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THE  
WORKS  
OF  
THE REV. ISAAC WATTS, D.D.

IN  
*NINE VOLUMES.*

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VOL. III.

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CONTAINING

SELF-LOVE AND VIRTUE RECONCILED  
ONLY BY RELIGION;  
HUMILITY REPRESENTED IN THE CHA-  
RACTER OF ST. PAUL;  
ORTHODOXY AND CHARITY UNITED;  
A CAVEAT AGAINST INFIDELITY?

THE HARMONY OF ALL THE RELIGIONS  
GOD EVER PRESCRIBED;  
THE STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF HU-  
MAN REASON;  
HOLINESS OF TIMES, PLACES, &C.

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LEEDS:

PRINTED BY EDWARD BAINES;  
FOR WILLIAM BAYNES, PATERNOSTER-ROW; THOMAS WILLIAMS AND SON,  
STATIONERS'-COURT; THOMAS HAMILTON, PATERNOSTER-ROW; AND  
JOBIAH CONDER, BUCKLESBURY, LONDON.

1812.





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**SELF-LOVE AND VIRTUE**

RECONCILED

***ONLY BY RELIGION:***

OR

**AN ARGUMENT TO PROVE,**

**THAT THE ONLY EFFECTUAL OBLIGATION OF MANKIND**

*To practise Virtue,*

**DEPENDS ON THE EXISTENCE AND WILL OF GOD,**

*&c.*

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## SELF-LOVE AND VIRTUE RECONCILED

ONLY

### BY RELIGION :

*Or, An Argument to prove, that the only Effectual Obligation of Mankind to practise Virtue, depends on the Existence and Will of God, &c.*

SECT. I.—*The General Proposal of the Subject.*

**I**T has been a great controversy, whether the rules of virtue, and our obligations to practise them, be eternal and immutable in themselves, antecedent to our conceptions of the being of a God; or, whether they depend on his will and appointment. In things which are merely speculative, it is very evident and certain, that there are many eternal and unchangeable truths; as, “two and two make four; a circle is most comprehensive of all figures, and a right angle is larger than an acute.” Note, By eternal truths we can mean no more than this; that in whatsoever moment of the eternity, past or to come, these ideal truths were or shall be proposed to an intelligent being, they must be assented to, and acknowledged to be true: But any real, eternal existence of them, cannot be supposed, without a God, in whose mind alone they could exist.

And when we call them unchangeable, our meaning is this, that we cannot conceive it possible, that any circumstances, or situation of things, or even the will of a God, should ever alter the nature of these truths, or make them cease to be true. But the case is not quite so evident to us, and so indisputable with regard to moral or practical subjects, however these may be supposed to be as certain in themselves. It may admit of a doubt, whether all the rules of virtue, and more especially, whether the obligations of mankind to practise them, are eternal and unchangeable; and that even before the supposition of the existence of a God, or without any regard to such a supreme Governor.

It must be granted, that there are persons of known learning and piety who have chosen this side of the question: And yet it must be acknowledged too, that it grates a little upon some religious minds, to hear of eternal and unchangeable obligations lying on men, which are independent on the will or appointment of God; or even upon a supposition there were no God. I would not chuse to see such sort of suppositions introduced, if it be possible to secure the rules and practice of virtue without them. I think that these eternal rules of virtue, whatsoever they

be, and especially our obligations to practise them, stand in such a close connexion with the being and the will of God, as Governor of the world, that if one could help it, they should not be even divided and separated in thought.

But since these sort of suppositions are and will be made, I beg leave to examine, according to the best rules of my reason, how far this doctrine of eternal and unchangeable obligations to practise virtue may be supported; and I will endeavour it in these following positions:

SECT. II.—*There are Eternal Fitnesses in Human Actions and in Divine.*

It is granted, there is an eternal fitness or unfitness of things in nature, or, if I might so express it, in our ideas of the natural world which do not depend on the will or appointment of God; and these are perfectly unchangeable. "A globe is not fit to fill up the space of a hollow cube; nor is a triangle fit to fill up the area of a circle." Note, By the eternal fitness of things, we must understand the same as before I said concerning eternal truths, viz. that in themselves they are mere abstracted ideas, and can have no real, eternal existence but in the mind of God. Let it be observed also, that this eternal fitness of things does not require the actual existence of these things from eternity: If the mere ideas of these things have a necessary connexion together, they may be called eternal fitnesses, in the sense I have explained. I think there can remain no reasonable doubt or contest upon this matter. The supposition of a God, or no God, seems to make no alteration in these abstracted ideas.

There seems also to be an eternal fitness or unfitness in the actions of single, rational and sensible beings. Note, Though we are here speaking chiefly of mankind, yet I call every rational being sensible, whether it be united to flesh or blood or no; because it is conscious and perceptive of pleasure or pain, happiness or misery. I say therefore, it is fit that every rational being should preserve itself, at least so far as it may be made happy; and it is unfit that it should destroy itself, or permit its own destruction. It is fit a rational being should seek its own general, ultimate, or supreme happiness\*; and it is unfit that such a being should procure its own misery, or permit it, if he can avoid it. Nature, self-love, and reason, seem to dictate the same thing. This self-preservation and self-felicitation, are wrought in our natural constitution: and our rational powers confirm it. These may be called single or personal duties of

\* I use the words "general, ultimate and supreme happiness," to distinguish it from any particular present pleasures, which a man may and ought to deny or refuse by the mere rules of reason, when they stand in competition with his general and ultimate happiness.

nature, or natural obligations, considering nature both as sensible and rational.

There seems also an eternal fitness or unfitness of things in the social life. It is fit that rational, social beings should make one another easy and happy, and preserve each other's life and peace; and it seems unfit that any of them should make their neighbours uneasy or unhappy, or that they should destroy them\*. It is fit therefore that social beings should keep their contracts, should do justice to all around them, should not rob or steal one another's property; and that they should love each other, and do good, and be grateful to their benefactors. This is properly called "social virtue." All these seem to be rules derived from the very nature of things; that is, supposing such rational, and sensible, and social beings to exist, they are directed by the eternal reason of things to behave with justice and goodness towards each other. These rules seem to carry an obligation with them by the light of reason. Note, by the word "obligation" in this place, we cannot mean any authoritative or coercive influence from the will, or law, or authority of a superior; since we are speaking of the eternal fitness of these things, without any consideration of the being of a God. Obligation, in this place therefore, can mean nothing but the mere reasonable fitness of our doing or not doing such or such a thing in social life; or that this is the dictate of our reasoning powers.

If there be a God, an universal Maker and supreme Lord of all, there are eternal truths and fitnesses which relate to himself, viz. that he must always act according to the perfections of his nature, as a single, self-existent and supreme being. That he is not always bound by the same rules which bind social beings or fellow-creatures; for he is not bound to do all the good he can, or to hinder all the evil he can. Again; that God cannot alienate his own right to any thing, to give it irrevocably to a creature, but by his own express promise; and therefore his gifts, without an absolute promise, are but loans, resumable at pleasure. That he cannot originally make a creature sinful or miserable. That he has a right to the obedience of his creatures. That he cannot command his creatures to do any thing unfit to be done. That he will be just and true to all his creatures; and that he will not finally deal alike with the righteous and the wicked. There is therefore a reward for the righteous, &c. I mention all these here, though they are not all necessary to my present subject; yet it is good to keep them much in our view, in order to justify God in many parts of his divine conduct.

\* These expressions are general indeed, and must include some limitation; but the reason and nature of things gives this plain limitation to them, viz. When men have not forfeited their life, or their ease, by criminal actions, they are to be treated well by their fellow-beings.



Now if there actually be a God, these eternal truths or fitnesses may be said, in some sense, to lay an obligation on God to act according to them, that is, his perfections are such that he will govern and regulate his own actions constantly and unchangeably by these eternal fitnesses or unfitnesses of things : For since he is self-sufficient for his own preservation and happiness ; and since none of these eternal fitnesses or unfitnesses can possibly stand in opposition to his own eternal being or blessedness, nor can they bring any inconvenience on him, he can have no possible motive, or reason, or obligation to act contrary to this fitness or unfitness of things ; and the rectitude of his own nature seems unchangeably to require such a conduct.

And if this be granted, then there is a sufficient foundation laid for the proof of all God's moral attributes by our ideas of his natural perfections, and our ideas of the eternal rules of justice, veracity and goodness ; and there is sufficient assurance that he will act according to them.

SECT. III.—*In Human Actions these Fitnesses may contradict each other.*

But in beings of an inferior nature, before we consider whether there be a God or no, the case is not the same ; for it is possible that some of these rules of reason, or, at least, the obligations to practise them, may, seemingly, or really clash with each other. As for instance, in what we have called single or personal duties : Do we not all agree, that a man is obliged to preserve his own life, and also to make himself happy by such a steady dictate of his own nature, as seems essential or eternal ? Is not this piece of self-love inwrought into his very constitution and frame of nature ? And do not his reasoning powers confirm it ? But Miserino lies in extreme anguish of gout or stone, or broken limbs ; and he seems to be encouraged, and even required, by his reasoning powers, to try to divest himself of all life, and of all possible happiness together ; for he judges it better not to be, than to be miserable. In this case self-murder, or the destruction of his being, would be a dictate of reason ; for it would be a sort of self-felicitation, though it stands directly contrary to self-preservation.

Again, in another case of single or personal duties. Philedon is a gentleman of good reason and learning, but of such strong and importunate passions and appetites, that every degree of restraint is a sensible pain to him. He sat down in a very calm and composed hour to judge whether he should pursue pleasure or virtue. His reason told him much of the eternal fitness of things, and what a noble victory it would be to deny his appetites and govern his passions ; and that he was obliged,

by the fitness of things, to follow the rules of strict virtue constantly. But, on the other hand, self-love and nature, with their strong sensibilities represented to him the constant and intense toil, the uneasy fatigue and pain of contradicting the dictates of his nature and his appetite of pleasure; and that he never would have one easy day in the course of strict virtue. His reason balanced these things together, and finally resolved, that both his own rational powers, and the fitness of things, required that Philedon should pursue his highest happiness, and that was to indulge his sensual inclinations in the highest degree; for this was the ultimate happiness he could expect: And as soon as he found diseases, or pains, or poverty come upon him, he might finish them all at once by a dagger, or by opium, and thus enter into eternal ease and indolence. Now in this case all his obligations to personal virtue, as well as to self-preservation, seem to be out-reasoned and overcome by the dictates of self-felicitation.

And there are yet plainer instances of such contradictions between single and social duties, viz. Famelico, a strong man, lies starving; and he sees his weaker and hungry neighbour with only one piece of bread in his hand; reason dictates that the strong man should not rob his neighbour of his property, especially where this property is his very life: And yet reason, self-love and nature, join to dictate that Famelico should save his own life, and procure his own ease from the pain of hunger; which he can do no otherwise but by taking away the bread, and perhaps life from his neighbour. Again, Naufragus is just drowning; but he sees his neighbour supported by a little plank, which is just big enough to save one man's life; reason and virtue dictate that, though he be stronger, he should not drown his neighbour, by taking away the plank: Yet his reason and nature seem to dictate also, that Naufragus should save himself, though it be by taking the plank away from his weaker neighbour, and leave him to be drowned. Yet again, reason dictates that Irus should pay what he has borrowed, and that at the promised time; and yet, perhaps, this payment takes away all his subsistence, and exposes him to extreme hunger and death; and then both reason and nature at the same time dictate, that Irus should save himself from death, or secure himself from pinching hunger, whatever his neighbour loses or suffers.

Or suppose, in a common shipwreck, a drowning man sees another near him, who has three or four such planks as would each of them save a life: Reason dictates he should preserve his life, though it be by plundering his neighbour of one of them, if that neighbour refuse to lend or give it him: And yet reason seems to dictate too, that he should not take away his neighbour's property by force. The same may be said concerning

#### SELF-LOVE AND VIRTUE RECONCILED.

loaves of bread, and a man who is starving. Many such crossing incidents as these may be supposed to happen ; and, in some of them it is not only very hard to determine which of these dictates should be obeyed, but it seems to me that these rules of reason may sometimes clash so much with each other, that they cannot be reconciled.

Here, indeed, an objector may start up and say, What ! is this a possible thing that reason should contradict reason ? Are we of such an absurd composition, and are we placed in such a self-repugnant state by nature, that our supreme powers of direction and action will contradict themselves, or that the fitness of things should stand on both sides ? I answer ; Yes, if we come into being by chance or by fate, without a God, then we may be such an absurd mixture, and situated in such a self-repugnant state ; and who can disprove it ; or who can help it ? Surely it can be no wonder if so so absurd a principle as fate or chance should produce absurd things.

#### SECT. IV.—*The Existence of a God Reconciles these Contradictions.*

But let us wait and enquire a little, how these difficulties may be compromised by the supposition of the being of a God, and whether they can be compromised without the supposition of it. If there be a God, an almighty Maker and Ruler of man, that God by his will and authority, requires and obliges\* man, in his general government of the world, to the same rules of single duty, and of social virtue, which are dictated by the fitness or unfitness of things. This will of God, made known to men, is his law, whether it be natural and written in the heart, or revealed and written in a book. Thus man is obliged by his duty to God his Maker, as well as to himself, to secure his own being and happiness ; and he is obliged by duty to God as well as to his neighbour, to practice every social virtue†.

\* Here it is granted, the word "obligation" signifies an authoritative or suasive influence from the will, command or authority of a superior, But if you enquire, why are we obliged by the will or command of a superior ? The fundamental and ultimate reason is still, because the fitness of things dictates it, that we should obey a rightful superior. So that the ultimate ground of all obligation is still the dictate of reason concerning the fitness of things. But if you will proceed further in your enquire-, wherein it appears that the fitness of things requires such obedience ? I answer, because such a superior can reward it, and punish the neglect of it, and therefore it is the interest as well as the duty of the inferior to obey ; and this increases or doubles the fitness of such obedience, as shall be shewn immediately.

† It must be confessed, there have been some cases in scripture wherein God seems to have commanded men to act, in appearance, contrary to these eternal fitnesses, &c. in point of social virtue : As in the case of Abraham's offering up his son, and the Israelites destroying the Canaanites. But we must distinguish between these two things, viz. there is God's common providence, or his general and ordinary rules of government, which he has made known to the reason of man, whereby man, considered as a sociable creature, is obliged to

#### SECTION IV. .

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Now if personal duties, even thus confirmed, should chance to clash with one another, or with any of the social virtues, how shall they be reconciled? I answer; By religion, by which name I mean a due regard to God as a commander of virtue, and a rewarder of it. I shall make this appear first in the case of our single or personal duties. If there be a God, he has made us to live for his use and service; and we ought not to oppose his will, and destroy ourselves. He who hath made us, hath a right to appoint our situation in what state he pleases; and while he confines our beings to this world of flesh and blood, though it be with pain and anguish; yet it is not fit that Miserino should depart hence by destroying his animal life, or his being, against his Maker's will: But he should trust in that God, who can find ways of relief which we think impossible; or who can and will reward us in a future state and life, with supreme felicity for what we endure with patience in this life, by the mere motive of submission to his will; and this is religion\*.

Thus our reason, upon the balance, in the most miserable circumstances, will supremely dictate to us, that it is our duty, and our highest interest, to preserve our lives, and to bear this present life and pain, till almighty God relieve us by healing, or release us to a state of ultimate felicity by death. And thus the obligations to self-preservation and self-felicitation are united or reconciled.

In like manner Philedon lies under plain obligations to God and to himself, to restrain his appetites and passions, be they never so strong, within the bounds and rules of virtue; for this is the will or law of God, who made him, and has a right to govern him: And, be his life prolonged never so far, yet constant self-denial, and strict virtue, is his duty all the way; for he may expect divine rewards and supreme or ultimate felicity in some

practice all social virtues in his own transactions with his fellow-creatures: And there is God's special providence, or his extraordinary orders or commands, which he may make known by some powerful revelation to men or angels, merely considered as his instruments to maintain his own divine rights, and to resume what he has given to any of his creatures, whether it be life or property, and which he might justly resume by lightning or pestilence. Now, according to the ordinary rules of God's government, made known to man by reason, every man is bound to practise strict social virtue to his neighbour: This is agreeable to the fitness of things. But according to the extraordinary orders made known by pure revelation, man may be required, as Abraham and the Israelites were in these instances, to become the instruments of God in maintaining his own divine rights, and resuming his gifts from men. This will go a great way to justify those actions, as being still agreeable to the eternal fitness of things, especially if the rights of a God are considered as superior to the rights of a fellow-creature. But these difficulties have had other particular solutions given them: And since they are not necessary to the present point of debate, I would not bring them in here into this dispute, to embarrass the present argument with them, though I throw this hint into the margin.

\* See the connection between human virtue and divine reward, manifested and confirmed. Section VI.

world to come from that God whose will he obeyed here in this present world, by long and constant self-denial.

The same is evident also in social life. If there be a God, it is evident to reason, that this God, who is the common Father of all his creatures, did not make a whole society for the sake of one man, but every single man is rather made for the sake of society; and the interests of a society, are of superior importance to the interest of each single person. Therefore, in the view of God their common Father, who is wise and just, the preservation and happiness of a whole society of creatures which he has made, by their steady practice of social virtue, even though it be to the detriment of any single man, is to be preferred to the preservation and happiness of any single man, with the detriment or danger of a whole society. Now a whole society would be injured by any man's wilful neglect of social virtues: Therefore the will or law of God requires, that social virtue be practised by every man; and that oftentimes with the neglect of any single man's present interest, where they are inconsistent\*. Now an obedience to this will of God is religion. And yet this God, who is a wise and righteous Governor of the universe, and is good to all his creatures, does not forbid the rational dictate of self-interest, that is self-preservation, or self-felicitation, to exert itself in a proper manner, but only gives it another turn or direction in particular cases: For even the light of nature and reason teaches us, that the righteous and almighty Governor may be expected to recompense present self-denial, performed in mere obedience to his will, with future life and felicity; for he can punish or reward after death. And thus our better life, and our ultimate felicity, are secured even by those acts of social virtue wherein we expose, or lose our present life or present happiness. This trust in the divine recompense is religion.

And upon this view of things a starving or a drowning man, if he be never so much stronger than his neighbour, may deny himself of some present advantage or comfort, or may neglect to secure life itself, in order to keep the rule of justice, and to obey his Maker therein. Reason itself will dictate to him this self-denial and steady virtue; for hereby he not only obeys his Maker's will, but he pursues his own best interest, and his highest happiness, even the favour of his Maker, and the reward of his

\* It is not any part of my design here to adjust all the proportionable circumstances or oppositions of single and social interests; much less can I say, that the least interest of a society, is preferable to the greatest interest of a single person. All that I think necessary to be said here, is, that upon the supposition of a God, the interest of societies, *ceteris paribus*, is of a superior importance to the interest of single persons, and carries in it a stronger obligation. But to adjust every single, possible case, may sometimes, afford considerable difficulties, though the general rule stands firm.

from the righteous Governor of the world. And he may upon himself as most powerfully obliged to practise such virtue and self-denial by the will and authority of that God and will reward him.

And thus the strict rule of social virtue, built on the reasonableness of things, will not clash with the other rule of reason, which is also built on the fitness of things, viz. that a rational sensible being should still pursue self-preservation and self-interest. The very supposition of a righteous God, who commands strict virtue, and will reward it in a future state, takes away the seeming contradiction that otherwise might lie between the two rules of reason, and reconciles them. It is the glory of reason to reconcile these contrarieties. Now let us survey the present case :

*T. V.—These Contradictions Irreconcilable without an Existent God.*

Upon supposition that men spring up into being by fate or necessity, and that there is no Almighty Creator, or righteous Governor, or Rewarder ; then reason would dictate to us self-preservation, or, at least, self-felicitation in the present state, as our only obligation, and our supreme rule of action, notwithstanding all our remonstrances of single or social virtue ; since there is no prospect of any possible compensation in any future state for precepts of self-denial : And thus the strongest obligation would be laid on the side of preserving our present life, or at least our present happiness ; nature and inclination, and self-love, would confirm it : and they appear also to have reason, and the fitness of things on their side. Thence it will appear, as to the fitness of single or personal virtue, that Philedon has not sufficient obligation to tie himself to the rules of it under his violent propensities to sensuality, if there be no God : But self-felicitation

will directly and lead him to all manner of indulgence of pleasures, and to finish his own life and being when his pleasures are exhausted. His reason would tell him that this was the fittest course he could do ; and I might prove it also mathematically :

Suppose Philedon spent his life according to the rules of reason, with much fatigue, and watchfulness and self-denial, he would die quickly, and his being, and all hope of felicity would be at an end, and that for ever. Or if he dragged on his life painfully to old age, still, at his death, his being and hope of happiness are for ever gone. And what good hath his virtue procured him ? But, on the other hand, if he pursue pleasure with appetite and relish, and die in a few years time, he hath a larger quantity of happiness than a short, or a long life of virtue, and constant laborious self-denial could give a man

of his temper: And after death his felicity would be equal to that of the most virtuous man, that is, non-existence, or eternal unconsciousness and indolence. So that if there be no God, then, upon the strictest reasoning from the fitness of things, Philedon would be obliged, by the principles of nature, to make himself happy in his own way.

It will follow also, that under such an atheistical state in the social life, the fitness of paying debts, of keeping contracts, of giving to every one their due, and the unfitness of robbing or murdering our neighbour, and of plundering, or of stealing a piece of bread by a starving man, or a plank of safety by a drowning man; in short, all social virtues among mankind, will be over-powered, and superseded in reason by this superior fitness; that is the rule of self-preservation or self-felicitation. Reason itself dictates this to mankind, since there is no superior authority or law to oblige them to practice these social virtues, and none can reward this self-denying virtue after death.

Perhaps it will be said, that though there be no God; yet, in social life, the good of the many, or of a whole society, must be still preferred to the good of single persons; that this is a rule of reason, and ought to regulate the conduct even of a drowning or starving person; otherwise there will be a door opened for all manner of plunder and murder amongst men, and virtue will have no farther guard or security. I might safely grant all this terrible inference, viz. that murders and robberies will be allowed, and virtue will have no guard: This is, and will be the sad consequence if there be no God. But I would give some particular answers:

I. In the first place then, though upon the supposition of an almighty Creator, who is the common Father of all his creatures, the good of a hundred or a thousand of these creatures, is to be preferred to the good of one, and it is his will that it should be so preferred; yet if men come into the world by chance, or by necessary fate, and had no relation to a God, nor any hope of hereafter, every man both would and ought to seek his own life and ultimate felicity, though hundreds or thousands perished. Self and nature, in each single man, have a much stronger, and more pungent sensibility of their own happiness or misery, than they can have of the misery or happiness of ten thousand others: And I think reason would dictate an obedience to this pungent sensibility, this principle of self-love, this natural rule of duty and practice. I answer secondly,—II. In cases which do not reach to life and death, or to such long pain and infelicity, which are worse than death, reason may dictate to us to deny our single selves many desirable things for the good of the society: But observe, that is not because the society itself has any sovereign right to this self-denial of ours; but because we ourselves may

afterwards want the help of this society : And we shall contradict our own best interest, and our felicity by our practice of rapine or falsehood, if we set the society against us. And therefore reason, perhaps, might dictate such self-denial to us in most of the common cases that would happen in human life, even if there were no God. I say therefore, where our lives or our ultimate happiness are not in danger, the good of the society, of which we ourselves are a part, and in whose welfare we expect our share of felicity, would oblige us by reason to observe the common rules of social virtue.

But in cases which relate to life and ultimate felicity, if there be no God to require of me any self-denying virtue here, nor to reward me hereafter, the superior rule of nature and reason is to save myself, and make myself happy, though ten thousand of my fellow-creatures suffer by it. What obligation can the welfare of the whole society lay upon me to do any thing for them, if I must perish? If I must lose all life, and being, and happiness, for ever, by the practice of social virtue, what is there in reason or nature can oblige me to practise it? Or who is there to reward my self-denying virtue? The secret consolation, or the public glory of a few dying moments, that I have lost my being and my happiness in service to the public, is but a poor and irrational recompence, if there be no God.

Let me add at last; wheresoever there are two different obligations which cross each other, the strongest obligation must be obeyed, and the other ceases. Though there are eternal differences between virtue and vice, and dry abstracted reason may require and seem to oblige us to the practice of virtue; yet since reason and nature, with its piercing sensibilities, join to dictate self-preservation or self-felicitation are we not first obliged to obey these dictates? Is not this obligation strongest? And should not nature and reason, when joined together, break through, or rather surmount and supersede all these abstracted moral notions and differences of vice and virtue, in favour of each man's own sensible happiness? And then I think the least inference we can make is, that man's obligation to these social virtues, especially in such sort of cases, can never be plainly proved and secured by reason, without the supposition of an existent God.

But if there be a God who governs the world, whose will and authority require the practice of virtue, and who will bestow upon those who practise it, an ultimate felicity, then the practice of social virtue is secured by the strongest obligations: And thus the moral obligation, which arises from the reason of things, and the divine or religious obligation, which arises from the will of God, together with the natural obligation, which springs from the pursuit of our own happiness, are all united to secure the practice of every virtue.



SECT. VI.—*The Chief Difficulty of this Scheme of thoughts removed.*

After a careful survey of what I have written on this subject, I can find but one difficulty of any importance attending it. Perhaps some friend may rise up here and object, that the whole stress and weight of my argument against the sufficient "obligation to virtue, arising from the mere fitness of things," rests and turns upon this single point, *the certainty of divine rewards*, which alone can bring over the principle of self-love to the side of virtue. But is it absolutely certain, that God will reward every man's virtue? And if he does not, then it will be said, that according to my argument, even the known will and command of God, though joined with the fitness of things, will lay but an insufficient obligation upon us to practise virtue: For the will of God, which really and in truth should give the highest obligation to the rules of virtue, will be as much superseded and overpowered by this same principle of self-love and self-felicitation; as that which arises from the fitness of things: And thus, if God be not a rewarder of virtue, Philedon will be indulged in all manner of pleasant vices still; though the known will of God forbids him.

This objection, as plausible as it appears, I think may be answered these two ways:—I. The will of God in commanding virtue, and the will of God to reward it, ought never to be separated. The equity and goodness of God joined together, incline him to consult the happiness of his creatures, as well as his own honour, in the obligations which he lays upon them to virtue or piety. He has inseparably united our duty and our best interest: And, therefore, though the will of God, made known to man, is a just obligation on man to obey it; yet since God himself hath mingled so intense and supreme a desire of happiness in our composition, he will provide some satisfaction for it in the way of obedience or virtue. Since God has inwrought in our frame such active principles as hope and fear of gaining or losing this happiness, there is abundant reason, from the light of nature, to conclude, *that he did not make all these supreme passions about happiness in vain*; nor to obstruct our virtue, but to encourage and promote it; and consequently *that he will be a rewarder*, as well as a commander of it.

If St. Paul may be cited here, he is of the same mind; Heb. xi. 6. *He that cometh unto God, that is, with a holy resolution to do his will, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.* To live a life of obedience to God's will, and trust in his goodness, with the faith and hope of divine rewards, this is the general idea of the religion of man both before and since the fall, both natural and revealed; *Do this, and thou shalt live: Repent, and your sins shall be blotted out: Believe, and obey the gospel, and thou shalt be saved.*

Shall it be said here ; but for once let us suppose it, that God may give self-denying and hard commands without any reason to expect a reward ; do not these commands carry sufficient reason to oblige a creature to obey ? And what if I should answer, no, they do not : You will tell me this is very absurd, that the will of God, which carries the highest obligation, should not sufficiently bind a creature. I answer, first, it is not the highest obligation where all hope of reward is cut off, for the natural duty of self-felicitation being added to it by the view of a reward, would raise it higher. But, secondly, what if it be an absurd thing, that the will of God commanding does not sufficiently oblige ? If you will force upon me absurd and inconsistent suppositions, why should you expect any thing but absurd consequences ? I confess there have been some mystic divines, and some enthusiasts, among the papists, who have screwed up their notions of virtue to such sublimities, that we are bound to practise all the will of God steadily, under the longest and sharpest trials and most self-denying instances, without any regard to rewards or punishments ; or even if there were no such things. There have been also some deists who have reproached christianity as a mere selfish and mercenary thing, because of the rewards and punishments it proposes ; and have maintained that true virtue should be practised by the sole motive of its own rational excellency and loveliness, that is the fitness of things\*.

I deny not the truth of this obligation arising from the mere manifestation of God's will, confirming the reason and fitness of things, even without the hope of reward ; but, in my opinion, this obligation alone would not be supreme and effectual : And indeed this seems not to be the religion of men on earth, but of some superior beings, if such there be, who can practise it. Abraham,

\* It is not unworthy of our remark here, that the opposite extremes of error in departing far from the truth, meet again in one and the same gross mistake, viz. that " true virtue or piety must have no regard to rewards or punishments." Deism and enthusiasm agree in this point of falsehood, to oppose true christianity, and scripture. This error is of the same stamp with the mad paradox of the stoics, that " a wise man is happy in Phalaris's bull," that is, that virtue, in the midst of the extremest tortures and agonies, is still a sufficient reward for itself. Alas ! for these unhappy men, these ancient philosophers ! they knew not the rewards of virtue and piety, some of which even reason might suggest or expect, if they had known the true God ; nor were they acquainted with those superior recompences of faith and holiness which christianity reveals and promises.

Nor can I forbear to make this inference here, viz. those writers who raise their rules and their test of true piety so high, as to require that we must be content to be damned that God may be glorified in our punishment ; they require what God and his word have never required : Nor doth scripture ever demand us to say, we would live in the same perfection of zeal for God, the same mortification of appetite, and persevere in the same strict self-denial and patience, both in duties and in sufferings, if there were no present or future recompences, no heaven and no hell. This is not the sense nor the language of the prophets, or apostles, or of *Jesus Christ our Lord*, when they would teach us the religion of mankind.

and Moses, and Paul, and even Christ himself on earth, *had respect to the heavenly country, the recompence of reward, the prize of the high calling, the crown of righteousness, and the joy that was set before them*: See the epistles to the Corinthians, to the Philippians, Timothy, and the Hebrews. The language of scripture runs always in this strain; and it seems to be the sense of the bulk of mankind, as well as of Epicurus the philosopher; *if we have hope in this life only, and there be no rewards after death, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*; that is, we have not sufficient obligations to the practice of virtue.

II. Though there were no positive and additional blessedness to be expected as the reward of virtue, to engage the principle of self-love or self-felicitation on its side; yet this is eternally certain, that God, who is the just judge of the whole earth, will not deal with the righteous and the wicked entirely alike: If the righteous be not positively rewarded for their virtue, it is at least certain, the wicked shall be punished for their vices; else virtue and vice would be treated alike, and both would have the same success and event. Now whatsoever advantage virtue has above vice in the remunerative sentence of God, that very advantage, whether it be of impunity and ease, or of positive reward, is sufficient to engage the principle of self-love or self-felicitation on the side of virtue. Thus, whether virtue is positively rewarded or no, yet the virtuous shall be dealt with in a much kinder way than the vicious by God, the governor and judge of the world; and thus the obligation arising from the will of God, as a commander of virtue, will always be joined with such a superior motive from the recompence of God as a governor, that the strongest and supreme obligation of man will still lie on the side of virtue; and this arises only from the supposition of the existence of a God, who, as he commands virtue, will in some way or other recompence the practice of it.

I conclude this point of debate therefore thus:—Without the supposition of the being of a God, I think there is no possible security to innocence, and there will be no sufficient obligation to social virtue and justice among men: But self-love, self-preservation, and self-felicitation will be the supreme law of nature and reason to regulate the actions of every rational and sensible being. And if this supreme law meet with any opposition from the abstracted and speculative notions of the fitness and unfitness of things, and the eternal differences of virtue and vice; yet it will surmount and overturn them all; and each man's own reason will support this supreme dictate of nature, this supreme fitness of things, viz. self-preservation or self-felicitation; though it bring with it an universal confusion, mischief and violence in social life. Therefore a kingdom, or a republic of atheists, can never subsist upon any solid principles of nature or reason.

SECT. VII.—*The Necessity of Divine Revelation, both to clear up the Rules of Virtue, and to strengthen the Obligations.*

If atheism, with all its pretences to reason, cannot secure our obligations to virtue, but wants the supposition of a God to determine and establish them, it is as manifest, that deism stands in as much need of divine revelation to clear up the rules of virtue with more evidence and certainty than human reason has done, as well as to acquaint the bulk of mankind with them, and to make our obligations to practise them more effectual. It is granted, the most general rules of duty, the chief outlines and boundaries of vice and virtue, may be discovered by the reasoning powers of man, if rightly employed; but these discoveries are so few, and some of them are so feebly impressed upon the minds of the multitude, that, in many cases, they leave but a general glimmering light, and give but a doubtful direction: So that man, by nature, in his present corrupted state, is born in the midst of so much darkness, that he hardly knows how to find the rules of his duty in a thousand instances, without some further revelation or assistance.

This has been made abundantly evident by several writers in the defence of christianity. They have shewn how many nations of men as well as schools of philosophers, have grossly mistaken these great outlines and boundaries of vice and virtue. Some have thought fornication lawful, and have practised it even in their worship. Others have encouraged theft, and the community of wives, and exposing or murdering their children. Most princes and generals have esteemed the plunder, robbery and murder of neighbour-nations a piece of heroism and glory. Others again have supposed revenge to be a very honourable practice, and have despised the christian virtues of *meekness* and *forgiveness*. In the midst of such shameful mistakes of great men and philosophers, and whole nations, can we say, the boundaries of virtue and vice are so plain, that all persons may as easily discern and distinguish them as they may distinguish light from darkness? Or, that the bulk and lower multitude of mankind, who seldom set themselves to study, that plowmen and labourers, can learn their duty sufficiently by the mere light of their own reasonings upon the fitness of things? Again; though some of the great outlines of virtue, and the general rules of it, are obvious to all men, and more might be found out by labour and reasoning; yet, in a thousand particular practices of life, in common occurrences, every man does not know how to apply these general rules to his present circumstances, and he will be often, if not almost always, at a loss in finding his duty in particular occurrences of life.

But God, by the revelation of his will in scripture, has given so bright a discovery of these general boundaries between vice

and virtue, and made plain a multitude of these particular duties both by many express commands, and prohibitions, and various parallel examples, both of vice and virtue, that even the common people may learn what they are to believe, and what they are to practise, or avoid, by a far more easy and ready way of instruction. Milk-maids and plowmen, and the meanest offices or capacities in the world may learn their duty here. All the rules of virtue given us by the heathen philosophers, from their supposed fitness of things, fall vastly short of what Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, have done in clearing up the common rules of virtue to mankind, by divine revelation. This is all I shall say concerning the necessity of revelation, to make the rules of virtue plain and evident to the bulk of mankind.

As to the obligations to practise virtue, even upon the supposition of the being of a God, still there is something wanting to render them effectual. This sufficiently appears in the wicked lives of many of the heathen philosophers, *who held the truth in unrighteousness*, and sinned against conscience abundantly; and they made it appear how feebly their moral obligations impressed their minds; *for when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; but practised all the idolatries of the common people, and gave themselves up to all immorality*, as St. Paul informs us; Rom. i. 21—32.

But the great and awful things that are revealed to us in scripture, enforce these obligations of virtue with many additions of strength and efficacy. It is the word of God which sets before us the terrors of the law of God, and his indignation against sinners; it is this gives assurance of pardon of sin upon repentance, and a trust in his mercy through Jesus the Saviour; which tends much to melt our hearts down to repentance, and love, and new obedience. It is this word which tells us, that God takes exact cognizance of all our actions; and that there shall be a great day of judgment, when we shall be called to an account for our behaviour, and rewarded or punished according to our works. It is the word of God which sets before us the certain joys or glories of heaven, and the certain torments and sorrows of hell, where happiness and misery are distributed in perfection, according to vice and virtue. These are the things which awaken all the reasoning and active powers of man; these influence his hopes and fears much more powerfully than the mere light of nature could ever do, and the doctrines of virtue arising from the mere fitness of things. These discoveries of scripture have actually produced more piety and virtue in a town or city of christians than heathenism, or the mere light of reason could ever do in whole nations.

Besides all this, the gospel acquaints us with those divine assistances of the holy Spirit, which persons who pray earnestly

to God for them may expect and receive ; whereby vice shall be subdued in their natures, and their irregular appetites and passions shall be mortified ; whereby moral and divine things shall be set before them in so powerful a light, as to persuade their wills to become religious and holy. Thus between these clear instructions, these powerful, religious motives, and these divine assistances which the gospel proposes, virtue gains a vast advantage by christianity.

To conclude ; though there are eternal fitnesses in things, and reason may find out the general rules of virtue, and the chief boundaries between good and evil ; yet a sufficient obligation to practise them cannot be established without the supposition of a God : And even after this supposition we must confess, that the knowledge of these rules amongst the bulk of mankind, will be very dark and dubious in a thousand instances, and obligations to practise virtue will be feeble, and have little effect without the divine revelation of the law and the gospel. Blessed be God for ever for his holy book of scripture ! O when shall it be read in every language, and be made known to the ends of the earth !

## PREFACE

*To Humility Represented in the Character of St. Paul, &c.*

I Hope there will be something found in these papers which is suited to rectify the vicious disorders of the mind, to subdue the foolish vanity of human nature, and promote a meek and humble spirit: But I am sure, they can have no such influence, while they continue to sleep in a desk where they have lain many years already. If the divine grace shall so far attend the publication of them now, as to make them attain these happy ends, my duty will be thankfulness and praise.

While I have endeavoured to trace out the pride of the heart in the various and general appearances of it both in higher and lower life, I have carefully avoided the particular description of any person living. By this means my representation of true humility in the moral and religious springs and advantages of it, together with some views of the opposite vice, may have a more kindly and powerful effect upon every reader. Conviction and reproof are much better received when such hints only are given, as may lead conscience in secret to search out the criminals, and may teach them to set their own folly and guilt and danger before themselves. We all like to do this work best in retirement and silence. And I hope my readers will be so kind and so just both to themselves and to me, as to be more diligent in the discovery and cure of any weakness of their own, than in pointing out censure for their neighbours: though it must be confessed these is sufficient matter for it in every corner of the world. Surely if we could but look down upon mankind with an all-surveying eye as the great God doth, we should see a dreadful and universal spread of this vice of pride over all the race of man, and an infinite number of mischiefs derived from it, and diffused through kingdoms and churches, through all human societies and personal affairs. Had we such a view as this, one would think every son and daughter of Adam should labour night and day to root out this cursed and poisonous plant, till not a branch or fibre of it remained to infect the earth. Pride was the ruin of angels: Pride was the fall of man: "Ye shall be as Gods," was the great temptation, and the event is we are become like devils: Nor doth the array of flesh and blood which we wear, cover our shame or excuse our iniquity.

God has sent his Son Jesus into the world in the likeness of man, and in all the forms of humiliation, that he might teach us by his word and his example to be meek and lowly, and shew us how to regain the divine favour and image, by laying the foundation of his gospel and of our recovery in humility of soul: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; Mat. v. 3.* And next to his own Son, God has set his servant Paul for our pattern, who calls himself, *less than the least of all the saints*, and persuades us to be followers of him as he is of Christ.

I have not drawn out at large here the particular rules and directions for acquiring these lovely virtues of christian humility and meekness, having written so many chapters of advice how to subdue pride and wrath and other vices in my little Treatise of the Passions, and to these I refer my readers under the divine blessing.

Newington, March 25, 1737½

## HUMILITY REPRESENTED

IN THE  
CHARACTER OF ST. PAUL, &c.

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EPH. iii. 8.—*Less than the least of all the Saints.*

### INTRODUCTION.

**H**OW meanly does this great and holy man, this chiefest of the apostles speak of himself? To how low a degree does he sink himself and his exalted virtues? To how narrow a compass does he reduce all his own natural talents, his acquired excellencies and even his divine qualifications? Less than the least, ἧλαχιστότερος: It is a Greek word made on purpose to signify the exceeding diminutive idea he had of himself, and it is very happily rendered by our English translators?

How different is our common behaviour from that of holy Paul? When we think of self we are ready to raise our thoughts beyond all measure and aggrandize our ideas to a vast and shameful degree, as though we stood as fair and as large and as high in the eyes of our fellow-worms as we do in our own eyes. Vain imagination! Wretched self-flattery and foolish pride! We take the least of all words, the least of syllables, the least of letters, I, and swell and amplify it, if I may so speak, to fill a page, or to spread over a whole leaf, and we scarce leave a scanty margin for all other names to stand in: Nothing less than a volume will contain or display our characters and our due praises. We set so many flourishes round our own names and fill our own eyes with them, that we can see nothing else. All other names lie concealed and disappear, while our own ingrosses our sight and admiration. We make every thing else look so little, as though it were fit only to lie neglected and forgotten, while self, or I, should be alone beheld and alone regarded. But the great apostle who had more excellencies and real honours than a thousand of us put together, gives his thoughts a different turn; what am I? says he, a little mean worthless thing, to be intrusted with this glorious gospel, and to have such divine favours conferred on me? “I am nothing that is grand and exalted, *but the least of all the saints, and less than the least of them.*” When, O my soul, when wilt thou learn to copy after so illustrious an example, so divine a pattern of humility? But not to paraphrase any longer on this matter here at large let us enter into particulars.

Perhaps some persons may expect that I should spend time



here to distinguish and determine exactly what sort of opinion and esteem we ought to have of ourselves. Surely a man of letters and education is not bound to think himself as illiterate as a peasant, nor a youth of ingenuity to fancy himself a fool : A person of figure and quality must not suppose himself in all respects upon a level with the lower ranks of mankind, nor can it be but that a man of sense and virtue, of religion and goodness must know himself to be of superior worth and merit to the rude and the wicked multitude. Do not nature and reason direct us to judge of persons as well as things according to truth? Nor does the best of religions forbid us to pass a true and right judgment concerning ourselves or concerning our fellow-creatures. Besides, it is proper and necessary that a man should have in some measure a just idea of himself, that he may every where in his conduct and behaviour maintain his own character, and answer the demands of his own station with justice and honour both in the world and in the church. What is it then we are to understand by this diminishing idea of self, which was so honourable in the great apostle, and which is so worthy of our imitation.

To this enquiry I shall give but a short answer, for I allow all that is here proposed by way of query or objection to be just and true. I grant it is our duty to know ourselves for many valuable purposes both in life and religion, and to form a just sentiment, as near as we can, of our own qualifications, and our place and rank amongst our fellow-creatures. But as the honourable example of St. Paul directs us, so the design of my present advice lies here, viz. that in passing a judgment concerning ourselves, we should always set a strong guard on the side of self-love and flattery : We should watch against the pride of our hearts, which is every moment ready to over-rate all appearances of what is valuable in us, and forgets to bring our defects into the balance of the account ; pride spies out those excellencies in us which none else can see, while it conceals and lessens our evil qualities so as to reduce them almost to nothing. By this means the judgment that we form concerning ourselves, is for the most part mistaken and criminal : We hearken to the prejudices of our self-love ; we view our virtues through a magnifying glass in the sunshine, and cast our vices into shade and concealment. We carry always about us these false representations of ourselves, this vain picture which is so very unlike the original : We speak, and act, and live, according to this bright and great and mistaken idea of self, and thereby we plunge ourselves into many errors, iniquities and mischiefs.

And especially when we happen to *compare ourselves* with others, our envy arises to assist the work, and offers its wretched and dangerous aid to help on the comparison. We soon spy out all their blemishes and imperfections; and lessen their character

in order to exalt our own. Thus while pride on the one side brightens and aggrandizes our own image, and on the other side envy detracts from the image of our neighbour, sullies his virtues and darkens his honours, we act our relative parts in the world in a very irregular manner, under the influence of these erroneous sentiments and ideas.

The mean opinion of self therefore, that by the pattern of the apostle, I would recommend to my own heart and to all my friends, is this, that in taking a just estimate of every thing that relates to ourselves or to our fellow-creatures, we should keep a strict watch against the dangers of these selfish passions and prejudices; and we should always make large allowances for those false and glaring colours, wherewith our vanity paints and adorns our own image, and for those deceitful weights which pride is ever flinging into our own scale, to make our virtues appear solid and weighty; and we should make the same allowances for those dark and disgraceful shades of vice and folly which envy spreads over our neighbours' character, and for those reproaches wherewith she loads the opposite scale while we are weighing the virtues of our neighbours, in order to make them seem lighter.

The bulk of mankind are so generally given to err on this hand, that is, to over-value themselves and depreciate their neighbours; and the number of those who make a mistake on the other side is so exceeding small, that in proposing general directions for our conduct there is scarce any need of a caution or guard against the humble and self-denying kinds of mistake. Then is our opinion concerning ourselves and our neighbours agreeable to the rule and temper of christianity, and generally nearer the truth, when we sink our idea of self rather below what seems to us to be our due, and when we raise the idea of our neighbours a little above what appears to belong to them, for they doubtless have some virtues and good qualities unknown to us, and it is certain we have some secret failings which do not usually come within our own notice. But I shall touch upon this subject perhaps once again, and therefore I proceed to the general heads of my discourse.

Here I shall enquire first, Whence comes it to pass that St. Paul forms so diminutive an idea of himself, and calls himself less than the least of all the saints? And secondly, What blessed advantages may we obtain by this lessening view of ourselves in imitation of such an example.

#### SECT. I.—*The Springs of St. Paul's Humility.*

The first thing to be enquired is, whence comes it to pass that St. Paul forms such diminutive ideas of himself? I answer, I. From a constant sense of his own former iniquities,

and an ever-present consciousness of sin that dwells in him. You may read this account in himself in many of his epistles ; 1 Cor. xv. 9. *I am the least of the apostles, and am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.* 1 Tim. i. 13, 15. *I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious ; And in this view I am the chief of sinners.* Rom. vii. 14, 18, 21. *I am carnal, sold under sin. In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing : O wretched man that I am !* Each of us are best acquainted with ourselves, and know best what our own former sins and follies have been. Some of us perhaps have been suffered to fall into more criminal actions and shameful iniquities than others ; but there is not one of us who has not sinned enough to make him lie humble in the dust, and think meanly of himself if our former iniquities were always kept in view. But alas ! we are much inclined to forget our sins, to cast them behind our back, to turn our eyes away from them ; it is a painful and an uneasy sight ; while at the same time we vainly turn our eyes to our own fancied excellencies, and with pleasure we dwell long in the survey of our own real or imagined qualifications and virtues : We aggrandize our little worthless selves into idols, and then we worship the vain image which our pride has made. We pay much incense of self-flattery and praise to the swelling and exalted idea of the little worthless name I or Me ; and when we have set up a false god for our own worship, we are fond to have other men bow down and worship it too. Come, my soul, come, let the holy apostle teach thee to secure thyself against the danger and deceit of this foolish pride : Let him instruct thee how to depress and keep down this rising tumour, this fermenting swelling thing, self. Take a frequent survey of thy former sins and follies ; look into thy heart, behold the hourly workings of iniquity there ; what abatements of thy fancied honour, what defilements and stains and inward shame wilt thou find upon thee ? Methinks, there is something elegant and exalted in the language of a famous English poet\*, while he is humbling the vanity of human nature beneath the brute creatures, and even beneath the things which have neither sense nor life :

“ Let the proud peacock his gay feathers spread  
 And court the female to his painted bed :  
 Let winds and seas together rage and swell ;  
 This nature teaches, and't becomes them well.  
 Pride was not made for man. A conscious sense  
 Of guilt and folly and their consequence  
 Destroys the claim, and to beholders tells,  
 Here nothing but the shape of manhood dwells.”

As if he should say, “ Here is not that glorious thing, that honourable and holy creature man, as he was first made by the

\* Waller.

hands of God, and stamped with the divine image: here is nothing but the mere outward shape and figure, shadow and appearance of him, divested of his original dignities, bereft of his inward and superior glories." If such a saint as Paul, of the first degree, could call himself *the chief of sinners and less than the least of all the saints*, and would frame a new word for it because there was none ready made in all the copious language of the Greeks, which was sufficiently diminutive to express his humble thoughts of himself, what new lessening names, what unknown words of abasement must we form to give ourselves our own true character, who fall so far beneath this apostle?

II. While the apostle depresses himself so much below his fellow-saints, he not only remembers his own failings, but he seems to look upon others without their blemishes: and this is one way whereby he comes to sink the idea of his own character in comparison of theirs. His goodness and his love cover all their follies and keep them as it were out of sight, while he compares himself with them: "Charity covers a multitude of sins." He practises that great duty in his epistle to the Ephesians when he calls himself *less than the least of the saints*, which he recommends in his letter to the christians at Rome; Rom. xii. 10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.* Oh when shall we arrive at this spirit and learn this holy lesson of love? When shall we think of our fellow-christians and leave their faults out of our ideas of them? How ready are we to spy out their blemishes, and fix our eye first upon their little spots and the abatements of their virtue? And then we exalt ourselves while we forget our own failings, and imagine that we are higher and better than all around us. Dost thou not know, O my soul, more of the vices of thy nature and of the sins of thy life, than thou knowest of any of thy fellow-christians? Why then should thy vanity tempt thee to think so much better of thyself than thou dost of them? One would think thy own guilt and follies, which are so well known to thee, should do more to abase thee in thy own eyes, than all thy suspicious of the folly and guilt of thy neighbours should do, to sink their character in thy esteem. Remember this, that for the most part it is but a rumour and suspicion of the sins of thy brethren that lessens thy esteem of them; but thou hast an inward consciousness and assurance of thy own frailties and thy own vileness, which might more powerfully abase thy pride and teach thee to cry out with the apostle, *less than the least of all the saints.*

III. I might add in the third place, another spring of his humility was an abiding sense of the infinite greatness and holiness of God, and the unsearchable excellencies and glories of his Son Jesus. This is a sight which stains the glory of all flesh,

and brings the laughtiness of man down to the dust: This I confess does not so directly tend to this comparative humility, this abasing himself below his fellows, but it has a mighty influence on this virtue absolutely considered, and therefore I name it. The apostle maintains upon his spirit grand ideas of the great God, *the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach, whom no man hath seen nor can see, to whom belongs honour and power everlasting*; 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. What an atom, what a dust of being, what a dark and diminutive thing is man under the lively apprehension of a present God, a God of such majesty and brightness? And in the words following my text he is surveying the grandeurs of *Christ, by whom God created all things, and the unsearchable riches of his grace*; Eph. iii. 8, 9. And how mean and little must every son of Adam appear in the presence of this Son of God? He looks upon himself as poor and contemptible in the view of such unsearchable riches and glory. A sinful and fallen man, who has been favoured with some attainments above his neighbours, when he stands in the midst of sinful and fallen men, may perhaps appear something great and honourable; but when he sets himself before a holy God and before Christ the Son of his love, and the *express image of his glories*, he must then think himself despicably little, and covered with meanesses and dishonours. So a worm or an emmet that is a little larger than his brethren may lift up itself among fellow-emmetts or fellow-worms; but the foot of a man treads it to the dust, and it appears a worthless and unregarded thing.

Oh my soul, if thou wouldst lessen thyself, as a creature and a christian ought to do, live much in the sight of God *as seeing him that is invisible*. When God appears in the glory of his holiness, God in the person of his Son Jesus in his pre-existent state, as St. John tells us in chapter xii. then the seraphs cover their faces and their feet with their wings in his presence, and the holy prophet cries out, *Woe is me, for I am undone, I am a man of unclean lips; mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*; Is. vi. 2, 5. *Once have I spoken of myself, saith Job, to maintain my own honours, yea twice, before I had seen God in his glory; but now mine eye has seen thee, behold I am vile, I will lay my hand upon my mouth, I lie down in profound silence, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes*; Job xl. 4, 5. and xlii. 5, 6. Live much therefore, O my soul, in the views of God, the fairest, and the first, and the best of beings: Live much in the contemplation of Christ his Son, *in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily*, and who is the first and fairest image of the Father. Thou canst never dare *to swell and exalt thyself, thy little worthless self, in the pre-*

sance of such majesty, in the eye of such adorable and divine excellencies.

The last thing I shall mention as a spring of St. Paul's humility, was his frequent view and meditation of the condescension, the lowliness, the meekness, and self-abasement of the blessed Jesus. As he charges the Philippian converts, that *the same mind and temper should be in them which was in Christ Jesus*; Phil. ii. 5. So by a continual contemplation of him in his humbled estate, he learned to imitate so divine an example, and he recommends his own conduct as a pattern for men, no farther than as he followed Christ. But this subject will fall in often by the way, while I am representing the grace of humility in its lovely appearances, and therefore I dismiss it now.

### SECT. II.—*The Advantages of Humility in Regard of God.*

It is time to proceed to the second general head of discourse, viz. what advantages are to be derived from an imitation of this apostle, this great example of humility, what unknown profit will arise from this holy diminution or lessening of self? Surely many and various will be the benefits of such a pious practice: Some with regard to God, some with regard to our neighbours, and others with regard to ourselves. The first set of advantages that we shall derive from this practice of humility are such as regard God and religion, and they may be thrown into the following particulars:

I. We shall be kept ever dependent on divine providence and grace for every thing, while we are deeply sensible of our own emptiness, and we lie more directly under the promises of divine supplies. While we feel that in and of ourselves we are nothing, we shall be continually waiting upon God for every blessing to be conveyed to us according to our wants: *We shall never think ourselves sufficient* for any work, duty, or difficulty without him, and we shall live upon him hourly for light and strength, for grace and comfort. *We are not sufficient of ourselves*, says the apostle, *to think one thought as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God*; 2 Cor. iii. 5. Humility and dependence go together: Those who have high thoughts of themselves are not so naturally inclined nor easily persuaded to trust in another. Psalm x. 4. *The wicked through the pride of his heart will not seek after God.* But David, as a type of Christ in his state of infirmity and flesh, cries out, *I am a worm and no man*; Ps. xxii. 6. And therefore his heart is ever trusting in the Lord: So St. Paul ever keeps his hold of the grace of God, and depends on the strength of Christ, under a constant and prevailing sense of his own weakness. 2 Cor. xii. 10. *When I am weak then am I strong*: When I feel my own weakness, I am strong by a dependence on the grace of Christ. A weak christian and an

almighty Saviour are a sufficient match for the most formidable enemy : *My grace, O Paul, is sufficient for thee* against the thorns of the flesh, and the buffets of Satan.

The rich gospel of grace was only made for the poor and the humble among the sons and daughters of Adam. For whom is all that fulness of righteousness and fulness of grace treasured up in Christ Jesus, but for those who are deeply abased under a sense of their own guilt and sinfulness ? It is for those who are dying and despairing in themselves that Jesus has brought in hope and life. We can never be christians till we are thus humbled and brought to the foot of God to receive all from his Son.

Remember, O my soul, it is this self-poverty, this emptiness and dependence makes thee a prepared vessel for the largest communications of divine influence and blessing. Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven furnished with all fulness of heavenly graces, to bestow only upon the poor and needy and the depending creature. He was sent to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to heal the sick, to give sight to the blind, to bestow wisdom upon the ignorant, to preach the gospel to the poor, and to call sinners to repentance and salvation ; but the self-righteous and the wise, and the exalted haughty things of this world, he hath no blessings for them, for they are all full of themselves, they do not feel nor imagine that they have any need of his bounty. The doctrines and benefits of his gospel are *hid from the wise*, and the mighty, and the sons of pride ; but they are *revealed to babes* and conferred on the poor. The humble soul dwells nearest to the rich treasures of grace, and the empty vessel is best prepared to receive the largest communications. What is it then, O my heart, that should tempt thee to maintain high thoughts of thyself, of thy own understanding, of thy own sufficiency, when it is the ready way to exclude thee from all the aids of divine grace ? *He hath filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he hath sent empty away ; Luke i. 53. God resisteth the proud, but giveth more grace unto the humble ; Jam. iv. 6.*

II. When we have low thoughts of ourselves, our hearts and lips will be full of acknowledgments for the daily favours of grace and providence. We shall take notice of every favourable dispensation that attends us, every support and relief of divine mercy which is communicated to us, and shall ascribe all to the free and rich grace of God. Learn this language, O my soul, I was sinking and drowning, and God set my feet upon a rock, and established all my goings : I was wandering in foolish and pernicious ways, running down to destruction and death, but the blessed God sent his Son from heaven to seek and save me, and by the voice of his gospel and the secret whispers of his spirit he

has directed my feet into the paths of holiness and peace and life eternal : I was sick and God healed me : I was in trouble and the Lord relieved me : I was in darkness and he shed light upon my path : I was in straits and his hand extricated me out of them, I was on the very borders of death and on the verge of hell, helpless and hopeless in myself, but, glory be to his holy name, he has given me help, and hope, and salvation.

Such is the language of the blessed Paul ; 1 Cor. xv. 10, 11. I am nothing in myself, and if I appear to be any thing, it is by the grace of God, I am what I am : Holy David in his devotions is full of the same humble acknowledgments : *I was poor and needy, but thou hast been my helper and my strength, I was surrounded with enemies, but thou hast been my salvation* : This is the sense of many of his divine songs. And *who am I or what my house that thou hast brought me hitherto ?* 1 Sam. vii. 18.

On the other hand the man who is full of self is ready to ascribe all the honour of his success and his peaceful circumstances to his own reason, to his own wisdom, to the diligence and strength of his own right hand, or at least to his own merit of mere favours from heaven. He gives himself the praise of the blessings that surround him : And if his table is spread plentifully from the earth or from the waters, he ascribes that plenty to his own skill, *he sacrifices to his own net, and burns incense to his own drag*, as the prophet expresses it in a noble metaphor ; Hab. 16. And thus the God of heaven is robbed of his honours, and the praise is given to a creature which is due to the Creator only : thus the proud man multiplies his iniquities and commits sacrilege and idolatry at once.

III. Another advantage of these humbling thoughts of ourselves is this, that we shall bear with more patience the afflictions of God upon us, and wait longer for the moment of deliverance without murmuring. These self-abasing sentiments under every sorrows will incline us to confess, " Lord, I have deserved them all," and will teach us to speak the language of the prophet Micah, chap. vii. ver. 9. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, till he arise and plead my case.* When, O my soul, wilt thou learn this holy behaviour ? When wilt thou learn this humble language ? If the Lord bestow no temporal blessings upon me, I lie at his foot ; he is not my debtor, I deserve no blessings from his hands : If he take away part of my substance and my wealth, I have deserved to be deprived of it all, for my unprofitableness, for my earthly mind, for my vanity and the pride of my heart. If I have *food and raiment, will therewith be content* ; it is much more than I have deserved. I am sick and in pain, I would remember that I am guilty, and he punishes less than my iniquities deserve. If I am stripped naked of my earthly comforts, I resign them to his disposal, I



can claim *note* of them as my merit, or as my property; *the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord*: He has done no more than he has a right to do with a worthless worm, and I lie in the dust before him waiting his good pleasure. Such a temper of mind carries peace and serenity in it, not without some glimpses of pious hope and humble expectation. I will *lay my mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope* in the grace of God, which loves to triumph over the unworthiness of creatures.

But let us now turn the tables, and view the different temper and conduct of the man who has high thoughts of himself. When he is under the afflicting stroke of heaven he imagines he has deserved some better treatment at the hand of God, and though he dares not say this to his Maker's face, yet the inward vexation and rage, the disquietude and resentment of his heart under afflictions, is such as would vent itself in loud murmurs and reproaches against heaven if it durst: And because he dares not suffer his passion and fury to rise thus against his Creator, he gives it a vent and lets loose his impatience against every creature that comes in his way: Hence arises the impious fretfulness, and the tormenting vexation of spirit, that haughty persons feel under pressing calamities; they throw their fury all around them: Their impatience under the hand of God is expressed by peevishness toward men: They make every one that is near them a witness of that inward indignation and resentment, which they dare not directly aim at him that dwells on high. It is this rising vanity, this fermenting and swelling idea of self that gives us ten-fold agony and smart when we are cast down and pressed under the hand of God. When we sustain evils which we cannot remedy, we multiply and increase their load, and sharpen every sting of calamity by the pride and impatience of our own spirits. God is affronted by us, men grow weary of helping us, we enhance the pain and anguish of every affliction, and we provoke the hand of a holy and jealous God to keep us longer under the weight of sorrow, sickness or distress, till it has done his work and pressed down the haughtiness of our spirit.

IV. By diminishing thoughts of ourselves we shall attain a nearer and greater conformity to the blessed Jesus the Son of God. What is there in all the character of our dear Redeemer greater and more surprising than his humble temper and his humble estate? The merit and honour of his humility and lowliness are aggrandized and brightened by every glorious and divine idea that enters into his character. *He is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person, yet he humbled himself to the form of a man, and to the likeness of sinful flesh*: He is the Son of God, and one with the Father, yet he *became the Son of man* and was born of a poor virgin of the dea-

ricable country of Galilee; and when he was a man here upon earth, how did his meek and gentle and condescending behaviour manifest his self-abasing virtues? He emptied himself of the glories which he once possessed; Phil. ii. 6, 7. *He made himself of no reputation, as the English translators have rendered it, and being found in fashion as a man, he behaved like a fellow-creature, a friend and a brother, though he was really superior to angels and one with God, though his name was God with us, and his character was God manifest in the flesh.* See what sort of inference the apostle makes from such a view of our blessed Lord? verses 3, 4, 5. *Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, that is, with a self-flattering and exalted survey of them, but let every man also look on the things of others, paying all due regard to their real worth and dignity. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.* Indeed there is no possibility of lessening ourselves comparably to the self-abasement of the Son of God; and yet the nearer we are like him the more shall we partake of the Father's love, and we shall be in the way of divine advancement, in a humble imitation of the advancement of Christ himself: *Because he humbled himself to death, therefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name above every name;* Phil. ii. 9.

V. By a humble opinion of ourselves, and by a lowly conduct and behaviour in life we shall bring honour to the gospel and become the truest ornaments to the divine religion which we profess. Never was any religion founded in so much humility as that of the gospel: The first principle of it requires that we be sensible of our own guilt and sinfulness, our danger and misery, and our utter insufficiency to relieve ourselves: And in the progress it shews us to derive all the good we have and hope for from the free mercy of God through a Mediator. The first line of that excellent sermon which Jesus, the author of the gospel, preached to his people upon the mountain, is this, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;* Mat. v. 3. Blessed are those who have the lowest and meanest thoughts of themselves, for the heavenly treasures of divine grace are particularly offered to them, and they are most ready to receive them. It is the very design of the gospel to stain the glory of all flesh, and to hide pride from man, to teach man that he is nothing, and that he has nothing in and of himself, *that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord;* 1 Cor. i. 19, 31. Now the man that keeps these self-abasing virtues, and maintains a humbling sense of his own nothingness in himself, and his universal dependence upon the grace of Christ, does acceptable honour to the gospel which he professes, and makes it appear in its own proper and divine light.

SECT. III.—*The Advantages of Humility in Regard of Men.*

As humility towards God is a necessary qualification of every christian, so humble thoughts of ourselves in regard of our fellow-creatures belong to the profession and character of this gospel: For what have I to boast of above my brother, when we are all under the sentence of common condemnation before God, all guilty and miserable in his sight, and are all entirely indebted to his free and rich mercy for every degree of excellency or advantage that we possess? *What hast thou, O my soul, that thou hast not received? Why dost thou then glory and look big upon thy fellows as though thou hast not received it? Who is it that has made thee differ from another?* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

O! what a dishonour does it bring upon the gospel of Christ, when one, who takes upon him the christian name, exalts himself into conceit and vanity, and swells in his own opinion of himself, when he sets himself on high above his brethren, and looks down upon them with haughtiness and scorn? Can such a wretch be a christian, while he is a reproach to the christian name, and has not the first principle of christianity, has nothing of the temper or spirit of the gospel in him? But some of these thoughts lead me to the second rank of advantages which may be derived from low and humble thoughts of ourselves, and these are such as regard our neighbours or fellow-creatures. And the first of them is this,

I. If we have a mean opinion of self, we shall pay due esteem and honour to every thing that is valuable in other men, and not scorn and despise every body around us, as though they were not worthy to be named the same day with ourselves: Nor shall we be so imperious and haughty in our behaviour even where God has given some degrees of superiority. Perhaps we plume ourselves with the honours of our ancestors and look down with disdain upon those whose family is of a lower rank than ours. But a grain of wisdom will put us in mind that the honours of birth are no certain evidences of virtue or merit: There may be some high-born animals with sorry and scoundrel souls, and some who drew their first breath in a cottage, strangers to title and quality, whose eminences are bright and shining. Add a grain of humility, and it will teach us that all families were one in Adam, the first man, when our blood ran in his veins: We are all made of one common earth; we are but the same coarse materials, the same clay moulded up into the form of man; let this dwell upon the heart, and we shall not carry it so disdainfully to our kindred-clods, nor look down with such scorn upon any of our earthly brethren, our fellow-worms, because of those accidental advantages of which we imagine ourselves possessed.

Or perhaps we fall into company that are unpolished and unbred, they carry rustic airs about them, while we have got a

few forms of behaviour, and we publish our scorn of them to shew our breeding. Foolish insolence and preposterous vanity, which the well-bred and polite are never guilty of! But tell me, man, how long hast thou learned thy genteel and elegant behaviour, these arts and forms of boasted debency? Canst thou not remember the time when thy gait, and thy mein, thy speech and all thy airs were almost as awkward and uncouth as the very creature thou deridest? And wouldst thou have been willing to have had thy former awkwardnesses made the ridicule of the company? Couldst thou so well bear to have been the jest of the man above thee, that thou spendest thy jests so freely upon one in low life, who is the very figure of what thou hast been? Hast thou not humility, nor prudence, nor goodness enough to remember this?

Or perhaps thou art dressed finer and art a favourite among the great: But is this sufficient reason to scorn the poor? Remember also that he is thy brother by nature: Naked and cast out of the favour of God together with thee: All sons and daughters of Adam the great sinner, all *by nature the children of wrath*, strangers to the blessed God, outcasts of paradise, and averse to all that is holy: And if we behold ourselves in this state, what is there in one little lump of this wretched and polluted mass of human nature, that it should exalt itself upon any little pretences over the rest of the mass, wherein it lay in common pollution and wretchedness? Or if we hope that we are called and sanctified and become the children of God, who was it made the difference? Was it not the free mercy of God that called us and wrought the divine change in us? What is there for us to boast of? Let us allow those who we think are yet uncalled and unchanged by grace, all the natural excellencies and moral qualifications that belong to them, and not sully and darken the evidences of our own christianity by a haughty and scornful carriage toward our neighbours.

Let us remember yet further, that many others are called and renewed and sanctified as well as we, and perhaps have brighter evidences of their graces, and bear up the character of the children of God with more honour than we do: And we should think so too, if our pride and conceit would but suffer us to see their shining virtues, their exalted piety. If we could but maintain such thoughts as these, we should not assume such haughty airs, such insolence of language over our fellow-worms, that have crept out of the same bed of meanness and defilement, and some of them perhaps have a larger share of purifying grace than ourselves. Or had I but a due degree of self-abasement, how swift and ready should I be to spy out the virtues which my neighbour possesses, and to pay due honour to all his valuable qualifications; even as the proud, the envious, and the malicious

spirits are ready to spy out the blemishes of their fellows and to expose them.

It is the voice of the humble man concerning his poor neighbour, "Though he may not have so much of this world as God has given to me, yet, perhaps, he has a larger and fairer interest in the inheritance on high : He may not have such a large acquaintance with human sciences because he has not had the advantages which I have enjoyed, but perhaps he is richer in grace, and has laid up a better treasure against a day to come. It may be he is not so much acquainted with courts and palaces, he has little to do with chariots and horses and rich equipage, but perhaps he is more acquainted with God, oftner at the gates of heaven, and nearer a-kin to *the spirits made perfect*, to the saints and angels on high." Thus he prefers his neighbour in the honours of the invisible world, while in all things visible he is much superior to him : Thus he fulfils the advice of St. Paul to the Philippians, chapter ii. verse 3. and *in lowliness of mind esteems others better than himself.*

Such a happy spirit as this reigning within us, will utterly forbid us to fall in with a word of scandal when it is going current round the room : A wretched but a common crime ! Humble souls ever carry about them such a constant sense of their own defects and follies that they dare not help onward the flying reproach. They find so many errors in their own lives that they cannot dwell with delight on the blemishes of their fellow-mortals. And inward consciousness and shame blushes in their bosoms, and imposes silence upon their lips : Or perhaps compassion awakens them to make some apology for the absent sufferer, or to strike the scandal dead with a word of just reproof. If we have a low opinion of ourselves, our eyes will never acquire the disdainful cast, nor learn the scornful airs of those who are full of self. Our lips will never assume the haughty tone and the insolent language of the proud in heart. "Speak not ;" say they to their inferior friends, "we do not want your prattle, while I am here : Answer not when I give my opinion : Do what I require, be silent and dumb ; Do you not know who it is speaks to you ?" At another time they will forbid you their company : go out of my sight, avoid my presence, it is not fit I should be seen in your company, you have neither dress nor manners fit to appear. So the haughty hypocrites in the days of Isaiah the prophet, *Stand by thyself for I am holier and better than thou ; Isa. lxxv. 5.* So the proud mortals of every age publish and pronounce their scorn of those, whom providence has placed but a little below them.

Such sort of language, indeed, should scarce ever be used by masters to their own menial servants, but where the servant is very assuming, or intolerably impertinent : But for persons to treat lower friends or acquaintance at this rate, gives too evident

a signal of a proud spirit. Where the eyes and the lips have learned these disdainful and imperious airs, it is exceeding hard to unlearn them. A peacock may almost as soon be untaught to spread his gay feathers, or the seas and the winds untaught to swell and roar, as a man full of self to put off his insolence, to stand upon a level with his fellows, and to treat those about him with affability and candour, who are in any respect inferior to him.

Watch, O my soul, against the first secret motions of vanity : when thy inward thoughts begin to swell and thy heart to exalt itself, watch against every haughty air, against the high look and the scornful tone ; watch and subdue the earliest workings of pride ; for if they gain but a little indulgence and strength, all the powers of thy reason will not be able to subdue them, and will create thee long and heavy toil to gain the victory after many sore vexations of spirit, nor wilt thou ever become a humble creature without the abundant aids of divine grace.

II. If we have low thoughts of ourselves we shall be thankful for every design of kindness which our neighbours express towards us, nor shall we scorn the good offices of the meanest, though perhaps we can receive little or no advantage by them. God the glorious and the sublime, *who inhabits eternity* and dwells above the praises of his highest angels, looks down upon the heart of every humble worshipper here on earth, and receives our little worthless services with a smile of approbation : *If there be a willing mind the gift is accepted according to what the giver is able to offer ;* 2 Cor. viii. 12. nor are the two mites of a widow neglected or disdained in the treasury of our God ; Luke xxi. 2. Remember, O my heart, the divine example, and be an imitator of the blessed God in this respect, who made thee to wear his own image. But mark how the haughty man who is full of self receives the offers of kindness from his inferior. He scarce vouchsafes to cast an eye upon them, unless it be in scorn : Thus he upbraids his neighbour with his poverty : He treats his humble civilities with contempt, and despises all his good-will : Merit and modesty blush and sink down before him, and die under his frowns. O vile idea of a haughty scorner, who puts modesty to the blush and lets merit die.

III. The humble man who has low thoughts of himself is beloved of men as well as of God, and gains the favour of all around him. He remembers that it is *of one blood God has made all nations*, and he is moulded of the same dust with his fellows, and he thinks rather of those essentials of human nature wherein he lies upon a level with the meanest son of Adam, than of those accidental differences of wit or wealth, which have raised him above some of his fellows. He knows that others have a right to some degrees of love and esteem as well as himself, they have some pretence to understanding and merit as well as he.

If the poor and the ignorant ask him a question, though it be an impertinent one, he does not turn short upon them with a smart and surly speech, nor turn away with a disdainful silence: He makes the child and the servant love him by the soft and friendly answers he gives even to their needless queries. His behaviour to his inferiors has something in it so engaging, that there is not the meanest figure of mankind goes from his presence without a pleasing image of his goodness left upon their minds. When he comes into company with his equals, he does not seize the dictator's chair, nor affect to shew himself in any superior forms. He comes to learn rather than to instruct, and not only gives others leave to speak in their turn, but he hears their opinion with patience and pleasure, and pays due deference to all the appearances of reason in their discourse, though he may sometimes happen to prefer his own sentiment. He is not fond of ingrossing the talk to himself, nor of filling up the hour of conversation with hearing his own discourse, or speaking his own praises: He limits the motions of his tongue, he pays to every one the rights of society, and he enjoys the esteem and love of all. Humility carries in it all the sincere arts of complaisance, and is the shortest way to form and accomplish the man of breeding.

But a swelling haughty creature is a hateful thing; Insolence of heart and tongue are forbidding qualities. *A proud look is an abomination to the Lord*, and an abhorred thing amongst men; Prov. xvii. 6. Such persons may be feared but they are never loved: They may have many cringes and compliments paid to them by their neighbours, but they have no room in their esteem, no place in their heart; Prov. xxiv. 9. *A scorner is an abomination to men*: He that takes this road to grandeur widely mistakes his way, for he often ruins his interest instead of advancing it. And if he should happen to arrive at greatness he leaves behind him the more virtuous and tasteful pleasures of friendship and love: If he could but hear with what contempt and hatred he is treated behind his back, he would endure much anguish of soul with inward shame and lasting vexation: And it is a pity but he should hear it sometimes, to punish at least, if not to cure his insolence.

Has divine providence raised me to any accidental degrees of elevation above my neighbours, let my heart seek their love rather than their fear: Let me find proper seasons to place myself as it were upon a level with them with all due and condescending decency, and thus let me seek and obtain the esteem and hearty benevolence of mankind, and particularly of those whom providence has placed beneath me. There is an art of bearing up one's highest character and dignity amongst men without the haughty airs, the exalted eye-brow and the insolent tone of voice.

IV. Low and humble thoughts of ourselves will teach us to bear the admonition of our friends with a gentler temper, and receive the blessing with a return of thankfulness: We shall sustain the reproaches of our enemies also with a greater calm of soul, and stand the rudest shock of calumny with a more steady patience.

What is it but the pride of our hearts, and the great and sacred image which we frame of ourselves, that makes us so hasty to resent the softest admonition of a friend? Our hearts and lips stand always ready pressed to vindicate our whole conduct, and sometimes we let loose our fire and thunder on a sudden upon those who give us the most friendly rebuke. Self is our shining idol, and no man must dare to suppose there is any blemish or spot upon it. Therefore we repay the kindest advice with railing, and revile men for the greatest benefit they can bestow upon us. We form so innocent and so venerable an idea of ourselves, we fancy our beloved selves to be so wise, so unblameable and perfect, that we cannot endure to hear or suspect there are any failings belonging to us, and we resent it as an high offence when they are pointed out to us by the gentlest hand. We are jealous of every thing that opposes our opinion, that censures our conduct, or in the most friendly language discovers our mistakes: Passion and resentment are ever upon the watch and stand ready to take the alarm; the eyes and the tongue are swift to discover the inward ferment, to publish and betray the pride of the heart. O that each of us would but honestly enquire, "Is this my picture? Are these the features of my soul? Do I ever wear this aspect, or assume these airs?" But alas, which of us, O my friends, is entirely innocent and blameless here? How few follies had any of us carried into aged life, if we had not had too much pride and self-flattery to invite and encourage the admonitions of our acquaintance, who saw these budding fooleries in younger years? But we were too rich, or too wise, or too vain to bear a reprover; and thus our vices are grown up with us to shame our grey hairs, and are now too much mingled with our natures ever to be rooted out.

While we maintain this temper of mind, it is no wonder we cannot bear the ruder reproaches of the world, nor confine ourselves in that dangerous moment within any bounds of sobriety or patience. We kindle on a sudden into undue rage, we swell and burn with inward indignation and indulge our lips in a wild revenge: Or sometimes perhaps the pride of our souls mingled with a particular constitution of body sinks under the assaults of scandal with a shameful cowardice, and almost dies with abjectness of spirit; for courage is not always an attendant upon pride; The vain man is not always an hero.

O unhappy creature, that is thus galled inwardly with every



stroke of the tongues of men! That vexes and frets its own peace away for want of due honours from the world! All the comforts and blessings of life are insipid or disrelishing, all the grandeur of circumstances, the sun-shine of heaven, and the gaiety of the seasons, have no power to relieve or support us. The soul of Haman amidst all his honours of state and his endless treasures is still pining away with inward vexation, and his life languishes from day to day, because Mordecai does not rise up to him and pay his compliments.

Have a care, O my soul, of copying after this wretched character: Have a care of swelling to these painful dimensions of pride, lest thou render all the comforts of life tasteless for want of some little punctilio of honour which the world will not pay thee. Look upon thyself as a weak mortal, as a creature capable of mistake and folly; this thought will keep the avenues of thy soul ever free and open for the counsels and warnings of thy friends, and make a kind and faithful admonition as welcome as a word of vain applause. And even when enemies reproach thee, thou wilt be suspicious of thyself whether thou hast not deserved the reproach: Thou wilt make a fresh scrutiny into thy own heart, and enquire there in secret, what real truth may be mingled with the unjust revilings of men: And thus thou wilt be powerfully awakened to subdue every vice, to abandon every folly that tarnishes thy character, and make use of the rough language of a malicious world to burnish thy virtues and to keep them ever shining.

V. The lower esteem we have of ourselves, the more easily shall we be pleased with persons and things round about us: We shall be more unmoved at the little accidents of life which may happen to cross our humour, and we shall rather pity than terrify those who chance to displease us where the will was not in it. What is it that fires our resentment at every little mistake or supposed mistake of those that attend on us? What is it rouses our angry passions at every real or fancied miscarriage of those with whom we converse? What is the spring of all this tumult of soul, this inward disturbance, but the vain and exalted idea which we have conceived of ourselves? As though we must be exempted from the common laws and incidents of our frail and mortal state? Let us colour over our guilt with the kindest salvos yet it is a certain truth, pride and passion are near a-kin, and they are most times joined together in the temper of men and in the conduct of life: Passion and pride are thus united in the descriptions of sin and in the rules of duty both in the books of morality and in the language of scripture. Prov. xxi. 24. *Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.* Prov. xii. 10. *Only by pride cometh contention.* Indulge the one and you support the other: Subdue the one and the other is

in a great measure prevented or suppressed. Indeed a man will much sooner confess his passion than his pride : You will hear him sometimes acknowledging to his friend, " It is the frailty of my nature, this cursed passion ! I am of a warm and hasty temper : May God and man forgive me !" But you scarce ever hear him say, " This pride is my folly, this pride is my secret iniquity." Yet I was once acquainted with a christian of a hasty and passionate temper, who has many years since left his frailties in the grave, and he would confess with freedom and with a becoming sense of his sin, that there was no passion without some degrees of pride.

VI. If we maintain a mean opinion of ourselves we shall be much more ready to practise benevolence in a disinterested manner, and to deny ourselves for the conveniency of those about us : We shall not be ever projecting to exalt and gratify self, nor shall we think it so hard or painful a thing to be put out of our own way and our course a little, and abate of our own conveniency in some instances in order to give some greater conveniency to our friends. Self-denial is one of the first lessons in the school of Christ. Mat. xvi. 34. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself*: We must learn to mortify our own humour if we would be approved of Christ or beloved of men.

The proud and haughty man is generally so selfish that he can never *love his neighbour* as he ought to love him, because his opinion of self rises so high as to deserve and engross all his kind affections. Let him make what pretences he will to friendship and goodness ; let him labour in works of beneficence, and feed the hungry and clothe the naked, yet in all his schemes, contrivances and labours he has still some secret design for his beloved self : As his imagination swells with this dear idea, so his wishes and projects are ever full of it, even when he would fain appear to practise a disinterested zeal for the good of others. If self and what belongs to self is well, all is well : If self and family be rich and happy, all is right ; the man is tolerably easy : But if any thing cross his purposes and the wishes and humours of his heart, nothing is right, nothing is well : His complaints shall be heard aloud and the man can find no rest.

Oh ! if we could but keep this dear self from reigning, we should not be so narrow-spirited and begin and end our projects in the little circle of self : We should not fret and storm at every thing that interrupts our pleasures or that interferes with our present designs : We should not rise in fury nor be lavish of our loud reproaches against every thing that disturbs our ease or our indolence. We shall not then think ourselves worthy of such honour and reverence, as though every thing about us must be made to submit to our purposes, and yield to our humours. We

shall be content to permit others to have some inclinations, some desires, some conveniences, as well as ourselves : and not imagine that the world was made only for our pleasure, nor even the inferior parts of it merely to obey us. It is only the good and the humble man who tastes satisfaction in the welfare of his inferiors, who relishes the pleasures of his fellow-creatures, and he feels a real and sincere delight to see every one around him made chearful and easy, though sometimes it may be at the expence of his own ease and convenience. These are joys which pride has never tasted. The man of haughty thoughts and airs has very little acquaintance with the golden rule of equity that our Saviour has given us, *to deal with others as we desire them to deal with us*. He scarce ever concerns himself to reflect how tenderly he would wish to be treated, if he were in the place of those whom he treats so rudely. His pride will not suffer him so much as to suppose himself there. He does not ask himself, "How would this disdain, this overbearing insolence, this disturbance and disappointment sit upon my heart if my neighbour treated me in this manner?" Surely no mortal would resent it more painfully than himself; and yet he is utterly regardless what pain he gives to his fellow-creatures by this his scornful behaviour. He may call himself a christian, but I know not who will believe him, while he makes it appear to all men that he has nothing to do with that divine rule of love which our blessed Saviour borrowed from Moses and gave it to all his followers : *Love thy neighbour as thyself*.

When I feel myself impatient of the least disappointment, when I take no thought to make my neighbour easy, but grow furiously zealous to maintain my own humour at the expence of the ease or the conveniency of all about me, how unlike am I to the blessed Jesus, who had a nobler self than any mere creature; and yet he denied it, even in the tenderest instances of reputation and of life itself for the good of his people? Rom. xv. 3. Whence St. Paul derives this holy inference, verse 1, 2. *We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. But let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification: For even Christ pleased not himself.* And the blessed apostle has added his own character to confirm and enforce this practice of virtue and goodness; 1 Cor. ix. 19—23. *I have made myself a servant to all that I might gain the more: To the weak I became as weak that I might win their souls: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some; and this I do, that I may be partaker of the blessings of the gospel together with you.*" O happy souls, in whom this humble and holy temper prevails! Happy souls indeed, who are so dear to God, so much a-kin to Christ and so zealous of the peace and happiness of men!

IV.—*The Advantages of Humility with Regard to Ourselves.*

Thus I have finished the second rank of advantages derived from a low esteem of ourselves, viz. Those which relate to our fellow-creatures. I come now to consider in the last place, the advantages of this virtue with regard to ourselves, our own improvement and happiness.

We shall not be so positive and rooted in all our own opinions nor so incapable of discerning or rectifying our mistakes.

It is of considerable importance to a fallible creature to be able to search out and correct his errors: But the man who is full of himself is never mistaken: He has no opinion to be dropped or retractation to make: Rash as he is, yet he has no need to be corrected in his own esteem, and therefore he lives in full possession of many falsehoods and in the daily exercise of many follies. Pride is one vice, but it supports and defends the rest. What is it but the over-weening conceit of our being wiser and better than others that renders us constantly so tenacious of all our opinions, and deaf to all further enquiries and corrections? What is it that makes us set up for dictators to the world with so much frontless assurance, and fix our own sentiments as a test and standard of truth? All the learned sciences, the affairs of common life, trade and politics, mechanic arts, and morals, are the daily subjects of these infallible decisions, both at the table, and the coffee-house, and in private conversation, and yet more eminently at the tavern: There indeed the light brightens every idea into truth, it raises the courage and the confidence, and establishes every man triumphant in his own opinion. The vain creature knows all things. But one would think that the sacred and sublime topics of religion should be treated with a more doubtful and ingenuous modesty; especially when the holy writers themselves are not very express and positive in their determinations. One would think there should be more abatements to our confidence, and that we might sometimes be attended with a holy fear and suspicion of our understandings in the contents of the most abstruse and divine argument, where the wisest and good men have often been divided. Alas, for our pride and folly! For our wretched ignorance and our shamefaced conceit! Let Mr. Baxter, who was a man of great sagacity and a wise observer of human nature, set it before us in this admirable tetrastich, wherein the verses are superior to many of their kind.

“ We crowd about a little spark,  
Learnedly striving in the dark,  
Never more bold than when most blind,  
And we run fastest when the truth's behind.”

But we are generally too wise to tread one step back again, though it be to lay hold on the truth which we have out-run in our haste to assurance. We have sometimes found it in ourselves and observed it in others that the firmness of a pretended orthodoxy has not been always derived from light and evidence: Want of humility in the heart is too often the reason why we have no want of confidence in our opinions, whether they be true or false. The boldest and most peremptory assertions are no criterions of truth: Nor are they always the result of a sincere and unbiassed examination, but the fruit of our own conceit and of the high esteem of our own understandings: We are sure we have been in the right even from our early years, or at least from the day of manhood, and we desire to be no wiser, nor can any man make us so.

It is granted there may be some subjects that we have searched to the bottom, we have seen them through and through; and by much labour and argument we are able to pronounce upon them with just assurance. This may be allowed sometimes even to a wise and a modest speaker: But what is it, my friends, that emboldens the bulk of mankind, to talk with such a decisive air upon all manner of themes as they do, when they have read or studied almost nothing of the matter? Hast thou found out, O man, every truth in the heights and the depths, and known every secret thing so well as to be incapable of mistaking? What inspires thee to dictate as though thou only wert the man of knowledge, and *wisdom must die with thee*? What is it but vanity and fulness of self that gives any man such assuming airs, and such an overbearing manner in conversation, that others must not be suffered to speak, while he must be heard with silence and attention? Nor is silence and attention enough without a submissive faith. If you dare to doubt of what the tongue of pride pronounces, you dare to be impudent in his opinion, and he is ready to tell you so to your face. What is it else but this inward arrogance that casts a scornful eye on any one in the company who dares to offer at an argument against his positions? And a contemptuous scoff is thought sufficient to refute the noblest reasoning. What is it but pride and a domineering spirit that tempts any man to oblige others to bind their understandings and their consciences for ever down to every punctilio of his own opinions, and reverence every sentence as though the pen of divine truth had written them? Happy had it been for the christian world if this assuming and imposing spirit had never been found, but only and always on the heretical side! Then we should have had a more evident and distinguished token *where to seek for truth*, that is, where this pride and tyranny of souls had no place. But alas, this is a vain and fruitless

! Every nation of christendom has felt the infection and mischief. Even the old idol at Rome with all his infidelity and thunder could scarcely demand more sovereignty over belief than the positive men of our age even in the land liberty.

But to proceed, What is it but our pride that breaks in the discourse of many a wiser person than ourselves? are impatient to set forth our own talents of talking, and at the same time to publish our arrogance and shame, and to expose our nonsense too. Truth and merit are often modest, but ignorance and folly sound their trumpet, and the brass makes itself heard while gold and jewels shine in silence. In, What is it but this fulness of self that makes persons unable to bear the least contradiction, even in the common course of life? They grow pale with anger or kindle into ire when any of their sentiments are opposed; they feel the word ferment working and boiling up when their neighbours seem to be of another mind: And it is seldom that they possess power or inclination to conceal their resentment: It generally boils over at their lips and betrays the secret fire. In the passionate speech, some wrathful word or other breaks from their tongue and gives notice of their impatience and high displeasure. What is all this but the fruit of pride and selfishness?

If men had a lower esteem of themselves, they would always maintain such a full assurance that truth and justice are ever on their side. By this assuming behaviour they forbid all instruction, they stop all the avenues of reason and knowledge, by which further light might enter into their souls to rectify any mistaken sentiment. There is no man lies so far out of the road of illumination and true wisdom, as he who is already very sure his opinions are all sun-beams; v. xxvi. 12. *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him.* It is with secret assurance and inward esteem that I have often read those four words which that excellent man doctor John Owen wrote under his own effigies.

“*Umbra refert fragiles dederint quas cura dolorque  
Reliquias, studii assiduusque labor.  
Mentem humilem sacri servantem limina veri  
Votis supplicibus qui dedit, ille videt.*”

Which may be rendered thus in English.

“*This shadow shews the frail remains  
Of care and grief and studious pains.  
The mind in humble posture waits  
A suppliant at truth's sacred gates,  
To find some gleams of light appear,  
And he that gave it, sees it there.*”

What an elegance of humility lies couched in the last line as it were retired from the eye of man, and seen to God only. But let not any of us imagine that a subscription to this great man's doctrines of grace, or a zealous vindication of his more evangelical opinions is a sufficient proof of a humble spirit. We may depress and even nullify the pride and power of fallen man with a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency. So Diogenes the cynic or dogged philosopher is said to have set his dirty feet upon some fine furniture of Plato's bed, and then he boasted himself that he had sunk down and humbled the pride of Plato : Yes, replied the more civil philosopher, and that with a greater load of pride. We may talk of our vileness and haughtiness with haughty and vain-glorious language, and defend the most self-abasing doctrines of the gospel with an arrogant and imperious temper. Give me the man that lays nature low before God under a living sense and consciousness of its guilt and wretchedness and impotence ; who appears to feel every word that he speaks, and his style and his airs are all as humble as his divine doctrine represents him. It is possible for us to take the language of heaven upon our lips with a hell of fire and pride in our hearts, and support even truth or grace itself with intolerable and shameful haughtiness.

II. As a low esteem of self will help us against many errors of the mind, so it will guard us against the follies of the humourist, which are a vice of the will. The wise and lowly mind has very few humours or unreasonable inclinations, and therefore he feels but little vexation or disquietude. He can conform himself to present circumstances without pain, there is no difficulty to please him, he finds an easy chair in every room of his house. It is the humourist that creates perpetual vexation to himself as well as to all around him : You must watch as for your life, if you would never offend him ; you must be observant to all his motions and comport with every notice of his pleasure : You can hardly move or speak, but you speak or move amiss : And if you would correct your mistake by doing the reverse of what you did before, this may be quite wrong also, and it is scarce possible for you to be in the right. So difficult, so tiresome, so impracticable a thing it is to please these vain animals, these pettish or wayward creatures, these everlasting children, which are grown to the size of men and women. Methinks I hear them disdain the name of child and resent my description : But let them go on with their disdain and resentment, and swell with their own manly idea : Yet let them know that till they put off these childish and humourous behaviours, they are but infants in longer garments, with all that high opinion and that overgrown esteem they have of themselves. They must begin their education again and unlearn these follies, if ever they would find sincere honour among men of wisdom and goodness. What claim, what pre-

tence has that man to the esteem and love of men whose conduct is insupportable to all those who converse or dwell with him? and what is it but the vast and vain idea he has of himself, that tempts him to suppose his will must be the absolute rule of duty and submission to all who are near him or concerned with him?

Let such persons declaim against tyranny as often and as loud as they please, and argue upon the theme with much wit and reason; let them talk of liberty and slavery in philosophical and just discourses, and appear the most forward and zealous patrons of the freedom of mankind, yet if they were exalted to a throne they would be very tyrants, and the world around them must be all their slaves. Native vice and inbred iniquity would prevail even above their own good reasonings, and mould their practice into that absolute sovereignty and dominion which their own mind and conscience must ever condemn and which their own lips at special seasons have so plentifully and so justly exposed.

This is sufficiently evident by their conduct wheresoever they happen to have power: They are already little tyrants in their own little dominions, and if they have but one inferior belongs to them, he shall know and feel that they are lords and masters. If their will be crossed in some common affair of life, their loud complaints shall break out at the windows and the doors: The walls of the house shall echo with the sound of their indignation, till the neighbours are alarmed and enquire into the domestic mischief. Ye shall see these sons of humour rise from their table in a fury and renounce their food. The breast swells with inward passion, and leaves no room for the refreshments of nature: The servants fly scattering into corners for fear: The peace of their nearest relatives is broken, the order of the family thrown into wild confusion, and the tempest rises so high in their own bosom, that it will require some hours to calm and compose it. Pride and humour have raised a storm, and it is no small labour to reduce the passions to peace, to smooth all the billows that roar and roll within, and to make the countenance serene again.

And after all, what is the cause of this tumult? What gross and unpardonable crime gave occasion for such resentment and violence? Perhaps dinner was not set upon the table exactly at the appointed moment, the clock has struck five minutes and the table is not covered; or it may be the cook has not performed her part to such a precise degree of nicety and elegance as the master expected, or as the mistress had taught her. "This fish is so insipid and seasoned so low, it is impossible to eat it, and the other is nothing but salt and fire." It is strange that for both these reasons the passions must burn and the heart broil with fury: "What, saith he, shall I never be gratified at my own table?" Or it is frosty weather and the plates are not quite warm enough, and therefore the master kindles; "must I still be



served so? Have ye all conspired that I shall eat a cold dinner to day." And yet this man possesses to be a philosopher, a man of virtue; he disdains to be led by that mean and brutal thing called appetite, and talks much of subduing the passions. I would he could suppose he had any to be subdued. Or perhaps a word is inadvertently spoken in the dining room which used to be forbidden there; perhaps some grave and serious theme is started a jovial hour, or some innocent mirth at another time is thought to be unseasonably introduced. Let the cause be what it will, the ear receives the sudden offence, pride feels the affront, the soul ferments into wrath, the tongue gives reproof in thunder and sets the softer part of the household all in tears.

The next day a plate is let fall from a servant's hand, or a glass is broken and the wine spilled on the floor; and if one were to judge of the mischief done by the degree of the sudden clamour, one would be ready to imagine that the pillars of the house were shaken or thrown down, and the outcry gave notice of immediate ruin and death. My reader, it may be, will presently enquire where this house stands? and where is this wretched character to be found? I confess I was never yet so unhappy as to live in such a family, nor was I ever an eye-witness to these disorders. I must acknowledge also that I know not the persons nor the door of their house: Perhaps they are dead, and the rising generation may be grown calmer and wiser: Nor will I presume to say where any of their kindred dwell: But I fear we need not go far to seek them. It is well if there be any street in this great city which cannot shew us such an inhabitant: It is well if a month can pass away in any town in Great Britain without some such ferment of pride and passion, some domestic tumult which has this unhappy original\*. Mark the tempestuous scene, O my soul, mark it wheresoever it occurs with just and everlasting abhorrence; and stand aloof from the vice that raised it. Pursue and practise, O my heart, the lovely virtue of humility: Acquire and maintain a low idea of thyself; then thou wilt bear to have thy humour thwarted, and thy own will opposed without such clamorous and sounding consequences; thou wilt bear the cross incidents of life without the ruffle and disturbance of thy own inward powers, without the pain and terror of thy kindred and friends, and without giving half the street notice of thy folly.

But, "strange doctrine is this," saith the master of the

\* I almost reprove myself here and suspect my friends will reprove me for introducing such low scenes of life, and such trivial occurrences into a grave discourse. I have put the matter into the balances as well as I can, and weighed the case, and the result is this: General and distant declamations seldom strike the conscience with such conviction as particular representations do; and since this iniquity often betrays itself in these trivial instances, it is better perhaps to set them forth in their full and proper light, than that the guilty should never feel a reproof, who by the very nature of their distemper are unwilling to see or learn their own folly, unless it is set in a glaring view.

house, "must I not bear rule in my own family? Must I not be heard," says the mistress, "and obeyed by my own servants? Must not the authority of a father appear among his children, and the mother demand due honour?" Yes by all means: And the superior character should always appear and shine bright before the household in the wisdom of the command or reproof, and not by the loud and haughty words or the terrible airs of the reprover. The authority of a parent or a master has but a poor support where it is maintained with such unreasonable and noisy resentments.

Thus far concerning wrath and tyranny of the violent and sonorous kind: But pride and humour in some complexions have their private and sullen airs, as well as in others the sounding and the clamorous ones. The soul may be full of self and the man an intolerable humourist, and yet never shake the house, or affright the neighbourhood. Should you happen to cross his will in a trifling instance, he puts on a sudden gloom of countenance and assumes a forbidding brow without a single word from his lips; and sometimes it is hard to know what has offended him. Here the haughty and the sullen humours mingle their cursed influences; the soul is like a prisoner in majesty, the wretch stalks about in dark resentment and supercilious silence: a short and disdainful sentence full of spite and rancour and fire shall break out at certain intervals and give notice of the hell within. The proud wrath which is pent up in the bosom as in a close and boiling furnace, must have time to vent itself by slow degrees; in a day or two, or sometimes more, perhaps the ferment may subside, and the man return to his speech again, and to his hours of business, of food and rest. But after all the poisonous leaven is left still within, and waits only for some new occasion to heave and swell and raise a fresh disturbance. I name the man only in this cursed and hateful character, if the softer sex should find it working in themselves, I leave them to be their own reprovers.

Dread the thoughts, O my heart, of such a frantic and self-punishing iniquity. Suppress all haughty conceits of thy own worth and grandeur, lest meeting with some unhappy ferments of blood and complexion of humours they work up into such a world of mischief. Have a care of magnifying the image of thyself, and thou wilt not become a slave to such unmanly humours, such haughty and sullen airs, or such wild and unruly hurricanes of spirit. Let the fond child cry and roar because his play-thing is broken: Let the fool storm or grow sullen because his will is thwarted; let the dog bark, and the ox bellow, when the brutal cholera is roused within them; but remember thou art *a man, a reasonable creature, a christian*. It becomes thee well

to know thyself, and to govern thy conduct and thy temper. Do not over-rate thy own fancy or appetite, nor be too fond of thy own will. Be not violent in any of thy desires : All thy inclinations and thy aversions to the indifferent and common things of life should be but feeble and indifferent : Do not thou imagine thyself worthy of such a profound subjection of the wills and humours of all mankind to thy own will and humour. Remember, O my soul, thou art upon a level with all other men in the world, in many more instances than those few things wherein providence has raised thee above them.

III. The man who has low thoughts of himself, is not ever in pain to publish his own excellencies, nor seeking to proclaim his own qualifications and honours. Though his zeal for God and his desire of the good of men forbid him to wrap his *talents in a napkin*, yet you find him rather backward at first to appear, and not hasty and zealous to display himself. He hardly hears even the voice of providence when it calls him forth to *arise and shine*. He is so fearful of exaltation among the great, so sensible of his own defects, and pays so much honour to his fellows, that he thinks many a one fitter to perform public offices than himself, and to sustain public honours. *Less than the least* is his motto, and therefore he often hides himself as unworthy to be seen, and below the notice of the world.

But if the world should happen to be so just to merit and virtue as to raise the humble man from his obscure circumstances, and fix him in a point of light and honour, he shall be the last man that proclaims the justice which the world hath done him, and ascribes it all to the favour of God and man. He carries none of those meannesses about him by which little souls always distinguish themselves, and betray and expose their folly ; for they are vainly fond of their own new title and character, and speedy in demanding due notice of it from others. This humble man practised the true sublime in his lower station, and you see nothing exalted in him now, though his inward worth is rendered more conspicuous. His friends and his kindred find him the same man still. His garments of honour sit close about him and swell not his figure or appearance. His titles add nothing to his own idea of himself, nor do they tempt him to assume any particular airs. He does not imagine that his opinions are now grown more sacred or more worthy to be imposed, nor does he give a loose to any of his passions with more freedom or sovereignty. Before the hour of his advancement he was a diamond in a cabinet, and he shone at home and gave light and beauty to what was near him : And now he is the same jewel set in a public ornament of gold to glitter and give light to the world, but he owns that he borrows it all from heaven. Place him on high and displace him again, his constant business is to approve himself to God and to remember that he is but a man.

How different a character is this from what multitudes assume in our day? How many are impatient of obscurity and yet worthless of observation! They are daily and hourly pushing forward into every company and fond of shewing themselves to the world betimes, while their talents are very few and their furniture exceeding slender. The vain man is not content to enjoy the common pleasures of conversation, but he assumes the first place in it, and affects to outshine all the circle. He is not satisfied to have said a wise or a witty thing upon a proper occasion, or to tell it perhaps to a friend, but without any occasion at all, he must once a week, repeat his wise sayings to the world: He makes them often hear his jests over again till they are weary, and is ever acquainting new company with the pert repartees that he had made some days before. These forward and conceited creatures will make the world know all their talents of body and mind, and will carefully spread abroad those possessions of equipage or title, which help to support their pride: and as a noble author expresses, "they are so top-full of self that they spill it upon all the company;" and a nobler person than he confirms the reason, *Out of the abundance of their heart the mouth speaketh*; Mat. xii. 34. And surely if the vessel of the heart were not brim-full of self it would not be always running over at the lips. They regard not the advice of the wisest of men; Prob. xxvii. 9. *Let another praise thee and not thy own mouth; not thy lips, but the lips of a stranger.*

Besides these vain and shameful boasters there is another tribe of creatures who are as vain adorers of self; but they put on a disguise that they may more effectually and secretly secure the praises of their dear and beloved idol. You shall hear them now and then invent an occasion, without any incident leading to it, to drop some lessening word concerning themselves, that the company may give them the pleasure of contradicting them. It is not that these appearing self-abasers believe a word of what they say, nor is it said with a desire that you should believe them, when they express their mean esteem of their own talents or virtues; but they are exceeding fond to hear themselves talked of to advantage, and when they give you this occasion, they expect your civility should incline you to take it. These persons are always angling for praise, and some of them practise in so gross and inartificial a manner, that the design of their vanity too plainly discovers itself. The bait is lost because the hook appears; and when they have made a speech of their own unworthiness, the company sometimes is so just and so wise as to allow them to be in the right, and so complaisant as not to contradict them: But then how abject, how mortified and simple they look under the painful disappointment! They fished for honour and to their sore regret they caught the truth. O when shall this

haughty thing self unlearn all its vanity? When shall we be content to be unseen and unnoticed in the world? To be unknown, as Jesus the Son of God was, for thirty years together? *Jesus the brightness of his Father's glory* was content to be unknown in a world which he himself created: *He came into the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not*; John i. 10. When shall it be that the professed followers of the blessed Jesus shall have no vain boasters among them, no seekers of their own glory, nor any greedy devourers of their own praises? The appetite of praise in the sense of the wisest is like the relish of honey: *To eat too much of it takes away the refined pleasure, and to search out our own glory is not glory*; Prov. xxv. 27. But in vain hath Solomon been preaching to these men from his own age till this day, for the voice of wisdom is not heard where pride and self maintain their dominion. They are blind and deaf to all instructors.

Yet it must be confessed there are some hours and occasions, there are some companies and occurrences in life which make it proper and almost necessary to speak of one's self to advantage: Prudence and religion should direct us how to distinguish those seasons and those occasions. A wise man when he is constrained to speak of his own character, or to support his own honour, feels a sort of inward uneasiness lest he should be taken for a vain glorious fool, and is even ashamed to speak what is necessary for his own vindication, lest it appear like vanity and boasting. See this notably exemplified in the conduct of St. Paul the greatest of the apostles, who was furnished with more sublime talents and blessed with more illustrious success than all the messengers of the gospel of Christ. This very man who counts himself less than the least of all the saints, was once reviled by some upstarts in the Corinthian church, who pretended to rival his office, and thus they led his converts away from the truth: Thus he was compelled to produce his own credentials, to display his own divine commission, and to make his superior qualifications known to the people. See 2 Cor. xi. 5, 6. *I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles: though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge: We have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things*: And then he recounts his abundant labours, his abundant sufferings and his services to Christ and souls: But mark how often this man of heavenly wisdom represents this his conduct as acting like a fool, and he seems to blush at himself while he *boasts himself a little*, verse 16, &c. *Let no man think me a fool indeed: but if you will think me so then as a fool receive me and permit me to proceed foolishly in this confidence of boasting: Are my rivals Israelites? So am I: Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool, I am more: In labours, in sufferings, in deaths, more abundant than*

all of them can ever pretend to. Boasting of one's self in the judgment of a great apostle is so foolish a thing, that when wisdom itself requires him to practise it, he is quite ashamed of it, and almost expects that he shall be taken for a fool.

It is the sentiment of a very famous French author, Mr. Paschal, that "true philosophy teaches men to be humble, to conceal self, to banish the word I, for the most part, out of our conversation; but christianity and the gospel have nullified and destroyed it." Yet alas! what would some persons have to say in company, if you cut off from their lips the beloved theme of self? What could they find to talk of, if you debarred them of all the language of pride and envy; the language of pride wherein self is perpetually exalted, and the language of envy wherein their neighbours are lessened and reproached.

IV. The man who has a low opinion of himself is not so often affronted: he does not so easily take offence; and when he meets with real disgrace and contempt, he does not feel so sharp and painful a sensation of it, as galls the heart of the sons of pride. He can bear with more ease that others should think meanly of him, because he first thinks meanly of himself: He is much better fitted to go through the world where every one must meet with some trials and some reproaches: He learns to bear the scandal of the world with a happy indifference, because he is not so solicitous about their applause: He does not lie so much exposed to disquieting passions by any inroads made upon his honour and fame, because he has a low esteem of himself, and is content without fame and honour.

But the proud and vain creatures who are full of self and have a high esteem of their own persons and their qualifications, you can hardly speak either to them or of them, but you affront them, unless it be done in a flattering and submissive manner: and some are so humourous in their pride, that the very manner of this submission must be polite and fashionable, must be agreeable to their fancy, or else they are affronted and their choler is raised. The man of vanity imagines his character and his figure so exalted, as though he had a right to claim honour from all around him; and upon this account he has an unhappy right to assume to himself more affronts than others, and to vex himself with many resentments above and beyond his neighbours: The idea of his own quality entitles him to it.

"Well, let the vain man swell thus with his own idea, his grandeurs and his honours, let him maintain and exercise this painful and vexatious prerogative of continual resentment, while the God of heaven fills my heart with humility and peace. Then shall I stand aloof from these honourable follies, and be delivered

from this disquieting and uneasy consciousness of my own merit : I shall be free from this troublesome and tormenting right of taking offence at every thing : I shall no more resent the little supposed neglects of my inferiors, nor tease my own heart with those shadows of an affront which a vain and busy fancy can create hourly. Grant, O my God, thou Father of my spirit, that there may be no dark corner in my heart to keep such hellish tinder in it, lest I should be kindled and fired with every flying spark."

V. The man who is not wont to raise a great and high idea of himself can much more easily content himself in a middle station of life, without a fond and anxious pursuit of wealth and grandeur either for himself, or for his household. He can rest satisfied in a mean estate, if the providence of God so appoint it ; for what is there in me, saith he, to deserve or expect riches or greatness among men? But he that carries about him an exalted image of his own worth is pushed on by ambition to climb up to pinnacles, and to venture upon methods dangerous to his soul and conscience, in order to acquire wealth as the support of equipage and grandeur. It is hardly possible for a mortal to be full of self, but he must be worldly-minded : Whereas if we are christians and the sons of heaven in this vain and perishing world, God speaks to us for the most part as he did to Baruch ; Jer. xlv. 5. *Seekest thou great things for thyself, seek them not.*

" Stand thou, O my soul, among the ranks of humble christians ; look on thyself as *a pilgrim and stranger here* ; travel as a foreigner through this dangerous wilderness, *and having food and raiment* to supply thy wants and support thy journey, *be content.* It is not of much importance whether thou acquire large treasures of that sort of coin which will not pass in the city to which thou art travelling, nor can ever be remitted to thee by any forms of exchange. It is not of great moment whether thou receive titles and honours among foreigners in this strange country : These honours and titles, are the contempt of angels, and are of no account in thy native land, for thou art born from above. Live upon the views and hopes of thy fair inheritance on high, of honours prepared for thee at home in thy Father's house, among the sons and daughters of God, among the angels of heaven, *and spirits of just men made perfect.* Alas ! How contrary is the spirit of a christian to the spirit of this world ! The one is all for self and shew and grandeur ; the other abases self, lies at the foot of God, and is content without honour from men. This fulness of self is opposite to the very temper of the gospel, which requires us to *be poor in spirit* ; and yet how ready are we to *indulge* it ? How few are there among those who take up the name of Christian that watch against this vice and labour to subdue it ? Which of us can lay his hand upon his heart and say, " there is no pride dwells here ? "

SECT. V.—*The Pretences of the Poor, and the Faint-hearted answered.*

Upon this challenge there are two sorts of men that rise up and deny the charge, and with their hand on their heart solemnly declare, there is no pride within them. These are the poor and the faint-hearted. Let us see what their pretences are to avoid this general accusation. Can I be proud, saith the poor wretch, that labours for his daily bread, and can hardly procure it? If you would search for pride you must go to palaces, and knock at the gates of quality. It is only the great and the rich among mankind who look big and despise their neighbour. *They who prosper in the world, and increase in riches, who are surrounded with servants, and would be worshipped as little gods. Ps. lxxiii. 6, 7, 8, 12. It is their eyes, which stand out with fatness, and because they have more than heart could wish, pride compasseth them about as a chain: it is they who talk loftily, and set their mouth against the heavens, they speak wickedly concerning the oppression of the poor: But what pride can be found with us? Our clothing is mean and tattered, our food is coarse and scanty, we have nothing to boast of, for we have hardly enough to live upon, and therefore we must needs be humble.*

But search thy own heart, O man of poverty, nor let the poor among women neglect the same inward enquiry. Tell me art thou content with that low station in which God hath placed thee? Is thy will and humour so far mortified, as to be brought down to thy condition? Dost thou not fancy thyself to have deserved something better? Dost thou submit to the will of God as wise, in making thee poor and not rich, a servant and not a master? Art thou so well acquainted with thy sins and follies as to lie low at the foot of God, and receive all the little portion that he gives thee as from mere grace? Art thou thankful for every mercy, and patient under all the pressing afflictions that attend thy low estate? Doth thy heart never rise against God the governor of the world, not repine at his dispensations as though he had not treated thee according to thy merit? Art thou humble enough to receive alms, if God hath given thee nothing of thy own? And art thou willing to be beholden to others for thy daily bread, and to accept thy portion in that way wherein God is pleased to dispense it without murmuring? He that promises his children in this world food and raiment, has never promised to give it them without dependence: There is no promise which binds him to maintain thy body and thy pride too.

But let us search a little farther. Thou canst not swell among the great ones, nor talk much of thyself among thy equals, and affect a superiority and esteem above them? Dost thou not aggrandize thyself and swell in thy little station upon some supposed excellencies either of beauty of the face, or strength of



limbs, or sharpness of wit, or tallness of stature? Or perhaps thou art vain enough to betray thy pride even in the tokens of thy servitude, because thy livery is finer, or has more lace upon it than the coat of thy neighbour? Ask thyself again, dost thou never set up for a chief talker in company, and doth thy heart never presume that thou art wiser than those above thee, without any just reason for it? Canst thou bear to be commanded by others, and contradicted by others and reproved by others without an inward rising ferment of wrath, and without returning a word of rash provocation? Art thou never inclined to rage and passion when thy ears take in a reproach? Canst thou bear an injury with such humble silence, and forgive thy enemy as a christian ought to do? Art thou not as ready to give or to take offence as any of the rich and the great? And is it thy humility that inclines thee to take offence or to give it? Where there is little forbearance and little care to please in our conduct surely there is some pride at heart.

Upon the whole I suspect there are more quarrels and contentions among the poorest and meanest of the people than among the rich and high-born: And the wise man says; Prov. xiii. 10. *It is only from pride cometh contention.* The polite education of the great teaches them to imitate humility and good humour, and by this means many a quarrel is prevented; whereas the poor who have been unbred and untaught betray their pride often, and often rush into clamorous contentions.

Let me ask thee yet further, art thou not too fond of some pre-eminence and honour even on a dunghill? Dost thou never despise in thy heart, and disdain those who seem to be inferior to thee in any respect? And yet at other times, art thou not too much ashamed of the rank of life where God has placed thee? Dost thou never abstain from any duties of religion, or duties of common life, merely because thou canst not make so good a figure among men as others do, and as thou desirest? Enquire of thyself again, is thy behaviour among thy equals modest and meek, and always courteous and obliging? Dost thou never refuse any offices of friendly assistance to thy inferiors or thy equals, from a principle of pride working within thee? Dost thou never disdain to be taught by them, even in some things which thou dost not well know? There is no creature humble who is not teachable, and willing to learn what is necessary and proper to be known? Ask thyself at last, art thou never humoursome and self-willed, never obstinate and unreasonably positive, answering thy superiors with wrath and rudeness? Art thou never gloomy and sullen after a rebuke? Is not thy spirit fretful when thy will is crossed, and thy humour thwarted? Dost thou never meditate revenge?

And now tell me, O son or daughter of poverty, tell me, hast thou no pride? Hast thou none of these symptoms of this mortal malady? No spots of this defilement of soul? No share in this universal crime of the children of Adam? Dost thou think that pride never inhabits a cottage, and never travels but in chariots and coaches? Art thou so weak as to imagine that a thread-bare garment must needs cover a humble heart? When thou hast honestly made all these enquiries which I have pointed out, I hope thy own heart will unlearn this mistake, and teach thee that thou hast not escaped this general guilt and folly. Some of the poorest of mankind have happened to be some of the proudest in my observation that I ever met with, and it is possible that others have made the same remark, though it must be owned their temptations to pride are less.

Let us enquire next of the faint-hearted man, the coward of soul, who flatters his infirmity, and thinks himself, to be all humility and meekness. I own, saith he, I have a tenderness for myself, but I have no pride. If I am injured and reproached, I cannot well bear it, but I am all in tears; I tremble and answer not again; my soul sinks within me at the words of slander, and I die at the voice of a proud oppressor, surely this heart of mine is humble.

But tell me, O man, if thou hadst courage and power to revenge the affront, would thou be thus impatient? If thou hadst wealth and dignity in the world to support thee, wouldst thou not retort the reproaches of thy adversary, and look down with a sort of disdain upon him who now disdains thee? It is impotence then and cowardice, but not humility which makes thee imitate patience and meekness. It is abjectness of spirit and want of power, and not christian lowliness, that renders thee so silent under injuries. Christ Jesus could command *legions of angels* to destroy his blasphemers; yet *when he was reviled*, he bore it patiently, and *reviled not again*: he *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*. But tell me, friend, dost thou never revile those in secret who have reviled thee in public, and that without any plain call of providence to publish their crimes or follies and to expose them? Art thou not impatient and inwardly fretful under the hand of God or man beyond all reasonable degrees? Are not thy lips open in slander where those whom thou slanderest cannot hear thee? Art thou not ready sometimes to take offence at some innocent words that are spoken, and where perhaps an affront was never designed? How dost thou bear a contradiction to thy sayings, or opposition to thy will? Dost thou not kindle into secret resentment and let wrath burn inwardly on such occasions? Doth not thy bosom swell with indignation at such a season, though thou art afraid to vent it? What is it but an *excessive tenderness for thyself*, and undue love of honour and

applause, and the high opinion that thou hadst formed of thy worth, that makes thee bear contempt and reproach so ill, and die under a word of slander ?

Say again, What is it but the pride of thy heart that tempts thee never to acknowledge a mistake, but always to colour it over with a semblance of truth ? Art thou a son or a daughter of Eve, and yet infallible and not capable of mistaking ? Canst thou ever look back and remember the time when thou didst readily confess any folly, or say, I was mistaken or I acted amiss, and yet has not thy heart been sometimes sensible that thou wert in the wrong ? What is it but pride then that makes these words so hard to be pronounced ? Is it not thy vanity of mind, and unreasonable esteem of thyself that forbids thee even to see thy error, or to confess thy fault, while all that are around thee behold thy mistake and thy misconduct ? Is it thy humility that makes thee abound so much in thy own sense ? Is it humility that raises such an anguish of heart, and such a painful vexation within, when thou art treated with small indecencies by thy fellow-creatures ? Is it humility that ruffles thy temper, and tears thy spirit when thou art not esteemed and honoured according to thy worth ? Or is it not rather excessive and criminal tenderness for self, and an over-value of thy own merit ? That is but poor virtue that cannot bear to be despised, but faints under a word of contempt and scorn ; poor pretence to virtue indeed that cannot support itself under an affront from a fellow-worm.

I will readily grant that the rich and the mighty, and the bold and the high-spirited and the high-born among men, lie much more under temptations to pride ; it is the very sin of their constitution or their condition in life, and perhaps they are more frequently guilty of this iniquity ; but if we would all of us search our hearts honestly, and examine our conduct by sincere enquiries, there is not one of us either in high or low state would be able to excuse ourselves from this universal contagion and guilt, this original degeneracy and over-spreading blemish of human nature.

SECT. VI.—*The Humility and Exaltation of Christ proposed as our Pattern.*

Among all the hearts that God ever made there have never been but three entirely free from this stain and poison ; two of them were the hearts of Adam and Eve in the day of their innocence, and happy had it been for us, if pride had never found an entrance there. The third was the heart of the man Jesus who is God's most beloved Son. It was amazing humility indeed in this glorious person the Son of God that he would condescend to be born a son of man, that he should leave *the bosom of the Father* and all the glories there to dwell in flesh

and blood : And when he entered our world there was nothing round him but the signs of humiliation and the marks of deep abasement : He became the child of a poor maid in Galilee, he was content to be born in a stable, *for there was no room for him in the house* : He lay down to take his first nap in a manger, below the rank and condition of men ; and as though he were a companion for meaner creatures, he borrowed his dwelling from the ox and the ass. This was the accommodation, this the presence-chamber of *the King of Israel, of the Son of God*. Come let us thus contemplate the glorious humility of the blessed Jesus, the humble infancy of our adored Saviour, and let us become infants and humble.

Let us follow and observe him in the progress of life, when he appeared as a young *carpenter*, when he sweat and laboured in the trade of his Father Joseph, when he assisted him, as ancient history informs us, to make yokes for oxen, and lived in a lowly cottage suited to those circumstances. No rooms of state, no rich hangings, no carpets or furniture of silk and gold, no costly and glittering things about him. And when he began his ministry, he travelled through the country on foot to preach his divine gospel; when he might have been borne on the wings of angels. He was content with mean lodging in the tents of fishermen, and sometimes *the Lord of glory had not where to lay his head*. He never accepted but of one gaudy day in the period of his life, and then his highest triumph was to *ride upon the colt of an ass* into Jerusalem : His way was *strewed with branches of trees*, and the garments of the poor, and he was attended with a shouting train of the lower ranks of the people : But his more constant dwelling was in cottages, and his accoutrements betrayed universal poverty and meanness : An obscure life on earth veiled the majesty of the King of heaven ; contempt and scorn, infamy and reproach were his daily companions in the streets of Jerusalem, and his table and his lodging were with poor fishermen in Galilee, the most contemptible part of all the country of the Jews.

And let it be observed here, that every instance of meanness and poverty in the life and circumstances of the blessed Jesus was a distinct token of the humility of his soul, for it was chosen poverty, it was assumed meanness : When he *was rich* in the glories and splendors of his Father's court in heaven, he laid them all aside for our sakes, and *became poor* on earth, *that through his poverty we might be made rich* ; 2 Cor. viii. 9.

What a shameful dimness and disgrace, what divine contempt has the Son of God cast on all the lustre and glory of this world, by his choice of so mean accommodations and so poor an equipage ? What a holy disdain of all earthly grandeur and magnificence should we learn from the incarnation and the life

of the holy Jesus? Even meanness and poverty should lose their disgraceful appearances, and seem almost an amiable sort of apparel to us, when we remember they were worn by the Son of God.

“ Think with thyself, O my soul, what if thou art not seated among the glittering idols of this world, the men of figure and quality and exalted station? Remember the blessed Jesus was thy fore-runner in a low and humble rank of life; Jesus, who went through the deeps of abasement to the temple of the highest honour; and divine wisdom assures thee, *that before honour is humility*; Prov. xv. 33. What if thou hast not the favour of the rich and the society of the great ones of the earth? Dost thou not hear the promise of the God of heaven and feel the divine encouragement with surprizing delight? *Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place: With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit will I dwell*; Is. lvii. 15. I will be his life and his support. The soul that is truly humble upon religious principles, when he is cast out of the company of the great and the wealthy with scorn, is a partner of the sufferings of the holy Jesus, is an imitator of his virtues, and he shall share in his sacred honours: he shall have the great and blessed God come down and dwell with him here on earth, to enrich him with grace, and he shall be raised to dwell for ever in the courts of heaven with God and with his Son Jesus, who is *the Lord of glory*.

Think yet further, O my soul, what if thy station and place in the visible church should be low and mean, as a *door-keeper in the house of thy God*, this will not give thy heart any sensible disquietude, while thou canst assume St. Paul's motto in my text, *Less than the least of all the saints*. Jesus and his disciples were even *cast out of the synagogue*; John ix. 22. Luke iv. 28. Yet he was the first beloved Son of God and the chief of all the saints both in the lower and in the upper worlds. Look up, my eyes, and behold him now on the throne of heaven, and there also the humblest among the holy ones sits nearest to his majesty; for that seat is prepared for those who are most like himself.

“ Labour hourly to subdue thy pride and fulness of self, O my soul, pursue the grace of humility here below in the deepest degrees of it, and this shall prepare thee for some exalted station on high. I am verily persuaded the man who called himself *the least of saints* in this world has a place of honour provided for him among the highest in the world above; and perhaps he sits next to the right-hand of Jesus who is enthroned *in glory at the right-hand of God*.

“ Farewell then vanity and pride! Farewell ye scenes of

grandeur, ye flattering and fading glories of this life ! Farewell ye vain and ambitious titles among my fellow-worms ! Be my ears deaf and my heart dead to all the noisy pomp, to all the sounding honours of this world ! Let me be a humble and a holy follower of the holy and the humble Jesus ! I adore him, I love him, I would fain be more like him. He is my divine example and my fore-runner to the world of joy above : He has a crown there provided for every humble soul, *a crown which shall never fade* : he has names of dignity for all his saints, but *on his own sacred head are many crowns*, and to his name belong superior honours : *To the Lamb that was slain ascribe glory and majesty and universal blessing for ever and ever.*

## PREFACE

### *To Orthodoxy and Charity united.*

**A**LMOST every one of these essays was written above twenty years ago, and some of them, more than thirty. The author finds reason to offer his sincere acknowledgments and thanks to Almighty God, who has preserved him, even to this day, in the same sentiments and principles of christian faith and love, amidst the numerous follies and errors of the times. One of these papers, indeed, found its way into the world, the very year in which it was written; the very design of it was to exemplify the title of this book, and it has been often since solicited to be printed again: But it was delayed, for many years, till the author had formed a collection of papers, of this sort, large enough to compose a moderate volume; and the reader will be sufficiently informed, of the present reason of this publication, by a mere explaining of the words of the title, *Orthodoxy and Charity united.*

By the word *orthodoxy*, the author means all those christian doctrines, which were generally approved in the last age, so far as he knows at least, by almost all the protestant dissenters in the nation; even those great doctrines, on which the reformation from the church of Rome was built; and they continued so, all the time these essays were writing, and long before, in the general good esteem of the churches, as being conformable to the instructions of Christ and his apostles. It is needness, in this place, to reckon them all up, particularly, but, in general, they were such as these:

1. By the fall of the first man, he, together with his posterity, lost their innocence and their immortality, their bodies were subjected to diseases and death, their natural inclinations were perverted from that which is good, and there was a strange prevailing bias in human nature, even from its infancy, to that which is evil.—2. In order to their recovery from this ruin, there is not only a necessity of the pardon of their sins, and reconciliation of their persons to God, but there is need also that their sinful natures be healed, and renewed by sanctifying grace, in order to restore men to virtue and piety, that is, to the love of God and their fellow-creatures.—3. The Son of God, who, in the language of scripture, is one with the Father, came down from heaven to take flesh, and therein to fulfil the duties of the law, and give an example of perfect holiness: And then he was appointed to suffer death as a sacrifice and atonement for the sins of men, that mankind might thereby obtain pardon and the favour of God.—4. There is a necessity, also, that sinners should heartily repent of their sins, return to God and be renewed to the principles and temper of holiness, in order to their complete recovery to eternal life and happiness.—5. Besides this repentance and returning to God, it is also required, that they believe in the name of Jesus Christ, their Saviour, or trust in him, with a humble expectation of the favour of God, through him: And, it is through this faith, they are to be justified and accepted of God.—6. They are also obliged to obey the law of God, as far as this feeble and imperfect state admits of, during their whole life, and still to grow

up towards perfection therein.—7. When such persons die, their souls are conveyed to a state of peace and rest, in the presence of God, till the great day of the resurrection, when their bodies shall rise again from the dead, and the whole person, body and soul, be made happy for ever, in the favour and presence of God their Maker.

These doctrines were generally professed at the time of the reformation, by protestants abroad and at home, and these are the set of principles, which have been usually called orthodoxy, or right sentiments.

Now, it has unhappily fallen out, that many of those who have received and professed these important doctrines, have differed also in many lesser points, such as the logical relations of some of these doctrines to one another, that is, “Whether faith or works be conditions or consequences of their justification and acceptance; what is the essential difference between the *covenant of works*, and the *covenant of grace*, or the law and the gospel.” &c. as well as in several particular practices of divine worship, such as ceremonies, vestures, imposed forms of prayer, &c. and they have so far quarrelled about these things, as too much to neglect and abandon that christian love and charity they ought to have maintained, according to their general acknowledgment of the great and necessary truths and rules of christianity, and, hereby, they have, in many instances, lost that duty and character of good christians, viz. *to love one another*. Now since these unhappy and uncharitable practices, even amongst some good men, have prevailed even to this day, it is the design of these essays, to endeavour the recovery of these persons, who unite in these principles, to charitable sentiments and practices towards one another.

Here it will be very natural to enquire, Where is there found amongst all these essays, any attempt to reconcile those to the christian love and charity of others, who, while they profess the christian religion, yet oppose, renounce or deny, the great doctrines of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, or his propitiation for sin by his death?

All the answer that can be given, is this: The author would gladly have done it, that the whole book might be of a piece, and every page might overflow with love, if he could, after the turning over his New Testament, have met with any evident instances, or examples, any plain rules or requirements, of such christian charity expressed towards persons of this character, in all the sacred writings.

But the language of scripture gives no encouragement to such a charity; for this doctrine is not any where numbered, among the doubtful disputables of our religion, the lesser things of christianity, such as *meats and drinks*, and *observation of days*, and outward forms of worship; but it is spoken of, as a matter of far higher importance, and, I think, seems to be necessary to constitute christianity itself.

This doctrine contains in it, the highest and the kindest design toward men, for which our blessed Saviour came down from heaven; it was for this very reason he came into this world, viz. *to give his life a ransom for sinners*; Mat. xx, 28. and it is repeated in Mark x. 45. So that those who depart from, and renounce this article, renounce the kindest design of the coming and the death of Christ, and they seem, by the words of the holy writings, to be exposed to another sort of sentence, from which may the grace of God recover and preserve them! In the mean time,



I hope those who heartily unite in their sentiments of these great doctrines which I have mentioned, and maintain a correspondent practice of strict holiness, and dependence upon Jesus Christ, our great high-priest, and our sacrifice, will be taught by some of these papers, to learn the duties of christian love more perfectly, agreeable to the original design of the holy foundation of our religion.

It should be observed here, that though the chief part of these essays were written at the time which is mentioned, yet there happen to be now and then a few lines and pages, and some few citations from elder or later authors, which were not all written or inserted at that time. Let it be observed also, that all the characters, here mentioned, are general and indefinite; and there is not one character or name, that is now written in these papers, or ever was, that was designed to be applied to any particular person: For the author avoided it with care in all these writings, and in all his reviews of them, that no single person whatsoever should be particularly described, as to imagine himself to be intended, and much less to be distinguished by any reader. May the divine blessing attend every humble attempt to establish the christian faith, and to confirm and enlarge on it. Amen.

# ORTHODOXY AND CHARITY UNITED,

&c.

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## ESSAY I.

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### *The Substance, or Matter of the Gospel.*

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#### SECTION I.

THE word, gospel, is used in more senses than one. Sometimes it signifies the history of the life and doctrine, the death and resurrection of Christ. So Mark i. 1. *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.* And so it is used in common speech, when we call the writings of the four evangelists, the four gospels. But, in the most proper and usual sense of it, in scripture, it signifies a discovery of divine mercy, through a Mediator, to mankind fallen into sin and misery; therefore in greek it is called *εὐαγγέλιον* or *glad tidings*.

The English name, indeed, as derived from its Saxon original, signifies only the word of God : Yet it is now peculiarly applied to the word of his grace, which reveals salvation to sinful and miserable man, and therefore it is often called the covenant of grace. This salvation is made up of many benefits or blessings, part of which are bestowed in this world, and the rest in the world that is to come. The revelation of these benefits, and of the foundation on which they stand, and of the way whereby we come to be partakers of them, is the matter, sum and substance of the gospel, in its most general notion among christians.

This gospel was not revealed, all at once, in its full glory to mankind. There have been several editions of it, or gradual discoveries of this grace, in all the former ages of the world. As soon as ever Adam had sinned, and ruined himself and his posterity too, by laying the foundation of their sin and misery, it pleased God to publish this gospel, by the promise of a Saviour, when he told our mother Eve, that *her seed should bruise the head of the serpent*, that had deceived her ; Gen. iii. 15. This, by our divines, is usually called the first gospel ; for, in the modern language of the New Testament, it signifies, that *Jesus Christ* should come into this world, *to destroy the works of the devil* ; 1 John iii. 8.

Doubtless Noah, the second Father of mankind, had some farther discoveries made to him, when *the rainbow* was appointed

as the seal of a gracious covenant betwixt God and man : For the very promise of the continuance of the comfortable seasons of the year, being given to man in a way of mercy, do imply that God would not be irreconcilable to his fallen creatures. Nor can we reasonably suppose but that Adam and Noah, and all those most ancient patriarchs, had larger explications and comments of the first promise given them than Moses has recorded. This gospel was renewed by revelations made to Abraham, when the Messiah, the Saviour, was promised to spring out of his family ; *in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed* ; Gen. xxii. 18. Which promise is expressly called the gospel ; Gal. iii. 8. There was also a type or pattern of our justification by faith in the way of the gospel, when *Abraham believed God* in his promises, *and it was imputed to him for righteousness* ; Rom. iv. 3.

Moses had a much larger discovery of the grace and mercy of God toward sinful man made to him, and to the Jews by him, than all the patriarchs put together : And this was not only done in the types, and figures, and ceremonies, not only in altars, sacrifices, washings, sprinklings, purifications, and in their redemption from Egypt, their miraculous salvations in the wilderness, and their safe conduct to Canaan, the land of promised rest ; but he had many literal and express revelations of pardoning and sanctifying grace, which are scattered up and down in the five books which he wrote, and which he gave to the children of Israel to direct their religion. This is also called the gospel ; Heb. iv, 2. *To them was the gospel preached as well as unto us*, as those words ought to be translated. This same gospel was afterwards confirmed, illustrated and enlarged by succeeding prophets, in the several ages of the Jewish church.

But God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoke this gospel to our fathers by the prophets, has in these later days published the same to us in a brighter manner, by his son Jesus, the promised Saviour, Heb. i. 1. And, since the death and resurrection of Christ, the apostles being sent by their exalted Lord, have given yet plainer and fuller declarations of this gospel to the children of men. And, upon this account, it is several times called *the gospel of Christ*, not only because the offices and grace of Christ run through the whole of it, but also because the clearest discoveries of it are made to the world by Christ, and by his messengers the apostles.

Now, from this last and fullest revelation of it, in the New Testament, we may derive a fuller and more perfect knowledge of the gospel, than all the former ages could attain. Hereby we learn, that the gospel is a promise of salvation from sin and hell, by the death, righteousness and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to every one that is sincerely willing to accept of it by coming to

Christ, or trusting in him ;" and it includes also " the promised aid of the Holy Spirit to those who seek it, to enable them to receive this salvation, and to fit them for the final possession of the promised glory." It includes also the " revelation of the sure resurrection, the last judgment and eternal life." To his end did the " Son of God come into the world, that whosoever believes on him should not perish but have everlasting life ;" John iii. 16. This may be made out and explained, more at large, in the following manner :

The salvation which the gospel proposes, is exactly answerable to our present state of sin and wretchedness, and fully supplies all the necessities of fallen man, his guilt and deserved misery, his sinful and corrupted nature, and his utter inability to help himself ; and therefore it must contain in it holiness and happiness, with divine directions and divine aids, in order to attain them. The happiness of it is a freedom from that death and punishment, which we had incurred by sin, and a recovery to the favour of God, which we had lost, and everlasting joy therein. The holiness of it is the *image of God*, in which we were at first created, which image was defaced and ruined by man's first transgression.

The foundation of this salvation is the eternal mercy and good-will of God the Father, to his poor, perishing, sinful creature, by the glorious undertaking and various transactions and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator, and the several operations of the blessed Spirit. This salvation in the whole is contrived and appointed by the various attributes of God, especially his wisdom, power and goodness, exerting themselves to this purpose: It is purchased or procured for us, by the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ: It is applied to us, by the work of the Holy Spirit.

*We are chosen*, to partake of all this salvation, both the holiness and happiness of it, by the eternal goodwill of the Father. We are recovered to the favour of God, and happiness, by the obedience or righteousness, the death and intercession, of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, in our nature. We are restored to the image of God, and holiness, by the Spirit of Christ, that is promised and sent down into this world, to change our hearts and reform our lives, and thereby fit us for the heavenly happiness.

But, what are we to do that we may become partakers of this salvation? For it is not every son and daughter of Adam who are possessors of it. Now, it is the gospel that reveals this to us, and also directs us in it. The appointed way to partake of this salvation is, by believing or trusting in Christ ; that is, when we have a deep sense of the evil of sin ; and our guilt and danger on that account, we grow weary and heavy laden with the bur-

den. of our sins, and surrender or betrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, that, by his death and obedience, we may be saved from hell, and be accepted unto eternal life, and that by the divine aid of his Spirit, we may have all the sinful powers of our natures renewed and sanctified, and fitted for that life eternal which Christ has purchased. Thus you see this grace of faith necessarily draws along with it sincere repentance for sin, and desires after true holiness.

When we consider, that we are, by nature, afar off from God, ignorant and averse to all that is holy, we shall find that we are not more able to believe unto salvation, nor to repent of sin, at first, than we are to perform works of holiness afterwards. Therefore this gospel provides us with divine strength to fulfil these duties; *Christ is our strength*, as well as *our righteousness*; Is. xlv. 24, 25. *He is exalted to bestow repentance* as well as *forgiveness*; Acts v. 31. and *faith is the gift of God*, who *creates us anew in Christ Jesus, unto good works*; Eph. ii. 8—10. and makes us holy by his spirit, as is before expressed. It is by the Holy Spirit, considered eminently as the Spirit of Christ, that we are enabled to receive this salvation at first, and trained up and prepared for the full possession of it.

It is further also comprehended in this gospel, and promised in this gracious constitution of God, that when we have finished our state of trial on earth, our souls shall be received, at death, into the presence and enjoyment of God; and our bodies also shall be raised from the grave, in the great resurrection-day, and thus our whole natures shall be made happy together to all eternity. This is the matter and subject of the gracious revelation of God, this the method of salvation, and the manner of our partaking of it, which is appointed by God himself, and this is what I call the substance of the gospel. There are some other points of importance that belong to it, but this is the foundation of all, and comprehensive of the rest.

To sum up the several parts of it in as few words as I can; the gospel of Christ is a gracious constitution of God, for the recovery of sinful man, *by sending his own Son, in the flesh*, to obey his law, which man had broken, to make a proper atonement for sin by his death, and to procure the favour of God, and eternal happiness, for all that believe and repent, and receive this offered salvation, together with a promise of the Holy Spirit, to work this faith and repentance in the hearts of men, to renew their sinful natures unto holiness, to form them fit for this happiness on earth, and to bring them to the full possession of it in heaven.

All this is so evident from a variety of scriptures, that might be cited here, that one would think there should be no need to prove it. But there have been some persons in the last and in

the present age, I chiefly intend the Socinian writers, and those nominal christians, who are leaning towards deism, who would impoverish and curtail the gospel of Christ, and make it to consist in little more than mere natural religion. Some of these persons just make a shift to persuade themselves to believe the bible, or at least they profess to believe it, because it is the religion of their country, but they explain it in so poor, so narrow, so dry, and insipid a manner, as raises it very little above the light of nature, viz. "That if we follow the dictates of our inward reason and our conscience, in worshipping God, and in loving our neighbours, according to the rules which scripture hath given us to explain and confirm the light of nature, and herein imitate the holy example of our Lord Jesus Christ, then our sins shall be forgiven us, by the mere mercy of God, through the supplication and intercession of so good a man as Jesus Christ, and we shall be accepted to eternal life;" and this without any dependance on the death of Christ, as a proper atonement or satisfaction for sin, or any regard to him as a true and real sacrifice. And as for the Spirit of God, and his almighty operation on the souls of men, to enlighten and satisfy them, at least in our age, this is almost banished out of their gospel, and finds but little room in their religion. I think it necessary, therefore, to prove, that the gospel of Christ is such a doctrine as I have described; and that I shall do by these five reasons:

Sect. II.—I. This doctrine, which I have now mentioned, of the restoration of believers in Jesus Christ to the favour of God, by the atoning sacrifice and obedience of Christ, and the renewing of sinful men to God's image by the work of the Holy Spirit, and thereby bringing them to eternal life, is the very gospel of Christ, because "it is the very labour and business, the chief scope, aim and design of the great apostle of the Gentiles, in those of his epistles where he sets himself, professedly, to explain the gospel; and this is what he takes frequent occasion also to bring into all his writings." It is his perpetual labour to instruct the Jews and Gentiles in these glorious and unknown truths: He uses various forms of speech to explain them to their understandings; for "I desire, saith he, and determine to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified, that is, nothing like it; nothing in comparison with it. 1 Cor. ii. 2. It is the cross of Christ that is and must be the great subject of my ministry; this is what I am sent to preach, for it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God; 1 Cor. i. 24. for the salvation of men; Rom. i. 16.

You find his letters to the churches full of such expressions as these, *Christ died for our sins; 1 Cor. xv. 3. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity: Tit. ii. 13. We have redemption through his blood; Eph. i. 7. God was in Christ*

*reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them*; 2 Cor v. 19. *He was made sin, verse 21. and a curse for us*; Gal. iii. 10. *He is our propitiation and atonement*; 1 John ii. 2. *He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*; Heb. ix. 26. *When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by his death*; Rom. v. 8. *He made peace by the blood of his cross*; Col. i. 20. *He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*; Rom iv. 25. *By the righteousness of one man the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*; Rom. v. 18, 19. and we are justified by faith in him; verse 1. He teaches us also the offices of the Holy Spirit. *We have access to God through his Spirit*; Eph. ii. 18. "We are purified and sanctified by the spirit"; 1 Cor. vi. 11. It is by the Spirit of Christ that we are *to mortify the deeds of the flesh*; Rom. viii. 13—17. *We are led by the Spirit*; and we are taught to understand this gospel by the Spirit which he hath given us; Eph. iii. 16. *We are sealed by this Spirit unto the day of redemption*; chapter iv. 23. The Spirit dwelling in us is a pledge and earnest of our inheritance in heaven, chapter i. 14.

Now these expressions of his are to be understood in the common sense and meaning of the words, and not as far-fetched metaphors; for it is evident, that in all this he does not affect the arts of oratory, nor assume a magnificent air of writing, nor does he raise himself into sublimities of style, nor rove in an enthusiastic way, when he treats of these subjects, but while he is explaining to us these great things of the gospel, he avoids the wisdom of words and oratory, and he talks in a plain, rational, and argumentative method, to inform the minds of men, and give them the clearest knowledge of the truth.

Surely, a person that was sent of God to preach and write the gospel, for the use of all nations and future ages, and even for the ignorant and uninstruced barbarians, would not have expressed himself in this sort of language, if he meant no more by it than the Socinians do by the gospel of Christ; that is, "that the Lord Jesus Christ was a very great man, but a mere man still; he was a prophet ordained of God, to preach up holiness in greater degrees than it had been before preached, to settle some points which were left a little doubtful by the light of nature, to assure us that God would be reconciled to man, and forgive him, if man repented and was sorry for his sins, and lived as well as he could for time to come; and that for the sake of the prayers of Christ, who was so very pious, so very religious, and so very heavenly a person, and so submissive in his sufferings to the will of God, he would favour the penitent among mankind with some blessings and comforts in this world, and eternal life in the world above. Then, when he had preached this doctrine to the world,

he suffered the death of the cross, to bear witness to the truth of it, and sealed it with his blood; and rose again for the confirmation of the same doctrine." Now if this were all the meaning of the gospel of Christ, St. Paul would never have preached it in such language as he did. We must suppose him to be a very inaccurate writer, a most unintelligible preacher, and a most unfit man to be made an apostle, and be sent to instruct the ignorant world, if he had expressed himself in such mysterious, figurative, and strange phrases, and all this while had meant no more by them, than what the Socinians mean by their gospel.

Can we think God would have employed such an instrument as this was, whose way of talking would have rather deceived multitudes than informed them of the truth, would have led them into the dark rather than have given them light, would have filled their heads with mysterious words without ideas, and instead of leading them into the way of salvation, would have left them in bewildered thoughts, about the doctrines and duties of it with so much entanglement and confusion ?

Here I might add also, that the holy apostle not only instructs his own countrymen the Jews, and the Gentile strangers in this divine doctrine, and teaches them to build their hopes of salvation upon it ; but he ventures his own soul, his immortal concerns, and his everlasting hopes upon the same foundation. He glories in *the cross of Christ* ; Gal. vi. 14. He has committed his all into his hands till the great judgment-day ; 2 Tim. i. 12. *He lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, saith he, and gave himself for me* ; Gal. ii. 20. It is the pleasure of his tongue, it is the joy of his pen, it is the delight and the life of his spirit to talk of those things : He hangs upon this subject, and knows not how to leave it ; his very heart and soul is in it, and he abandons all things for the sake of this knowledge. He despises the former privileges of his birth, of his learning, of the Jewish prerogatives and rites. He renounces all his legal and ceremonial perfection, and all his honour amongst the Priests and the Pharisees in comparison of this. " *What things were gain to me,*" says he, " *these I count loss for Christ : Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness, which is of God by faith : that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ;* Philip. iii. 7—10.

*Nor is the apostle Paul singular in this respect, or different in his sentiments from the other apostles. You find Peter and*



John saying the same things in their epistles; and they take every occasion to publish the same gospel and the same promises and hopes of salvation by the death and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the enlightening and sanctifying operations of the same Spirit. It would be endless to cite all the proofs of this. Now, it is not to be supposed that the three chief writers among the apostles should all conspire to talk in the same mysterious and unintelligible language, so widely different from the common and obvious sense and meaning of their words, if they intended no more by them, than the Socinians mean by their gospel, which is very little different from the way of salvation that the deist proposes, while they deny the satisfaction of Christ, and his real and proper atonement for sin, and the powerful sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit.

II. As this gospel of Christ which we have described was the labour of the apostle's ministry, and the design of the revelation of the New Testament, so it is this gospel which is often hinted and prophesied in the Old Testament also, and typified by the ceremonies of the Jewish religion. Now these prophecies could not have been fulfilled, nor these types answered and accomplished, without such a gospel as I have explained. The prophecies of the Old Testament are various and many: Some of the clearest of those which relate to the sufferings and atonement of Christ, and to our justification by him, are expressed by Daniel, Isaiah and Jeremiah. By Daniel we are told, that the *Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself*, and the design of this is to *finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquities, and to bring in everlasting righteousness*; Dan. ix. 24, 26. Isaiah speaks the same thing more largely, "Christ was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. We like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. It pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief," and to *make his soul an offering for sin*. By the knowledge of him shall he justify many, *for he shall bear their iniquities*. How exceeding plain and strong is this language to support this doctrine? Is. liii. 5, 6, 10, 11. "In the Lord shall we have righteousness and strength: In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory; Is. xlv. 24, 25. And the prophet Jeremy expressly calls *Christ the Lord our righteousness*; Jer. xxiii. 6.

The promise of sanctification by the Spirit of God, is given us in Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." This sort of language is repeated chapter xi. 19. and Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Jer. xxxi. 31—

34. which is cited by the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, and to the Corinthians, as the language of the gospel, or the new covenant. Now it is manifest enough, that all these expressions of glorious grace, and of the method of our reconciliation to God, our sanctification and salvation could never be answered and accomplished without such a gospel of Christ as we have described.

The rites and ceremonies of the Jewish church speak the same thing, if we consider them as types and figures of the gospel-state. I will grant, indeed, that many of those ceremonies had also some other intendments, viz. to distinguish the nation of Israel and their religion from the Gentile world, and the fantastical inventions of pagan worship: To keep them in subjection to God as their political head or king: Several of their sacrifices and methods of purification were appointed to cleanse them from ceremonial defilements, and to atone for civil or political crimes, whereby they were admitted to their civil rights again, and their place in the congregation, when they had done any thing to forfeit them.

But it is evident, by the writings of the apostle Paul, in 2 Cor. chap. iii. Gal. chap. iv. Col. chap. ii. Heb. vii. viii. ix. x. that the great end of these Jewish ceremonial appointments, was to stand as types and figures of things, under the gospel, and emblems of the various offices and benefits of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, in this figurative or emblematical sense, what did all the sacrifices and the blood mean, the burning beasts and the smooking altars whereby the Jews made a typical atonement for their sins? What were they types of, what did they represent, if not the sacrifice of Christ? And what means the sprinkling all the people with the blood of animals, if these things did not typify and represent our being cleansed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is therefore called the blood of *sprinkling*, and which is the only real and substantial atonement for sin? What meant their laying the hand upon the goat that was to bear their iniquities, and the confession of the sins of all Israel over his head, if they did not design to foretel the transferring of the sins of men upon the head of our Lord Jesus Christ, the surety and the sacrifice for sinners? What did the washings of water imply, but the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon sinful men, and the purification of their natures by divine grace? Why did that glorious and divine light dwell in the tabernacle and in the temple and between the cherubims in the holy of holies, if it were not an emblem of the "fulness of the godhead dwelling bodily in the man Christ Jesus," in and by whom God was to converse visibly with the children of men? Can any man be so absurd as to believe, in opposition to so many expressions of the apostle in his letters, that these sprinklings of water and

of blood, these bleeding lambs, and burning goats and bullocks, these veils, curtains and tabernacles, served for nothing else but to wrap up the duties of the light of nature in them, and to explain, or rather to darken, the common truths of natural religion? And yet the apostle tells us in several places, that these were types or figures of the gospel of Christ. Surely every shadow bore the shape and figure of the substance: Every veil and covering was fitted to the body. All these were but shadows, but Christ is the substance or the body, and the shape of the body appeared therein to those that had divine light to discern it, especially to us, whom St. Paul has taught to understand many of these mysteries.

Those therefore who impoverish the gospel of Christ, as some writers have done, and deny those glorious doctrines that are included in it, they deny that gospel which was foretold by the prophets, that gospel which was hidden in the Jewish shadows, and they refuse to see it, though it be now broken forth into open light.

III. The gospel of Christ must needs be such a doctrine as we have before described, it must needs be so far superior to all the dictates of the light of nature, and to deserve those glorious characters which the apostle frequently gives it, viz. that it is *the wisdom of God in a mystery*; 1 Cor. ii. 7. *The great mystery of godliness*; 1 Tim. iii. 16. *A mystery hidden from ages and generations*; Col. i. 26. *The mystery which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men*; Eph. iii. 3. 5. *The mystery that was kept secret since the world began*; Rom. xvi. 25.—*hidden in God himself*; Eph. iii. 9. *And is hid from the wise and prudent of this world*; Mat. xi. 25. *It is made up of the deep things of God*; 1 Cor. ii. 10. *And derived from the depths of his wisdom and knowledge*; Rom. xi. 33. *It is the manifold wisdom of God, which was made known to principalities and powers by the church*; Eph. iii. 10. “Which things the angels desire to pry into;” 1 Pet. i. 12. *In this he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence*; Eph. i. 8. *And it contains the unsearchable riches of Christ*; Eph. iii. 8. *And treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; Col. ii. 3.

Now such sort of descriptions as these are very applicable to the doctrine of the Son of God, who is also one with the Father, and who is *God, blessed for evermore*, coming down to join himself to flesh and blood that he might be able to die in the room and stead of sinful men, and that this glorious person, by whom the worlds were made, and all the hosts of men and angels; Col. i. 15. that he should be made a sacrifice for our sins, that God might declare his unspotted holiness, or righteousness, his terrible justice, and his unchangeable hatred of sin even while he forgives sinners, and justifies those that believe in Jesus; Rom. iii. 24, 25, and that this Lord Jesus in human nature should rise

from the dead, ascend to heaven, be exalted to the government of *all things visible and invisible*; Eph. i. 22, 23. should send his Spirit down to work faith, repentance and holiness in all his chosen and redeemed ones, and carry them through a thousand temptations and difficulties, and through death itself, to heaven and glory. This is the doctrine that human reason could never have found out, and as much ado to be persuaded to receive it now it is manifested, in the New Testament. These are wonders of unsearchable wisdom, and an entertainment for prying angels.

But if the gospel of Christ signify no more than the mere promise of pardon to those that repent of their sins, and believe Jesus Christ to be a true prophet, and follow the example and commands of Christ, who has explained and confirmed the light of nature, what is there in this that deserves such a catalogue of glorious titles as the apostle bestows upon this gospel? There is no such great and deep contrivance, such astonishing wisdom in such a covenant of grace, as does nothing else but abate the severe and rigid terms of the covenant of works, and make repentance and imperfect obedience to serve instead of perfect obedience, in order to obtain pardon and happiness.

I confess there was need of some divine revelation to assure us that God would accept of our repentance and our honest endeavours, when in his law he demands perfection. But this any common prophet might have done, being sent of God and supported by miracles, as Elijah and Elisha were. And when once this doctrine was thus plainly revealed, there would be no great difficulty to persuade men to receive it; there are no such sublime mysteries and depths of wisdom and knowledge contained in it; nor does it need any extraordinary genius, much less divine wisdom itself to have been the inventor of it. But far be it from us to have such a diminishing thought of the glorious gospel of Christ.

IV. Another reason that I shall give to prove, that the gospel of Christ is such a doctrine as I have before described, is the opinions both of the Jews and Gentiles concerning it, and the treatment that it met with both in Judea and amongst the nations. It was counted *foolishness by the Greeks*, or the learned heathens, and it was *a stone of stumbling to the Jews*. *We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*; 1 Cor. i. 23. Whereas if the doctrine of Christ crucified had implied no more in it than this, that Jesus, by his death and martyrdom on the cross, bore a testimony to the truth of the doctrine which he preached, and that doctrine was nothing else but a discovery of God's readiness to accept of sinners that repented and obeyed him, as well

as they could, out of his mere mercy ; the Jews could never have been so much shocked or offended at it, for they believed as this much long before St. Paul ever preached : Nor could the learned Greeks have counted that doctrine folly which the wisest of their philosophers seemed to understand and teach. This sort of gospel would have been so little different from what the light of nature might lead them probably to expect and hope for, that surely they would not have endeavoured to expose it and ridicule it, but rather they would have fallen in with St. Paul's sermons, as being agreeable to many of their sentiments. That gospel therefore, which both the Jews and the Greeks were so much offended with, that they reproached it as madness and folly, must be something strange to their ears, and exceedingly different from their own opinions.

V. I may add also at least, that if St. Paul had meant no more, by the gospel of Christ, than this, that God was willing to be reconciled to mankind, if they would repent of their sins, and be sorry for them, and lived as well as they could for time to come, there had been very little reason for him to speak of his courage in preaching it so often as he does, and that with such an emphasis ; Rom. i. 16. *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation* ; and he repeats it again ; 2 Tim. i. 12. and encourages young Timothy to preach the same gospel with boldness, and be not ashamed of Christ, nor his ministers. He counts it a great thing, that he could *glory in the cross of Christ*, Gal vi. 14. and in his doctrine of Christ crucified, and is resolved to spread the savour of it round the world. *I am not ashamed of this gospel*, I am ready to preach it among the Jews or the barbarians, or in the city of Rome itself ; Rom. i. 15. Now if he had preached nothing but the Socinian gospel, there was nothing in it that would have exposed him to much shame and reproach for the hopes of forgiveness, upon mere repentance ; and the enforcement of duties of natural religion, with a little illustration and advance upon them, was much like the gospel or doctrine of the wisest of the heathen philosophers, that he had almost been esteemed one of those wise men, and rather treated with honour amongst them at Athens, and in other gentile cities, and not been reproached as *a setter forth of strange Gods*, and called a babler for his preaching of such sort of doctrines ; Acts. xvii. 18.

But when the apostle preaches the Son of God in the likeness of man, that came down from heaven, not to set up a throne in the world, and rule personally over the nations, but to be exposed to shame and pain, to be nailed to a cross, and have a crown of thorns put upon him, and endure all these sufferings for the *sins of mankind* : When tells the heathen world of a man that *was hanged upon a tree at Jerusalem*, and assures them, that his

death is the foundation and spring of eternal life, to all that believe on him; when he preaches that the *Lord of glory was crucified*; 1 Cor. ii. 8. that so the worst sort of sinners might be saved, and that *he who knew no sin* was made a sacrifice for our sins, that we might stand righteous in the sight of God through his righteousness; 2 Cor. v. 21. This was something that sounded so strange in the ears of the heathens, and the blind Jews too, that they multiplied reproaches upon the sermons and the preacher. And St. Paul thought it a considerable point gained, when he could assume such a degree of courage as to be able to say, *I dare preach amongst the Gentiles, the Jews, the pharisees and the philosophers at Jerusalem, and at Rome, such a gospel as this is; for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.* This is an argument which, in my opinion, carries much evidence with it, that the gospel of Christ is such a doctrine as I have before described.

But here a considerable objection arises against this description of the gospel. How can the atonement for sin, by the death of Christ, be so considerable a part of the gospel, when Christ himself, the great prophet of his church, spoke so seldom and so very little of it, during the whole course of his ministry. Surely one would think so important a part of the christian doctrine should not have been neglected by Christ himself.\*

#### SECT. III.—*Answers to Objections.*

Though there be a very large and particular answer given to all the parts of this objection in those sermons; particularly, sermon the thirty-fifth, yet since it seems to carry some considerable force in it, I would mention some hints of reply in this place. Answer I. The great design of our Saviour, in his public appearance and ministry on earth, was to prove himself to wear the true characters of the Messiah, to deliver the Jews from many false expositions and glosses, which the scribes and pharisees of that day had given to several parts of scripture, to lead the world to a conviction of their sins, and thereby prepare them to receive the doctrine of salvation with more zeal and desire; whereas the salvation itself, and the manner whereby it was accomplished, was but briefly mentioned in some few texts, and the rest was left to be explained by his apostles.

II. The doctrine of Christ's atonement for sin is, indeed, intimated in several places of his own ministrations, viz. Mat. xx. 28. *The Son of man came not be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many*; John x. 15. *I lay down my life for the sheep*; John vi. 51. *The bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* And

\* See a large and full answer to this objection in "the Sermon on the Atonement of Christ." Vol. 1. page 403.

when he instituted the holy supper ; Luke xxi. 19. He took bread and brake it, saying, *this is my body which is given for you.* And as in St. Matthew's gospel ; xxvi. 28. *This cup is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

III. This doctrine of atonement for sin by his death, as a sacrifice, and the acceptance of it with God the Father, could not be so well preached in public, before those very facts were fulfilled, upon which this doctrine is founded ; for his death was the foundation of this atonement ; his resurrection and ascension to heaven, were the proofs of its being accepted with God : Now it might have appeared preposterous to our Saviour, who was divinely wise, to preach these doctrines freely in public to the multitude, before these events appeared in the world. And even to his own disciples he was not too free in the communication of them, because, as John xvi. 12. He told them, he had *many things* to teach them, but they *could not bear them yet.* It might have been the means of raising some prejudices in the minds of his own disciples ; whereas he reserved some of these things to be taught, in those forty days, while he continued with them after his resurrection, and *spoke with them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God ; Acts i. 3.*

And thence we may infer, that if we would learn the plainest and fullest account of the gospel of Christ, it is not enough for us to consult, merely, his public sermons, or the histories of his life, which are called the four gospels, but we must read carefully the writings of the apostles, after he went to heaven ; in which they taught these doctrines more completely, which they had learned from the converse of Christ, after his resurrection, as well as by the pouring out of his own Spirit upon them in great abundance, as he had promised.

But there is another objection, which is borrowed from the Socinian writings, which it may be proper to give some reply to, viz. " That it does not agree to the moral perfections of God to punish sin in a surety ; nor does it become the great God, who is a being of infinite wisdom and goodness and equity, to appoint such a way of salvation of men," as would necessitate an innocent creature to be exposed to so many sharp sufferings as Christ underwent, while the guilty sinner suffers nothing of all these terrors, but is delivered from the severest of them by the death of Christ. In answer to this,

I. I desire it may be considered, that this doctrine of the expiation and atonement for sin by Christ, is so plainly and expressly revealed and declared in the New Testament, by the apostles Paul, Peter, and John, as has been already shewn, and is so frequently repeated in many forms of speech in the sacred writings, that it seems a very bold imagination to suppose, that that could not be agreeable to the moral perfections of God, or that

it could not become God to appoint that, which in so many repeated scriptures, is expressly asserted to be done by Jesus Christ, and by the appointment of the Father. Can it be ever imagined, that the great God did not know what would become every one of his perfections better than we little insects, just crept out of the earth, and returning thither again, could teach him? Can it be ever thought, that the eternal mind did not know what was decent for a just and a wise God to do, better than we can conceive or suggest?

I answer, in the second place, that some of the very expressions wherein this doctrine is represented in scripture, are such as seem to be designed on purpose to obviate this very objection, particularly 2 Cor. v. 21. *God has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, that is, he made him to be a sacrifice for sin for us, that we might be delivered from the guilt of sin, and accepted as righteous in the sight of God. Again, 1 Pet. iii. 18. *Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*. Again, 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22. *Christ suffered for us, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree*. Again, 1 John ii. 1, 2. *Jesus Christ the righteous: He is the propitiation for our sins*. Thus you see all these texts declare expressly the innocence of Jesus Christ who suffered, and the iniquities of those for whom he suffered: It is evident enough, that a righteous person died for the guilty, and the guilty were saved.

III. Let it be yet further considered, that the man Christ Jesus, who had a natural will which was distinct from the supreme will of the godhead, gave up himself to those sufferings, and consented to it fully; Heb. x. 5, 10. *In burnt-offerings and sacrifices of beasts thou hadst no pleasure; but a body hast thou prepared me: Then I said, lo, I come to do thy will, O God*. He had a right given him by the Father to lay down his life, and a right to take it up again; John x. 18. And he had an additional exaltation promised him on this account; Heb. xii. 2. and actually bestowed on him for this service; Phil. ii. 9. *Wherefore God hath highly exalted him*; besides several other events in the divine scheme of God's government, for the glory of God, and the happiness of men. All which are sufficient to make the sufferings of Christ very consistent with the equity and justice of God, though the innocent creature suffered and the guilty was set free. So that I see no manner of inconsistency between this transaction, and any of God's moral perfections; and therefore I can see nothing in it which was unbecoming for God to appoint, or for Christ to submit to.

To confirm this, let it be remembered, that it is expressly said, Heb. ii. 10. *It became him for whom are all things, and by*



*whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through sufferings, τιθεῖσαι,* which signifies to consecrate Jesus Christ to be high-priest by this blood of atonement, which Doctor Whitby proves at large in his Comment on this Text. Nor is it at all strange, that those who borrow from the Socinian\* writers may raise such objections against the atonement or satisfaction of Christ for sin : Since Socinus himself saith, “ should there be found some places of scripture, where it should be expressly written, that God was made man, or did assume human flesh ; they should not presently be taken according as the words sound, since that is altogether repugnant to the divine Majesty.” So Socinus in his Disputations of Jesus Christ. And again : “ If not once only, but often it should be written in the sacred scriptures, that Christ made satisfaction to God for sins ; I would not therefore believe, that the matter is so as you imagine.” So Socinus on the Satisfaction. And again : “ Any, even the greatest force is to be used with words, rather than take them in the obvious sense.” So his Second Epistle to Balcerimicius.

\* At the time when this essay was written, it was the common custom of writers to denominate parties of men, by the name which belonged to one of the chief leaders of that party, as Doctor Whitby speaks of the Socinians, the Arians, and others, in the same manner. This practice is not quite so customary now a-days, because the same errors are not always joined in the same person, and therefore it may be proper to describe opinions, errors or parties in general by such names, but not particular persons. As for instance : The Socinians, in the last age, generally believed Christ to be a mere man, and denied his satisfaction or proper atonement for sin ; whereas in the present age, most followers of that party, believe Jesus Christ to be as glorious a person, as the Arians make him, viz. more ancient than any of the works of God, and his agent in creating the world, and at the same time they deny his proper atonement for sin.

You see then a plain reason, why errors may have the names of their leaders applied to them ; but it is not proper to give the same denomination to all those particular persons who hold some of their errors, but who deny the others.

## ESSAY II.

### *The Form of the Gospel.*

An Enquiry, "Whether it be a New Law, with Commands, Threatenings and Conditions in it? And, whether the Duties of the Gospel are our Justifying Righteousness?"

*A Reconciling Discourse.*

SECTION I.—*Is the Gospel a Conditional Promise?*

**T**HE general nature and substance of the gospel is agreed on all hands to be a discovery of divine grace to sinful man through a Mediator: But several parties of christians have raised endless doubts about the particular form of it, viz. whether it be a mere absolute promise, or a conditional covenant: Whether it contain in it commands and threatenings or no: Or whether it be a new law.

It is my opinion concerning many of the debates about our religion, that they may be sufficiently determined for the peace and practice of christians, by finding out the various use of words in common language, and especially the sense of them in the holy scriptures, and submitting our judgments and consciences to this sense of them, with a little reconciling explication. And this noisy controversy may, perhaps, come nearer to a decision, if we will but honestly consult the ways of speaking, that the scripture useth in solving these three following questions:

But before I propose them, I would beg one favour of my readers, and that is, as they run over these pages, they would so far deny themselves of a common custom, as to examine and judge of this little essay by any systems of orthodoxy in their closet, or in their head, but by the only system out of which I have drawn it, the holy bible; for in the whole composure of this discourse, I have not consulted one author besides; and I would chuse to be read just in the same way in which I write, and to be judged by the same rule. I proceed now to name the three following questions:

*Quest. I.* Whether the gospel be an absolute or a conditional promise? *Ans.* The gospel, in its most general sense, may be described as a declaration of the free mercy of God, for the salvation of fallen man by a Mediator. As man by his fall hath lost the image of God, and his favour; salvation includes the recovery of both these: It implies therefore repentance,

regeneration, holiness and perseverance, as well as justification, adoption and glorification; we must be saved from our sins, as well as from the wrath of God, if we are made truly happy. Jesus the Mediator *saves his people from their sins*; Mat. i. 21. as well as *delivers from the wrath to come*; 1 Thess. i. 10.

These several blessings included in salvation, though they are all bestowed freely by grace, yet have a connexion one with another, and dependance on each other; therefore some of them are represented as foregoing, others as following: some as means, the others as the end. Faith, repentance, regeneration, pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, obedience, the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and perseverance, may all be esteemed as means, with regard to the great and final blessing of glorification, which is the end; and indeed, every foregoing blessing may be reckoned in some sense, as a means with regard to that which follows. Again, some of the blessings included in salvation are to be wrought in us, as repentance, sanctification, &c. Others to be only bestowed upon us, as pardon of sin, adoption, eternal glory, &c. Those that are to be wrought in us, are sometimes set forth in scripture, as duties to be performed by us, to stir us up in a rational way to seek them; and those that are only to be bestowed upon us, are set forth as blessings to be conferred in consequence upon such duties performed; for God will save us still as intellectual creatures, under a moral government, and will have our rational powers used in obtaining and possessing this salvation; and therefore it is sometimes set forth, as a proposed agreement between two intelligent beings, God and man, and is called *the new covenant, a better covenant, and the word of reconciliation*; Heb. viii. 6. 8. 2 Cor. v. 19.

Upon these considerations the gospel or covenant of grace is sometimes represented as a mere declaration of grace; or an absolute promise in scripture, and sometimes as a conditional one. It is represented absolutely in these texts: Gal. iii. 8. *The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed.* Heb. x. 16, 17. *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.* Though the word covenant does usually signify an engagement on both sides, yet it is sufficiently evident, that in the language of scripture it does not always imply restitution or mutual agreement; for it is applied to the day and the night, and their stated courses, to the beasts of the field, as inhabitants of this earth; Jer. xxxiii. 20, 26. Gen. ix. 9, 10.

All the blessings of the gospel, both the means and the end, are represented in a way of free or absolute donation by the apostle Paul frequently. So Eph. ii. 8, 9. *By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works,—for we are his workmanship.*—In other places of scripture, the gospel is represented in a conditional way, as Mark xvi. 15, 16. *Preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth shall be saved.* Mat. xi. 28. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* John vii. 37. *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*—These are properly called conditional propositions in a logical rational view of the relations of things.

And it may be observed, that those very parts of our salvation, which in one scripture are commanded as duties, in another are promised as blessings. So faith and repentance are duties required. Mark i. 15. *Repent and believe the gospel: They are blessings bestowed.* Phil. i. 29. *To you it is given to believe; Acts v. 3. God hath exalted him—to give repentance:* And it is easy to bring instances of the like nature, concerning several other parts of our salvation. Now according to the distinctions I have laid down, the foregoing blessings which are as means, may be esteemed conditions with regard to others, which are as the end of them: So justification and adoption, as well as faith and repentance, and perseverance, all which are as means, may be called conditions in regard of glorification which is the last end. In that golden chain of salvation, Rom. viii. 30. Calling, justification, and glorification are three great links. *Whom he called, them he also justified: And whom he justified, them he also glorified.* But all agree if we are not called we shall not be justified: If we are not justified, we shall not be glorified. Thus every blessing of salvation that, in the necessary order of nature follows another, may be said to be suspended on that other, as a condition without which it shall not be bestowed.

Again, those blessings that are represented as our duties, and are to be wrought in us, may be said to be conditions with regard to consequent blessings that are only conferred upon us: For the word condition, in its most common sense, does by no means imply that it must be performed by our own power, nor does it include any thing of a valuable consideration or merit in it. And therefore in this sense, faith may be called a condition of justification, because faith and justification are connected together in scripture, and faith is represented as a foregoing blessing, and as a duty; justification is a consequent blessing, and a privilege which is suspended upon it. Gal. ii. 16. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that*

*we might be justified.* So the use of water is a condition of being made clean, so coming to the fire is a condition of being warmed, so the putting on a garment is a condition of being clothed, receiving a sealed pardon is the condition of a prisoner's release, committing the body to a physician is the condition of a sick or dying man's being healed: And, in this sense, faith is called a condition of our interest in Christ, by the assembly of divines, in their larger catechism under the question, "How is the grace of God manifested in the second covenant?" *Answ.* The grace of God is manifested in the second covenant, in that he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him, and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth and giveth his holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them that faith with all other saving graces, and to enable them unto all holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their faith and thankfulness to God, and as the way which he hath appointed to salvation."

Nor can I see any sufficient reason why the grace of faith, as a blessing conferred, may be called the condition of a following blessing, and yet faith, considered as a duty, may not be called a condition of the same blessing, since both the habit and the act of faith, are the effects of divine grace working in us and by us; and where faith is proposed as a duty, it is represented more evidently in a conditional way, than where it is mentioned as a mere blessing. And upon the same account, holiness and perseverance may be called the conditions of our complete salvation in heaven, because holiness and perseverance are foregoing blessings and duties, and complete salvation in heaven is the final privilege; Heb. xii. 14. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*; Mat. xxiv. 13. *He that endures to the end shall be saved.* Nor doth Doctor Owen, nor other moderate writers in this controversy, refuse the use of the word condition in such a sense.

What I have said concerning the various blessings of the gospel or new covenant, may be applied also to the seals or symbols of it, baptism and the Lord's-supper. These are seals on God's part, which he hath appointed for the confirmation of our faith, by the help of our senses, and that he might give us, as it were, a real pledge of the performance of his promises. Thus Abraham received circumcision a seal of the righteousness of faith; Rom. iv. 11. Thus we receive baptism as a seal of our regeneration by the holy Spirit: Thus the Lord's supper as a seal of our pardon and life by the crucifixion and death of Christ. But as great privileges as they are, thus granted to us, we must remember they are also duties to be performed by us, and are seals on our part of our engagement to be the Lord's. Nor have we any reason to expect the comforts that arise from these sealed

·blessings of the gospel, if we wilfully despise and neglect the use of the seals : And, in this sense, they may be called conditions of the privileges, and comforts that are annexed to them.

I desire it here to be noted, that I speak not this to encourage and promote the common use of the word condition in these cases ; for it is not used in scripture, except once in a parable ; and that not in the original, but only in our translation. The text is Luke xiv. 33. where it is not at all to the purpose of the present controversy : The conditions there mentioned are not the conditions of our salvation, but quite another thing : The design of the parable is to shew that those who have not courage to fight with their spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, must even make conditions of peace with them, that is, sit still and neglect Christ and religion. Besides the word condition, though it be an innocent and an useful and expressive word in the matter of duty and privilege, yet it hath been ill explained by some preachers, and worse understood by some hearers, and thereby it hath given great offence : I say this therefore only to shew that there is not so much heresy and poison in those four syllables, as some learned men pretend, and some unlearned believe and fear. If any man will fix such a rigid sense on the word condition, as is inconsistent with the grace of the gospel, and then say, the gospel has no conditions in it, I will not contend with him ; for he speaks consistently with himself, and with scripture too ; because scripture does not use the word : But if condition be taken in a very plain and common sense, for any one thing upon which another is suspended, I do not know any scripture that forbids the use of it but such texts as these, 1 Cor. x. 32. *Give no offence to—the church of God.* Rom. xv. 2. *Please your neighbour for his good to edification.*

SECT. II.—*Question II.* “ Is the gospel a new law ? ”  
Whether commands and threatenings belong to the gospel ?  
*Answer.* The word gospel or *εὐαγγέλιον*, though it signifies glad tidings in its original derivation, yet it is used in scripture sometimes in a larger sense, as well as sometimes in a more proper and limited one.

When it is used in its proper and limited sense, it denotes a mere declaration of the good-will of God for the recovery of fallen man : So the texts before cited Gal. iii. 8. Heb. x. 16, 17. And so 2 Cor. v. 19. where the gospel is called *the word of reconciliation*, the substance of it is, *that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.* So the first gospel that ever was preached to Adam, after the fall, was a free discovery of mercy ; Gen. iii. 15. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*

When the word gospel is used in its larger sense, it

includes predictions, commands, promises, threatenings, histories, examples, and almost whatever is necessary to enforce those duties upon the consciences of men, which are as means appointed, in order to partake of the privileges.

So the gospel contains in it narratives of matters of fact, or histories; Mark i. 1. *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ*, which seems to refer to all the following history of his life and death; and the four histories of the evangelists are called gospels, which title, if not divine, originally, yet has been the language of the church, through so many ages of christianity.

The word gospel contains, also, some doctrines; Col. i. 5. *The hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of truth of the gospel.* The gospel reveals truths before unknown to men. *So life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.* 2 Tim. i. 10. that is, doctrines of the heavenly state.

Commands. 2 Cor. ix. 13. *By the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ.* This subjection to the gospel, implies, that liberality is commanded in it. Acts xvi. 21. *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* This is the command given to the convinced jailor.

Promises and threatenings. Mark xvi. 15, 16.—*Preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.*

Predictions, particularly of the final judgment. Rom. ii. 16. *God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.* That is, according as I have preached.

It is plain, that sometimes the gospel is said to be the object of belief; as Mark i. 15. *Believe the gospel;* and there it signifies a declaration of grace to sinners. Sometimes it is said to be the object of obedience. Rom. x. 16. *All have not obeyed the gospel;* there it must include duties and commands: It is also evident, that in many places of the New Testament, the gospel is used to signify the whole ministry of the apostles, and all the subjects of their preaching, as Rom. i. 9. *Whom I serve in the gospel.* 1 Cor. ix. 14. *They that preach the gospel, should live of the gospel:* viz. be maintained, not merely for preaching a promise, but for the whole of their ministration; and therefore the apostle sometimes calls it my gospel, and our gospel, to signify his whole ministry. Nor do I think there is any great difference, whether we include commands, threatenings, &c. in the word gospel, taken in a large sense, or call them appendices and attendants of the gospel, taking the word in a sense more proper and limited: For the language of scripture seems to favour the one as well as the other. But this is the mischief that ariseth

between christians, that differ in their sentiments or expression of things, they imagine that while one is true, the other must needs be false; and then they brand each other with error and heresy; whereas if they would but attend to scripture, that would shew them to be both in the right, by its different explication of their own forms of speaking. The gospel hath, or hath not, commands and conditions in it, according to the various senses in which it is used. And, in this way of reconciliation, I cannot but hope for some success, because it falls in with the universal fond esteem that each man hath of his own understanding; it proves that two warm disputers may both have truth on their side: Now if ten persons differ in their sentiments, it is much easier to persuade all of them that they may be all in the right, than it is to convince one that he is in the wrong.

*Quest.* "Whether the gospel be a new law?" *Ans.* A law in the proper and full meaning of the word, includes these three things in it:—I. That there be some command given out, wherein some duty is required, or sin forbidden by the just authority of a superior.—II. That there be a sanction, or penalty annexed to the neglect of that duty required, or the commission of that sin forbidden: This sanction is not always expressed, but it is always implied; for the authority, that is sufficient to impose a command on any person, must also be sufficient to punish the breach of this command, and the offender is liable to bear it; otherwise the command would be a mere advice, and not a law. III. That the performance of this duty or duties required, and abstinence from these sins forbidden, is our proper righteousness, or matter upon which we are justified in the court of this law. These three things are implied in every strict and proper law: And I might prove it by instances of the chief laws that scripture speaks of, viz. the law of innocency, the law of nature, and the Jewish law.

Thus it was in the law of innocency, or covenant of works with Adam; the duties required, were all that the light of nature and reason enjoined to Adam in such circumstances, to which there was one positive prohibition added, *Thou shalt not eat of the tree of knowledge, &c.* and the sanction and penalty is expressed; *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;* Gen. ii. 17. and Adam's observance of this law would have been his righteousness in the sight of God, and justified him before God, according to the general language of this and all laws. *The man that doeth them shall live in them;* Gal. iii. 12. And it is generally agreed, that the tree of life was a symbol or seal of immortal life to Adam, if he obeyed the law.

Thus it was also in the law of nature, or moral law, which is very little different from the law of innocency, and this



law is plainly described by the apostle; Rom. ii. 12—15. *The work of the law is written in the hearts of the heathens, that is the general commands and penalties may be found by the light of nature, and "the doers of this law shall be justified."* Not that St. Paul means, that any person shall actually be justified by his doing, but that this is the way of justification, according to the law of nature.

Thus it was, also, in the Jewish law, or Sinai covenant, which was not the gospel, but an additional constitution, relating only to the Jewish nation, to be governed by God as their peculiar king. And it was really distinct from the covenant of grace or gospel of salvation, whereby Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the Israelites themselves were to be saved. Some persons, indeed, call it a legal dispensation of the covenant of grace, with whom I will not contend, but it is more agreeable to the language of scripture, to call it a distinct covenant, or a covenant or law of works, as a Jewish appendix to the gospel.

It is true, indeed, the Jewish law had much of grace in it as well as much of terror, and in many parts of it, it represented, typified, witnessed and held forth the gospel or covenant of grace, whereby all believers in all ages are to be saved, as well as the original law of nature, or the general covenant of works, whereby all men are cursed and condemned; and the apostle makes use of it in all these views in his epistles to the Romans, Galatians and Hebrews: But the Jewish law in its own proper nature and design, was a special or particular covenant of works with temporal promises and temporal threatenings.

The duties enjoined were chiefly contained in the four last books of Moses, and commonly called the moral, the ceremonial, and the judicial or political law: The sanction is written in many parts of those books; some of the threatenings or penalties were to be inflicted on particular offenders by the magistrate, such as, beating with rods, stoning to death, fines and amercements of money or goods, &c. Some were to be inflicted on the whole nation by God himself, if they transgressed this law, such as, plagues, famine, banishment from the land of Canaan, &c. Deut. xxviii. and the justifying righteousness according to this law, was their obedience to the precepts and ordinances of it. Deut. vi. 25. "And it shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us. So Deut. xxiv. 13. So Rom. x. v. Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doth those things shall live by them." Now let us consider how far the gospel partakes of the nature of a law, and may be so called:

I. The gospel, taken in a large sense, hath so much of the nature of a law in it, that there are commands given, duties en-

joined, sins forbidden ; and it hath a sanction also, for there are terrible penalties annexed to the contempt or rejection of it, even a *much sorer punishment* than was threatened for the breach of the law of Moses ; Heb. x. 28, 29. And because it partakes so much of the nature of a law, and hath so much resemblance to it, it is in a few places of scripture called a law ; without dispute ; Is. ii. 3. *The law shall go forth from Sion.* Rom. iii. 27. *The law of faith.*

II. The gospel is not a law, in the full sense of the word, for it wants the third requisite of a law. Whatsoever duties are required in the gospel, the performance of those duties by us is not described in scripture as the matter of our righteousness before God. There are many blessings promised, and blessednesses pronounced in the gospel upon the discharge of various duties of holiness, which are prescribed in the New Testament ; but in the court of God and his word, a sinner is not justified by any, or all these duties. Faith itself, which is the first and great requirement of the gospel, is not our justifying righteousness, but is the way and means to obtain, or be possessed of a justifying righteousness. The righteousness, by which we are justified under the gospel, doth not use to be represented as a righteousness wrought in us or by us, or as a righteousness of works, or as a righteousness of man ; but it is mentioned as a righteousness from without us, a given righteousness ; Rom. v. 17. a righteousness *imputed without works* ; Rom. iv. 6. And it is commonly called by St. Paul, *the righteousness of God*, it is a rectitude in the court of God including or inferring an absolution from guilt, and a right to heaven, appointed, prepared and bestowed by God himself, upon all them that believe ; and it is received by our faith or trusting in Christ. “ The righteousness of God is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe ; Rom. iii. 22. And it is called *the gift of righteousness* ; in Rom. v. 17. as a very distinct thing from the gift of faith ; Eph. ii. 8.

And here we may do well to take notice that though there are a great many differences between the gospel, which St. Paul preached, and the Jewish law, such as the multitude of arbitrary commands, in the natural and civil life, the burden of many ceremonies, the temporal promises and threatenings, &c. yet the grand point of difference, which he frequently insisted on, is the different way of justification, viz. That the one is by works, the other not. Always remembering that before God, as the great Lord of conscience, and with regard to eternal life, the Jews were to be justified and saved by the same gospel, and by faith, even as Abraham of old, and christians now. But with regard to God, considered as their political governor or king by the Sinai covenant, they were to be justified by works. The blessed apostle

therefore treating accurately of these matters ever distinguishes the gospel from the law, whether it be the law of nature, the law of innocency, the Jewish law, and indeed, from every thing that hath the full nature and form of a law, by this particular mark, viz. that our obedience to the law would be our justifying righteousness if we performed it ; but obedience to the gospel is not our justifying righteousness. So Rom. ii. and iii. chapters.\*

The Jewish law, considered as a special covenant, or as it includes or represents the general law of nature, says, *Peace to every man that worketh good*, to the Jew and the Gentile : and *the doers of the law shall be justified* ; Rom. ii. 10, 13. But *the righteousness of God*, that is, that righteousness whereby we are justified according to the gospel, is a *righteousness without the law*, a different thing from a law-righteousness, and is now manifested by the gospel, and comes upon every believer ; Rom. iii. 21, 27. So Rom. x. 5, 6. The righteousness of the law saith, *The man that doeth those things shall live by them* ; but the righteousness of faith saith, ver. 9. " If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe with thy heart, thou shalt be saved ;" So Gal. iii. 11, 14. *The law is not the faith*, for this very reason, because the law says, " Do this and live, or obey and be justified." But the gospel saith, " The just shall live by faith. Believe and thou shalt be saved." And in the following verses, the gospel is represented under the term and title of a promise to distinguish it more evidently from a law : " For if there had been a law which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the law ;" Gal. iii. 21. " But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." This is the common language of scripture.

And therefore instead of representing the several duties enjoined in the gospel as the matter of our righteousness before God, the New Testament sends us expressly to Jesus Christ for righteousness. So St. Paul tells us ; Rom. iii. 25. *Christ is set forth as a propitiation*, that God might justify them that believe, and yet be a just and righteous God ; Rom. v. 17, 19. " They that receive the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ." So " by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." *By the obedience of one*, that is, Christ, *shall many be made righteous*. God will have a righteousness in his gospel whereby grace shall reign to eternal life ; Rom. v. 21. though it is not a righteousness of our own works, as the objection in the very next verse ; Rom. vi. 1. evidently proves, and so Rom. x. 3. " Christ is the end of the law

\* See this more enlarged and explained in the " Harmony of all Religions," chapters v. and vi.

for righteousness to all that believe; 1 Cor. i. 30. Christ is made of God righteousness to us; and 2 Cor. v. 20, 21. where the gospel is described as the word of reconciliation, we are told that Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, and this righteousness is expressly called the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ; 2 Pet. i. 1. because it is the immediate result of his obedience and death. And it is upon this account in the Old Testament, he is more than once called the Lord our righteousness. But when I explain in what sense Christ is our righteousness, I would take more time and room, lest if I should not keep exactly to the common forms of expression, I should want a larger vindication.

Now though our obedience to the first and great command of the gospel, viz. Believing in Christ, is not our righteousness, lest it exclude Christ and the righteousness of God, yet it is the way of our partaking of this righteousness; and therefore our justification or justifying righteousness is so often called the righteousness of God by faith, and the righteousness of faith; ἡ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη, Rom. ix. 30. Rom. x. 6. δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πίστεως, and ἐπι τῇ πίστει, Phil. iii. 9. all which are more properly rendered, "The righteousness that is by or through faith," or, that comes upon our believing. In other places it is expressed, that we are justified by faith; but still in opposition to the works of any true and proper law. And it is in this sense that faith is said to be imputed or accounted for righteousness. Rom. iv. 5. it is not said, faith is our righteousness, or instead of a perfect righteousness, but λογίζεται ἡ δικαιοσύνη, that is, in order to our justification; meaning, that of all the graces, wrought in us, or actions done by us, faith is the only thing that God makes account of, or reckons to our advantage, in order to our justification, or our obtaining a justifying righteousness, and that not as a work or duty performed, as is proved by the context, but chiefly for this very reason, because it renounceth every thing of works, and goes out of self to depend entirely on grace, which is the design of all that fourth chapter, by a parallel instance of Abraham's not depending on his own sufficiency of nature, but on God's power to fulfil the promise.

Nor is this exposition of the words ἡ δικαιοσύνη forced or strange, for they are used exactly in the same sense in other places, even when it is joined with πίστις; Rom. x. 20. *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness*, that is, in order to his obtaining a justifying righteousness, or in order to justification; for verse 4. *Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one who believeth.*

This account of things gives a plain reason why the gospel justifies and accepts those persons who perform a honest and sincere, but a very poor, inconstant and imperfect

obedience to the commands contained in it, although those duties are there commanded in perfection, viz. because it is not our obedience to those commands that is the justifying righteousness of the gospel, but another righteousness that is given us, that is, a freedom from guilt, and a right to life, when we obey the first great command, viz. believing or trusting in Christ.

Whereas a proper law requires perfect obedience for justification : The language of every proper law is this ; *Cursed, or condemned, is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them* ; Gal. iii. 10. and *who-soever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all* ; James ii. 10. That can be no justifying righteousness according to a law, which doth not arise to the perfection of the command, both for kind, for degree, for continuance, and for every circumstance. But the gospel proposing another justifying righteousness to be received, only, by our faith, whether this faith be strong and perfect or no, yet, if it be true, it receives the righteousness, and the believer is justified. If a criminal lay hold on a pardon with a trembling paralytic hand, he is as safe from condemnation, as he that with courage and strength reaches out his arm to seize it ; because it is not his hand, but the pardon secures him. If an Israelite stung by a fiery serpent could but just look with half an eye to the brazen serpent, he was healed, as well as another that beheld it with strong and steady eyes ; Num. xxi. 8, 9. If the manslayer was never so lame and feeble, yet if he could but reach the city of refuge, he was as secure from the avenger, as he that fled to it with the swiftest feet ; Num. xxxv. 12. So he that commits his guilty sinful soul to Christ for salvation, though with a feeble faith, and far short of perfection, yet a righteousness is given him ; “ the righteousness of God is unto and upon all that believe, for there is no difference ; ” Rom. iii. 22. and a weak believer is as secure from hell as a stronger, though he cannot have so much present evidence or comfort : And the reason of his safety is, because his believing is not his justifying righteousness, but is only a means to attain it.

This is my present best set of thoughts upon this subject ; and though I have copied them all from the word of God, so far as I have been able to understand the meaning of it, yet some subtle disputer may arise and tell me, he could embarrass my scheme with so many objections, and press it with such powerful difficulties, as are far above my skill to solve, and so constrain me to renounce it.

If this disputer can shew me that any part of it is contrary to scripture, I renounce it freely ; but though he might perplex it with difficulties, which I could not easily answer, yet I would not merely for that reason be bound immedi-

tely to renounce it: For there are many texts of scripture itself which are so embarrassed and perplexed by the cavilling wit of the Deists or Socinians, that it may be exceeding hard to give a fair and satisfactory account of them; yet none of us, who are christians, dare to renounce the scripture, nor those very texts, that have so much darkness about them; because we have so much stronger proof of the truth of scripture. How many difficulties are there in the chronological and historical parts, that seem scarce reconcilable by all the learning and reason of men; and perhaps that Spirit only can reconcile them who knows what were his own design in writing, what the idea that the first writers fixed to each word, what the sense which they intended to convey to the first readers, and what accidental variations may have crept into the text by the ignorance or negligence, the bigotry or sacrilege of the transcribers. I have learned from my youngest years of philosophy, not to renounce any proposition, for which I see plain and sufficient evidence, from reason and revelation, though many difficulties may attend it, which I am not at present able to solve. I know the weakness of human nature.

SECT. III.—Yet that I may make a clearer way for this discourse, to the assent of my readers, I would give a hint or two how the chief objections that I can think of, may be removed: I. Some may oppose me by scripture, and say, Among all the texts that call the gospel a law, there is one that makes our blessedness evidently depend on our doing the work commanded therein. James i. 25. *Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.* Now this looks like justification by obedience to the commands of the gospel, which is the proper nature of a law.

Answer I. That the gospel, which hath advices, commands and threatenings belonging to it, should be sometimes called a law in scripture is no wonder, for the word law among the Jews, was in so frequent use upon all occasions, that not only doctrines, rules and constitutions were called laws, but even the natural and supernatural principles of human actions. So *the law of kindness*; Prov. xxxi. 26. for good humour, or a principle of love and civility. So *the law of sin*; Rom. vii. 25. for the principles of corrupt nature and evil inclinations. So *the law of the Spirit of life* for a principle of holiness; Rom. viii. 2. And yet if all the places where some suppose the gospel to be called a law, were well examined, we should find them reduced to a very few in reality: Whence it will appear that this is not the common language of scripture. The text cited in the objection, seems rather to refer to the moral law, which is called a *law of liberty*, because it is freed from its cursing and

condemning power by the gospel, and made easy to believers by their new nature : Now, surely, no christian will say that we are to be justified by doing the works of the moral law.

II. In those places of the New Testament where the gospel is, or is supposed to be called a law, there is generally some qualifying word added, as, *the law of faith, the law of liberty, &c.* that it may seem to stand in opposition to a law of works, and appear distinct from a strict and proper law.

There may be, as I have before hinted, many blessings promised, and blessedness pronounced upon obedience to any of the commands of God, whether in the moral law or gospel ; so Ps. i. 1. and cxix. 1, 2. so Mat. v. 3—11. But every such blessing doth not signify the justification of a sinner in the sight of God, his release from the guilt or obligation to hell, and his first right to heaven. He that obeys the duties of the law or gospel in any measure or degree, has some sort of blessedness pronounced on him by the favour and condescension of God, for *in keeping any of his commands there is great reward* ; Ps. xix. 11. especially to a soul in a state of grace and already justified by faith.

Objection II. Another may draw an argument from reason, and say, Whatsoever duties of righteousness are required in any constitution or covenant, the fulfilling those duties must in the very nature and reason of things be esteemed that righteousness upon which that constitution pronounces a man just or right in court ; so faith justifies us against the charge of unbelief, so repentance and sincere obedience justify us against the charge of impenitency and hypocrisy, and so perseverance justifies against the charge of apostacy, because it is a conformity to that rule or constitution which requires faith, repentance, perseverance, &c.

Answer. It must be granted, indeed, that in the very nature of things our faith justifies us against the charge of unbelief, so far as our faith goes ; and our repentance and our love to God justify us against the charge of impenitence, and hating God, so far as we do repent and love him ; and our meekness, humility and sincerity, justify us against the charge of pride and passion, and hypocrisy, so far as we are meek, humble and sincere : And in this sense the apostle John might say ; 1 John. iii. 7. *He that doth righteousness is righteous, as God is righteous* ; where righteousness is evidently used for holiness, and not in a forensic sense, to signify justification. But all our virtues and graces of faith, love, repentance, &c. are so very far from perfection, and so much below what the holiness of God and his commands require, that the Spirit of God in his word, hath not thought fit to honour these our works with the name of righteousness, when he *is describing* the way how a sinner is justified ; nor hath he *applied the term of justification* to those performances in those

places of scripture where with a plain design and exactness of expression he hath treated of the righteousness that justifies a sinner before God. And the holy apostle seems cautious of using the word justification, when he is speaking of his own sincere ; obedience ; 1. Cor. iv. 4—*I know nothing by myself, yet I am not hereby justified* ; though this justification refers only to the charge of any negligence in the discharge of his apostolical office.

Objection III. Yet it is evident that there are several texts which speak of our justification by works, as James ii. 24. our justification by our words ; Mat. xii. 37. and our right to heaven by doing the commands ; Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and enter through the gates into the city.* Answer. In those places of scripture where the word justification is used and attributed to our duties or graces, we must consider in what sense justification is taken.

1. There is a justification before men, and a justification in our own consciences ; and in both these respects our repentance, our love to God, our good works, all justify us against the charges of wicked men, and against the charges of Satan's temptations, or our own doubting consciences, that is, our repentance shews we are not impenitent, and our good works shew that we are not full of wicked works ; and good works may be said to justify us also against the charge of a false and hypocritical dead faith, for they prove that our faith is lively and true ; and this is that justification St. James intends, chapter ii. for verse 18. he says, *I will shew thee my faith by my works* ; and it is in this sense that he speaks of justifications by works. So *Abraham was justified* from the charge of a dead faith, by his zeal for God in offering up his Son ; James ii. 21—23. Thus was the scripture fulfilled, that is, thus was the truth and honour of the scripture maintained and cleared, which declares Abraham to be justified by faith. Now though this act of Abraham's faith here mentioned ; and Gen. xv. 6. exercised on the express promise of the Messiah, be not the first act of faith that ever he put forth, and though he might be in a justified state long before ; yet every repeated act of true faith confirms the justifying sentence, and shews the way of his first justification : And so every good work he performed may be said, in another sense to confirm his justification too, as it proves the truth of his faith, and evidences him to be justified.

2. There is a justification at the day of judgment, which is only declarative, and designed to publish and declare to all the world the equitableness of God's final sentence, adjudging some to heaven and some to hell : And there our own holiness, imperfect as it is, may justify us against the charge of being utterly wicked ; what good words we have spoken may justify us against the charge of being always guilty of evil or idle words : They



serve to distinguish the character of saints and sinners, and to make it appear there is a difference in their practice, as well as in their recompences, as the process of that awful day is represented; Mat. xxv. 31—46. And it is in this sense that our Saviour saith concerning the day of judgment; Mat. xii. 37. *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*; that is, your words as well as your actions shall have a share in determining your character before men and angels in that day. And that text also in the Rev. chap. xxii. 12, 14, refers evidently to the last judgment, where it is said, *Behold: I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be; blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.* The sense of it is, that those who persevere to the end, in a sincere obedience to the commands of Christ, in all the duties of holiness, shall have a public, adjudged and declared right to the immediate possession of heaven; which is a very different thing from the justification of a sinner in the sight of God, by his believing or trusting in Christ, which gives him the first right; and which is the precise subject of St. Paul's discourse, Romans, chapters ii. iii. iv. and v. and Galatians, chapters ii. and iii.

It is on this matter that our divines are wont to make a distinction between the "jus hæreditarium," or the right of heirship which a son has to his Father's estate, as soon as he is born, supposing his father to be dead, and the "jus aptitudinarium," which is a right of fitness, and a right to the immediate possession, and this he has not till the age of manhood. Nor is this distinction ill-framed, nor unaptly applied to the present case; for scripture gives a plain foundation for it, viz. that we have the right of heirship at our first believing, and the right of actual fitness, when we have fulfilled all the services God hath appointed us in this life. The scriptures that naturally lead to this distinction are these: The right of heirship by faith is very plain; Rom. iv. 11, 13, 16. Gal. iii. 26, 29. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Nor doth the apostle make much distinction between our right to heaven by justification, and that by adoption or inheritance, for both justification and adoption come by faith; and he intermingles both, as they most fitly answer his present design; which is evident by comparing the process of his discourse from Rom. iv. 1—16. and Rom. v. 17, 18, 21. And then there is the right of fitness for immediate possession; Heb. x. 36. "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise;" and this is the right intended; Rev. xxii. 14. Now we may suppose both the right of heirship

and of fitness to be joined in that text; Heb. vi. 12. *Who through faith and patience inherit the promises.* Through faith they are made heirs at first, and through continuance in faith and patience they are become actual inheritors. Nor is that text Rom. x. 10. much unlike, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Here justification is attributed to faith, and salvation to the outward profession of christianity, including all the proper effects and evidences of faith in a holy life. . And though salvation in many places of scripture is put for justification, because justification is salvation begun, yet when they are more accurately distinguished, the one is attributed to faith, the other to works, or to faith and works together.

Now, whatever other sorts of justification may be mentioned in scripture, yet this justification of a sinner through faith, requires such a righteousness as must secure us from all the charges and penalties of all the guilt of every sin both original and actual, from all the charges of God's most holy and broken law, from all the charges of the imperfection of our faith, repentance, and our best works, and must set a sinner right and make him righteous, and and give him a right to life in the court of that God, who justified Abraham and David without works, by imputing righteousness to them, and continues under the gospel the same way to justify the ungodly; Rom. iv. 5, 6. that is, all that we do in a way of duty or godliness, is not respected in this court, but we are looked upon as ungodly, and without all righteousness in ourselves, and as such have a righteousness, or a right to life bestowed on us, or are justified of mere grace.

And though here and there, for wise purposes, an expression may be dropped occasionally in scripture, that may favour another way of speaking, yet in the descriptions of the gospel, the way of a sinner's justification in the sight of God at his conversion, is never put upon fulfilling of the gospel-duties, as the matter of his justifying righteousness; and therefore the gospel is not a proper law: And whatsoever forms of speech some persons may fancy agreeable to the nature and reason of things, yet this which I have described is the most common way wherein the penmen of scripture represent those things, when they seem to aim at an accurate and distinct description of the law and gospel: Now scripture is our surest rule of speaking in matters of pure revelation.

To sum up all in short: The word law is taken in various senses in the bible: In some places it means inward principles of action, as *the law of kindness, the law of sin*: sometimes it signifies only directions and rules of life, as Prov. xiii. 14. *The law of the wise, that is, rule of wisdom.* In other places it includes all the orders and injunctions that re-

late to one subject; as *the law of the Nazarite*; Num. vi. 13. *the law of the burnt-offering*; Lev. vi. 9. Sometimes it is taken in so large a latitude as to take in all doctrines, counsels and advices, commands, promises, threatenings, including prophecies, histories and examples also; so the law frequently signifies all the five books of Moses. And in these senses the gospel in its largest signification has several laws belonging to it, and itself may be called a law. The scripture indulges a sparing use of it in such a sense. But the word law in its most proper and strict sense signifies a constitution where duties are required, which if neglected, subject the offender to a penalty, and if performed, they are his justifying righteousness; and in this sense, scripture doth not at all favour the application of this name to the gospel: For it is abundantly evident, that the words law and gospel, taken in their most proper and limited senses, are constantly distinguished from each other, and set in direct opposition in the New Testament.

Thus have I thrown into some order those few, plain, reconciling thoughts between the contending parties of christians, and am already almost in pain to think that I shall a little displease all parties, because all these thoughts will hardly square and adjust themselves exactly to any of the popular and settled schemes of orthodoxy; or at least, they will never agree with the extremes on either hand: Yet if they appear to be drawn merely from the scripture, and to speak the language of the holy writers, then this discourse will approve itself to those who maintain the most sacred regard to the bible: and those schemes should be a little moulded and bent, to adjust them to the language of scripture, even when it uses different forms of speech. But I shall not enter farther into this controversy, because my design is to soften the angry tempers of men, that they may not rage against each other when they use different forms of speaking, as the scripture itself does, and make an apology for both sides, while they agree in the things that are most substantial and necessary.

#### SECT. IV.—*Reconciling Sentiments.*

Now that I may proceed in this reconciling work, I shall follow this method:—I. Represent the different apprehensions and different language of men in preaching the gospel.—II. Mention some of the causes or occasions of these different apprehensions.—III. Give a hint or two of the conveniences and inconveniences of each of these ways of preaching.—IV. Shew the safety and sufficiency of each, with regard to salvation.—V. Conclude with a word or two of request or humble advice.

I. Let me represent the various apprehensions of men in those matters: But here I would be understood to describe

only the moderate men among those who are called calvinists, and those that are named new-methodists ; as for the high-flyers, or extreme and rigid party-men of either side, I leave them out in my present account, while I mention the little differences among the men of moderation, among whom I reckon far the greatest part of the protestant dissenters in England, to be at this time, and I hope I am not mistaken in this opinion.

Some when they read or pronounce the words law or gospel, take them generally in their loosest and largest sense, and so they unite their names, and make them consistent together ; others are ready to take those words in their limited and proper sense, and then they divide them into very distinct things, and will not allow their names so promiscuous a use.

Some ministers love to explain the gospel in a more legal way, and describe it as a conditional covenant that requires agreements and stipulations from men ; they insist much on vowing and resolving to submit to the commands of Christ, and with a lively zeal and powerful eloquence, they enforce the duties of repentance, sincere obedience, watchfulness and perseverance ; and shew how much the promises of life, heaven and glory, peace and daily pardon depend on these qualifications and performances, pronouncing the terrible threatenings of damnation on the impenitent, the unbelieving, and the disobedient, to awaken the secure sinner, and stir up the slothful christian. Others delight more in representing the gospel as a declaration of grace and free promise of salvation to sinners ; a promise of pardoning mercy, sanctifying grace, and everlasting glory to sinful and perishing criminals, and invite sinners to receive all this grace, to accept of this salvation, and to trust in this Saviour, according to the offers of the gospel : When its truths are revealed, the first sort chuse to say, that the moral law of nature in the hand of Christ, commands us to believe them ; when its duties are mentioned, they rather say, the law of nature in the hand of Christ requires obedience to them ; and that while the gospel in its proper language promises salvation to believers, the moral law, or law of nature, binds condemnation on the unbeliever, and the impenitent ; but the pure gospel is all grace and mercy : And they preach the law of works in the perfection of its demands and terror of its penalties, to drive sinners for refuge to the gospel : and they press the duties of holiness on their hearers from a comfortable sense of their deliverance from hell, and from gratitude to Christ, as evidences of their faith, as preparatives for heaven, and as necessary, both in the nature of things, and by divine appointment, in order to our final happiness.

Those that follow the conditional way of preaching the gospel, describe the chief act of faith, as a consent of will to submit themselves to him in all his offices ; a consent to take him for

their *Prophet*, and resolution to make all his instructions their rule and guide; a consent to take him for their *Priest*, to make their peace with God, and obtain their pardon; a consent to own him for their *King*, and promise sincere obedience to him as their *Lord*, in all his commands; but still with a humble dependence on his Spirit and grace, to enable them to fulfil these resolutions.

Those that preach the gospel in its more free and absolute form, describe faith in Christ as the flight of a poor, guilty, perishing sinner to an only refuge; and they make its chief act to consist in a trusting or committing the soul, ignorant, guilty, hard-hearted and sinful as it is, into the hand of Christ, with a sincere desire to have it enlightened by him as their *Prophet*, pardoned and reconciled to God through him as their *Priest*, and subdued to all willing obedience to him, and by him, as their *Lord* and *King*; humbly expecting that he will do all this for them; and this is, in their opinion, the best way of addressing themselves to poor sinners, who find themselves so dark, so sinful, so feeble and inconstant in their best obedience and purposes, that they dare not resolve upon any thing, and can hardly say, they heartily vow and promise a submission to Christ in all things; but that they can better apply to him in a way of trust and dependence, humbly desiring and hoping he will work all this in them by his free grace, while they wait upon him in his appointed means.

The one are ever persuading their hearers to bind their souls to God, by solemn vows and covenants, even in particular duties, believing this to be the most effectual way to guard against every sin, and best secure their obedience and constancy under every temptation: The other are afraid to urge so much vowing and resolving on the consciences of men, lest they thereby lead them into a legal frame, under a spirit of bondage, and lest their consciences be more troublesomely entangled and ensnared after every broken vow, and their faith and hope be too much discouraged; that faith and hope which ought to be the constant springs of their obedience. They advise their people, therefore, rather to commit their souls afresh continually to the care of Christ, as 2 Tim. i. 12. to believe he accepts them, and to walk watchfully, without any particular, formal, and explicit vows. Though it must be confessed, that with regard to Christians of different tempers and temptations both these methods have had very good success.

Some are sons of thunder, "Boanerges," and frighten the profane out of their security, by many terrors that are written against those who obey not the gospel; and they enforce obedience on the consciences of believers, chiefly by way of rewards and punishments: The other are like *Barnabas's*, sons of conso-

*lation, and persuade sinners to accept of the offered grace, by all the allurements of the compassion of God, and by the dying love of a Redeemer, beseeching them to be reconciled: And they draw out the hearts of believers to repentance, and lead them with the spirit of power and love to an easy and connatural obedience by the constraints of the love of Christ, and by a humble persuasion of their acceptance in him unto eternal life.*

In short, the one dwell most upon the duties of the gospel in their sermons, in order to qualify their hearers for the privileges: the other insist most upon the privileges and comforts of the gospel, in order to invite and allure them to fulfil the duties, and to give their hearers strength and delight in the discharge of these duties.

I would not here be understood, as though I supposed either of those ministers never to mingle mercy and terror, precepts, penalties, and promises; for it must be acknowledged, there are some persons of each opinion, in whom all the talents of a preacher happily unite, and they honourably sustain both characters, the sons of thunder, and the sons of consolation; and all of them make conscience of publishing to men both divine grace and their duty, all of them preach *repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*; but those who have chosen one scheme of divinity for their own, more generally bend their ministry the one way, and those who have chosen the other preach more usually in the other way.

All our protestant confessions of faith, and I would persuade myself that our ministers, at least among the non-conformists, agree that, though duties are required to be performed by us, yet the grace that is necessary to perform them is given freely to us: that though faith and repentance, and sincere obedience, are indispensibly necessary, in order to our final salvation, yet they are not the justifying righteousness upon account of which our sins are pardoned, and eternal life is bestowed upon us: That the obedience and death, and intercession of Christ, as a proper high-priest and sacrifice, are the only foundation of our acceptance with God, and ground of all our hopes; and that from him, as a head of influence, we must receive all grace, whereby we are conducted safe to glory.

Both sides agree that we are to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling, but that it is God who worketh in us to will and to do*; Phil. ii. 12, 13. *That we are saved by the faith of the Son of God, and not by works, lest any should boast*; yet that we must also be *created in Christ Jesus unto good works, for God hath appointed that we should walk in them*; Eph. ii. 8—10. In the next place,

II. That I may make a little further apology for those that are humble, honest and sincere on both sides, I would consider,

the various causes or occasions, whence different apprehensions of men about these things may arise : And here we shall find poor frail weak mankind, almost universally born and brought up in prejudices to some party or other, encompassed with a thousand things that tend to influence the judgment, and incline it insensibly toward some particular opinion ; so that a whole scheme of doctrines built upon a pure and zealous and laborious search after truth, without any manner of bias or corruption on any side, is scarce to be found in human nature. There is no man alive free from these weaknesses. Happy the mind that has the fewest of them.

“ *Nam vitii nemo sine nascitur, optimus ille est  
Qui minimis urgetur.*”———Hor.

It may be these ministers themselves, who differ in opinion, are of very different natural complexions and tempers, and this hath a secret influence in swaying their mind, their studies, their judgment and ministry one way or the other ; though all those who agree in natural temper, are not always of the same opinion.

Or it may be, they had an education under teachers and tutors of different sentiments, or have met with books of different principles and opinions, which have made a strong and lasting impression upon their minds, and engaged them betimes into one party, before they had strength of judgment to determine their opinions upon just arguments.

Some persons in order to settle their judgments in these points, have studied more and prayed less, and some have prayed more and studied too little ; and some on both sides have studied hard, and prayed much, and sought earnestly the instructions of the blessed Spirit, and yet have fallen into different ways of thinking in those parts of christianity which are not of necessity to salvation, and have been suffered to follow different forms of speech for wise purposes in the providence of God. Some little accident or occurrence of life, or some sudden start of thought, while the balance of the judgment was in suspense, has perhaps given it a turn to one side or the other, and perhaps determined it for their whole lives.

Some have happened to form their set of doctrines at first more by their own reasoning powers, and drawn their schemes of religion from what they imagine the most natural connection, the necessity or congruity of things, and they call the bible only to their assistance, and seek proper texts to confirm their own system : Others draw the whole scheme of doctrines from a constant and intent application to the holy scripture, and call in reason to their assistance only in order to understand and methodize those doctrines : And though the first way of study in matters

of the christian religion, is by no means to be justified, yet too many have unhappily practised it ; and though the latter way is much to be preferred, and most likely to come near the truth, yet it is not followed by all who preach the gospel ; and no wonder then that ministers may differ in their thoughts.

Such is the weakness of human nature, that as some of us form and build up our first opinions upon very slight and insufficient grounds, and there are many who persist in them, and strongly maintain them without an honest re-examination, so others of us change our opinions upon reasons as slight and feeble and insufficient. Some persons having been perplexed with one or two great difficulties in that scheme of sentiments which they have professed, and being unable to grapple with them, have by swift or slow degrees, abandoned that whole scheme, and fell in with another, which perhaps hath equal or greater difficulties in it ; never considering that the whole system of christianity, with all its appendices, is so vast, and our view of things is so narrow, and our knowledge so imperfect, that a sharp disputant may push some parts of all our human schemes into great perplexities, even such as human reason can hardly solve ; and perhaps God alone knows how to reconcile them, in whose single view all things lie for ever fair and open, perfectly consistent, and are comprehended at once.

Or it may be the way and method of divine grace in the first conversion of the one and the other was very different. Some were wrought upon at first more by legal methods, and the terrors of the law of God, and they find them still to have the greatest and most powerful influence on their consciences ; others from their wild wanderings were brought home to Christ by gentle discoveries of divine love in the death of a Saviour : Some, like the jailor ; Acts xvi. 26—30. have had their consciences shaken as with an earthquake, they came in *trembling* and crying out, *what must I do to be saved?* Others had their hearts softly opened, as was the heart of Lydia, verse 14. of the same chapter, and *they received the word of grace* and the gospel ; and they find the work of God carried on upon their own souls, still by the most evangelical methods. Now a man's own early experiences in the things of religion, will naturally have a great influence on his opinions ; and God in his infinite wisdom hath ordered it should be so, that persons of every sort and temper, and humour, young and old, sinners and saints, under every kind of temptation, might meet with some ministers of the gospel, and some sermons and writings to suit their taste, to hit their case, and be the most effectual means of their salvation. The third thing I proposed here was to shew briefly,

III. That as each of these ways of preaching have their several advantages, so each of them have their special incon-



veniences too, if they are perpetually and only insisted on, unless well managed by the extraordinary prudence of the preacher. The one aims most at the glory of divine equity, in rewards and punishments, and contends much for the sincerity of God in all his transactions with men : The other seems to look most at honouring the sovereignty, the riches and freedom of divine grace, and God's infinite condescension and compassion to sinful creatures.

One seems to lead christians more to a strict scrupulosity in every action, in order to make up the undoubted evidences of a gospel-perfection, which they call sincerity, and thereby to raise their hopes of escaping hell and obtaining heaven ; it drives the soul to duties, and maintains a trembling watchfulness ; but is in danger of governing it by a spirit of bondage, and of keeping our faith and comfort very low. The other leads to equal holiness, or perhaps to higher degrees of it by the delightful constraints of a filial love, by the sweet influences of divine consolation ; but there may be some danger of encouraging negligence and presumption, and that not only in sinners, but even sometimes in believers themselves, if not wisely managed and guarded.

Upon this subject I might here give my pen into the hand of some sprightly advocate of each party, and have forty more pages written for me speedily, without any thought or labour of mine ; this would swell my essay up finely, and enlarge it to a volume, with many a name of arminian and antinomian dealt about freely on the opposite opinions : For the supposed advantages and disadvantages on both sides, are frequently mentioned as arguments of each party against the other ; but I shall not think necessary to insist longer on them here for that very reason : And though these sort of moral arguments, drawn from the design and tendency of things, may be justly used on both sides, and on both sides have some degree of truth and force in them, yet both may not have equal force : Nor do I think it inconsistent with my design in this reconciling discourse, to declare my own sentiments : " For a man may be very happy in making peace between two quarrelling neighbours, though he is well persuaded that one hath the better side of the cause, and in a friendly manner expresseth it too."

I will not be ashamed then to declare, that in my opinion, one method of preaching the gospel hath greater advantages in it, and fewer inconveniences than the other ; supposing still that we guard against extremes : That one seems more con-natural to the genius of the gospel, as it is distinct from a covenant of works, and seems to suit better with the glorious designs of divine grace. My own experience in the things of religion, my observations of some others, and my diligent search of the holy scriptures, I hope not without divine aid, hath led my thoughts rather to favour and practice the more evangeli-

cal method of preaching most frequently : But another person who follows a different way may tell me, he came by his turn of thoughts the same way as I did by mine and my charity demands that I believe it. Yet while both sides maintain those great truths, wherein I mentioned the general agreement of our protestant confessions of faith, I cannot conceive that either of them can lead sinners astray from salvation, and that is the fourth proposal I made, viz.

IV. To shew the real safety of each of these methods in ministering the gospel both to saints and sinners, and that is evident, because they agree in the most necessary and essential parts of it. Both of them preach grace and duty, justification by Christ, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and teach men all that is of necessity to be believed and practised in order to salvation.

If two men sitting under a different ministry are brought sincerely to repent of all sin, and to love God with all their heart, can I imagine that one shall be damned, because he tells me he repents in obedience to the commands of the gospel ? Or the other, because he doth it in obedience to the moral law in the hand of Christ, supposing the pure gospel to have no command in it ? If two sinners are persuaded to accept of Christ Jesus for their Lord and Saviour, can I ever believe that God will condemn one of them, because he first resolved to obey Christ as his Lord, and thereby took encouragement to trust him as a Saviour ? Or that God will punish the other for ever, because he first trusted in Christ as a Saviour, and thereby found his will sweetly inclined to submit to him as his Lord ? Where all duties required in the gospel are sincerely performed, can I ever be persuaded men shall be ever sent to hell, merely because they do not agree about the logical relations that these duties have one to another, or to their salvation, while both agree to lay the Lord Jesus Christ, and *his righteousness*, or his obedience and death, as the only foundation of all their hopes ?

If either of these ways of preaching the gospel, were so contrary to scripture, and such abominable and pernicious errors in the sight of God, as angry and quarrelling men of both sides represent them, I cannot persuade myself that God would so far have favoured both, in these instances following, viz.

I. If either of these ways of preaching were so criminal and dangerous as some have supposed, I cannot think the Spirit of God would have used those expressions in scripture, which sometimes seem to represent the covenant of grace in one form, and sometimes in another : nor that he would have suffered the penmen of his holy word to have given occasion so such different sentiments on this subject among his favourites, his holy worshippers, and those who have sought his directions and his grace with much importunity and perseverance.

II. If either of these ways of preaching were so dangerous as some have imagined, I cannot believe that the blessed God would ever have attended both these ways of preaching with his blessing, so far as to convert great numbers of sinners by them, and edify his saints; but it is sufficiently evident that ministers of very different apprehensions in these points have been owned and blessed of God to the conversion, comfort and salvation of many souls.

III. If either of these representations of the gospel were so very dangerous, I cannot imagine, that persons of good understanding, of deep learning, of large knowledge and religion, of long experience, and of great holiness, should maintain their opinions in these things so very different to their lives' end, if their salvation were in such extreme hazard thereby, however in the infancy of their christianity they might have received and embraced these different apprehensions. Surely if these points had been of so dreadful and dangerous importance on either side, God would have granted a greater union in sentiment to so great a number of his children, who laboured in sincere enquiry after truth, constant and fervent prayer for the teaching of the blessed Spirit, and were truly zealous for his honour. Divine goodness surely would not have suffered such multitudes of holy souls, on either side, to continue always in mistakes of so terrible consequence, as some disputers have represented them.

SECT. V.—*Advices or Requests.*

May I be permitted at the end of this discourse to drop a word or two of general advice, or rather of humble request to all, but especially to my younger brethren in the ministry.

I. "Pay a constant and sacred reverence to the language of scripture," and let it appear in these following instances:

1. Let the forms of speech that are used in those scriptures where the doctrines of the gospel are expressly laid down and proved, be the speech which you commonly teach those doctrines; and let the language wherein warm and pathetical exhortations are given in scripture, be the language which you generally imitate in your affectionate addresses, to the consciences of saints and sinners; the one as well as the other are given for our example. Whereas if we should preach and explain the deepest truths in all the affectionate forms and flourishes of speech and metaphor, it is the way to lead the judgments of hearers astray; but while we submit ourselves to the words which the Holy Spirit useth as our pattern, both in teaching, and also in exhorting, we may humbly expect his inward teaching to enlighten our own understandings, and make our labours in the gospel powerful to the salvation of them that hear us.

2. Let those words which are not used in scripture never be zealously maintained and insisted on as necessary to salva-

tion, and especially where they give great offence : Nor let those terms and ways of expression which scripture useth but very seldom, and upon particular occasions, be the perpetual or constant language of your ministry, in opposition to those expressions and ways of representation which scripture most frequently delights to use ; and let no authentic systems of divinity, to which you are most inclined, nor the names of great men ever prevail with you to break this rule.

3. Dare not indulge yourself in a disgust to any scripture language, or an aversion to those scriptures which seem to run in a style and expression different from the language which you generally chuse ; for even those expressions are designed for useful purposes by the Holy Spirit, and doubtless have attained some happy end in the providence of God, in particular cases and persons : If you should once encourage such a vicious humour, it might proceed so far at last, as to render a great part of the bible the object of your disgust. Be sure therefore always to maintain upon your spirit such a reverential tenderness for the holy scripture, that you may never dare to rail against any expressions that scripture useth, nor oppose them with violence, without a modest distinction in what sense they are proper, and in what sense they are to be avoided. And this leads me to the second request.

II. When you hear any ministers, in preaching the gospel use the words, " free and absolute, conditional, unconditional, promises, laws, threatenings, commands, &c. exercise so much, charity as to believe they use them in such a sense as the scripture approves of, and as secures the salvation of men," according to their sincerest apprehensions.

If the preacher speak of the gospel as a free and absolute promise, always suppose he intends also, that all the duties of repentance and holiness are necessary, in order to salvation, though he does not like to call them conditions. If another should insist much on conditions in the gospel, suppose he means none of them to be performed merely by your own strength, nor to include any thing of merit in them. If he speak of the laws of Christ, understand him concerning all those rules and directions and commands, which Christ hath given to his followers, but not in the strict and perfect notion of a law. Even if he calls the gospel a law, believe that he intends only in the largest sense, and doth not mean that we are justified in the sight of God, by our performance of the duties of this law, believe that he intends it only in the largest sense, and doth not mean that we are justified in the sight of God, by our performance of the duties of this law as the proper matter of our righteousness before God : Or if he should *happen to mention* any such thing as justification *by our good works of holiness, &c.* take due heed to the *connexion, and let charity persuade you that he is speaking concerning*

justification before men, or justification in our own consciences, or in the day of judgment, and not of a sinner's justifying righteousness in the sight of God, when he is first converted and accepted of him through faith in Jesus Christ.

Suffer not your disgust and anger immediately to be kindled at the sound of any of these words, as though they were at once undermining and perverting the gospel of Christ. Nor ever give yourself leave to reproach ministers, as no preachers of the gospel, merely because they chuse other modes of expression than those which you must esteem, and frequently use; for such a conduct will warp and bind down the consciences and spirits of men to a narrow and an uncharitable partiality. This will render every sermon offensive to them that is not conceived just in their beloved language, and will utterly prevent their profit by the various gifts Christ has bestowed on his ministers. There are some common christians in our age, who are most unhappy instances of this unchristian temper; and it is to those persons chiefly that I give this second advice.

III. "Avoid all the high flights and extremes of zealous party-men," and which way of preaching soever you approve and pursue, be sure to guard against all extremes, both of notion and language. Let the hopes of exalting free-grace never persuade you to neglect to enforce the duties of the gospel, and press them with zeal on the consciences of all men: Nor let the fear of encouraging licentiousness ever tempt you to turn the gospel of grace into a covenant of works: For God, in his gospel of free-grace, hath sufficiently provided for the honour of his holiness, and the sanctification of his own children.

You will tell me here perhaps, that scripture itself useth expressions as high upon particular occasions, and as much leaning to extremes as any men of party among us. But remember then, that the scripture uses such strong and high expressions not on one side only, but on both sides, and infinite wisdom hath done this more forcibly to argue and impress some present truth or duty: But while it is evident the holy writers have used high expressions, strong figures of speech, and vehement turns on both sides, this sufficiently instructs us that we should be moderate in our censures of either side, and that the calm doctrinal truth, stripped of all rhetoric and figures, lies nearer to the middle, or at least that some of these appearing extremes, are more reconcileable than angry men will generally allow. If the apostle charges the Corinthians, *so run that ye may obtain*; 1 Cor. ix. 24. and tells the Romans, "It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy"; Rom. ix. 16. we may plainly infer that our running and his mercy, our diligence and divine grace, are both necessary to our salvation.

IV. "Let the particular tempers, temptations and dangers of persons with whom you converse, or with whom you preach,

together with the growing errors of the times, have always some weight with you to bend your ministry a little more the one way or the other : And never affect to preach these matters in a disputative and controversial way, but rather in a plain and practical form, except the temptations of the age and nation, or of particular churches or christians seem to demand it. And indeed this seems to be one great reason, why scripture itself in different parts of it sometimes manages the argument in a way of dispute, and at other times gives a different practical turn to the same truth, and uses so different language in the representation of the same doctrines. For the several books of scripture were written according to the various necessities of the church of God, and to obviate temptations of contrary kinds, and to prevent the danger of errors arising, by running to extremes on either side.

In the last age, in the times of the civil wars, antinomianism and errors of that nature, were very common in the nation : This turned the labours and study of many pious men to vindicate and preach up the duties of the gospel, and works of holiness, as the proper business of the day. In this present age, the popish and pelagian doctrines of justification by works, and salvation by the power of our own free-will, are publicly maintained and preached abundantly through the land : the socinian and arminian errors are revived and spread exceedingly, whereby Jesus Christ is robbed of his godhead, or his satisfaction, or both, and the blessed Spirit denied in the glory of his offices : For deism and natural religion, in opposition to christianity, daily prevail.

Now, perhaps, some may think it the duty and business of the day to temporize, and by preaching the gospel a little more conformably to natural religion, in a more rational or legal form, to bring it down as near as may be to their scheme, that we may gain them to hear and approve it, or at least, that we may not offend them. But I am rather of an opinion, that we should in such a day stand up for the defence of the gospel in the full glory of its most important doctrines, and in the full freedom of its grace ; that we should preach in its divinest and most evangelical form, that the cross of Christ, by the promised power of the Spirit, may vanquish the vain reasonings of men, and that this despise doctrine triumphing in the conversion of souls, may *confound the wise and the mighty*, and silence *the disputers of this world*. This was the bold and glorious method St. Paul took at Corinth, where learning and reason and philosophy flourished in pride ; but they yielded several trophies of victory to the preaching of the cross. Paul could use the *wisdom of words* whensoever he had occasion for it, and had the *excellency of speech* at command when he pleased : This appears in several parts of his writings ; yet in his sermons at Corinth he disclaimed it all, and determined to *know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and him crucified* ; 1 Cor. ii. 2.

Happy that man who hath attained the holy skill of joining promises and commands, duties and privileges, authority, terror and grace ; and who mingles them all wisely in his ministry ; who hath learned of St. Paul the divine art of addressing himself to the reason, the consciences, and the passions of men in such a variety of expressions of power, terror and love, as may most effectually answer the ends of his office. Happy is he that knows how to display the gospel in all forms under which scripture represents it, to preach to the Jews, and to teach the gentiles ; to talk to the righteous and the wicked in proper language, to the obstinate rebel, to the trembling sinner, and the mourning saint. Happy is he that *becomes all to all that he may gain the more souls ;* 1 Cor. ix. 19—22. *sometimes as without the law, yet under a law to Christ ; sometimes as with the law, yet free from the bondage of it ; that never strives about words to no profit, but knows how to divide the word of truth aright, and to give every one their portion : This is the workman that needs not to be ashamed, and hath most reason to hope for success ;* 2 Tim. ii. 14, 15.

To conclude ; “ Let us all apply ourselves with unbiassed minds, with new diligence and fervent prayers, to search the word of God, and draw all our notions of the gospel thence :” Let us enquire into the spiritual state, the dangers and necessities of the people to whom we minister, and this will be of great use to guide us to proper subjects and methods of discourse.

Let our conversation be such, as becomes the gospel in every form of it, whether absolute or conditional. Let our close walking with God be exemplary and instructive, that men may see our religion as well as hear it, and all may confess, that while we preach the gospel, we are zealous observers of the law. Let us maintain upon our own hearts a sweet and honourable sense of the riches of free-grace in Christ, together with a tender sense of the evil of sin, and a lively delight in holiness, that the daily experience of our own souls, and our inward christianity which is taught us, and wrought in us by the Spirit of God, may instruct us how to preach to others.

Let that gospel which is *written in the fleshly tables of our hearts, that is, in our very souls, by the finger of God,* be manifested in every part of our ministrations for the good of men. Thus we shall obtain the approbation of Jesus our Judge, in preaching his gospel of faith and love, and thus shall we have the pleasure of *this testimony in our own consciences,* that in the general course of our ministry we have sought to save the souls of others in the same way as we ourselves have sought to be saved : And that we have proposed the same truths to them, *and recommended the same duties, which we ourselves believe and practise, in order to our own salvation.* Amen.

## ESSAY III.

### *The True Use of the Moral Law under the Gospel.*

Exemplified in the Conference of Christ with a young Pharisee, explained in a Sermon, May, 1711.

Mat. xix. 17. If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the commandments.

#### SECTION I.—THE INTRODUCTION.

HERE it will be necessary to run over the short conference between Christ and this young man, which is recorded by several of the evangelists, because it will give us a plainer account how these words are introduced, and lead us into the knowledge of the true design of them.

Read from the 16th to the 23d verse: "And behold one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? 17. And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God? But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. 18. He saith unto him, which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness. 19. Honour thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 20. The young man saith unto him, all these have I kept from my youth: what lack I yet? 21. Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me. 22. And when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 23. Then said Jesus to his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. This is the history.

The person who addressed the Lord Jesus Christ here, was a young man, and wealthy, as this sacred writer informs us; and that he was a ruler among the Jews, St. Luke gives us notice; Luke xviii. 18. That he was either a Pharisee, or at least one of the stricter sort of the Jews, seems evident, because he sought after eternal life, whereas the sadducees denied future state, many of the higher as well as the looser part of the nation disregarded it. He appears leavened with the common Pharisaical doctrine, viz. that the way to procure eternal life is by his own good works, by doing some good thing.

It is probable he had heard of the miracles and the fame of the blessed Lord, and believed him to be a teacher sent from God,



for he comes in a humble manner as to a divine prophet, he seems to be in good earnest in the question which he puts to Christ, and seriously concerned about the welfare of his soul. He did not come with a design to ensnare Christ in his words, as that sort of men, viz. the Pharisees often did : Nor did he come with useless perplexing questions, as the scribes and sadducees and lawyers sometimes had done : But as St. Mark relates the history, he shewed some tokens of sincerity ; Mark x. 17. for he came running to Jesus with diligence and speed, longing to have the opinion of a new prophet about a matter of such importance, as the obtaining of eternal life : *He kneeled* down to him, and paid our Saviour much civil respect : He received the directions of Christ with attention, and when he found in his heart that his love to his riches would not let him comply with the terms proposed, *he went away sorrowful*. There was something in his design and in his deportment, that was lovely and amiable, and we find that our Saviour, as a man, looked on him with a love of complacency ; Mark x. 21. But he was not so zealous a lover of God as to part with earth for heaven. We may suppose this young gentleman, who seems to be a follower or disciple of the Pharisees, might probably have one or more of these three designs in his question, viz.

I. Whereas the law of Moses promises long life in the land of Canaan, and the blessings of this world to those that are obedient to the statutes and ordinances which God enjoined to Israel ; but it scarce ever mentions, plainly and expressly, any promises of eternal life in another world, nor the methods to attain it ; and whereas this youth was fully convinced from several of the writings of the prophets, that there was a future state and eternal happiness in another world to be obtained, he comes now to Jesus, as a new and divine teacher, to seek an answer to this question about eternal life, which he could not find an express answer to in the law of Moses ; and he would fain know whether he must obtain eternal life the same way that he was to seek for a long life on earth, and temporal blessings, namely, by an outward obedience to the laws already given to the Jews.

II. We may suppose him enquiring after some shorter and more compendious way to eternal life, by practising some one or two extraordinary instances of duty, and thereby to atone for the neglect of the rest. This was an error that prevailed among the Pharisees in our Saviour's time, as seems to be sufficiently evident from their doctrine, as it is represented ; Mat. xv. 5, 6. Whosoever shall make a great present to God and his temple, as some interpret the word corban, or a gift, *he shall be free* from all relative duties to parents, &c. So Mat. xxiii. 23. if they did but pay tithes duly to the priest they might be saved, though they neglected *the weighty matters of the law, justice, judgment and mercy,*

*and the love of God.* So the Pharisee that went into the temple to pray, *he fasted twice a week, and gave tithes of all that he possessed,* and he accounted himself righteous; Luke xviii. 12.

And upon this account you find the question proposed elsewhere to our Saviour; Mat. xxii. 36. *Which is the great commandment of the law?* Some were for circumcision, as a most ancient precept, and therefore of the most general obligation: Some for the sabbath, because it was so strictly enjoined to the Jews: And some for sacrifice, as being in their opinion a sufficient expiation and atonement for any other defects whatsoever. They thought one or other of these to be the critical points on which salvation depended.

And generally we find that the commands of God, of an external or ceremonial nature, or the mere inventions and traditions of men, were thus aggrandized by the teachers of the Jews, as though heaven might be obtained in a short way, by practising those formalities, without the long labours of watchfulness and abstinence from sin, and obedience to every moral command of the law. Yet we must suppose this person to be one of the better sort of them too, for he had endeavoured to keep the moral law, at least in the outward and visible duties of it, as well as ceremonial, even *from his youth up*, as he tells our Saviour.

III. Or we may suppose this young man hearing the fame of Christ, as the great prophet that was to come into the world, might expect some new and unheard of doctrines, some new and unknown way to heaven, which the law and the old prophets had never spoken of; especially since he thought he had already fulfilled all that they had required: And therefore *he came running to Christ*, kneeling down with earnest desire to be taught this new revelation, this method of obtaining heaven and eternal life, which the new prophet was sent to teach: And perhaps he might imagine Jesus to be the Messiah: And they knew that *when the Messiah came he would teach them all things*, which all the former prophets and Moses himself had not fully acquainted them with; John iv. 25.

Or may we not suppose all these three designs together, to be in the heart of this young querist? As if he should say, *Good Master*, Moses in his five books, hath spoken much of life, long life in the land of promise, but has not given us an express account of life eternal in the other world, nor prescribed the special methods to attain it; I would therefore fain learn that of thee. And whereas the statutes and ceremonies, and commands and judgments, and duties of the law, are very numerous and difficult, is there *no one good thing* that may be as acceptable to God as all the rest, and give me a title to eternal happiness, in a short and compendious manner? Or is there any new way to heaven which thou discoverest to men? As thou seemest to preach up

future state, a heaven and a hell in the other world, dost thou come to give any new directions how to avoid this hell, and obtain this heaven?"

Our Lord, before he answered his question takes occasion to ask him, why he called him *good*, which was a title that eminently belonged to God only: The best conjecture that interpreters can make of this query, is this, viz. Jesus searched into his opinion concerning himself, whether he knew or believed that he was the Messiah, or the Son of God, who was "one with the Father," and thereby had a right to divine titles and characters, and might justly be called good in a divine sense. Perhaps Jesus might have, before this time, manifested this his own oneness with God; but if he had not, yet there were several descriptions of the Messiah in the Old Testament, wherein the names and titles of the true God are given to the Messiah, which could not be given him without such a oneness with God, and therefore he might justly take occasion to catechise such a forward young man who seemed to be conceited of his own righteousness, &c. It is as if Jesus had said, "Thou callest me good: *There is none* originally, eternally and perfectly good but God himself; none good as God is; none hath right to the title in the most absolute and exalted sense of it but God: Why then dost thou use this salutation to me, and give me this title? Dost thou think any thing more than human dwells in me?" "Hast thou known or observed any of those speeches or those miracles of mine, whereby I have asserted and proved that *I am in the Father, and the Father in me*, or, that I am *one with the Father*, and so partake with him in the title of good?" See John x. 30, 37, 38. and xiv. 8—10.

Here it may be remarked that our Saviour did not use to publish his own divinity, or oneness with God, in plain and express terms to the people, but generally by such methods of enquiry and insinuation. See Mark ii. 5—11. where he had forgiven the sins of a man that was sick of the palsy before he healed him; and then he proves by the miracle of healing, that he had a right to forgive sin, while the Jews acknowledge that none could forgive sins but God alone. So John x. 30—36. after he had given a hint of his Deity, by saying, *I and my Father are one*, the Jews would have stoned him for pretending to be God; which he answers by such an enquiry; Since those are called gods in scripture, to whom the word of God came, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, he blasphemeth, because I said I am the Son of God? Such a sort of oblique insinuation, or enquiry concerning the divinity of his person, seems to be our Lord's design in this text. If this be not the purport and intention of this question, I must confess I am ignorant of the design of it. But this seems to me the most probable conjecture.

he immediately he proceeds to give our young querist an answer to his question, *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments.* The young man again seems to have his former question in his eye, when he asks “*which commandment he should keep?*” As if he should say, “*Is it any one particular commandment or commandments of Moses that I must keep; have kept them, is there any new commandment thou shalt give me, whereby eternal life will be insured to me?*”

Our Lord replies, *Keep the common commandments of the law, thou knowest them,*” as Mark x. 17. It is not by observing one command and neglecting the rest, but the way to eternal life is obedience to all the commandments, for *I am not come to break or dissolve the law of God, but to confirm or fulfil it.* Mat. v. 17—19. And though our Lord Jesus mentions only the duties of the second table, and the duties towards men, yet he surely suppose he means inclusively all the rest; for he saith Mat. v. 19. *Whosoever shall teach men to break the least of the commandments of the law, shall be the least in the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth them, shall have no place there.* Our Saviour doth not mention any dispensation to neglect duties toward God, by mentioning only the duties toward our neighbour; but the reasons why he mentions these duties seem chiefly these two:

Because these duties to their neighbours were those which the Pharisees, who boasted of their own righteousness, more especially neglected, while they pretended to much devotion and respect to the worship of God in all the forms of his appointment: And therefore our Lord insists particularly upon these commands that he might shew our fellow-creatures, to shew him that these were as necessary a part of his duty, as all the more pompous services of the temple.

Because it might be more easy for his own conscience to excuse him of the neglect of these moral and relative duties towards his fellow-creatures, than of his neglect of religious duties towards God: And our Saviour thought when he had named only these few, he had named enough to shew him the extent of his righteousness: Therefore he did not proceed to mention them all.

And it may be noted, that our Lord reckons up these commands in their exact order, nor exactly in the words of the statement, but with a more loose and negligent way of repeating them, because he spoke to a man that was supposed to know them already: *Thou knowest all the commandments which I have commanded thee, even the commands of the moral law, Do not kill, do not commit adultery, &c.*

SECT. II.—*The Sense of Christ's Answer.*

When the great and important question comes naturally into our mind, *in what sense did our Saviour speak these words to the young man?*

young enquirer, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments?* Did he design to give him a plain and direct answer how he might obtain eternal life and salvation, according to the gospel? Or did he design only to convince him of sin, by preaching the law to him, in order to make him see his guilt and misery, that he might seek after a better righteousness than that of the works of the law, another way of obtaining acceptance with God and eternal life, than merely by his own doings? I answer, the last of these seems to be the design of Christ. He did not intend in these words to give him immediate and direct instruction, how he might actually obtain salvation, but rather first to convince him of sin, &c. and I would offer these following reasons for it:

I. The answer of Christ is exactly suited to his question. Now his question was about eternal life to be obtained by works, and not about the salvation of a sinner by the mercy of God. He did not ask, as the convinced jailor; Acts xvi. 30. *What shall I do to be saved, or to obtain salvation?* But what good work must I do to obtain eternal life by it?

It is granted that eternal life is sometimes put for the final happiness of believers under the gospel, because it is included in the salvation of Christ; yet life and eternal life are peculiarly and properly the blessings promised in the law of works, in which sense the word salvation is never used: and the scripture in some places by this way of expression makes this distinction evident. See the terms of the law or covenant of works, both in its commands and its reward, as it is described in direct opposition to the gospel, and method of salvation, in Rom. x. 5, 6. *Moses describing the righteousness which is of the law, that the man who doth these things shall live by them; whereas the righteousness of faith, that is the way of justification and acceptance with God by the gospel, says quite other things, If thou shalt believe and confess Christ, &c. verses 9, 10.* So St. Paul describes the promised blessings of the law of works, in the same manner, in his epistle to the Galatians, Gal. iii. 12. *The law is not of faith, but the man who doth them shall live in them.* Life is still the word of the promise. And in Rom. ii. 6, 7. where the apostle is properly preaching the law of works with the terms of it, it is called *immortality, eternal life*; to be obtained by continuance in good works, or *well-doing*.

It is this eternal life and immortality which was implied in the covenant of works which God made with Adam. If he did eat the forbidden fruit, he should die; but if he observed the commands of God, he should live; and the tree of life, in the midst of the garden, was a symbol or sacrament of life and immortality to seal this promise to man, if he continued in his obedience to God.

Our Lord therefore gives an answer exactly according to the question, *What good thing shall I do for eternal life?* saith the enquirer. *Keep the commandments*, saith our Lord. When the young man proposes his question about final happiness in the terms and language of the covenant of works, our Lord gives an answer in the same language: "If thou wilt obtain life by doing works, these are the works which thou must do, even the works of the moral law."

II. I suppose Jesus Christ, the chief minister of the covenant of grace would not give this direction to obtain the salvation and benefits thereof, because it is the most direct answer which a preacher of the covenant of works could give to this same enquiry; *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments*. And this is very different from the terms of justification and salvation by the gospel, which exclude the works of the law, as the way to pardon and justification, and refer us to faith in Jesus Christ. See Gal. iii. 11, 12. Rom. x. 5, 6, already cited. Is it not most expressly asserted, that *by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified?* Rom. iii. 19, 20. Are not these works perpetually excluded by the blessed apostle, whensoever he is describing the mere method of grace and salvation, or the means for a sinner to obtain his acceptance with God unto eternal life? See Rom. iv. 4. *To him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt*: But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, that is, the man who has no works of righteousness answerable to any law, his faith is counted for righteousness; Gal. ii. 16. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ, &c.* See Gal. iii. 8—12.

And it is plain, that it is not merely the law of levitical ceremonies that the apostle speaks of, when he excludes the works of it from our justification, for it is also that law which is written by nature in the hearts and consciences of the Gentiles; Rom. ii. 14, 15. It is the law that forbids stealing and adultery; Rom. ii. 21, 22. The law that forbids coveting; Rom. vii. 6, 7. even this very law, and those commandments which our Saviour makes mention of in my text. It is by the works of this law no flesh shall be justified, no man shall be saved, or obtain eternal happiness; Rom. iii. 20. Now can we suppose that Christ, the great messenger of God to sinful man, and the prophet of the gospel or covenant of grace, would give the very same advice and direction to a sinner how to obtain salvation, which a preacher of the law, or a zealot for the covenant of works, would give to one who thought himself righteous, and never confessed himself a sinner, but enquired about obtaining life by his good works?

III. It is hardly to be thought Christ should direct a man to fulfil the commands of the moral law, as the proper way for him to obtain eternal life, when through the weakness of our sinful nature, he knew the law could not give life to men in their fallen estate, and he himself was sent to provide another way for them to obtain life. Rom. viii. 10. *What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent his own Son to do for us.* Rom. iii. 20. *By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.* This does not arise from any weakness or insufficiency of the law itself, for it still promises life, and would secure it to any man who was perfect without sin. But as the apostle says, it is *become weak through the flesh*, that is, because man is so much immersed in flesh and sin, that he cannot perfectly fulfil it. The law cannot give the favour of God and eternal life, because man cannot obey it.

And upon this account the law of ten commands, which was engraven in stones, is called *the ministration of condemnation and death*; 2 Cor. iii. 7—9. and not the ministration of life and righteousness; that is the peculiar glory of the gospel. *The law indeed, is holy, and just, and good*, and it was originally *ordained for life* to innocent man: But when the apostle Paul came to have his conscience awakened to a sense of sin by the law, he *found it to be unto death*; Rom. vii. 10. partly by shewing him his imperfection of obedience, as well as by irritating his indwelling sinful inclinations. So far is the law from giving life to sinners.

God honours his laws so much that the scripture assures us, *If there had been a law which could have given life, eternal life, verily righteousness, justification and happiness should have come by the law*; Gal. iii. 21, 22. *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin*, and condemned them by the law, and has shewn the insufficiency of the law to save, *that the promise of eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* It is not to be supposed therefore, that Jesus Christ the Son of God, who was sent into this world to give, or further reveal this promise of eternal life by faith, and to provide another way to salvation and eternal life for fallen man, because the law was unable to give it; I say, it is not to be supposed that this very Son of God should preach obedience to the commands of this law, as the proper and direct way for a sinner to obtain eternal life. This would be like *building up again* the hopes of sinners to obtain salvation by the law, which hopes he came to destroy, and to provide a much surer foundation for hope.

IV. It is much more probable that Christ in these words designed to lead this young man to a sense of sin and guilt, and self-condemnation, by preaching to him the law of God, rather than to give him immediately the direct and plain advice how a

sinner might obtain eternal happiness; for this is a work which the law can do, even in our fallen state: *For by the law is the knowledge of sin*, Rom. iii. 20. and vii. 7. The law can convince and condemn, though it cannot justify and save. Our Saviour knew the hearts of men; he knew this young man was conceited of his own righteousness, and he had a mind to lead his conscience to a sight and sense of the imperfection of his obedience, and therefore he preaches the law to him in many of the express commands of it, for that very end which the law might attain, that is, conviction of sin and self-condemnation. This is the first thing necessary in order to the salvation of men, and therefore our Saviour begins with it.

And it is well worthy our notice, that the public promulgation of the ten commandments, with such solemn terrors at mount Sinai, was designed, in the spiritual intention of it, to lay the consciences of men under guilt, rather than to make them partakers of righteousness and life. Rom. v. 20. *The law entered that the offence might abound*, that is, that the sins of men might appear to be great and numerous, beyond what their carnal imaginations would have supposed, without the express letter of the law, which forbids coveting, &c. The apostle Paul tells us; Rom. vii. 7. *He had not known this concupiscence to be sin, but by the law*; and that useful expositor of scripture, Mr. Samuel Clark, who is not wont to be too evangelical in his expositions, remarks on Ex. xix. 24. That the charge of forbidding the people to come near mount Sinai, is often repeated, lest God *break forth upon them*, to shew that the end of the law is rather to exclude men from God, by reason of their sins, than to justify or to give life; for which he cites; 2 Cor. iii. 7. Gal. iii. 10—24.

And indeed this was one considerable part of the design and business of our Saviour's personal ministry here on earth, viz. to preach the law of God in its perfection, and convince men of sin, to let them see that they were condemned and exposed to the wrath of God, that they might learn the necessity of a Saviour to atone for sin, and of the mercy of God to pardon it. He described the purity and exactness of the law, not only to teach his disciples and all succeeding christians, that their obedience to the law of God ought to be more exact and pure, more inward and spiritual, than what the Pharisees required or practised, but also to shew men the imperfection of their best righteousness, and that they were all guilty before God that he might prepare them to receive the gospel, partly by his own preaching it, and especially when it should be published in greater brightness and clearness, and in its full glory, after his resurrection.

Was not this one great design of his sermon upon the mount, where he explains the law of God in its lengths and



breadths, and shews that it reaches to the thoughts of men as well as their actions? Did he not begin this sermon with, *Blessed are the poor in spirit*; Mat. v. 3. that he might shew the way to blessedness was not a self-sufficiency of soul, and a trust in our righteousness, but a spiritual poverty, that is, a humble sense of our own weakness and sinfulness? What mean many of his parables, particularly that of the prodigal son returning in rags and sorrow to his father's house? Luke xv. 13—32. Doth it not teach us that the way to be accepted of our heavenly Father is to return to him with a deep sense of our disobedience, sin and misery, with a humble repentance, and asking forgiveness? What is the intent of the parable of the Pharisee and publican going up to pray? Luke xviii. 10. Is it not to shew us that a humble, confessing, repenting sinner seeking for mercy, is much nearer to justification and the favour of God, than a man who spreads abroad his own righteousness and justifies himself? What means our blessed Lord in his perpetual reproofs of the Pharisees who *trusted in themselves that they were righteous*? Verse 9. Did he not frequently talk thus to convince men of sin, and shew them how imperfect their obedience was, and how insufficient to procure acceptance with God, and to let them see that repentance and confession of sin, and trust in divine mercy, were the only way to salvation.

It is no wonder then if our Saviour had the same design in his eye when he saw a rich young man of a Pharisical spirit, come to enquire the way to heaven by doing some good work; it is no wonder that he begun to talk to him of obedience to the law, in order to convince him of sin, and shew him that he was not sufficiently righteous to obtain eternal life by his righteousness.

It is most likely that our blessed Lord had a special intention in this place to try the young man, whether he knew his own state and case as a sinner who wanted pardon, and whether he was prepared for the gospel or no: Whether he stood convinced of sin, and desirous of true salvation, such as Christ came to procure for those who were sensible of their guilt and danger. I have before shewed that the first sentence that Christ spoke to him was with design to try his opinion about himself, the Messiah when he called him *good*, whether he was *one with God* or no: And now he tries his opinion about the inward and spiritual perfection of the law, and about his own power to keep it, and about his own hope of justification thereby: And therefore he at first gives him such an answer as should make him bethink himself, whether he had obeyed the law of God perfectly or no.

If he had found him sensible of his guilt and his imperfections, then most probably the compassionate Jesus would have preached to him the pardoning grace of the gospel, which he came to offer to those who repent of sin, and believe in the

**Saviour.** But when he heard the vain enquirer justify himself as a righteous man, and say, *All these commands have I kept from my youth*; Mat. ix. 16. then our Saviour put him to a fresh and more painful trial of his sincerity and obedience to God, and that partly for his conviction, instead of saying, *repent and believe*; he did not proceed so far as to preach repentance to him, because he saw him so much unconvinced of sin; and he tells us that *he came not to call these righteous men but sinners to repentance*; Mat. ix. 13. that is, those who own themselves to be sinners.

This leads me to the fifth or last reason, to prove that this answer was not designed by Christ as a direction to the querist how to obtain salvation, viz. It is a quite different answer to the like questions that is given by Christ, and by the apostles, when they designed to preach the gospel in plain, direct and express language. Mark i. 15. Christ saith, *Repent and believe the gospel.* John vi. 40. "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." And again, *This is the work of God, that is, the great work which God now requires, that ye believe on him, whom he sent*; John vi. 28, 29. So preaches St. Peter, Acts ii. 38. *Repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ*: So Paul, Acts xvi. 31. *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*: And so John speaks, *This is his commandment, that ye believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*; 1 John iii. 23. These are the plain and direct advices of Christ and his apostles to sinful men, in order to obtain the favour of God and eternal life. To suppose therefore that Christ did in this place, and in these words, direct the enquirer into the proper way of salvation by the gospel, is to suppose that Christ differed greatly from himself, in the directions he gave, how men might be saved; and that he and his apostles, and particularly St. Paul, taught very different doctrines; that Christ taught the way to salvation by the works of the law, and the gospel taught it by faith and repentance, *without the works of the law*. But this would set Christ and his apostles so much at variance with themselves, that it is not to be admitted.

#### SECT. III.—*An Answer to some Objections.*

I come now to answer some objections against my sense of this text, and the chief of them are taken from Doctor Whitby, a most ingenious writer on that side.

**Objection I.** Doth not Christ say, that "to love the Lord our God is the way to life;" Luke x. 27, 28. Is not this the same thing in effect, as when he directs the young man to eternal life, by keeping the commandments, and that in the same language? For when the lawyer enquires, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus gives him this advice, *Love*

*the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thy self: This do and thou shalt live.* Thus eternal life is promised by Christ himself, to our loving God and man, which is the epitome or abstract of all the moral commands in one, for *love is the fulfilling of the law*; Rom. xiii. 8, 10.

Answer I. It is very plain that in that place our Saviour is preaching the covenant of works, as well as in my text, and that for the same purpose too, viz. for the conviction of sin. This lawyer was not a humble and sincere enquirer, but one who came to tempt and ensnare him; and then it is no wonder if Jesus did not give him a plain and direct answer according to the method of salvation by the gospel. And though he directed others *to believe and repent*, yet he did not treat a vain young Pharisee, who thought himself righteous, and a cunning lawyer who designed to ensnare him, in the same manner that he would treat persons who were sensible of their sins, and sought the way to obtain pardon and happiness, nor did he give them the same directions.

Answer II. Let it be further considered, that the life-time of Christ was not the appointed season to speak the glories of the gospel in the fullest and plainest language, as I hinted before. His frequent business and practice was to preach the law, to reprove sin, and prepare men for the fuller and more complete ministry of the gospel, which after his death he sent his apostles to preach by the power of his own Spirit: And they published the gospel of salvation by *repentance and faith* in the blood of Christ, and forgiveness through his atonement, much plainer and clearer, and fuller than Christ himself did in his life-time among the multitudes. That gospel which he taught them secretly, they proclaimed as it were *upon the house tops*, according to his order; Mat. x. 27.

Though Christ himself gave such hints of this gospel in his preaching, as were sufficient for salvation to those that would receive them, yet he might be said to be sent rather with this dreadful commission to the generality of the Jews; Mat. xiii. 13. Isa. vi. 10. *Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, &c.* They were such a stubborn and self-conceited and disobedient people, that God justly gave them up to their own blindness and hardness: And for this reason our Saviour spake often the great things of the gospel to them in parables\*. He was ordained to be *a stumbling-stone and rock of offence* to the house of Israel and Judah; Is. viii. 14. 1 Pet. ii. 8. and this by the just judgment of God, for their stoning the prophets, and murdering the former messengers of heaven, for their forsaking the law of God, and *making it void by their traditions*, and for their violent opposition to Christ his Son.

\* See Section V. Reflection I.

Christ was not always bound to speak the gospel to this people in as plain words as he could, for reasons that the wisdom of God was well acquainted with, reasons that the justice of God righteously determined, and the goodness of God did not think fit to oppose. And it is no wonder at all that he doth speak in this way to those men who came with curious questions and with evil purposes to ensnare him, as the lawyer did in this account of St. Luke.

Objection II. But can we suppose that Christ would deceive a young man, who came seriously to enquire the way to eternal life? Can we imagine that Christ, in whom dwells all wisdom, truth and love, should give such directions as could never bring a man to heaven, and especially considering that he came into the world on purpose to bring *life and immortality to light* among men, and to shew them the true way to heaven?

Answer I. That we may secure the goodness of God, and the mercy of Christ from any reproach in this case, I say further, that Christ did take a very wise and regular method with this young man to bring him to salvation, if he would have stayed to attend to it, and had not been full of evil prejudices, of self-righteousness, and the love of this world. For the first thing to be done in order to bring sinners to heaven, as I hinted before, is to *convince them of sin*, and this is done by the law. This the apostle Paul sheweth at large in his epistle to the Romans, that men by beholding the perfection of the law, and their inability to perform it, might be dead to all hope from the law, as he was when he says, Gal. ii. 19. *I by the law am dead to the law*; and that they might not expect life by the law, but that they might seek for salvation by the way of repentance and faith, or trust in Christ, and obtain forgiveness of sins through the free grace of God in the gospel.

Answer II. Though this young man had a vain conceit of his own righteousness, yet there was something in him naturally pleasing, agreeable and engaging, so that Christ as man "looked upon him and loved him;" Mark x. 21. He had some liking to such a towardly and hopeful youth, and preached the law to him, to convince him of sin, in order to his salvation: But when he professed himself to be so righteous in his own eyes, as to have kept all the commands of the law, his divine wisdom then saw it proper to put a harder trial upon him, viz. *to sell all that he had and give to the poor*, and to become a follower of Christ. Now if this young man had loved God so well as he pretended, and believed Christ to be a prophet come from God, he ought to have obeyed him, even in this difficult and self-denying command; which command was *put upon him, partly to convince him that he did not love God as*

well as he imagined, and which hard trial probably would not have been put upon him, if he had not been so conceited of own righteousness.

It must be observed also, to vindicate the honour, faithfulness and goodness of Christ, that if the young man had followed these directions of Christ at the end of the conference, he had been saved: Our blessed Lord gave him sufficient advice for eternal life, if he would have taken it. *Comē, sell what thou hast, and give it to the poor, and follow me, and be my disciple* and then it would follow, "Thou shalt learn of me the way to heaven more perfectly, and I will teach thee the way of repentance and faith, and holiness unto complete salvation. But the young man loved his money, and *went away sorrowing* that he could not keep all his riches and obtain eternal life too.

Objection III. Doth not God all along in the writing of the Old Testament, in successive ages, promise life in this sort of language to those that observe and do his commandments and that both by Moses and by the prophets? And did not the saints, under the Old Testament, obtain life this way? *I xviii. 5. He that doth them, that is, the commands of God shall live in them; Ezek. xx. 11. this promise is repeated: I in Ezek. xxx. 15. If the wicked walk in the statutes of God without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall die:* Now this dying cannot mean a natural death, for they know they must die naturally; therefore it must mean a deliverance from eternal death, and assurance of eternal life. "It is therefore certain, that all pious persons, under the Old Testament, obtained a right to life eternal, by this observance of the moral precepts of the law." These are Doctor Whitcomb's own words.

Answer I. This life which is here promised in these texts to the Jews, in a literal sense, chiefly means long life in their own land, and peace and freedom from sorrows and miseries in this world: And though the freedom from or preservation from death, which is promised by Moses to those who keep the statutes and ordinances enjoined to Israel, does not mean an entire preservation from temporal death; so neither in the obvious literal sense does it mean a security from eternal death, but rather a freedom from death, as it is a general term used to include all temporal and painful evils, and particularly from sudden and violent death, from cruel, lingering and shameful death from death in foreign countries, and untimely death in the middle of their years. This is very evident, if you read those expressions of Moses; *Deut. vi. 24, 25. and Deut. xxx. 15—Ezek. xxxiii. 10—15.* So Solomon, in his prayer; *1 Kings viii. 31—50.* Nehemiah, in his prayer; *Neh. ix. 29—teach us to explain it.* Life is put for all that is good, and d

for all that is evil. It is evident that God governed the Jews with regard to temporal blessings and temporal curses, in the way of a covenant of works. As to the external and temporal state of their persons, their church, and their nation, they were under a covenant works; and God, who was their king or political head, dealt with them from time to time in saving them, or in punishing them, according to their works: And it is very observable, that it is this very promise of life, upon condition of doing the works of the law which the apostle takes to describe that covenant of works, by which the Jews could not be saved as to their eternal state, see Rom. x. 3—5. and ix. 31. *The man that doth them shall live in them.*

If it be objected, that God allowed of their repentance for sin in this his law or covenant as their king, and sometimes he saved the nation upon their repentance, and therefore it must include the gospel or covenant of grace; yet I answer, it may still be called a covenant of works, because a mere external visible humiliation and reformation, without a real penitence at heart, was accepted by God as their king, as sufficient to divert divine judgments from the nation, and sometimes from particular persons, who had provoked God's anger by external and visible iniquities. 1 Kings xxi. 29. *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself? I will not bring this evil in his days; whereas all his humiliation was his "rending his clothes, wearing of sackcloth and fasting," and a little outward appearance of reformation, but it is evident that his heart was not changed. See 1 Kings xxii. 27.*

It may be granted, indeed, there was much grace and mercy mingled in this political law or covenant of life, between God as a civil king, and Israel as his subjects in this world; but still this was not the gospel or covenant of grace and salvation, whereby the pious Jews were saved from the wrath of God, as their spiritual Lord and Ruler in the other world, and whereby they had their sins pardoned, and were made partakers of eternal life; for the rites of the law could not cleanse the conscience from sin in the sight of God. Heb. ix. 9. and this leads me to the next answer:

II. Besides the frequent charges which are given to the Jews to keep the commandments of God, in order to obtain life, we find also frequent calls to inward and hearty repentance of sin, to make their *hearts clean, to forsake their evil thoughts, to rend their hearts and not their garments*, and so trust in the pardoning mercy of God; and there are many promises of pardon to the penitent, and the favour of God to those that fear him and hope in his mercy in order to lead them to obtain the happiness of the other world and eternal life. See Is. lv. 7, 8. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;*

*and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon; Ps. cxxx. 4—6. There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared. Let Israel hope in the Lord; with the Lord is plenteous redemption. He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* One might transcribe many pages to this purpose out of Isaiah, Jeremiah and David. This is more evangelical language, shewing the way for sinners to obtain salvation: *This is the gospel that was preached to them as well as to us: Heb. iv. 2.* And even to them was preached also the gospel of the Messiah, and the salvation of men by the Messiah, the seed of Abraham; Gal. iii. 8. Is. liii. 5, 6, 11. *He was wounded for our iniquities: The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all.* And it is said; Acts x. 43. *To him give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in him shall receive forgiveness of sins through his name.* Thus it plainly appears, that the mere keeping of the commands, as written in the moral law, was not the proper term or rule of their acceptance with God unto eternal life, under the Old Testament: For there is nothing of this doctrine of repentance and forgiveness, nor of the Messiah, contained in the ten commands.

Let it be observed also, that even in those legal promises, which ensure life to those who kept the commands of God, there is a more spiritual and evangelical sense sometimes implied: For under this word life, and these temporal blessings which were promised, eternal life and eternal blessings were typified and held forth to those that looked through the veil, and that fulfilled the will of God in spiritual and sincere obedience, with a humble sense of their sins, and trust in divine forgiveness. But the ground of their acceptance with God unto eternal life, or their right to heaven and salvation, was not this their performance of the works of the law, for their best works were all imperfect, and they were *saved by faith even as we; Gal. iii. 6—9.* that is, by trusting to pardoning mercy, so far as it was revealed under that dispensation.

And as the salvation itself was typified by temporal blessings so the way to this salvation, which was "repentance and trust in the mercy of God through the Messiah, was typified by offering sacrifices of blood, and by many washings and purifyings, both by blood and water, which implied a confession of their defilement: and the saints or righteous men of that day, hoped for the mercy of God, as discovered more plainly in the promises, and perhaps also, some might understand it as hinted in these types and figures. They knew that "blessedness was to come upon men to whom God imputed not their sins, or to whom the Lord imputed righteousness;" Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. or accounted them as righteous in his sight by his mercy, though they were

very imperfect and far from righteousness, that is a perfect justifying righteousness, even if they put together all their works of obedience to the commands of God. David often speaks of the impossibility of our attaining the acceptance of God by our works; Ps. cxxx. 3. *If thou shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Ps. cxliii. 2. *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.* Ps. xiv. 3. *There is none righteous; no, not one.* Ps. xix. 12. *Who can understand his errors?* He seeks for pardon of sin by repentance and trust in the mercy of God; Pa. li. 1, 6, 10. and cxliii. 1, 2. And he pronounces the blessedness of those to whom God forgives their iniquities; Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. or to whom he imputes righteousness without works, as St. Paul explains him; Rom. iv. 6. and\* this encouraged him to confess his sins, and repent of them, as in Pa. xxxii. 5. 6. and li. 3, 8, 9. and cxxx. 3, 4.

Thus it appears, that the bare keeping the commandments of the law was neither under the Old Testament nor the New, the way to salvation and eternal life for sinners: But since the law was weak, and unable to save, by reason of the weakness of our flesh or sinful nature; Rom. viii. 3. that is, since the law promises life only to those who obey the commands perfectly, and men could not obtain life this way by reason of the imperfection of their obedience, there were many calls to repentance, and to trust in the mercy of God, given to the Jews in the Old Testament, as the prescribed way for sinners to obtain salvation; which duties, together with the grounds of them, and the blessings promised to them, are much more clearly revealed in the New Testament. I might confirm these answers to Doctor Whitby, out of his own exposition to Rom. x. 9. "Justification,

\* And here, by the way, I would take occasion to relieve or explain one great difficulty, which occurs in reading of St. Paul's epistles; especially those to the Romans and Galatians. It is evident that when St. Paul designs to represent the terms of the covenant of works, viz. *Do this and live*; Rom. x. 5. and *curst is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*; Gal. iii. 10, 12. he doth it by citations out of the Old Testament, or the Jewish scriptures, because the language of the political covenant which God made with the Jews, as he was their king, and they were his nation or people, was the language of the covenant of works, and God governed them very much in that way with regard to their temporal rewards and punishments.

On the other hand, when St. Paul gives us the terms of the covenant of grace or the gospel, viz. "Faith in the grace of God through a Saviour," he also cites the Old Testament or the Jewish scriptures. So Rom. iii. 21. Rom. iv. 3, 6, 7. Rom. x. 6—11. Gal. iii. 8, 11. Because the covenant of grace, or the way of salvation and eternal life, was also prescribed, though in a more obscure manner in the Old Testament, partly by promises made to repentance and trust in the mercy of God, and a Messiah that was to come, and partly by sacrifices and washings, which were types and figures of repentance and pardon, through the blood of Christ, and sanctification of the Spirit. Thus the righteousness of God was witnessed by the law and the prophets; Rom. iii. 21. (I think without this clue it is impossible to read and understand the great apostle's way of arguing in those epistles. See more in the Harmony of all the Religions that ever prescribed; chapters v. and vi.



saith he, is here expressly ascribed to faith ; and that not as including works, but only as being that principle which, when it is cordial and sincere, will certainly produce them : I say, "not as including all those works" which by the gospel are required to salvation, for then the righteousness of faith must be described as the righteousness of the law, viz. that *the man that doth these things shall live in them*, which is contrary to the words of the apostle," verses 5, 6. So far does the force of truth, in some places, constrain honest minds to admit and confess, what in other places they are very unwilling to allow, and which they almost contradict : But this must be charged on the common or universal influence of human frailty and mistaken prejudices, and for want of an equal, uniform, simultaneous and comprehensive view of all the parts of religion together, which no human mind perhaps in the present state can arrive at.

Objection IV. There is another objection which may be started against my exposition of this text, that is drawn from Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter through the gates into the city* ; that is, into heaven, and enjoy eternal life. Surely, say some, these words must be acknowledged to be the language of the gospel, or the covenant of grace, and not of the law or the covenant of works : For they are the words of Christ himself, after his ascension to heaven, and yet it is plain that doing the commandments is here represented as the way to obtain eternal life in heaven.

Answer. But it is as plain that doing the commandments of the moral law, are not the only things that are meant here in this text : But these commandments which give a right to the tree of life, &c. include at least, if not chiefly design, the peculiar commands of God in the gospel, viz. repentance of sin, faith in the pardoning mercy of God through a Redeemer, which is productive of love to God and man. To prove this, read Mat. iv. 17. *Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Mark i. 15. *Repent and believe the gospel.* Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth—shall be saved.* 1 John iii. 22, 23. "And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight : And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment."

Now as Adam, by doing the peculiar commands which God gave to him, might have obtained a right to the benefits of the literal tree of life in the garden of Eden, that is, immortality ; so christians by doing the peculiar commandments of the gospel, may be said, in some sense, to obtain a right to the benefits of *the spiritual tree of life*, that is, Christ Jesus, and may enter into heaven ; but a mere obedience to the commandments of the moral

law is never prescribed as the way to obtain a right to the benefits of Christ, but rather an obedience to the commands of the gospel which are peculiarly repentance and faith in Christ.

It may be yet further observed, that the commands to which Christ directed the young man in my text, in order to enter into life, were not faith and repentance, but only the ten commands of the moral law: For he directs the young man precisely to the commands of the moral law, and tells him, "Thou knowest what these commands are." Now this young man was so full of his own obedience to that law, and so confident of it, that he seems not to know the commands of confession of sin and repentance for it? much less did he think of the other command of "faith in the mercy of God through a Mediator." So that if it be never so much allowed, that obedience to these humbling and self-abasing commands of the gospel, faith and repentance may give a right to the benefits of Christ, and to an entrance into heaven, yet an obedience to the ten commands of the moral law could not make a sinner's way to heaven and eternal life: But these ten commands are those which Christ points out to the young Pharisaical enquirer.

Upon the whole it appears, that when our Saviour saith to the young man in my text, *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments*, he did not mean to give him the plain and direct prescription of the gospel in order to the salvation of a sinner, but rather began with him in preaching the law, in order to shew him his duty by the law, and to convince him of sin. And from this view of things, I think we may draw this plain observation, viz. That wheresoever the keeping the commands of God is proposed to men in scripture as the way to life, it either means that the way to obtain long temporal life and temporal blessings, was to observe the Jewish laws, according to the political covenant of God made with the Jewish nation at Sinai; or it means that perfect obedience of thought, word, and action to all these commands which God gives us, is the way to obtain life eternal by the covenant of works, and law of innocency: Or if at any time the context plainly determines this phrase, "keeping the commandments," to signify the way to obtain salvation under the gospel, then the word "commands" must extend to include the evangelical commands of repentance for sin, and trust in the pardoning mercy of God through a Mediator. And the reason is plain; for this is the great difference always observed between the law and gospel, or between the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace, viz. that the covenant of works or the law, teaches us to claim life as a debt by our own exact obedience to the commands of the law; but the covenant of grace or the gospel, teaches us humbly to seek for life or salvation by confession of sin and repentance, and by depending on the free mercy of

God, through a Mediator, for the forgiveness of sin and acceptance with God\*.

SECT. IV.—*Of what use is it to keep the law then?*

Before I proceed I would answer another objection or query or two, upon this subject, viz. “Of what use is the law of God in a christian country? Or what use is there of keeping the commandments of the moral law, if we are not to obtain eternal life by them?” Let the first enquiry be answered first. “Of what use is the law of God in a christian country, where the gospel of Christ is preached?”

Answer. It is to be feared there are several thousand souls in a christian nation, who make a general profession of the religion of the blessed Jesus, and yet have no serious sense of the things of God and religion in their hearts: And it is evident to daily observation, that in a land professing the gospel of Christ, there are multitudes who have abandoned all piety even in the form of it, as well as the practice and power thereof, and there are some who have lost even morality itself; now the law of God is needful to be maintained, and published in such a nation as this, to keep the sinful world in awe, and to preserve even wicked men from running to all excess of riot and iniquity, by pressing the commands of God always upon their consciences, and by setting before them the vengeance and curses of the law of God, which are due to sinners, to preserve the world from universal disorder and wickedness. If there were no such representations of the holiness and justice of God in the world, what shameful impieties against God, and most outrageous iniquities and villainies would be spread among the children of men: So that there would be no such thing as peace, and civility and honesty to be found in several places. The apostle Paul tells us; 1 Tim. i. 9, 10. “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.

\* Here I would caution my readers to take notice, that I am not now debating that point, “In what manner the righteousness, atonement or death of Christ is applied to us in order to our interest in forgiveness of sins, the justification of our persons, or our right to final happiness.” This is an argument of a different consideration from the present debate. All that I propose here to treat of, is to determine that obvious question, whether Christ is plainly and directly shewing a conceited young man the way of obtaining salvation according to the gospel or covenant of grace, when he says to him. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments of the moral law; or whether he is not rather leading him to conviction of sin, by preaching the law to him, that he may be better prepared and inclined to receive the salvation of the gospel.*

The holy apostle acknowledges, where the law of God is originally written in the heart, and a man is made righteous by a thorough sanctification of all the powers of nature as it is in heaven, there is no such need of the commands, threatenings, and terrors of the penal law, to keep men in the practice of obedience ; their own innocent or renewed nature, their sincere and universal love to God, and to his law, will powerfully incline them to the practice of holiness, without the terrors and punishments from the hand of the blessed God, being always kept before their eyes.

It is true, there are some cases wherein the law of God may not be well known even to good men, or may be mistaken by them, and there may be need of special commands to discover what is our duty, and what is sin : But where the law is well known, the inward power of universal goodness in the soul, without these outward terrors, is made effectual to preserve holiness and obedience in the life. But perhaps you will then reply,

“ Where there are true christians found, of what use is it for them to keep the law of God ?” This is the second enquiry, and to this I would give several particular answers, besides the first and general one. In general I say then, it must be acknowledged, that there are so many remains of indwelling sin in the best of men, that fears and terrors of the punishments of God, have their use in this imperfect state, to prevent the soul from warping aside to sinful practices, under strong and special temptations. Such frail and imperfect creatures are we in this present state. I proceed now to give some particular answers to this question, “ Of what use is it to keep the law ?” and they are such as these :

Answer I. Though we are not saved from the punishment of hell, nor pardoned and accepted to eternal life and happiness in heaven, by virtue of our poor imperfect obedience, and keeping the commands of the moral law, yet we can never be saved without it : For our love to the law of God, and a hearty inclination to keep it, is a great part of the very salvation which the gospel provides for sinful men. Jesus Christ the Son of God is become our Saviour, not only to save us from God's wrath ; 1 Thess. i. 10. but also to save us from our sins ; Mat. i. 21. and Tit. ii. 14. *He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.* We must be restored to the image of God as well as to his favour ; now his image is all holiness.

Mankind by the fall have not only lost their original state of innocence and happiness, but their natural powers are corrupted, the mind, will and passions are perverted, and defiled, and turned away from God, and from their duty to his law. Now it is one great design of the gospel to rectify these disorders in the nature

of man : It is one of the promises of the gospel *that the law of God shall be written in our hearts* ; Heb. x. 16. and of the great offices and business of Christ, as a Saviour, is by all the methods of his grace and power, to reduce our hearts to the love of God and his law : *He is made sanctification to us as well as redemption* ; 1 Cor. i. 30. So that for men to talk of being saved without love and obedience to the moral law of God, is to talk plain inconsistencies, or to affirm what natural reason can never allow, and what scripture and the gospel never designed ; in short, it is to talk of being saved without salvation. The moral law of God is of eternal obligation upon creatures : And it would be our constant duty to obey it, even if we could suppose there were no such future state, no such eternal life provided for men as the gospel reveals. It arises from the relation between God and his creatures. We can never be disengaged or released from this duty by the gospel, which brings in pardon and mercy to save us from the punishment due to our defects or transgressions of the law ; but not to release us from obedience to it.

A holy God will not save sinners from hell, and forgive them their sins, without making them holy. Christ in all his abounding love to sinners, will not become *a minister of sin* ; Gal. ii. 17—20. The design of God in his grace to sinners, by Jesus Christ, is *that they might be holy and without blame before him in love* : Eph. i. 4. And hereby we shew that the grace of God, in the forgiveness of sin, is not lost upon us, but obtains the end for which it was designed, viz. to bring us back to God and holiness.

II. " Good works are necessary to manifest our gratitude to God for his pardoning mercy ;" These are our returns of love to the blessed Jesus for his dying love manifested to us ; 2 Cor. v. 15. He died for all ranks and characters of men, Jews and Gentiles, *that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again*. 1 John iv. 19. We are bound to love him, and *we do love him because he he first loved us*. 1 Cor. vi. 20. *Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your body and spirit, which are God's*.

III. " Good works are also necessary to render us useful to men our fellow-creatures," and to make our profession honourable in their sight. Good works are recommended by St. Paul for the purpose ; Tit. iii. 8. " This is a faithful saying, and I will that thou constantly affirm, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men." It is necessary to convince the world that our gospel is all holy, and that it indulges and allows of no known sin : That this gospel is a divine blessing to mankind, that it carries blessings with it wheresoever it comes, that it cures the vices of the mind, and the sinful passions of the

heart, that it suppresses all injustice and cruelty, fraud and malice, envy and oppression; and every evil work which sin and Satan have introduced into this world. A christian must preach and prove the purity and power of his gospel in his whole conversation, that it changes a lion into a lamb, an earth-worm into an angel, and a son of Adam into a child of God. This is the way to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*, as St. Paul expresses it; Tit. ii. 10. This must force a conviction upon the eyes and ears, and consciences of men, that there is something divine and heavenly in our religion.

IV. "Without holiness and good works we are not; nor can be conformable to our Lord Jesus Christ:" And yet all the members must be conformed to their head, when they are presented by him before the Father; Rom. viii. 29. *God has predestinated all his children to be conformable to the image of his Son, that he may appear to be the first-born, and in all things may have the pre-eminence*: He must present them *without spot and blemish*, like himself, in the other world; that they may dwell with him for ever. And in this world the disciples must resemble their Lord; christians should be public blessings to the world, as their master was, *who went about doing good*; Acts x. 38. and they should be known to be his followers by this blessed character:

V. Another use of good works is, "to evidence the truth of our faith, and our interest in this salvation;" James ii. 20, 24. For faith which does not produce good works is dead, and cannot save us. Our faith in Christ is made known to ourselves, as well as to the world, by our works; Rom. viii. 1. They who are in Christ Jesus, and are free from the condemnation of the law, must *walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit*? 1 John ii. 2—5. *Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*: And it is by keeping or obeying his word, that we know we are in him.

VI. Works of holiness, a new heart and new obedience, are needful to fit and prepare us for the actual possession and blessedness of heaven, for *without holiness no man shall see God*\*. And in this view a sincere return to God with obedience to his commands, is a necessary requisite, in order to our final salvation; Heb. xii. 14. This blissful vision of God is reserved only

\* Note, when I speak of good works, or works of holiness, as necessary toward our final salvation, or our complete possession of heavenly blessedness, I mean all the inward exercises of holy fear, and love, and hope, and obedience, and dependence, and patience in the heart, &c. as well as the outward performances of the acts of religion and righteousness in the life: But it must still be understood with this limitation, viz. They are necessary where there is time and room, opportunity and capacity for the performance of them; so that this doth not exclude infants from salvation, who are not capable of exercising the principles of grace: Nor doth it exclude dying penitents who have no space of time allowed them for living a life of holiness.

for the *pure in heart*: Mat. v. 8. Sanctification is the beginning of our salvation, and it is eternally necessary to continue it. We can never be happy in the presence of God till we are like him in holiness. Nor can we be fit company for the holy angels, or the spirits of the just made perfect, unless we are conformable to their temper. And it should be observed also, that this preparation or fitness for heaven, may be sometimes represented as a right to the blessedness of it, because the promises of heaven are sometimes made to those who are thus qualified and prepared, and these promises give them a right to it\*. Mat. v. 3—12. *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God, &c.* Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.* Yet it may be remembered what I said before, that these commandments do not signify directly the ten commandments of the law, but rather the commands of Jesus Christ, or of God in the gospel, which indeed include a sincere obedience to the moral law, and something more, viz. Repentance and faith in Christ.

VII. I might add, in the last place, that holiness of life or obedience to the commands of God, is necessary in order to make the process of the last judgment appear equitable and righteous in the eyes of all mankind; for Christ the judge *shall render to every one according to their works*; Rev. xxii. 12. Rom. ii. 5, 6. 1 Cor. xv. 58. And indeed this is one chief design of God's appointing such a solemn and public transaction as the last judgment, that all the creation may see the equity or righteousness of the dealings of God with men, that he awards the eternal recompence to saints and sinners, according to their different characters of vice and virtue, sin and holiness. *The vessels of wrath* are by their own rebellion and impenitence *fitted to destruction*, and *the vessels of mercy* are by sanctifying grace and holiness *before prepared unto glory*; Rom. ix. 22, 23. Though our own works are by no means sufficient to atone for sin; or to procure the favour of God or eternal life, for such guilty creatures as we are, yet there is, as Doctor Owen, I think in his *Book of Justification*, calls it, a rewardable condescency in the works of holiness, and there is many a promise of heavenly rewards made to them in the New Testament: Now when Christ shall adjudge the wicked to hell, and the saints to heaven, the whole creation must approve the equity of his dealings with men. In the mean time

\* Some divines have here distinguished, as I have elsewhere shewn, between a "*Jus hereditatis*," or a right of heirship through faith in Christ, whereby we become the sons of God, and have a title to heaven, and a "*Jus aptitudinis*," that is, a right of fitness, whereby we are actually prepared, by sanctification and holiness, for the possession of this heavenly inheritance. He that is a heir by birth or by adoption, has a title to an estate or a crown; but he acquires a right to the actual possession, by being trained up for a fitness for it, at the time appointed, by him who is his natural father or his adopter.

the saints shall admire the grace of God, and the mediation of Christ, while they see how unworthy they and their works are of such a glorious reward.

Thus we find there is abundant reason for our obedience to the commands of the moral law, though it is not made the proper condition, or prescribed term of our acceptance with God, and of obtaining happiness by the gospel; for it is only perfect obedience to these commands in thought, word and deed, can give us a right to eternal life, according to the law. And yet a sincere endeavour after universal obedience to them, is one necessary requisite of our being approved by Christ at last, and our actual entrance into heaven, according to the gospel: Hercupon I am bold to affirm, that those persons whom all these reasons cannot draw to the sincere practice of holiness, may be sure they never believed in Christ, and are not partakers of the salvation of the gospel; for the great and necessary duty of christianity is *faith which works by love*; Gal. v. 6. The heart is purified by true faith; Acts xv. 9. And *faith without works is dead*, and is unable to save us; James ii. 20, 26.

#### SECT. V.—*Reflections.*

I. "It is a dangerous thing to mistake the great design of Christ's ministry here on earth." Let us learn from this discourse, that our Saviour often preached to sinners the gospel of grace and forgiveness, of repentance and faith in himself; yet that his chief business here, was not to preach the gospel constantly, nor to preach it in its full light, perfection and glory; but rather to prepare the way for it when he had laid the foundation in his own death and resurrection, and when his kingdom should be set up in the world by his apostles, and by his Spirit, and built upon this foundation. He prepared the way for his Spirit, and his apostles, even as John the baptist prepared the way for him. The great business of Christ in this life on earth, was to appear with the characters of the Messiah on him; to answer the types and prophecies that went before concerning him; to pass through the stages of life without sin as our example; to yield a perfect obedience to the law, and fulfil all those precepts in perfection which we could never fulfil; to preach the law in the spirituality and perfection of its demands, and begin to open the gospel; to resign and submit himself to death, as a sacrifice for sin, accursed by the law, and devoted to the punishing justice of God: And hereby he laid a foundation for clearer preaching the gospel of forgiveness of sins through his blood, which doctrine he just mentions to his disciples at the last supper.

As for his own public preaching, it chiefly consisted in clear and full explanations of the law of God in its spirituality, which had been shamefully obscured and curtailed by the Jewish Doctors; in bringing the invisible worlds of heaven and hell into a



nearer and brighter view ; in vindicating his own conduct against the accusations of men ; in maintaining his own character, as one sent of God ; in reproving the Jews for their corrupt traditions, for their hypocrisy, for their self-righteousness, for their uncharitableness to the Gentiles, and thus calling the world to conviction of sin and repentance, and preparing the way by his parables for the reception of the Gentiles into the church. When he preached the gospel of his atonement for sin and faith in his blood, it was rather in secret to his disciples ; or if in public, it was generally in dark sayings and parables, and mystical expressions, such as, *the Son of man being lifted up, and drawing all men to him* ; John xii. 32. *giving his flesh for meat to the people, and his blood for drink*,—chapter vi. 51—55. The plainest intimations, which, I think, Christ ever gave of the salvation of sinners by his own death as a sacrifice, to people who were not his disciples, was in those metaphorical words two or three times repeated in the tenth chapter of John, *I am the good shepherd, who giveth his life for the sheep* ; verses 11, 14, 15. But when his death and resurrection had laid a fairer foundation for the gospel, then he taught it his disciples much more plainly after his resurrection, both by his conversation and by his Spirit, and sent them to publish it to the whole world more gloriously than ever he himself taught it to the Jews. See this explained more at large in the Second Sermon on the Atonement of Christ\*.

Now, I say, a mistake in the design of Christ's public preaching, may lead many people into some unhappy misapprehensions about several things, and particularly about the way of salvation by the gospel. For,

1. When we hear Christ preach the law so much, and speak of "entering into life by keeping the commandments," if we imagine all this to be the clear gospel, *we shall seek to be saved as it were by the works of the law*, which the apostle so severely reproves the Galatians for, and the Jews or Jewish christians, who dwelt among the Romans ; Rom. ix. 31, 32. Gal. iii. 1—6. and iv. 21. and v. 4. And if our opinions and conduct be the same, we shall expose ourselves to the same sacred reproof of the apostle, and be greatly bewildered in the way to heaven.

2. Such a mistake in the design of Christ's preaching the law, as though he taught it as the way for the salvation of sinners, "will incline us to expound the law in so gross and defective a sense, as the Pharisees did of old, that so expounded, sinners may be able to keep it, and obey the commands of it sufficiently to gain salvation thereby." It will tempt us to retrench and diminish the perfection of its demands of universal

\* See vol. I. page 493, &c.

holiness in thought, word and deed ; because otherwise we cannot yield a perfect obedience. Whereas it is much more glorious to God, the Governor of the world, to suppose his holy law still maintains its own perfect purity, and its original demands of constant universal obedience ; and it is more glorious to God our Saviour, to suppose that he has provided an effectual way for the salvation of sinful creatures, who trust in divine mercy, and who love the law of God, though their best obedience to it be very defective.

3. " Such a mistake will lead ministers to neglect the mention of the death and sufferings of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, and as the foundation of our pardon and our hope ;" it will lead them to omit these important points in their descriptions of the gospel, and in their accounts of faith in Christ ; because Christ never spoke so publicly and plainly to the people, of making atonement for sin by his death, &c. And upon this account we shall be in danger of leaving this doctrine out of our directions of sinners when they seek the way to salvation, which is now made plainer and more necessary since the death and resurrection of Christ are accomplished, since the apostles have particularly explained this doctrine, and the New Testament is complete.

4. " This mistake will tempt us to set Christ and his apostles at variance about the way of salvation." Christ says, " If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments : " and the apostles say, " The law is the ministration of death, but believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved ; and we are justified by faith without the works of the law, &c." And thus we shall make the holy scripture contradict itself : Or if we endeavour to accommodate and reconcile these seeming oppositions, upon a supposition that Christ in the language of my text preached the gospel, it can never be done, with fairness and justness of thought, without straining the words of scripture from their natural sense ; and it will ever bring a darkness upon the distinction between the law and gospel, and leave the way of salvation by the gospel under much confusion.

5. " This will tempt and incline us to expound the clear gospel, which we find in the writings and preaching of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John, after the death and resurrection of Christ, by one of the legal expressions of our Saviour," when in his own life-time he preached the law for the conviction of sinners : We shall interpret the words and language of the gospel into the sense of the law of works : We shall almost explain away the covenant of grace, and make a covenant of works of it : And thus, perhaps, expose ourselves to the danger of St. Paul's censure and " anathema," by " preaching another gospel, or perverting the gospel of Christ ;" Gal. i. 8.

“THE JEWISH WRITERS are to slight and despise the writings of the apostles, as though they never did nor could preach the gospel so clearly as Christ himself;” whereas they were the first preachers of the gospel after the death and resurrection and ascension of Christ, to preach the full gospel to the Jews in a clearer and stronger language than Jesus himself used to the multitude; they were instructed and commissioned to point the way to salvation by Christ, in a longer and more explicit manner and expression, than his divine wisdom thought proper to do before he had actually died and rose again, by which transactions he laid the foundation for preaching the gospel more clearly and perfectly.

A mistake about the personal ministry of Christ, in such passages as this in my text, will make us look upon the glorious and evangelical paragraphs in the sermons and the epistles of Peter, Paul, and John, as mere affectionate and fervent pieces of discourse, according to the warm temper and lively fancies of those honest and zealous men, who in the heat of their spirits spoke many things mystically and unintelligibly. This hath been the professed opinion of some who are called christians concerning the great apostle; and upon this account they think none of his writings are to be read without great caution: But if you will seek the way of salvation aright, say they, you must go to the mount, and hear our Saviour’s sermon there, in the v. vi. and vii. chapters of the gospel of St. Matthew, while they neglect the more evangelical speeches even of Christ himself. This has been the language of some men, the leaders of the consciences of the ignorant multitude, who are by nature inclined enough to a covenant of works, and need not be taught and persuaded to build all their hopes of heaven upon the works of the law, which Christ never designed in that noble and admirable sermon of his on the mountain.

But now if we suppose Christ frequently preaching the law, on purpose to shew the Jews the grossest defects and imperfection of their obedience, and their need of a Saviour, and giving such hints of the gospel as were suited to that dispensation of his life and personal ministry; and if we suppose the apostles were fully preaching this gospel, which our Saviour just opened and began in his life-time, and publishing it in all its glory of righteousness and grace, after the death and resurrection of Christ, because it was not proper to be thus openly preached before, then we may well reconcile the different language of St. Paul and Christ, when he saith, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; Acts xvi. 31. and yet say, that he who will be saved, let him keep the commandments of the law; Gal. iii. 12. for the law is not against

the promises, Gal. iii. 21. but the "law is our school-master," and leader of us as children to Christ: so the Greek word *παιδεία* means, Gal. iii. 24. Conviction of sin by Christ's preaching of the law, leads men, as in a lower school, as yet, to proceed farther, and to seek for and embrace the grace of Christ in the gospel, as it is preached more fully and clearly by his apostles under the teachings of his Spirit.

This scheme and view of things being well adjusted in the mind, will help us to understand many of those legal expressions in the New Testament, which might seem to lead us to the covenant of works again, or which seem to mingle the law and gospel for salvation, if we will but remember that the Holy Ghost in the New Testament sometimes discovers the law in its severity and perfection of demands for the conviction of sin, as well as for the discovery of our duty, and sometimes reveals the gospel in the riches of its grace, for the faith and salvation of awakened sinners.

II. "How firm and durable is the ancient and perfect law of God, which requires perfect, constant and persevering obedience?" It is an eternal law: It is not yet abolished, though the gospel be introduced, nor shall it be through all the ages of mankind, and the several dispensations of God toward men. The moral law is sometimes said to be a transcript or copy from the nature and attributes of God; the duties there required bear the more perfect stamp and signature of his essential perfections, and therefore the law must be unchangeable. And not only the requirements of duty, but I think the sanctions of the law also in its promised rewards and threatened penalties are everlasting. "He that doth these commands perfectly shall live in or by them: But cursed is he that continueth not in all the commands of the law to do them," and he must die, Gal. iii. 10, 12. I do not find any scripture that tells me, that the commands, or the sanctions are repealed\*, though God hath provided a way to deliver

\* If it should be said, that the apostle in Heb. vii. 18. says, "there is verily a disannulling of the commandment for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, for the law made nothing perfect," &c. I answer, that the context plainly shews that the words "law" and "commandment" here, do not mean the moral law, but refer either to the Sinai covenant, or the whole scheme of the Jewish economy, and particularly to the levitical priesthood which is abrogated, because it could not make a proper atonement for sin.

If it should be objected yet again, that the same apostle in Rom. vii. 6. declares, that "we are now delivered from the law, that being dead in which we were held;" and that the law in this place means the ten commandments, because the apostle argues from the tenth command, "Thou shalt not covet:" I answer, that the apostle there plainly means, that now under the gospel we who are true christians, and are entered into the covenant of grace by faith, are delivered from the bondage and chains of the law, as a covenant of works, whereby our indwelling sins were rather irritated and provoked than subdued: "It is dead," that is, it has lost its unhappy influences on true believers: But not that the law itself is abolished, either as a rule of life to christians, or as a condemning

men who receive the gospel and enter into God's new covenant from the bondage of the law, as a covenant of works, and to release and free repenting sinners from this cursed death, to deliver them from this sentence of condemnation, and to bestow on them the blessings of eternal life.

It is granted indeed, as the apostle confesses ; Rom. viii. 3. That through the weakness of our flesh, the law is become weak and unable to save sinners ; because their corrupt nature and fleshly inclinations render them unable to keep it perfectly ; but, as I intimated before, it is not weak in its own nature to give life. Christ in my text preached the law, and says, " If thou keep the commandments," that is, with a persevering constancy, and a sinless perfection, " thou shalt enter into life : " What Christ speaks is true. If any man appear who hath been guilty of no sin, and hath fulfilled the law of God in every tittle of it in thought, word and deed, he shall have eternal happiness. Rom. ii. 7. They who seek for glory, honour and immortality, by patient continuance in well doing, *in opere bono*, in one good work, without intermission or interruption by any sin, they shall have eternal life. This is the language of the law of works. But our incapacity to fulfil this law in our fallen state, hath awakened the compassion of God to provide a gospel of grace and pardon, and to send his Son Jesus Christ down from heaven to earth for this very purpose, that humble, repenting, returning sinners, who trust in the mercy of God through a Mediator, might be saved, even while they cannot fulfil the perfect demands of this pure and holy law, though they sincerely endeavoured it.

The great and blessed God maintains his holy law still in its own perfection and glory, though we have lost our practical or moral power of obeying it perfectly : I say, we have lost, by our fall in Adam, our moral or practical power of perfect obedience to the law ; but our natural powers of understanding, will and affections remain, and there is no other natural power or faculty required, in order to obey it. And since our natural powers remain, the great God requires perfect obedience of us, and all men, to his holy law, and yet he assures us by his gospel, that he will not inflict the curse of the law on those who heartily repent of their sins, and trust in Christ, though they do not or cannot yield perfect obedience to this law.

covenant of works to those who are not entered into the new covenant or a state of grace, by faith and repentance : For he adds, verse 12. that even now " the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." If this might be explained by a similitude, I think it is much in the same manner as the penal laws against the protestant dissenters in England, are not abolished, but stand in force still : Yet they have no power to hurt any person who accepts of the act of toleration, and qualifies himself accordingly : Though indeed there is this difference, that it can never be said, that those penal laws are now, or ever were, either " holy, just or good," as the law of God is.

He doth not lessen or diminish the demands of his law, which requires perfection still ; for his nature is too pure to require only an imperfect obedience. If God under the gospel had quite laid aside or abolished his law, and required or commanded no more than such a sincere imperfect obedience, or such good works which converted and pious men perform, then they would fulfil the requirements or commands of God, and would have no sin, and such persons would need no pardon. But this is contrary to the whole tenor of the New Testament. If we say we have no sin, we make God a liar, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ; 1 John i. 10. The law of God is eternal, and demands perfect obedience of every creature : But his grace pardons those who cannot come up to the perfect demands of this law, by reason of the moral impotence contracted by the fall, if they apply to Jesus Christ his Son, according to the rules of the gospel.

The law therefore is holy, and just, and good, and will be so to all generations ; Rom. vii. 12. and when our Saviour was beginning his divine and admirable exposition of it on the mount, he warns us in Mat. v. 17, 18. " Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets : I am not come to destroy but to fulfil : For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled ;" and our Lord Jesus Christ has put honour upon his Father's law several ways :

1. He preached and explained it in the glorious purity and perfection of it.—2. He fulfilled it all himself in most exact obedience, and thereby set all his followers an admirable example how to fulfil it.—3. He suffered death for the dishonour we had cast upon it by our sins. not to destroy the sanction of it, but to free us from the curse.—4. He hath taken all the rules or commandments of it into the scheme of his gospel, as divine rules and directions for the constant practice of believers, and obliges them to obey it with their utmost care and endeavour, though he hath taken away from them that curse and condemnation, which originally belongs to every degree of disobedience.—5. He sends his own holy Spirit continually to write this law in the hearts of his people, and to form and mould their souls to a delightful conformity to the rules of it.

Thus it appears that Christ Jesus himself and the very scheme of the gospel doth confirm and not abolish the law ; Rom. iii. 31. The law is everlasting, and the gospel doth not destroy it, while yet it relieves guilty creatures from the deserved penalties.

III. " *How useful is it to meditate and study, to preach and explain the law of God, and that not only for the direction of our life and actions, but also for the same end that our Saviour*

preached it in my text to this young man, viz. to convince of sin." So Rom. iii. 20. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Rom. iv. 15. The law worketh wrath ; it sheweth to the consciences of men the wrath of God, which is due to sin, and therefore saith the apostle, I by the law am dead to the law ; Gal. ii. 16, 19. By considering and studying the purity, the extent, and perfection of the law of God, I am dead to all expectation of righteousness and life by it, for I see I cannot fulfil its pure and perfect demands, and therefore I fly to the gospel as my only refuge and hope.

We must be made sensible of our guilt of sin, our liableness to death and misery, and our incapacity to save ourselves by the law, that we may fly to the gospel of grace. We must be wounded by the law, that we may seek and find healing by the gospel. The law impressed on the conscience is an excellent preparative for the gospel of forgiveness ; for sinners that are not awakened to a sense of sin and danger, will not hear the sweet invitations of the Saviour. Dare not charge and censure those as legal preachers, who frequently preach the law of God in its demands and in its curses : There is abundant use of preaching the law, for many excellent purposes under the dispensation of the gospel : Jesus himself is our pattern.

IV. "How happy are we who live under the clear and complete light of the gospel, as it is explained and illustrated by the inspired apostles, since the death and resurrection of our blessed Saviour." We are happier in several respects than those that lived even in the life-time of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are ready to say within ourselves, Surely if I had seen Christ in the flesh, I must have loved him : If I had beheld his pure and perfect example of holiness, I could not help imitating : If I had heard him speak as never man spake, I must have embraced his doctrine, and submitted to his instructions : But we are much mistaken in this thought, for we might have been carried away from Christ by the common national prejudices against him, we might have been among the proud Pharisees, building up a righteousness of our own, and refusing the gospel, while we heard Jesus himself preach it. Multitudes who heard this glorious preacher rejected his divine counsels, and perished in their unbelief and disobedience, though they had as good an opinion of themselves as we have. Besides many other advantages that we have now, beyond what they had in the days of Christ ; besides the many predictions and promises that are since accomplished, which confirm his mission ; besides the explication of a greater part of the Old Testament, by the apostles, than could have been done before the death of Christ ; besides the many proofs of the christian religion, which we derive from the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the arguments drawn from the miraculous gifts

of the Spirit, which could never have been brought in our Saviour's life-time, we have this advantage also amongst others, that we have the gospel set in a clearer light by his apostles, in their sermons and epistles, than our Saviour himself set it in by his own personal ministry.

That divine teacher explained the law clearly, and set the commands of it in their full light and beauty, partly to lead us to a more spiritual practice than the Pharisees, and the Jewish doctors of the law were acquainted with, and partly to shew our utter incapacity of keeping the law, or obtaining eternal life by it : He also began to publish the gospel of grace, repentance and forgiveness ; but as was declared before, his sovereign wisdom did not think proper publicly to explain and illustrate this gospel of forgiveness with the doctrine of his own sacrifice, his death, his atonement for our sins, his resurrection for our justification, his intercession for us in heaven, and his ruling the world for the good of his people : He left all this to be done by his apostles, when the Spirit should come down upon them and teach them many things which they could not bear in his life time, and which therefore he did not clearly teach them ; John xvi. 12.

Value therefore and love the gospel, and return not to the law of works, as the means or rule of your justification ; Gal. iv. 21. Tell me ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law, how it curses every sinner, and condemns them all without remedy and without hope ? It is the business of sinners to fly to and live upon this gospel of forgiveness, and not seek to establish their own imperfect righteousness before God. Rejoice in the way of justification by the obedience, death and resurrection of the Son of God in flesh. Never hope to obtain pardon of sin, and to secure the salvation which Christ has revealed, by your own keeping the commandments of the law, for your best righteousnesses are all very defective and insufficient : But repent of sin, trust in Christ, and live upon atoning blood and pardoning grace, while you humbly seek after the highest degrees of holiness and conformity to the commands of the law. By this means you shall magnify the law of God, and make it honourable to the sight of men, even while your hope of salvation and eternal life is entirely owing to the rich grace of God in the gospel of his Son Jesus : *To him that has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, to him that has redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse and a sacrifice for us, be glory, honour and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*



## REMARK.

It is proper to put in a remark here, which perhaps would have been better placed at the end of the first essay, viz, That the ingenious commentator Dr. Whitby, was well known to the learned world, when he wrote his Comment on the New Testament, to be a pretty warm defender of the Arminian doctrines concerning the will of man and divine grace, &c. though at the same time he was a zealous opposer of the Socinian sentiments concerning the person of Christ, and a strict and zealous asserter of the doctrine of his satisfaction and atonement for sin, and probably he borrowed some of his sentiments on that point from Dr. Owen, on the epistle to the Hebrews. In his latter days, a little before his death, he seemed to raise the character of the human nature of Christ as high as the Arians do, but supposed it still below divinity.

## ESSAY IV.

### *Three mistaken ways of Coming to God without Christ:*

JOHN xiv. 6.—No man cometh unto the Father but by me.

If the race of man were immortal on earth, and sinners were never summoned to die, or if they could put an eternal end to their souls when the body lies down in the dust, there would be little concern among us, *How shall I come and appear before God?* or “What shall I do to obtain his favour?” Sinful creatures seem to live well enough among the cares or amusements of this life, though they are *without God in the world*; and if they could live for ever without seeing him, or could plunge into death into the unseen world, and not meet him there, they would take little thought about that grand enquiry, which Balak the king of Moab thought to be of such importance, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, or bow myself before the high God?* Micah vi. 6.

But when the consciences of men begin to be convinced that they are transgressors against the law of their Maker, and that they must one day appear before him, as their Governor and their Judge, and answer for their conduct, then they enquire in God earnest, “What they shall do to stand in his sight with acceptance, or to draw near his Majesty without terror?” Then reason and nature exert all their forces to find an answer to this grand question. But nature and reason darkened and weakened by the fall of man, and unassisted by revelation and divine grace, lead them into many mistaken ways, such as will never bring them into the favour of him who made them, nor obtain them the happiness. Poor foolish and fallen mankind is ready to try many means of procuring eternal life for themselves, before they will betake themselves to the one only way which God has appointed by his gospel, and that is, faith in Jesus Christ.

Of the several mistaken ways that sinners are ready to chuse in this case, these three are the chief, viz. The way of supposed innocency, The way of dependence on God’s general goodness, and the way of their own repentance and self-righteousness. Let us consider each of these, and enquire into the justness of their pretensions :

I. First, “the way of innocency.” How many souls are here in such a land as this, who come to God with a thoughtless confidence, and expect to find mercy at his hands, though they are conscious they have not done so much good as they ought, or have been so religious as they should be? Yet they think

they are harmless and have done no wrong, and therefore they are safe for eternity. Perhaps, by education and other methods of restraining grace, they have escaped the viler pollutions of the age, and been preserved from gross impieties : Then they hope and believe all shall go well with them, and dream of nothing but the favour of God, and happiness after death, because their life has been outwardly unblameable in the world. Thus they live, and thus they die. Ask these persons when they lie languishing on a dying pillow, "How they can venture to appear before the great, the just, and the holy God, in the world of spirits?" They will readily return this answer, "They have done no harm and they hope God will do them none ; they have wronged no man, and they know not why they should not be accepted of God." Poor ignorant, unthinking creatures ! One would wonder that so gross blindness and stupidity should remain on the minds of any who sit under the preaching of the law and gospel. Let me endeavour to convince such sinners here, and prove that this hope is a false and dangerous one.

I. If it were possible that they should be found such as they suppose themselves, that is, innocent in their outward carriage and actions towards their fellow-creatures, yet have their language and their lips been always innocent too ? Or if they have in the main learned to bridle their tongues from gross falsehood, and wrath and slander, yet have they never indulged evil imaginations against their neighbour, and the working of evil passions ? Sirs, if we construe the law of duty to extend to our hearts, as well as to our lips and our lives, as our Saviour has construed it in his sermon on the mount, Mat. chapters v. and vi. and vii. who is there can ever plead innocence ? You have kept your actions to all appearance tolerably blameless, with regard to men, but have you never broken the last command of the second table, never been desirous or covetous of another's possessions in thought, never been guilty of immoralities in heart ? Can such souls plead at the bar of God, that they never allowed one envious thought against their neighbour, and never let loose a malicious word ? That they never coveted that which belonged to another, nor wilfully lessened their neighbour's good name or reputation ? Did they never find wrath or revenge kindling and burning within them without resistance ? Did they never indulge the motions of lust or intemperance, or any sinful desire stirring in their hearts ? When the great apostle, in the second and third chapters to the Romans, is convincing all the world of sin, and laying mankind under a sense of guilt, he convinces them effectually by their breach of the second table, that *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* ; Rom. ii. 21. and iii. 10, 12—20.

Where is the son or daughter of Adam that can stand forth and say, I never dishonoured father or mother, nor ever dis-

obeyed the just commands of my superiors ; I never was unreasonably angry against another ; I never encouraged a wanton thought within me, nor indulged any covetous and sinful wish ; I never broke the rule of temperance in eating and drinking, nor ever gave way to an irregular passion. I never was guilty of known falsehood, in design or in word. Let mankind take but these laws of God, which regard themselves and their neighbours, and make a sincere examination of themselves thereby, and their own consciences will soon condemn the very best of them in the sight of God. They are all condemned by the law of innocence, and if they have no better plea, they will meet with an offended and angry God, in whose sight no sinner can stand and find acceptance. His law is wise and righteous, and every violation of it deserves a proportion of punishment.

Perhaps they will plead after such a strict enquiry, that though they have not been perfectly innocent, yet their offences have not been gross and constant ; but only of the smaller kind and few in number, and therefore they hope for excuse ; But the apostle James takes away this hope also, when he tells us ; James ii. 8, 10. *Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*, for by one wilful sin he abuses that governor and affronts that authority by which all the commands are enjoined. Nor is any wilful sin small in the sight of divine justice, for it is the fruit of a presumptuous heart, and is therefore highly criminal.

But suppose after their own review of their behaviour, they should pronounce themselves quite innocent, and say boldly, *they knew nothing by themselves ; yet they are not sufficiently justified hereby*, for God sees the heart, and he knows us better than we know ourselves. 2 Cor. vii. 2. and 1 Cor. iv. 4. *Receive us, saith St. Paul, we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man ; for though I know nothing by myself, that is, nothing of fraud or deceit, or wilful injury, yet am I not hereby justified, but he that judgeth me is the Lord. The eyes of God are a flame of fire, and will find iniquity where I can find none, for he sees all the disguises and veils of self-love and self-flattery, whereby every man is naturally prone to cover his sins, and to impose upon himself. He beholds those secret ferments, those hidden operations and motions of sin in the soul, which pass by unnoticed to ourselves, and escape the accusation and charge of our consciences. He knows so perfectly all the just demands of his own law, in the lengths and the breadths thereof, and is so perfectly acquainted with all the motions of our hearts, all their follies and passions, and sinful biasses, that he can find in us a thousand contrarieties to his law, where we are fondly ready to presume upon our own innocence. Should I say with Job, chapter ix. verse 30. *If I should wash**

*myself in snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, thou wilt plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes would abhor me.* That is, if I should use all my own purifications, thou wilt discover me to be still as greatly defiled with sin, as one who is plunged into a ditch, and is unfit to put on his common raiment, lest he defile that and every thing about him.

Alas, how little do men believe this? How little do they know and think of their own guilt, in the sight of God, and the depth of their own misery! How are they led by their own thoughtlessness and shameful ignorance of themselves to build their hopes for eternity on a very sandy foundation, which will never stand in the day of that divine tempest, which shall try every man's work: You imagine, God will not be so strict a judge, and so severe, as preachers represent him; but how do you know that he will not be thus severe in his enquiries and his judgment? I am well assured the mere light of nature can never assure you of it, nor secure you against this severity: And the scripture often represents him thus severe in his judgment, formed by the rules of his own law, and abstracted from the gospel of his grace. David knew this in ancient times; *Psal. cxxx. 3. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord who can stand.* *Psal. cxliii. 2. No man living shall be justified in thy sight.* All mankind are sinners; *There is none righteous, no, not one: Every mouth is stopped, and the whole world lies guilty before God; Rom. iii. 19.*

2. If we were entirely innocent as to man, would that be sufficient to answer for all our injuries and dishonours done to God? Would this honest and blameless conduct among your neighbours, atone for all your neglects of religion, and your shameful forgetfulness of God your Maker? What! Did God send you into this world among sensible things, and give you leave to neglect him, who is the eternal and Almighty Spirit? Did he form your spirits within you, and give you understanding and reason, and noble powers to know the God that made you, and never require or expect that you should use them to obtain this knowledge? Have you a tongue to speak, and yet never speak to him in petition or praise? It is not only cruelty, or falsehood, or injustice to our neighbours, which the holy apostle charges mankind with, in order to lay their consciences under guilt and condemnation, but their neglects of God and religion are brought in as a heavy part of the charge; *Rom. iii. 11, 17, 18. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; there is no fear of God before their eyes.* You hear the accusations of this apostle, speaking in the name of God to men, to make them sensible of their guilt and misery; you have defrauded the great God of his due glory; you have done him much injury in withholding from him worship and reverence,

fear and love, prayer and praise ; and you fall under the sentence of his broken law for ever, if you have no better plea than this.

Under such a charge multitudes would be ready to rise up, and with a thoughtless and inconsiderate pertness would say, " Far be it from us to injure our Maker when we would not injure or wrong a worm : " And this is the common sentiment and language of neighbours and friends when a man dies, even though he were a drunkard or a man of irreligion. " Alas, for him ! poor man ! he has been honest and just ; his soul is at rest, he never did any body an injury but himself. " When such sinners are charged with neglect of religion, they cry out as though they were falsely accused, as those Jews do in Mal. iii. 8. when God complains of them, *Ye have robbed me, saith the Lord ;* but they replied with impudence and ignorance, *Wherein have we robbed or wronged thee ?*

" Alas, sirs, you are far from innocence in this respect : for you have robbed God of your hearts and best affections ; you have robbed him of your thoughts and serious meditations ; you have robbed him of your highest love, and chief delight. Were all the passions of your souls and powers of nature given you to be employed about the trifles of this world ? Doth not God, in the person of divine wisdom, call to men in the book of Proverbs, *My son, give me thy heart ;* Prov. xxiii. 26. And hath not the world had these hearts of yours given up to it entirely ? Doth not the light of nature, as well as our Saviour, say, *Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and your whole soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength ?* Mark. xii. 30. And hath God had all his share of love from you ? " What time have you ever spent in his service, in secret transactions between God and your own souls ? What seasons have you taken for prayer to him, or for speaking his honours ? and yet our time is all his : And though he gives us sufficient portions of time for all our necessaries and conveniences of life, yet have you not robbed God of much of your time, in neglecting religion so entirely as you have done ? Have you lived upon the Lord as your delight and your life ? Have you made him your hope and your all ? Have you daily expected all your comforts and blessings from him, and have you returned all the fruits of your blessings back again to him in a way of thankfulness and obedience ? Surely your consciences must answer, no : Then believe it and be afraid ; *you have robbed God,* you have injured the Almighty, you are far from innocency and you must expect to perish with malefactors, if you have no better plea than this. " O dismal change of apprehensions, when God shall make creatures, who thought they were innocent, appear abominable in his sight, guilty of atheism and irreligion and high ungodliness, and shall judge and sen-

tence and punish them as criminals of a deep die, for *God was not in their thoughts, they lived without God in the world!* Ps. x. 4. Ephes. ii. 12.

“ Dare not therefore, O sinners, dare not continue one day longer in this practice : Renounce and abandon your false and foolish hopes : Walk no longer in this vain, this dangerous, this supposed way of innocency, for it will never bring you to God and his favour. Nor go on to think yourself fit for heaven, because you imagined you had done no wrong on earth, for upon a serious search you must be convinced in your consciences, that you have been evident transgressors against the law of God, both in regard of the duties of religion and morality, in what you owe both to God and man ; and innocency will be found a false and vain plea at the bar of God.” But I will go one step further in making it appear with abundant evidence, that the way of pretended innocency can never bring such creatures as we are into the favour of God ; and that is, by enquiring of such as call themselves christians ; what is the use of christianity, and why was it brought into the world ? Surely, if innocence had been the way to heaven, Christ Jesus the Son of God would never have come into flesh and blood, that he might die for us ; God would never have sent so glorious and divine a person to have exposed himself to so many infirmities and sorrows, fatigues and sufferings among the wretched inhabitants of this our globe, if we could have been saved in the way of innocency. Never would the Son of God have entered our world to have been driven out of this mortal life again by cruel and bloody men ; nor sustained the shame, the pangs and agonies of the cross, and a cursed death. There would have been no new religion introduced by him ; there would have been no gospel, for there needed none if we are saved by innocency. The coming of the Son of God into our world, his painful circumstances of life, and his atoning death at the end of them, sufficiently prove, that the law of innocency can never save mankind.

The covenant or law of innocency was broken by our first parents ; our natures are corrupted, and this law or covenant is for ever weak, and unable to bring us to God again. Rom. viii. 3. *What the law was not able to do in that it was weak through the flesh, Jesus Christ came to do for us, by coming in the flesh, and making his soul an offering for sin.* “ If after all this representation of things you are resolved to continue in this way, and seek eternal life in the way of innocency, you give a sensible affront to the Son of God, who came down from heaven to bring sinners near to God, and you say in effect, he might have spared his journey to earth to shew us the way to heaven, or to provide a new way for us, for we have done no harm to God or man, here in this world, and therefore God will not condemn or hurt

in the other. O my friends, beg of God to convince you deeply of sin, and that there is no hope by all your pretences of this kind."

II. The second mistaken way of coming to God is "by a mere dependence on the absolute and sovereign goodness of his nature," while you neglect the particular methods of salvation which you hear and read he has appointed in the book of his grace. It is true, *his tender mercies are over all his works*; Ps. cxlv. 9. and men imagine this eternal love to his creatures will not suffer him to make any of them miserable hereafter, for what they call a little misconduct here: And while they lessen their own sins, and enlarge upon his goodness, they venture their souls upon an unsafe foundation, and build up a dangerous and ungrounded hope. "Fancy his goodness, O sinners, as large and glorious as you will, and I may venture to affirm it yet larger and more glorious than your fancy; but if all your hopes rest here, and you walk onward in this confidence, you will never see the face of God with comfort; nor arrive at his favour." Remember this is spoken particularly, and only, to those who have known and heard the gospel of Christ, and yet have neglected to receive it. Yet how common a mistake is this, even among those who are called by the christian name? Many will confess, "We are sinners indeed, and so are all men; but God is infinitely merciful, and he will not damn us: Surely he will never condemn so many millions of souls; he did not make mankind to destroy them; his goodness will not bear to see us eternally miserable, and therefore though we do indulge a little sin here, we shall not perish for ever." Thus that very sin is committed, which the apostle warns men of; Rom. ii. 4. *The riches of the goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering of God which should lead men to repentance* are abused to indulge and uphold them in sin. It is a shameful indignity and dishonour done to the goodness of God, to pretend to trust to it for salvation from punishment, and yet neglect the means this very goodness hath appointed to obtain it. But I will endeavour to convince you here, that this is not a sufficient or safe way.

1. Infinite goodness doth not save sinning angels, and why should it save sinning men? Those noble creatures, who sinned against God, and left their station, are for ever damned and miserable, and yet God is for ever good: How largely is his goodness diffused through all the heavenly world, and he receives endless hallelujahs for it; how largely on this earth, though we often overlook it, and neglect his praise: But he is not bound to exercise goodness in hell too; nor is his heart to be charged with hardness, nor his hand with shortness, because he will not save those who deserve destruction.



2. " Though the goodness of God be infinite in its nature, yet its exercises are all regulated and limited by wisdom and justice ;" and these are also infinite. Wisdom hath joined with divine goodness, and saved a multitude of sinners ; but is it bound to save them all ? Or is it obliged to save you ? Terrible majesty, holiness and consuming fire are with our God ; and among rebellious creatures, his wisdom finds proper seasons and objects where these must have their exercise : And if you are sinners, why should not his just vengeance be let out upon you ? It is a dreadful word which is written ; Is. xxvii. 11. *This is a people of no understanding ; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.* Those who are so ignorant of God and his way of salvation in the midst of the brightest means of knowledge, deserve destruction from the almighty, as the fool who says in his heart, *There is no God ;* Ps. xiv. 1.

3. " There is no promise in the gospel made to those that rest on infinite goodness, and refuse the means God has ordained to salvation," that is, *repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ;* Acts xx. 21. Goodness, when it is not bound by a promise, is perfectly free : And, indeed, if it were confined always to act to the utmost of its reach, it were not free, nor divine, nor worthy of God. And where there is no divine faithfulness engaged to support you by a promise, a sinner's hope in goodness itself will not be a sufficient and effectual security.

4. " Though the goodness of God is infinite, yet it doth not express itself in all the ways that it can do in temporal things, and why must it then be exercised in so unbounded a manner in things eternal ?" If divine goodness exerted itself to the utmost in this life, there would be no pain, there would be no sickness among men, no heart-ache, no sorrow : But you see there is much sickness, sorrow and pain among us, notwithstanding the boundless goodness of God. There are ten thousand ways for infinite goodness to express itself in, besides in forgiveness of the sins of men. How do you know that God will forgive any one sinner, or bestow upon him eternal life ? The light of nature cannot assure us of it, much less can the light of nature inform us, that a God of infinite goodness will pardon every sinner, or save them from the punishment which is due by his righteous law. And I am well assured the scripture gives us no such general hope : Thousands and millions will be *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord Jesus, and from the glory of his power ;* 2 Thess. i. 9. notwithstanding his own and his Father's unsearchable treasures of grace and goodness. *The Lord is abundant in goodness, and yet earth and hell abound in miserable creatures.*

5. "Although you could prove that the mercy of God will pardon some sinners, yet how can you be sure it will pardon you?" If you were told, that it will save a million of transgressors, yet can you ever prove that it will save you? Nay, as highly sovereign as you fancy it to be, you may be still excluded from the exercise of it; for you may as well imagine this to be one instance of sovereignty, to forgive thousands, and yet punish you, if you have nothing else to plead but his mere goodness. Now it is not wise to venture so important an interest as that of an immortal soul upon any uncertainty whatsoever, if it can be avoided; and according to your own principle of dependence on sovereign mercy, you are left at a dreadful uncertainty, if you have nothing else to trust to but the mere sovereignty of divine goodness.

6. "You have over and over again, by repeated sins, forfeited all pretences to the favour and mercy of God;" Whatsoever ground you have had to hope in his goodness, yet you have cut off all those grounds by your frequent actual iniquities. Let us enter into particulars, and survey a little what claims, what pretences you have to trust in this absolute goodness of God.—1. Will you say, "You are his creature, and he is your Maker and owner, therefore you trust him to save what is his own?" But remember that every sin of yours has disowned his dominion, violated his authority, and forfeited his love and all his kind regards, as a Creator and proprietor.—2. Will you plead, "You have obeyed him, and done much service for him, and therefore you hope his goodness will reward you?" But have you not done more against him? Surely your sins are more than your acts of piety, and they cancel all pretended obligations you could hope to lay upon a God: I fear, should all our virtues and devotions be put into the scale against our vices and sins, they would be found greatly wanting in the weight.—3. Will you add this plea, "You are in a miserable state, and you trust in his compassion that he will not leave poor sinful wretched beings in a state of misery?" But have you not affronted him since your miseries began, and sinned against him, even in your bonds? And is not his compassion thereby utterly forfeited? Besides, might not fallen angels make the same plea as you do? Are they not in great misery? And yet are they not bound in chains of darkness; because of their sins, and shut up to further vengeance?

"O see what an uncertain foundation your souls lean upon, when you venture to trust in the mere absolute mercy of God, and his goodness, without his gospel. It is a goodness sovereign and absolutely free, and therefore not bound to save such wretches as you from misery: It is a goodness that can see sinning angels perish for ever, and not help them: It is a goodness

that is regulated in its exercises, by infinite wisdom and righteousness, and the authority and justice of a divine Governor, and these must have their proper exercises too : It is absolute goodness without a promise, without engagement ; goodness that has ten thousand ways to exercise itself besides in forgiving criminals : It is a goodness that may forgive ten thousand sinners, and not forgive you ; and it is a goodness too, that you have so oftentimes dishonoured, whose favours you have so shamefully forfeited and abused. Stand and wonder then that it is not turned into fury against you long ago without change and without hope.

“ Surely since I have a soul of immortal duration, I will strive to have better rest and support for it than this is, and never venture it here, since there is a stronger and a better hope. Ye holy and happy souls that have learned the new and living way of coming to the Father, bless him, that he has not left you to seek all your salvation from absolute and unpromised goodness : Bless him that has bound his goodness by many a kind promise to you in his gospel, and sealed it with the blood of his own Son. We proceed now to consider,

III. “ The third false or mistaken way of coming into the favour of God, and that is, by self-righteousness : For when we are made sensible that none is innocent, and the goodness of God in general is not sufficient ground enough to raise and support a solid and assured hope, then we are ready to offer something of our own to God, to engage this general goodness of his on our side, and make our righteousness the way to procure divine favour, expecting that God should exercise and express his goodness towards us, in the blessings of pardon and salvation. This self-righteousness may be divided into four sorts :

1. Penances and mortifications, sorrow and regret of soul, with all our own fancied atonements for sin.—2. Works of charity to the poor.—3. Forms of religious worship.—4. Outward reformation with vows and labour after better obedience. Let us examine each of these briefly :

1. “ Penances and mortifications, and our own remorse of conscience and regret of soul, together with many fancied atonements for sin :” Thus the heathens, ancient and modern. What tortures have some of them inflicted on themselves for the expiation of their own sins, or the sins of their country ? So great and powerful hath been their sense of the guilt of sin, that large sacrifices, and dreadful ones too, have been proposed by some of them for this purpose ; Micah vi. 6, 7. *Thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil*, and some of them have actually offered their *first-born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls*. The Gentiles, when they are a little considerate, one would think, must acknowledge

God to be the Governor of the world, and that he is a great and dreadful God, who has, in very visible instances, sometimes manifested his displeasure against the sins of men, and *revealed his wrath from heaven against their unrighteousness and ungodliness*; Rom. i. 18. And under the fear and terror of his vengeance they have sometimes put on sackcloth and lived in ashes: They have denied themselves the common food of nature, and half starved their bodies with abstinence. So the Ninevites did at the threatening of the Lord by Jonah the prophet. Sometimes they have banished themselves from towns and cities, and all converse with men, into mere deserts and caves of the earth, and strained their limbs in painful postures, for years together, to make atonement for the sins of the people; so some of the pretended saints in the East Indies have done. They have put themselves in iron cages, with sharp spikes, to be carried about and wounded from head to foot, as some of the bonzes in China; they have thrown themselves under a heavy laden chariot of their huge images and idols, and been crushed to death, as some of their holy men in Malabar. But what hath all this availed to obtain the favour of that God whom they have offended? *Who hath required this at their hands?* And what ground have they to think God will accept it?

So also those of the Roman church, who are fallen from the doctrine that St. Paul once wrote to the Romans, have invented various penances, and endeavoured to come into the favour of God by them: As though lashing themselves with cords, could satisfy infinite justice for their crimes, and wearing sackcloth on their flesh could make their polluted souls pure and acceptable to God. In following ages when the priests were grown more crafty and covetous, they taught them to come to God by money, and to buy pardons for sin, and titles to heaven of the pope. This was called a commutation of penance, and making their purse suffer instead of their flesh; and thus they compounded with the justice of God for the sins of their souls. *They lavish away much silver and gold*, to make atonement before God for breaking his law. Poor attempts and hopeless pretences, to remove the displeasure of a God and make a way for their favourable access to him? There have been some austere persons that have separated themselves from the lawful customs of the world, and common comforts of life, in order to appease their consciences for past indulgence and sensuality, as though God and his holiness, and his governing wisdom and majesty, would be as easily satisfied as their blinded consciences.

Others again after sin are terrified with fears of death and destruction; and under these impressions they seem to mourn *for their sins, and then fly to their repentances and tears to save them; though perhaps their repentance and regret of conscience*

carries no more hatred of sin in it than Judas had, who hanged himself for inward vexation and anguish of soul; Mat. xxvii-5. But if this repentance be never so sincere, is the great God obliged to pardon such repeated crimes and iniquities as ours are, merely because the criminal repents? Do the princes of the earth think it necessary to forgive every rebel and traitor, because he is sorry he has been guilty of treason and exposed himself to punishment? Why then should the King of kings be bound to let every criminal pass without being punished, merely because he repents of his wickedness? It will be said perhaps, we have nothing better to offer than our repentance. And what then? Must a poor rebel be always pardoned because he has nothing to make satisfaction to his injured sovereign, besides his own tears? And yet there are too many who still will hope that their sins are washed away, and their guilt atoned for, by their sorrows and repentances; and some christian divines have expressed themselves a little too grossly and unwarily on this point. O let us have a care of such mistakes, and bless the Lord, that he hath taught us a better laver than our own tears, a more powerful atonement than any of our sorrows or terrors. The pollutions of the soul by sin require a better cleansing, and affronts to the majesty of heaven demand a higher satisfaction or recompence, than any that we can make with our utmost efforts of this kind.

2. "Others fly to "works of charity to the poor, or of supposed piety towards God, performed either in life or at death." Hence arise some extraordinary appearances of liberality in the world: This hope of making some compensation for sin, lays the foundation of churches and hospitals: And magnificent structures arise upon the earth to gain the favour of the God of heaven, who hath been provoked by former iniquities. Whole estates are sometimes given away by old sinners, and alienated from their natural heirs and possessors, even from needy friends and kindred, and are devoted to religious and charitable uses, in order to purchase salvation for their souls. If they are protestants indeed, we can hardly suppose they have these actual reasonings within themselves, as to infer, that God will be so much pleased with these legacies, as to pardon their sins, for the sake of such a liberality to the church or the poor; this is the popish doctrine of merit, which as protestants we all renounce. But still there is a secret working of this self-righteousness in the hearts of multitudes: And when upon a death-bed they bequeath large legacies to the service of God, or the relief of the poor, they hope to breathe out their spirit comfortably into the hand of God the Father, with some dependance on these legacies, at least as sufficient evidences of their love to God, and with confident expectations of obtaining his salvation.

But alas ! what can a little charity to the poor do toward the reconciliation of a God to an offending creature. Is there any force in this reasoning, because I do a kindness for a fellow-worm, therefore my Maker must love me, and forgive me all affronts against him ? Or because I have given to the service of God, some of those worldly good things which he first bestowed upon me, therefore he must pardon all my former iniquities, he must receive me for ever into his favour, and confer upon me the riches of glory and the inheritance of the saints in light ? How weak and ignorant are these reasonings ? And yet how many have been ready to lay the stress of their hopes upon them, having nothing else within their view to trust in ?

3. "Forms and observances of religious worship," are another vain pillar upon which sinners lean and support themselves. This is a most common and powerful deceit. How many thousands are there, that by daily attendance upon solemnities of worship and coming up to the house of God, hope at last to come to the arms of the Father with acceptance ? And especially if they have practised secret devotion too, in the common rounds and forms of it, and have frequently bowed their knees to God in their retirements, and their hope has risen high ; and though they have not arrived at a thorough change of heart, and sincere love to God, yet they will presume upon his acceptance without any great concern about the salvation of Jesus Christ. But let me ask such sort of candidates for heaven and happiness, whether a formal round of duties and services, without the heart and soul in them, without sincere love to God and delight in him, can so far please the blessed God, as to persuade him to neglect all the righteous demands of his governing justice for past crimes ? Or if your hearts are sometimes engaged in these solemnities, is this sufficient to cancel all former transgressions ? Besides, if you have no Mediator, who shall introduce such a sinner, or his duties, into the presence of God with acceptance ? May he not justly drive us with all our solemn formalities, afar from his seat, since we neglect the only hope set before us, that is, the name of his Son, without which no man shall come to be accepted of the Father. John xiv. 6. *No man cometh to the Father but by me.*

4. The last thing I mention, on which some persons are prone to depend, in order to obtain divine favour and forgiveness, is "a course of outward reformation, and some vows and some endeavours after better obedience." But I would endeavour in these few particulars, to discover the vanity of all hopes of this kind.

1. *Our duties of obedience are very imperfect: They do not in any degree answer the strict demands of the law and*

justice of God; and the best of them are so defective that they can never claim or pretend to any merit in them, since they do not come up to answer the requirements of God in his general rule of government. 2.—Our obedience of to-day cannot wipe away or cancel the crimes of yesterday or our past life: These crimes stand like high and unpassable mountains in the way betwixt God and us: Paying a new debt never wipes off old scores among men, and why should we imagine it will do so before the throne of God? 3.—Were our duties perfect, yet it is not only a guilty, but a worthless creature, a mere polluted worm performs them; and the eternal favour of an offended God is not to be purchased for rebels at so cheap a rate. 4.—It is true, it is by duties of worship we must draw near unto God, and by the acts of our mind and will, by knowledge, assent, faith, trust, hope, prayer and repentance, we must come to God; but it is still by and through the mediation and interest of Jesus the Son, that these acts of the soul must be addressed to the Father. These considered alone in themselves, are not prescribed in my text as the way itself, for *Christ is the way, the truth and the life*: He is the only true and living way to God: These actions performed with a due regard to Christ, are properly our walking in the way which God hath appointed; but if we have no regard to Christ in these actions, we are not walking in God's way, nor can we raise any solid hope that we shall arrive at his gracious presence, while we neglect or refuse the only way which God has ordained.

Perhaps some more intelligent or more conceited hearers may cry out here, Why are these rudiments and plain principles of christianity preached to us? Surely we know better, and understand more of the gospel of Christ, than to make such discourses necessary for us to attend them? I answer,

1. However learned some may be in these truths, yet perhaps there may be others coming continually into our assemblies, who know little enough either of the law or the gospel; and they had need of the doctrines of their own guilt and misery, and danger, to be spoken in very plain and clear language to them, before they will hearken and stand still, and consider their own circumstances, and their peril: And the nature of man when under the awakenings of conscience, is so prone to take hold of every false and feeble refuge, and to venture their eternal hopes upon them, that it is very necessary to speak these things often, and to represent them in the clearest light, in order to caution sinners against building their hopes on the sand, and resting all their expectation of the favour of God and happiness, upon some feeble foundation which will not bear them. It is not the wise and the learned that I pretend to instruct; but it is a pity any poor soul, even of the lowest ranks of mankind, should abide

ignorant of these important concerns, and should perish in such a land of light, and for want of christian knowledge.

II. Let us search diligently our own hearts: Have we all attained and kept up such a due sense of our danger without Christ as we should have? Are we never inclined to depend on self-righteousness at all? Are we never under any temptation to indulge this false hope? Some pious souls have complained of this temptation, and corrupt nature is very ready in the best of christians, to build up some parts of their own righteousness as their sufficient refuge, and sometimes to put it in place of the perfect mediation and atonement of the blessed Jesus.

III. However the case be now with us, and if we have truly got the victory over all temptations of this kind, yet it is very proper to remember what once we were, and reflect upon what false hopes we once were ready to build on, and to bless the Holy Spirit of light and grace, that hath discovered our mistakes unto us, that has turned our feet from every dangerous hope, and led us to the Father by the true and living way Christ Jesus. Let this thought also call us to mourn over the souls of men, even the greatest part of our fellow-creatures, inhabitants of this world, who are made of the same flesh and blood as we are, and who, through gross ignorance, are ever practising some foolish methods of pacifying God for past sins, and aiming at his favour and happiness in such ways as will never attain their end. O come, Lord Jesus, and spread thy light and thy truth through the dark nations, and scatter all the remaining mists and darknesses that lie upon countries which have only the name of Christ, and some of the forms of his religion among them. Thousands there are, even in Europe, who neither know the gospel in truth, nor come to God by this mediator: They live not by the faith of the Son of God, nor have just reason, according to the gospel, to expect divine favour and forgiveness. Blessed God, enlighten the thousands of dark and wretched mankind, and lead them in thy appointed way to happiness.

The next essay will shew us a plain and easy account of faith in Christ, or of coming to God by Christ. I acknowledge, I have been sometimes uneasy and ashamed to bear a divine of the protestant church tell his people, that faith in Christ is a mysterious thing, and it is not to be well known, or clearly conceived in itself, but it may be much better conceived by its effects; therefore, saith he, I proceed, instead of speaking of faith itself, to give you an account of the fruits and effects of it. As though there was any thing in the affairs of human life, in reason, or in religion, clearer than this notion, viz. Upon a sight and sense of our sins and dangers, and our weakness to help ourselves, to commit ourselves into the hands of Christ, by a humble act of trust or dependence on him, complying with his appointed methods of relief in the gospel. It is but as a man sensible of his sickness applies himself to a wise and knowing physician, and gives himself up to him, and trusts himself in his hands to relieve him, complying with the remedies appointed in order to his cure: which I hope will appear very plain in the following Essay.



## ESSAY V.

### *A Plain and Easy Account of a Sinner's coming to God by Jesus Christ, or of saving Faith in Christ Jesus.*

JOHN xv. 6.—No Man cometh unto the Father but by me.

**I**NNOCENT man in the day of his creation had a liberty of drawing near to God his Maker, and of delightful converse with him in a more immediate manner ; but man having fallen from God, and become guilty in his person, and sinful in his nature, dwells in this world afar off from God ; and yet sometimes would attempt to approach, and obtain his favour again merely by his own powers and performances ; as though the goodness of God would receive him again into his presence, and into his love in the same manner as before. Sinful mankind have been often trying to make their way to God in and of themselves : Thence arise those various mistaken grounds of hope, of which we have given an account in the former discourse : But the blessed God has sufficiently informed us in the word of his gospel, that is in vain for us to hope to draw near to God, our offended sovereign, without a Mediator ; and *there is but one Mediator* ; of God's appointment *between God and man*, and that is *the man Christ Jesus* ; 1 Tim. ii. 5. and *no man cometh unto the Father but by him* ; John xv. 6.

Now in order to explain what it is for sinners to come to God the Father by Jesus Christ, let us consider that all saving approaches of the creature unto God, depend on God's approaches to the creature : He first draws us by his grace, and then we follow. Jer. xxxi. 3. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.* 1 John iv. 19. *If we love him it is because he loved us first.* If our souls are set a-moving towards him, it is because his heart, his pity and his love moved first towards us. In the reconciliation of God and his sinful creatures, there must be a mutual approach, and a mutual nearness ; but it must be remembered, that the sinner's coming nigh to God, is but an echo or answer to the merciful voice of God coming nigh to him : And the same method in which we may suppose the great God to draw near to sinners, the same steps should we take in drawing near to God. It must be granted indeed, that all acts of God are eternal, and his decrees have no order of succession as they are in him : The eternal mind conceives the ends and beginnings of all things at once ; but there are many expressions in scripture which conde-

nd to our frailty, and teach us to conceive of the infinite and eternal things of God, by way of time and succession, that we may obtain a fuller and clearer understanding of them ; for no created mind is capacious enough to grasp all the divine decrees in one single thought, as that God does who formed them.

It should be observed also, that though the actions of the soul of man are generally produced in a successive way, yet sometimes two or three of these acts are so swift in their succession, and so nearly simultaneous, or at the same moment that they are blended together, or are so interwoven in many cases, that it is hard to say, which is first, and which is last : And many times also, in one and the same act of the soul, there are such different views and designs concurring, as may make it look like two or three distinct actions : So returning to God by Jesus Christ, includes in it both repentance, with all the acts contained therein, as well as faith, with all its subordinate motions ; it is repentance, as it is a return to God ; it is faith, as Jesus Christ is the medium of this return. I put in this caution here, only to shew that we are not to expect every single sinner that returns to God by Jesus Christ, must have all these particular motions of the soul, or all these transactions sensibly arising through his mind, and that in the same order as is here presented ; yet the representation of these things in some rational order, may greatly help the conception of the whole, and give persons somewhat of a more clear and more distinct idea of it.

Let us then here take a survey of those "several steps, whereby God may be supposed to draw near to fallen man, in order to his recovery, and thereby we shall learn what corresponding steps sinners must take, in order to their coming to God."

I. The blessed God surveying his lower creation, beheld all mankind as creatures in general fallen from his image and in love, and at a wide and dreadful distance from their Creator. Compare Ps. xiv. 2, 3. with Rom. iii. 9—12. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God : they are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy ; there is none that doth good, no, not one. This text of the psalmist is cited by the apostle in Rom. iii. 9—12. to prove that all mankind is afar off from God by nature ; and therefore I may justly use this scripture, to prove that God beheld us in this fallen state ; he saw us there under the righteous condemnation of his broken law, justly exposed to misery, and deserving his indignation and wrath, under a sentence of death, and yet still going farther from him without his fear or his love.

Now in correspondence with this view, which God has taken

of the children of men, in their guilt and misery in general ; we also, in order to our recovery, must be brought to see ourselves guilty and miserable, we must see ourselves destitute of the image and the love of God in our fallen state of nature, if ever we would return to him by Christ and grace.

God, who is essentially happy in being for ever near himself, and one with himself, has made the happiness of his creatures to depend on their being near to him, and their union with him ; and he knows it is misery enough to be afar off from God : So must we be made deeply sensible of our wretchedness and misery in the loss of the favour and image of God, and in our dreadful state of distance and estrangedness from him. We must behold ourselves exposed to the wrath of God, and under sentence of just condemnation and death, because of sin. We must see it so as to feel it, and be affected with it at our heart ; we must have such an impression of it made upon our souls, so as never to be satisfied to continue in such a state, and be restless in seeking some way of recovery, as I shall shew more particularly afterwards.

II. The great God surveying his own glorious perfections in himself, and the just rights of his government, taking a view also of the holiness, justice and wisdom of his law, which sinful man had grievously dishonoured and affronted by disobedience : he did not think it proper for himself as the supreme Governor of the world, to receive sinful creatures into his favour again, without some signal honour done to his broken law and his authority ; as a sort of righteous recompence for the affront and dishonour done thereto by the offence of his creatures. It became the great God to make his law appear wise and just, by demanding such a reparation of the dishonour done to it.

But he found all mankind utterly incapable of making any such recompence, since all that they could do for time to come was but their known duty to their Creator, and none of their sufferings short of destruction or eternal death, could make atonement or satisfaction for the sins that were past : And in this view of things the great God did, as it were, pronounce the recovery of his creature man, by all his own powers and capacities, altogether hopeless, and that his recovery must arise only from divine grace.

In correspondence to this view of things in the eye of God, we should also set before our own eyes the holiness, justice and wisdom of the law of our Creator, in order to make ourselves deeply sensible of our great guilt, in breaking his law, and our desert of death by the transgression of it : We should also be made sensible in some measure of the right of his divine authority and government to demand some satisfaction for our offences, before we be received into his favour again. The very workings

of natural conscience under a sense of guilt, seem to be an impression from the God of nature on the mind of man, that sin deserves punishment, because the law of a God broken, requires some reparation of honour\*.

On this account we ought to reflect on ourselves as the more miserable and helpless, in our guilty state, because we are utterly incapable to make any atonement for our own sins, or to repair the dishonour that hath been done to God's holy law and his authority thereby. We must look upon our circumstances therefore as hopeless in ourselves, and acknowledge that all our hope is in the free grace and mercy of God. *Every mouth must be stopped on this account, and all the world lie at the foot of God as guilty before him*, as justly exposed to his indignation, and unable to procure his favour; Rom. iii. 19.

III. The great God saw it also impossible to bring sinners near to himself, and make them partakers of his favour and happiness, without a change of their corrupt natures, an entire alteration of their vicious affections, and an universal turn of heart from sin to God. In our present fallen and sinful state, God beheld our hearts so averse to all that is holy and divine, that we could never be fit for converse with him, or the enjoyment of him as a God of holiness, without being renewed after his image and likeness, and possessed of a sincere love to him.

And he also beheld these guilty sinful creatures utterly incapable of recovering themselves to his image by a change of their natures, and by a thorough conversion of their hearts from sin, and the creature, to God and holiness: So that this is another obstacle in the sight of God to our reconciliation, and which we of ourselves cannot surmount. In the same manner in order to our recovery, we must look upon ourselves in our fallen state, as unfit for correspondence with God, incapable of enjoying happiness in his presence, by reason of the opposition of our will to his holiness, and to our duty, we must be sensible of the great carnality of our affections cleaving to earthly things, and to the tempting vanities of this life, chusing them for our portion and our happiness instead of God.

And we must be acquainted also how weak and feeble all

\* This is so universal in all ages among the considerate part of mankind, that the heathens themselves, in their own circumstances, thought a "Nemesis" or vindictive indignation of God would attend on sinners. Acts xxviii. 4. They thought St. Paul was a murderer, and therefore vengeance followed him. And this set them upon various and foolish inventions, to make atonement for sin: Nor is it to be supposed that the craft of priests alone, could so easily and so universally have imposed on the nations their self-punishments, and their expensive sacrifices of atonement, if there had not been something in the natural consciences of mankind, which told them they wanted an atonement for sin. And in this respect the workings of natural conscience should be encouraged, and kept awake, and sensible of the wrath of God, which sin deserves, and that God will require some satisfaction to his injured law and government.

our own efforts are to work this mighty and universal change of nature in us, to form our spirits anew, and to rectify all the moral disorders in them : We must be made sensible how incapable we are of giving our souls a new bent and bias towards things divine and heavenly, instead of that sinful propensity which works in our natures, and is ever leading us astray from God and true happiness ; so that if ever we are recovered, we must depend entirely upon the free grace and mercy of God for our whole recovery ; not only to provide a satisfaction for his own injured law and authority, but also to take away the perverseness and obstinacy of our wills, and to change our vile affections into holy and heavenly. This is that poverty of spirit, that sensibility of our own helpless state, which is the first foundation of the kingdom of God within us. So our Saviour teaches ; Mat. v. 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.* This is that humility of soul which the men of Laodicea wanted ; Rev. iii. 17. When they were really great sinners before God, they supposed themselves *rich, and increased in goods and wanting nothing* : But before they were recovered it was necessary they should see they were *poor, and blind, and wretched, and naked.*

IV. Though God beheld mankind in these deplorable and helpless circumstances, yet he was pleased, out of his free grace, to decree and determine, that they should not all perish. He resolved to bring some off at least, out of their state of distance from him, and to restore them to his favour and his image, to holiness and happiness. Whether this gracious will and design of God, be so clearly and sufficiently discovered, to the light of nature, in his providential goodness to all the world, I will not now debate ; But it is sufficiently discovered in the gospel or the book of grace.

In correspondence with this gracious design and determination of the blessed God, it is necessary that we also should have some hope and belief of God's willingness to be reconciled, or that there is grace and compassion with him for returning sinners : Heb. xi. 6. *He that cometh to God must believe, that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him* : And in this view, belief and hope, we should resolve never to rest and continue in such deplorable circumstances ; but desire and strive with all our powers to return to God, and never be content without obtaining his favour and image. We should humbly resolve and determine that we will not perish, but that we will return to the great God, through the aids and encouragements of his grace, in what way and manner soever he is pleased to return unto us. In this sense we may say that the kingdom of heaven, or the blessings of salvation *suffer violence*, as our Saviour expresses it ; Mat. xi. 12. *and the violent take it*

*by force.* This holy desire with some degree of resolution, seems to be the first step or motion of the will towards God; these are the beginnings of true repentance flowing from faith or hope in divine mercy; this is the first work of a saving conversion, even a restlessness of soul in this state of distance from God, and under the hope of his mercy, a sincere desire and holy resolution of heart to return towards him, as our portion and our everlasting happiness. This is that repentance towards God, and faith in his mercy, which was necessary in all ages, and in all nations, and under every dispensation, in order to the salvation of sinful mankind from their state of misery, and in order to return to God.

V. When God designed to recover man to himself, and restore him to his favour, he designed also to secure a due honour to his government for all times to come, and obedience to his authority in all his future demands: And for this end man must be made, in some measure, to feel the evil of sin by the painful consequences of it, viz. "shame and remorse of conscience, and holy sorrow for his past transgressions:" And God designed that these actings of the soul should have a powerful and a lasting influence, through his grace, to make man hate every sin, and fear and avoid it, and awaken him to constant sincere endeavours of universal obedience to a forgiving God for time to come.

Agreeably to this design of God, the sinful creature must seek to have his heart in some measure, painfully affected with shame and sorrow, for his past folly and disobedience to his Creator; and must learn hereby to hate every sin, and constantly avoid it, and he must endeavour after universal compliance with the will of God in all future instances of duty." These are the natural necessary operations and attendants of all true repentance wheresoever it is found, and will be in greater or less degrees, working in the heart of every sinner that truly returns to God: For the great design of God in all his transactions of grace towards fallen man, is to recover to himself a *peculiar people*, averse to sin and *zealous of good works*; Tit. ii. 13. and that under the motives of his pardoning love, and the aids of his sanctifying grace, they walk before him in all holiness. This also belongs to all the several dispensations of the grace of God ever since the fall of man, and is required of every creature who should return to God.

VI. In the New Testament the great God hath made much plainer discoveries of the particular way of his return to sinful man, viz. that he did not think fit to be reconciled to men, or bring them back again to himself, without a Mediator\*: This

\* There may be several reasons why the blessed God thought fit to save mankind by a Mediator, and not without one; ss. 1. To maintain his own honour and the dignity of his majesty; for it does not seem so proper for a God of such supreme glory, to admit such criminals immediately into his favour and

was intimated in God's earliest revelations of his grace, when he spake of the *seed of the woman, which should break the head of the serpent*, and destroy the designs of the tempter to ruin mankind : But under the christian dispensation it is much more abundantly manifested : And finding no other person sufficient for this work, God chose his own Son to become a *Mediator between God and man* ; even that Son of his love, who was *one with the Father* ; John x. 30. and *lay in his bosom* and had *glory with him there, before the foundation of the world* ; chapters i. 18. xvii. 5. that Son, *in whom dwelt all the fulness of the godhead* ; Col. ii. 9. even that Son *by whom he created the world and mankind at first* ; Eph. iii. 10. Heb. i. 3. it was by him, as a Mediator, that he designed to recover man from his ruins, his guilt and his wretchedness.

This was the Messiah whom God promised to Abraham, who should be one of his posterity, and in whom *all the nations of the earth should be blessed* ; Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18. xxii. 18. This was he whom God spoke of, and recommended by many of the prophets, and described under several types and figures in ancient ages, that when he came he might be better known and accepted by the world. This was he who *in the fulness of time* ; Gal. iv. 5. was sent to take flesh and blood upon him, and to become a complete man. This is the *one and only Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus* ; 1 Tim. ii. 5. who was also one with God.

For this end it pleased the Father to furnish him with every necessary talent and qualification : He *anointed him* with his holy Spirit to dwell in him *without measure* : John iii. 34. he appointed him to be born of a woman in low circumstances of life, and to grow up through all the stages of infancy, childhood, and youth, to the manly age of thirty ; then he called and commissioned him to be a public prophet and teacher of the gospel, or the way of salvation : He set him up also for an example of humility and love towards God and man, and of holiness, submission and patience, and universal obedience through the course of his life, and then appointed him to die as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men : God *laid our sins upon him* ; Is. liii. 6. and *set him forth*, or fore-determined him *to be a propitiation for sin through faith or trust in his blood* ; Rom. iii. 25.

This is he whom *God raised from the dead and exalted him*

his presence, and his embraces, without some honourable Mediator to introduce them. 2. To do sublime honour to his Son Jesus Christ, who is the express image of his person and his first favourite, that as by him God made the world, so by him mankind should be recovered, new-created, and restored to God's favour and image again. 3. To secure the salvation of man more effectually, uniting all the saved number in one unfailling and all-sufficient head : And therefore his own Son was chosen for this office, as being able to undertake all that was necessary completely to bring back man to God.

at his right-hand to be an *intercessor* for sinful man there, in the virtue of his sacrifice, and to be the head of vital influence to men, to work *repentance and holiness in their hearts, as well as to be a prince, or Lord and Saviour, to bestow forgiveness of sins*; Acts ii. 32, 33. God gave him also power to rule and govern all things for the good of his people, and ordained him to be judge of the world at the great day. And all this was designed of God, that his Son, *Jesus the Mediator*, might answer every necessity, and be able to supply every want of sinful man, in order to his complete salvation. Now in correspondence with these counsels of God the Father, in order to bring fallen man near to himself, sinners must believe the truth and certainty of God's appointment, that they shall not come to him again without a Mediator; and they must have a certain and well settled persuasion of this divine constitution.

It is granted that there have been some such thoughts among mankind, in all ages: They have had some notion of coming to God by a Mediator, from an awful sense of the majesty and holiness of God, and of their vileness and unworthiness, and their desert of his displeasure because of sin. So Job, when he had described his own sinfulness, in the sight of a pure and holy God, chapter ix. verses 30, 31. he adds, *God is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment; neither is there any Days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon both; for Job had not a clear light at this time of the great Mediator who was appointed, though it is plain he saw that he wanted one.*

So again the Israelites at mount Sinai, when they saw God in his terrible appearances of thunder and lightning, and a voice came from the fire, they said, *Let not God speak to us lest we die, but let Moses speak to us and we will hear*: Exod. xx. 19. they declare they wanted a Mediator. The heathens had their lower deities who were supposed even by the philosophers, to be mediators between them and the supreme God. Besides God transacts his great affairs with mankind, oftentimes according to the language, customs, and manners of men. Now it is the natural and common way of offenders, against a superior, to get some mediator to speak for them, and bring them into favour again. Mankind also, in order to this reconciliation, must have some knowledge of this Mediator: They must be acquainted with the most important articles which God has revealed concerning this great Mediator Christ Jesus.

We are called to behold him and to survey him in the glory of his personal excellencies, in his original fitness for this work of a reconciler, and in the several offices which God has commissioned him to sustain, as just before described. We must be made to see the *blessed Jesus in the riches of his grace, and his*



large and various furniture for this great undertaking : We must believe what God has pronounced concerning him, and from the bottom of our hearts humbly approve of these counsels for our salvation. It must be the language of our hearts in a way of echo to the appointment of God, *There is none like him*, there is none like Christ, for a reconciler of the offended God and offending man ; he is every way a suitable relief to our wants, and all-sufficient to save. We must see him as one that has made full atonement and satisfaction to the justice and majesty of God, for the sins of men by his own sufferings and death\* : We must approve of him as our great teacher, and our glorious example ; as our high-priest to reconcile us to God by his blood, and to make intercession for us at the mercy-seat in heaven ; as *one that is able to save to the uttermost*, because he lives for ever ; Heb. vii. 25. to fulfil all his offices. We must behold him as a Lord and governor appointed to rule over us, and to give us laws, and to defend us from our enemies : We must see him as the most proper person to be our head of vital influence, for the communication of all grace and holiness to us, for the changing of our natures into his Father's image and his own ; and as one that is able and willing to take care of us through this world, and bring us safe into the Father's presence at last with exceeding joy. Thus the faith of the sinner echoes to the voice of God concerning Jesus the Saviour, in a way of assent to what God has revealed, and in a way of humble approbation of what God has appointed.

7. The great God foreseeing the obstinacy, corruption and wickedness of the heart of man, well knew that all this preparation to restore mankind to holiness and happiness, might at last be ineffectual, and might all be performed in vain, unless he took one step further ; and therefore to secure this salvation to many he gave them into the hands of his Son Jesus Christ, and committed the care of their salvation to him ; he gave them to Christ, or entrusted him with the care of them, that he might fulfil his whole commission, and all his various offices, in a most effectual and powerful manner with regard to them ; appointing also that this same gospel should be preached to the rest of mankind, and the offers of this salvation should be made to them some way or other, in various seasons, in plainer or darker discoveries thereof.

\* Though it is not necessary for every person among the fallen race of Adam, to find out the real and eternal necessity of his coming to God by a Mediator, or that such an atonement must needs be made for the sins of men, yet since God saw it most proper to appoint this way, and to ordain his Son Jesus to be this Mediator and this atonement, and to reveal it in so many plain and express declarations of his word, I think it may be readily agreed, that it is our evident duty, now we know this gospel, to approve of this atonement so plainly revealed, and this Mediator, as a most reasonable appointment, and to come near to God by him, even by faith in his blood, if we would find certain acceptance with God.

Therefore though the gospel be sent to be preached to all the world in general, and salvation to be offered them through Jesus Christ, yet we are told often by the evangelist John, of these particular persons whom the Father had given unto Christ, that they might be his, that is, his seed, his subjects, and his willing people.

In conformity to this great act of the Father in committing the souls of men into the hands of Christ, we also having seen him all-sufficient for this work, must commit our souls into his hand, as one able to keep what we commit to him until the last day; 2 Tim. i. 12. We must resign ourselves unto him, as a glorious undertaker for our salvation: We must receive him, or be willing to submit to him, in all his appointed offices of prophet, priest, king, example, head of influence, &c. that we may receive from him every thing that we stand in need of, in order to our being brought home to God in heaven. We must trust in him as a Prince and Saviour, exalted to give repentance to sinners, and forgiveness of sins. We must trust in him as the great propitiation for our sins, our peace-maker, and the procurer of our pardon; we must live upon him as our head of vital influence, to change our sinful natures, and to work the principles of all grace in us by his Holy Spirit, and to preserve them in opposition to all our corruptions: We must depend on what he hath done and suffered for us, as the ground of our acceptance with God, and we must seek to him to form our natures so far in the likeness of God, as to fit us for happiness in the enjoyment of God for ever. We must commit the important affairs of our souls to him, as one that is able to take care of them, and to carry them safely through all the temptations and dangers of the present life; and we must trust in him to receive our departing spirits at death, to raise our bodies from the dust at the last day, and to make our whole natures completely holy and happy, in the favour and image of God for ever: All this belongs to his commission which he received from the Father.

This is that great act of christian faith, trust, hope or dependance, which we are so often called to perform in the New Testament, which is foretold by the prophets of old, and upon which our salvation is so much represented to depend, in the writings of the evangelists and the apostles.

8. If I were to add any thing to what has been already said, it should be this, viz. that as God the Father has appointed his Son Jesus Christ to be the great and general medium of our restoration and return to his favour, image and happiness, so he has appointed that in all our particular addresses, and applications to himself, in a way of prayer or trust, thanksgiving or praise, we should make use of the name of his Son Jesus, as the only valuable and worthy foundation for our hope of acceptance;

that so Jesus Christ the Son, as well as the Father, may be honoured and glorified throughout the whole course of our religion in our way to heaven.

And since this is the constant design, and the express appointment of the Father, it is necessary that we comply therewith, in all our addresses to God : We must come unto the Father by him in every part of worship : By him we must believe, or trust in God ; we must pray to the Father in his name, we must ask forgiveness of our sins for his sake : It is by him we must offer up our sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise ; Heb. xiii. 15. and by him we must present all our services of obedience, and whatsoever we do in word or deed, must be all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ; Col. iii. 17. that we may be accepted of the Father, and that the Father may be glorified in his Son.

This is the appointment of the blessed God, and this must be our practice till we come to the fulness of this salvation in heaven, where we shall dwell for ever in the presence of God, and where we shall join with all the holy and happy tribes of mankind, of every age and nation, in ascribing blessing, and honour, and glory, and praise, to him that sits upon the throne, as our reconciled God, and to the Lamb for ever, as our glorious and successful Mediator. *Amen.*

## ESSAY VI.

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### *A View of the Manifold Salvation of Man by Jesus Christ, represented in Order to Reconcile Christians of Different Sentiments.*

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#### INTRODUCTION.

**MANKIND** by nature lies under the ruins of the fall, both as guilty and as sinful. We are guilty in our persons, and exposed to the divine anger, as well as sinful in our natures, and ever ready to break his holy law. Whosoever therefore becomes our complete Saviour must relieve us under both these distresses.

As we are guilty in the sight of God, we are condemned in the court of his law and justice, we are liable to bear the punishment due to our sins, and we have lost all pretence of right to the favour of God and eternal life. Now our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, who has undertaken the work of our salvation, is an all-sufficient Saviour in every respect; by his obedience, death and intercession, he relieves us from the guilt of sin, and so delivers us from all obligations to the punishments of hell: He reconciles us to God, and gives us a right to life and salvation in the heavenly world.

As we are sinful creatures we are ever ready to offend God afresh, and are utterly unfit for his heavenly presence: And Christ saves us in this respect, by changing our vicious nature and temper, sanctifying us by his grace or holy Spirit, so that we may be prepared for the enjoyment of God in heavenly places.

In these two things the substance of our salvation chiefly consists: And since these divine affairs could not be so well understood by us, according to those sublime ideas by which God the Father and his Son transact them in their eternal counsels and their subsequent dispensations, therefore God has been pleased to reveal them to us under such ideas or representations, and in such forms of language, as are borrowed from our common affairs in human life: and that not only by one figure or emblem, but by many representations thereof, that we might view them on all sides, and have a fuller knowledge of them, so far as is sufficient for our present state, or necessary to our salvation.

**SECT. I.**—*The Characters of Christ as our Deliverer from the Sinfulness of our Natures.*

First, Let us take a very brief survey of this matter, as our

Lord Jesus Christ delivers us from our sinful natures, or the power of sin that works in us, for he is our sanctification as well as our righteousness; 1 Cor. i. 30.

Our blessed Saviour in this respect, is sometimes represented as our almighty Redeemer, who rescues us from the power of Satan, and of our own lusts, by the more powerful influences of his Spirit: He is our Sanctifier, who renews the image of God in us, which was lost by our first apostacy, and this he does by his sovereign creating power, for we are created anew unto good works, in or by Christ Jesus; Eph. ii. 10. He is sometimes set forth as our prophet, to give us light and the knowledge of God, and of the way of salvation, by the divine instructions of his gospel. He is our example to go before us, and to mark out for us the path of duty and holiness by his own footsteps, and to encourage our walking therein by his precedent, and so he is also our forerunner to heaven. Christ is also our King to give us laws and rules of life, and to rule in our hearts by giving us an inclination to obey his laws: By his royal power also in his exalted state, he subdues sin in us, he mortifies our unruly appetites and passions which are his enemies, he brings every power of our nature into obedience and subjection to himself. He fits us for the heavenly kingdom, and actually bestows upon us this final happiness. He is also represented in scripture as our vital head, or head of spiritual life, and believers are his members; and so his Spirit becomes the spring of spiritual life in us, renews our sinful nature, raises us from death in trespasses and sins, conveys a new and divine life to us, and will at last, by the same Spirit, raise our bodies from the dead, to live for ever with him.

Thus much concerning one branch of our salvation, viz. the recovery of our nature from the sinfulness thereof, which I shall no longer insist upon here.

#### SECT. II.—*The Characters of Christ as our Deliverer from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin.*

The other branch of our salvation is, that which I chiefly have in view at present, viz. that which consists in the deliverance of our persons from the guilt of sin, from condemnation and punishment, and in that right to eternal life which is provided and given us by our Lord Jesus Christ. There are many representations thereof in scripture, borrowed from the affairs of men; and the characters which our blessed Lord sustains, together with the respects that our faith and our salvation bear to him, under these characters, are chiefly such as these:

I. The first and most general character which our Lord Jesus Christ assumes, is that of a Saviour, by which name he is most frequently called in the New Testament. This is the very

signification of his proper name Jesus, in the Hebrew; Mat. i. 21. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." He saves or delivers us from sin, and from all the painful or criminal effects and consequences thereof: He delivers us from the wrath to come; 1 Thess. i. 10. he saves us by withholding the divine anger from us, and taking away every thing that provoked it, or might provoke it.

Salvation is the natural word to express the blessings we receive from Christ, as he is our Saviour, that is, salvation from the guilt of sin and punishment thereof, partly in this world, and chiefly in the world to come. Faith\* gives us a special interest in these blessings, by chusing him or receiving him as our Saviour, by *looking to him from the ends of the earth*, from the borders of hell, that we may be saved; Is. xlv. 22. by *calling upon the name of the Lord, that we may be saved*; Rom. x. 13. and by yielding obedience to him: So faith in a large sense may be represented; for Heb. v. 9. *He is the auther of eternal salvation to them that obey him*, or accept of all the blessings of salvation in his own appointed way.

II. The next title which is given to our Lord Jesus, on this account, is a Mediator, to make peace between an offended God and offending man; 1 Tim. ii. 5. *There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus*. He is that *Days-man*, as Job speaks, chapter ix. 33. that great Reconciler, that Umpire or person who can argue for us with the blessed God, who is able to *lay his hand upon both*, to come between God and man, and to remove this dreadful difference betwixt them. And this he did by all those methods which God has appointed in the covenant of redemption made with his Son Jesus Christ, that is by his incarnation, his obedience, his sufferings, his death, his intercession, &c.

Our salvation under this character is called peace; Rom. v. 1. Jesus Christ himself, for this reason, is called our peace or peace-maker; Eph. ii. 21. and Is. xxvii. 5. where a sinner is represented as *taking hold of the strength* or arm of the Lord, in order to *make peace with him*. It is called *reconciliation to God*; 2 Cor. v. 19. and the gospel is called *the word of reconciliation*: And let it be observed, that our Mediator not only takes away the difference between God and man, but has also proceeded so far as to obtain an interest in the love and favour of God for ever, instead of his former wrath, and displeasure, and condemnation.

\* It is granted that the word faith in Christ, in its most strict and proper sense signifies a trust in him, according to the several discoveries made of him in the gospel: But if taken in its most large and general sense, as it implies the address or application of a sinner to Jesus Christ for salvation, it includes in it those various actions of the soul which are attendants on this trusting, either with it, before it, or after it, as many scriptures sufficiently manifest.

Faith applies this salvation to us, or secures to us an interest therein, by our humble acceptance of Jesus Christ, for such a Mediator as God has proposed him in his word. Now this acceptance of him as our Mediator, implies in it an earnest desire of reconciliation to God by him, as St. Paul *beseeches* the Corinthians to be willing to be reconciled: It is an inward and hearty approbation of what Christ has done, and what he does for our reconciliation in his mediatorial offices, attended with sincere repentance for past offences, and a submission to God for time to come, which is necessarily, and in the very nature of things required of all that would be reconciled to God, by the mediation of Christ\*, and hereby we become partakers of those blessings of pardon, peace and grace, which are procured by our great Mediator.

III. Christ is set forth as our high-priest in the New Testament, as he was typified under that character in the Old Testament; and especially in the epistle to the Hebrews, chapters iv. viii. and ix. Now in fulfilling this office, he offered a sacrifice acceptable to God upon earth, even a sacrifice of atonement, or propitiation by his own blood, and he ascended to heaven to present it there before the throne of God; Heb. viii. 3. and ix. 12, 22, 24. He went thither, *not without blood, to appear for us in the presence of God*, and to intercede for us in the virtue of his sacrifice, chapter vii. 25. which, in the language of scripture, is represented "as carrying his blood into heaven, and as it were appearing with it there before the throne of God:" All which was shadowed out by the high-priest carrying the blood of the sacrifice into the holy of holies, and sprinkling it there at the mercy-seat.

Our salvation under this character is called also *peace, pardon or remission of sins, reconciliation and eternal redemption, and the promise of the eternal inheritance*; Heb. ix. 12, 15. Faith entitles us to the saving benefits of the *priesthood* of Christ by the acceptance of him, as our *high-priest and intercessor*, to make our *peace with God*, by appearing before God for us in the virtue of his sacrifice, and *making intercession for us* there. Or faith may be represented as our *coming to God the Father by Jesus Christ*, as our *high-priest*, or applying to the *throne of grace* for mercy under the umbrage and encouragement of Jesus our *high-priest, who is gone thither for us*; Heb. iv. 14—16.

IV. Our Lord Jesus Christ is described not only as our high-priest, but he himself was also the very sacrifice of propitiation or atonement, *to take away our sins*; Heb. ix. 12, 26. He

\* The personal ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, was *repent and believe the gospel*; Mark i. 15. The message with which he sent his apostles to the Jews was the same; Mark vi. 12. Luke ix. 6. and the business of St. Paul among the Gentiles, was to *teach them repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus*; Acts xx. 21.

offered himself up to God for us as a sacrifice ; Eph. v. 2. and *his blood was shed for the remission of our sins*, as in the words of the institution of the Lord's-supper, recited by the several evangelists, and by St. Paul ; 1 Cor. xi. Is. liii. 10. *God the Father was pleased to make his soul an offering for sin.*

Our salvation this way has the same names as under the former head, *viz. the washing away our sins by his blood* ; Rev. i. 5. *The forgiveness of sin, reconciliation to God, &c.* Our faith is called *faith or trust in his blood as our propitiation* ; Rom. iii. 24. It is a dependence on the virtue and efficacy of this blood of Christ, for the procuring our pardon : It is a sort of confession of our sins over the head of the sacrifice which was an ancient ceremony in the levitical law, sometimes performed by the offender, and sometimes by the priest, whereby sins were transferred to the sacrifice who was to suffer for them, either by being slain, or by being sent into the land of separation and destruction ; Lev. i. 4. and iii. 13. and v. 6. and xvi. 21. It is as it were a putting our guilty souls under the *sprinkling of this atoning blood*, that we may be cleansed from every defilement ; and it doth, as it were, present to God the Father, that blood on which our hope is placed.

V. Christ is yet farther represented to us an advocate, which idea is a very different thing from his intercession as a high-priest ; 1 John ii. 2. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* The proper design of an high-priest is to transact affairs between God and man, for reconciliation and divine favour, &c. An advocate is a person appointed, and chosen to plead before a court of justice against a charge or accusation, and by his pleading to bring off his client with honour, or to defend one who is charged with a crime, from the condemnation and death which might be due to it. So our Lord Jesus Christ, our advocate, pleads against the charges which the law of God, or which Satan, our adversary, may bring against us ; not by pretending that we are not guilty, but by pleading the atonement made by his blood for our sins, by pleading our pardon in the court of heaven, and by pleading his own righteousness, as the foundation of our hope ; and therefore as the apostle in this very text calls him *Jesus Christ the righteous* ; in Rev. xii. 10, 11. Satan is represented as accusing the saints *day and night before God.* Jesus Christ is their advocate, representing his own blood, and in this sense they are said to cast down the accuser by the blood of the Lamb, which pleads and *speaks better things than the blood of Abel* ; that is, it pleads for mercy, whereas the blood of Abel pleaded for vengeance.

Our salvation, in this sense, is called freedom from guilt, *absolution or acquitment from the penalty, and a vindication of*



christians from the charge of sin, and the condemnation thereof, which is obtained by the prevailing power and interest which Jesus Christ our advocate has at the court of heaven, and by representing before the throne of God our pardon purchased by his blood, so that Satan has no further charge against us. By faith we commit our case and circumstances to this great advocate, and we become his clients, dependents upon him; and in this sense, faith may be said to *cast down our accuser by the blood of the Lamb*, by trusting in this great and blessed advocate, or resigning the important concerns of our souls to his care and faithfulness, to be transacted by him before the bar of God in heaven.

VI. Our Lord Jesus Christ is set forth as our sponsor or surety; Heb. vii. 22. *Jesus was made a surety of a better testament*, that is, the new covenant of grace, as manifested in the gospel. A surety is properly one who undertakes for another to do or suffer something for him, or who undertakes that this other person shall do such services, or suffer such penalties, or enjoy such privileges. So our Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken to answer the demands of the law of God for us who had broken it, to pay a compensation for our violations of the law, and to make peace betwixt God and us. He has also undertaken, that all his people shall be sanctified and brought safely to the heavenly world. So Judah became a surety to his father Jacob for his brother Benjamin, whom he took with him into Egypt. Gen. xliii. 9. *I will be surety for him; of my hands shalt thou require him.* Reuben in the foregoing chapter was in like manner a sponsor for him, verse 37. *Deliver him into my hands, and I will bring him to thee again:* and Joseph bound Simeon in Egypt as a surety for the return of his brethren, and Benjamin with them, verses 19, 36.

Now as Christ was our surety, so our salvation may be called a freedom from our obligation to the penal law of God, which our Lord Jesus took upon himself to answer; Rom. vii. 6. *We are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held.* Gal. iii. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us, or freed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* Nor is this obligation of Christ as a sponsor, quite fulfilled, till he has brought us all to heaven, and can say to his Father, *Lord, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me;* as Heb. ii. 13. and shall present us before the throne *without spot or blemish;* Jude 24, 25. and Eph. v. 25—27. Now faith gives us an interest in all that Jesus Christ has done as our sponsor by trusting ourselves with him entirely under that character, and accepting him as the surety of this everlasting covenant.

VII. Christ is exhibited in the scripture as *the second Adam*, as a common head of his people, as a public person, and their

representative. This has some difference in it from the former character, though in many respects they agree and coincide. Adam was the head of all his offspring, a common person and representative for them, but not so properly their surety in every sense. Christ is what Adam was; Rom. v. 14. 1 Cor. xv. 47. Christ is not a common person or representative in his intercession or his advocateship, though he is properly a surety therein, for he has undertaken as a surety for us, to plead in the court of heaven, and to bring us off with safety and honour: But in his obedience, in his death, and his appearance for us in heaven, he is our common head and representative.

Our salvation in this sense, may be called *the glory of God*; Rom. v. 2. *We rejoice in hope of the glory of God*: And it may be called eternal life. Both these describe the happiness which was promised to man upon his perfect obedience to the law at first; Rom. ii. 10. and iii. 23. *By sin, we are fallen short of the glory of God*; but we obtain by Jesus Christ salvation with eternal glory." In this sense *Christ is our forerunner* into heaven, and he, as our public representative, *appears there for us*, and has taken up places or mansions in our name; Heb. vi. 20. *We shall sit on his throne*; Rev. iii. 21. It is also called *an inheritance*, and we are *heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*; Rom. viii. 17. as we are one with him.

Faith accepts of Christ as our common head, or great representative, and gives us an interest in this salvation, by uniting us to Christ, and making us one with him. Christ is the original Son of God, and we are also the *sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus*; Gal. iii. 26. and thus we are co-heirs with Christ, he as the head, and we as the members; and faith saves us, as it has been called the bond of union between Christ and us. When we become believers in Christ, whatever was done to Christ as a head or a common person, is then applied to us, either in the right to it, or in the possession of it. Christ was justified from sin, that is, from all imputed sin, at his resurrection, and when we become the seed of Christ by regeneration through faith, *we are justified in him*, much in the same manner as we were condemned in Adam, that is, as soon as we become the sons of Adam by a natural birth: As there is no new actual and particular sentence of condemnation passed upon us at our birth, but we fall under the general condemnation, when we become the sons of Adam; so there is no new act of justification passed by God upon the creature at his regeneration or believing, but the word of God, which is his sentence, pronounces us justified at our faith, or our new birth; and our condemnation is taken away as soon as we are in Christ. Rom. viii. 1. *There is no condemnation now to them that are in Christ Jesus*.

VII. Another character which Christ sustains, is that of

a Redeemer, and it is generally represented, both in the scripture and by our divines, as one who redeems us both by power and by price. Now the redemption of us by his powerful grace out of the slavery of Satan, and our own lusts, and our rescue from the temptations of this world, belong rather to the other part of this salvation, wherein his sanctifying influences are necessary and requisite : But when Christ is considered as a Redeemer by price, he frees us by the price of *his own blood* as a ransom, chiefly from the hands of the vindictive justice of God, and from the bonds of the guilt of sin and condemnation, whereby we are held as breakers of the law of God. Yet our redemption from the slavery of sin and Satan, may be also attributed to the blood of Christ which purchased sanctifying grace for us. The name of a Redeemer is very applicable to both parts of our salvation. *So he gave his life a ransom for many ; Mat. xx. 28. He redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us ; Gal. iii. 13. He redeemed us also by his precious blood as of a lamb without blemish or spot, from our vain conversation or slavery to sin ; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. And thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood ; Rev. v. 9.*

Salvation in this respect is called *redemption* ; Rom. iii. 24. *eternal redemption* ; Heb. ix. 12. and we are said to be *bought with a price* ; 1. Cor. vi. 20. and therefore *we are the Lord's and not our own*. Faith applies this benefit to us by our accepting the Lord Jesus Christ under this character as a Redeemer of our persons from this condemnation, or as our great friend who ransomed our souls from imprisonment under the bonds of the condemning law and justice of God, who purchased and ransomed us from our captivity, bonds and miseries in every sense.

IX. To sum up all other characters, I add in the last place, Christ is represented as our great *friend* and benefactor, one who came down from heaven *to seek and to save* lost sinners here on earth : He made a visit to our world to take special notice of all our wants, in order to relieve them all, and to do, and to procure for us whatsoever we stood in need of, in order to our eternal happiness. Under this character he first instructed or taught us the doctrine of our lost estate, and acquainted us with the methods of his salvation ; he procured or purchased for us, by his death, not only pardon of sin and future blessedness, but every grace and every blessing which was necessary, in order to our full possession of heaven, and no greater friendship can any man shew to another, *than to lay down his life for him ; John xv. 13.*

Under this view salvation or *eternal life* is called the *gift of God by Christ Jesus* ; Rom. vi. 23. *Abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness in order to reign in life* ; Rom. v. 17. He bought again for us our forfeited inheritance in heaven. Observe this notion of Christ, as a benefactor respects his doing

every kindness, and procuring or purchasing every blessing for us, and bestowing it upon us; whereas in the character of a *Redeemer* he bought or purchased our persons from imprisonment and condemnation.

Faith gives us an interest in these blessings of Christ as a benefactor, when it comes to him, and seeks them at his hand, when it humbly depends upon Christ for them, and trusts in him to bestow them. Thus our faith is like a hand, whereby we receive these blessings which Christ has to bestow, or like the feet whereby we come or fly to Christ to partake of them; or it may be likened to the voice of petition, whereby we seek them at his hands, and *call upon the Lord* to bestow them.

Thus I have briefly run through many of the scriptural characters or offices, whereby our Lord Jesus Christ is represented to us, whereby our salvation is set forth, and whereby our faith is described as the appointed means of our interest in them. It is evident enough they often run into one-another, nor did the gospel ever design that these several representations of Christ, of his salvation and of our faith, should be kept so separate by exact logical forms of expression, as to please scholastic readers only; but that plain sincere souls, under a sense of guilt and condemnation, might see and view them on every side, and might find something in Christ, suited to their sensation of their own wants and miseries, and apply themselves to him for relief; but this shall be the subject of the next section.

SECT. III.—*The Reasons why Christ and his Salvation may be represented to us under these various Characters.*

The great God was pleased to send his own Son Jesus Christ to save us by these various characters or offices, and to represent him to us under so many relations, emblems or figures borrowed from the things of men, perhaps for such reasons as these:

I. That those attributes of the divine nature, viz. his wisdom, his justice, his mercy, his faithfulness, &c. which could not have so full an illustration one way, or under one expression or metaphor, might have another. God is said to be *just* and *kind*, and *faithful*, in the *forgiveness* of our *sins* through the blood of Christ. He is *just* in bestowing this blessing upon us, since Christ has become our sacrifice of atonement, and made full satisfaction for our offences: He is *kind* and *merciful* in appointing such a forgiveness for us, and sending his own Son to purchase or procure it: He is *faithful* in fulfilling his promise made to Jesus Christ, in the covenant of redemption, and bestowing upon us what Christ our benefactor has purchased for us. His wisdom also and his goodness are rendered more conspicuous to us in contriving and effecting our salvation, in *assuring it to us*, and *bestowing it upon us* in so many different *ways and manners*.

II. That our Lord Jesus Christ might be the better known by us, and the more endeared to us, by sustaining these various offices and relations ; and that we might be able to borrow some further ideas, and some clearer knowledge of these divine and important things of our salvation, from many of the common affairs and occurrences of life. When the blessed God has taken so much care to provide such a Saviour for us, and such an illustrious salvation, he is very desirous that we should view it on all sides, and be more thoroughly acquainted with it, as well as with that blessed person by whom he prepares and bestows it.

III. That all sorts of persons, of whatsoever temper or capacity, whatsoever want or difficulty they are in, might have wherewith to suit them and their circumstances ; that every son and daughter of Adam, in their various ranks of life, might all learn the way to receive this Saviour, and lay hold on this salvation of Christ, and that he might render it easy and familiar to us by so many common similitudes, or parallels drawn from the things of common life : And thus those who know not how to apply themselves to Christ one way, might do it another.

As for instance, some poor feeble creatures who are convinced of sin, and ready to perish, perhaps may not know how to apply or address themselves to Christ, as a *Surety*, or as a *Sacrifice*, or as a *Redeemer*, &c. for these things are done already, and in a great measure were finished long ago ; but the meanest and poorest creatures can easily learn how to apply to Christ as a *Mediator*, to do something for them that is yet to be done, to *reconcile them to God*, and to bring them into his presence with comfort ; or as a *high-priest* of intercession, or as an *advocate* to plead for them before the throne of God, and their faith can wait on Christ, can call upon him, and trust in him to make intercession for them in the virtue of his blood, or to present his blood before the Father as an atonement for their sins, to appear before God for them as their great friend in heaven, to become their Mediator, Peace-maker, or Reconciler, to bring them into the favour of God.

Those who are infants or *babes in Christ* ; may thus be nourished by the *sincere milk of the word*, and with diet fitted for their feeble capacity, when they are not sufficiently grown to bear *stronger meat*, as the apostle expresses himself ; Heb. v. 12 —14. whereas those who are well grown christians, and in the sense of the apostle, may be called perfect, may know better how to converse with Christ as their great representative, they may *know and rejoice in him, and in the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings*, and be made *conformable unto his death* ; but those that are in a lower form may not have their apprehensions so well cleared, and so much raised at present, although afterwards God may reveal also these things unto them ; Phil. iii. 10, 15.

IV. Christ is set forth under these various characters, that as our understanding in the things of religion, and in the graces and glories of Christ increases, we might take the faster hold of Christ, if I might so express it, and that we might have more various exercises of our faith, and more numerous evidences of the truth of our faith, and secure to ourselves more solid ground of hope, when we can view him in all these relations; and our faith can receive or lay hold of him under all these forms. Thus we may hereby obtain double and treble confirmation of our faith and comfort; Heb. i. 17, 18. God gives us both his *promise* and his *oath*, to secure salvation to us; *he swears*, in order to confirm what he had promised, *that by several immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

Thus has God been pleased also to do in the various representations he has made of Christ Jesus our Saviour, that our meditations and prayers, our hopes and dependencies; and indeed all the pious exercises of our souls towards Christ, might have a rich variety for our entertainment, support and joy; and therefore the apostles have written these things unto the disciples of Christ that their joy might be full; 1 John i. 4.—I add fifthly, another reason is,

V. That God our Father and Jesus Christ our Saviour might have the larger revenues of glory from us, and receive honour from our hands in a rich variety; that we might have our *thank-offerings* rising up to God and the Lamb, in many forms of adoration and expression; that we might bless our dear Redeemer, rejoice in him, and do honour to his name under all those happy representations of his grace and glory, in which he has set himself before us in the gospel:—The last reason I will add, shall be this:

VI. That in all ages the followers of Christ might have a more clear and easy relief from those difficulties and controversies which may attend these great doctrines of our salvation, and which might darken and perplex the way whereby God has appointed us to be made partakers of this blessing:

SECT. IV.—*The Difficulties which are Relieved by this Various Representation of the Salvation of Christ.*

Since God has set forth our blessed Saviour with his salvation and our faith which interests us therein, under so many various characters and expressions, the following difficulties will be very much relieved hereby, and several controversies abolished.

I. A christian who reads these things in his bible, cannot say that Christ has saved us in this particular manner, and therefore he did not save us in the other; as for instance, When

we read or assert that Christ was put to death for us, as a *sacrifice for our sins*, we cannot say, therefore he did not save us as a *high-priest*: Or when we read or assert that he saved us as our *high-priest*, we cannot say, therefore he was not a *sacrifice*; for the scriptures assure us, Christ himself is both the *high-priest* and the *sacrifice* also; Eph. v. 2. *Christ hath given himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God.* Again,

One christian will perhaps be ready to maintain, that Christ saves us as a great friend and benefactor, who has, by the price of his blood, purchased the blessings of grace and glory for us, and bestows them upon us; another may chuse to fix his eye more upon Christ as a redeemer, and say, he has bought or purchased our persons from the hands of divine justice, or he has redeemed us from the curse of the *law*, and from the bonds wherein we, as criminals, were held by the law of God: But neither of them should dare to say, he bought or purchased these blessings for us, and therefore he did not purchase our persons; for he has done both these under different characters.

Yet further, one christian may delight more to fix his eye and hope on Christ as a *surety* or representative of his elect, or of those whom he certainly and finally saves, and on that account he suffered death particularly in their room and stead, and secured to them certain deliverance and salvation; yet he cannot therefore affirm, that Christ did not, in any sense, *die for all men*, as a general friend of man, or suffer death for their good; nor can he say, that the benefits of his death do not any way reach to all mankind. Another perhaps will say, since *all are dead*, he *died for all* as a common *Mediator between God and man*, or as a general benefactor to procure conditional salvation for all men, and offer it to them if they are willing to come to him and receive it; but he cannot say, that he was not a proper *surety*, or representative of his elect, whereby he has secured certain salvation to them only: For as I have shewn in former papers, that he by his righteousness and death has directly and absolutely procured this salvation for his elect, as their head and representative, but yet he has also procured salvation, with all the glories of it, conditionally, for the rest of mankind, upon which foundation these blessings are offered to all men in the gospel.

II. There is another sort of difficulty from which these various representations of the salvation of Christ may deliver and relieve us, viz. The actions or the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, have not precisely the same relation, character, or effect, with regard to one of his offices, as they have with regard to another; and therefore what is pronounced safely, with regard to the death of Christ under one character, cannot be with safety pronounced concerning it under another. As for example, When so glorious and illustrious a person as Jesus Christ appears as our

friend and benefactor, he paid so sublime a price by his death and sufferings, as in a strict sense to satisfy or make full recompence for all our violations of the law of God, and to merit pardon and eternal life at the hand of God for us : But when we consider him merely as our representative, or our surety, and to answer what the law demanded of us, he cannot be so properly said to merit our pardon, or to make full and abundant recompence to the justice of God for our offences ; for this might lead or encourage persons to infer, that we ourselves have satisfied God, or made recompence to him in the person of Christ, or that we have merited our pardon and our salvation, because what he did entirely as our representative, we may in some sort be esteemed to have done in and by him.

Again, the death of Christ as a *surety* and the *second Adam* was his suffering of *the curse of the law*, and the penalty thereof in our stead, which we have incurred ; and in this view his death and his dereliction, or being forsaken of the Father, was the *idem*, or same, which sinners should have suffered ; though in other respects, and when we consider him as a glorious Mediator, or super-eminent benefactor, then he appears with all the dignity of his indwelling godhead, and in this sense he paid a price of superior value, his death is the *tantundem* ; and more, he makes an abundant compensation for sin, and a satisfaction to the demands of the law, and honours the justice of God more than our everlasting punishment could do, and hereby he merits for us those blessings which are above all our reach, or pretences, or obligations to procure or merit for ourselves. Again, as he was a Redeemer, his death is a price paid for our souls to divine justice, in order to release us from the bonds of condemnation : But his death as a benefactor, may be rather considered as a price for the blessings which he purchased for us, and of which we are made partakers through him.

III. There are other difficulties which are started among the several controversies of christians with regard to our faith, and the way and manner whereby this faith interests us in Christ and his salvation : And since Christ has sustained so many characters and offices, and stands in so many relations to us, our faith is exercised towards him in a correspondency to each of these relations and characters ; and therefore when we read or assert that our faith saves us in this way, or under this logical relation, we dare not therefore assert, that it cannot save us in any other way, or under another logical relation. I would endeavour to make this thing a little more clear, because there have been many controversies arisen upon this head. Let us then briefly recollect or take a short survey of the several representations which are given us of faith in Christ, according to these different characters of our blessed Saviour.



Faith in its most general sense, nature and design, as it refers to Jesus Christ, is the application or address of the soul to Christ, or to God by him, under any or all these characters, whereby he and his salvation are set forth in scripture. Now these characters being so very different and various, require different manners of address to him, which are represented in scripture, which perhaps may be all included in faith taken in its largest sense, together with those necessary acts of the soul which must accompany, attend, or follow it.

Particularly then faith is sometimes represented by *believing his gospel*; Mark i. 15. *Repent and believe the gospel*: But here it is to be supposed, that all the proper and sanctifying effects of this faith must attend it, and it must not rest in a mere assent. It is a *knowledge of Christ*; John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*. Is. liii. 11. *By his knowledge, or the knowledge of him, shall he justify many*: And here I might add, that this our knowledge requires a correspondent practice, otherwise it will be of no more avail towards salvation, than the knowledge of devils, *who believe and tremble*; James ii. 19. It is a *believing in Christ*, which perhaps ought rather to be rendered *trusting in Christ*; Is. xi. 10. compared with Rom. xv. 12. *In him shall the Gentiles trust*. 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, or trusted*. Eph. i. 12, 13. *Who first trusted in Christ, or hoped in him, as in the original*.

*Believing in his name*; John i. 12. *To them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name*. Seeking to him, Is. xi. 10. *To him shall the Gentiles seek*. Receiving Christ, John i. 12. *To as many as received him,—Col. ii. 6. As you have received Christ,—so walk in him*. Laying hold of Christ; Is. xxvii. 5. *Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me*. Heb. vi. 18. *Those who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them*. Hearing of Christ, or hearkening to him; Luke ix. 35. *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him, or hearken unto him*. Calling upon Christ, Rom. x. 12, 13. *Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*. Coming unto Christ, Mat. xi. 28. *Come unto me all ye that labour, &c.* John v. 40. *Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life*. Flying to him for refuge; Heb. vi. 18. as before. Looking unto Christ, or beholding him, Is. xlv. 25. *Look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved*. Is. lxv. 1. *I said, behold me, behold me, unto a nation not called by my name*. Obeying Christ, Heb. v. 9. *He became the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him*. Believing in God through Christ; 1 Pet. i. 21. *Who by him do believe in God*. Coming to God by Christ; John xiv. 6. *No man cometh to the Father but by me*.

Thus you see faith, together with its various concomitants, or consequent exercises of soul, is represented as our address or application to Christ for salvation by and with almost all the senses or powers of nature: It is looking to him with the eye, it is hearkening to him with the ear, it is receiving or laying hold of him with the hand, it is coming to him with the feet, it is knowledge of him in the head, trust in him with the heart, calling upon him with the tongue, and obeying him with all the powers of soul and body.

Now it is well known, that there have been great disputes about the particular influence which this act of faith has, in order to interest us in the salvation of Christ: And here I will readily grant, that the word faith primarily and chiefly implies such a knowledge of Christ, such a belief of his gospel, such a sense of our wants, and his sufficiency to supply them, as leads the soul to receive him under any of those characters in which the gospel sets him forth, and more particularly to trust in him for this salvation\*: But there are many poor souls who have learned sincerely to address themselves to our Lord Jesus Christ, by one or two of these characters and representations of faith, but were never carried on so far as explicitly to make an address to Christ under all his distinct relations, or to perform every one of these actions in their addresses to Christ: And can I suppose where the soul is very sincere in its desires of the whole salvation of Christ, both in the holiness and the happiness of it, and seeks it from him, that such souls shall be excluded, because they have not well learned all the metaphors and figures under which these sacred things are exhibited in the gospel?

Again, on the other hand, if one should say, faith saves us as it is an eye to look to Christ that we may be saved, he cannot thence infer it does not save us as an ear to hearken to him, as a hand to lay hold of him, or as a tongue to call upon him, or a heart to trust in him. Again, if another should say, faith saves us as an instrument† to receive Christ, and his righte-

\* It may be observed here, that almost every character or action, whereby faith in Christ is represented in scripture, carries in it the notion of trust, hope or dependance, so that the original and most proper sense of the word "faith" is still maintained, and every sinner who sincerely applies himself to Christ for salvation, does certainly put forth an act of trust or hope in him, though he may not always so evidently and distinctly apprehend and judge of the inward acts of his own soul, or distinguish them so exactly.

† Perhaps there have been no greater quarrels upon this subject than amongst those who have maintained that faith saves us as it is an instrument, whereby we receive Christ and his righteousness, and those who assert it is a condition upon which Christ has appointed us to be interested in his blessings: And though I think they may both be true, according to the representation I have made in this and other of these essays; yet we have no great reason to be fond of either of these terms, especially when they are made a matter of controversy, because they are neither of them the expressions of scripture, which is our supreme rule of instruction in the matters of salvation.

ousness and grace, he cannot argue that it does not save us, as it is a condition, or a term of our being accepted of God through him; or if another should say, faith saves us, as it is a laying hold of his person, or as a bond of union between Christ and us, yet he cannot argue, therefore faith does not save us, as it is a looking or seeking to him from afar off, or as it is a *calling upon the name of the Lord*. God has been pleased in many ways to manifest these most important things of our salvation, and revealed them to us in a variety of human expressions, similitudes, actions and relations, that the poorest and the weakest christian might have support and encouragement for his hope.

Conclusion: It is confessed, that these thoughts are not sufficiently digested into perfect form, nor put together with all that accuracy as theological controversies require; but my sense and meaning in them is pretty obvious and evident: Perhaps this design might be more improved and promoted much farther by a wiser head, and a better pen; and it might assist the solution of many difficulties, and relieve the quarrels and contentions of different parties to a greater degree: for it is evident, that the characters which our blessed Lord sustains, and the exercises of our faith on him, are very various, and we are made partakers of this salvation, perhaps as many ways as our acts of faith bear different respects to the several blessed characters and offices which Christ sustains, in order to our salvation. *Now, to him who has redeemed us by power and by price; to him who has saved us by his blood and his Spirit; to him who has purchased our souls from the bondage of the law, and from death and hell, and has purchased for us the blessings of grace, the pardon of our sins, and an inheritance in heaven, be glory and honour in endless varieties, and eternal praises from all the redeemed. Amen.*

## ESSAY VII.

*Against Uncharitableness—Wherein the Secret Springs of that Vice are traced, and the Mischievous Effects of it briefly surveyed.*

Written to Expose that most Unchristian Iniquity of Censures, Revilings and Church-Anathemas, on the Account of Smaller Disputables in Christianity.

**ROM. xiv. 3.**—Let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth: For God hath received him.

**LUKE ix. 54, 55.**—His disciples—said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?—But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

—“Tantæne animis cælestibus iræ?  
“Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum!”

### INTRODUCTION.

**CHARITY** in the soul of man is the very picture of the god-head, taken as it stands in the fairest light. Wisdom and holiness, power, sovereignty and justice are various features of the Deity: They are indeed his very nature and essence; yet the scripture rather chuses to express, that *God is love*, and that twice in one chapter, 1 John iv. 8. and 16. *The beloved disciple that leaned on the bosom of Jesus*, took peculiar delight in the contemplation of God, under this character. This appears in his gospel, as well as in his epistle. The other glories of that infinite beauty shine with awful beams, and command my reverence: But methinks, I love to look upon so glorious a being, in his most condescending air, and to converse with him in his mildest and most inviting aspect.

Charity in man is a grace of that alluring sweetness, that my pen would fain be attempting to say something in favour of it: I find a strange pleasure in discoursing of this virtue, hoping that my very soul may be moulded into its divine likeness. I would always feel it inwardly warming my heart. I would have it look through my eyes continually, and it should be ever ready upon my lips to soften every expression of my tongue. I would dress myself in it as my best raiment. I would put it on upon my faith and hope, not so as entirely to hide them, but as an upper and more visible vesture, constantly to appear in among men. For our christian charity is to evidence our other virtues.

Uncharitableness is a loathsome part of the image of the fallen angel: It is a-kin to the hatred of God. *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen; 1 John iv. 20.* He that hates his fellow-christian, and brings railing accusations against him for a difference in little opinions, how can he expect to be beloved of God, who beholds in the best of us so many monstrous follies, and guilt of a more aggravated nature? By the word *uncharitableness* here, I would not include our neglect of charity to the poor and hungry, nor our aversion to errors of the grosser kind; but I mean our aversion to such persons who not only profess to be christians, but who also agree with us in the chief doctrines of christianity, viz. the pardon of our sins by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and the sanctification of men by the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of faith in Christ, and good works, &c. I mean our aversion to those who differ from us in little punctilios of doctrine or duty which are not expressly and plainly written in the New Testament; those who maintain such an aversion to their fellow-christians, as to pronounce damnation upon them, or some terrible and unchristian censures, because they do not come up to our sentiments and practices in things which are of little moment, while we agree in all fundamental points, and such as are of most importance. This uncharitableness is a vice attended with such a train of mischiefs, that I would set all my biggest powers in array to fight against it. *It is a fountain of such bitter waters, that I would fain dam up the spring.* It is a plant of so poisonous a product, that I would dig deep and search for the roots, and tear up all the fibres of it, though they twined about my heart-strings.

SECT. I.—*The Causes of Uncharitableness.*

An uncharitable humour springs generally from some of these following causes:

I. *From a malicious constitution of nature, an acrimonious or a choleric temper of blood.* There are some animal engines of human flesh, that have their juices all soured in their very formation; and there is an ill ferment raised in such persons at the perception of every object, that is not just suited to their present fancy and inclination: And by the hard laws of union between soul and body in this our fallen state, the spirit too often complies with the fretful distempers of the flesh. There are but few that attempt to suppress the ferment, and to resist the angry motions of the animal; and of those few that attempt it, scarce one in ten is very successful: For it is a work of toil and difficulty, perpetual watchfulness and unceasing prayer.

This ill humour mixes itself with religion, as well as with civil affairs. It diffuses its malignity through all the studies and

e manners of the man, and gives a visible tincture to his actions and his practices. Furio can never converse about the truest and most speculative points of divinity, but his indignation kindles against every different opinion, his fiery temper breaks out and blazes, and he bestows on his own deportment the honourable names of shining light and burning zeal. His peevish and angry passions are so blended with his understanding, that good names are his best arguments; most convincing to himself, though they are the just scorn of the wise. He stabs his brethren at differ from him to the heart, with pointed railing; and from a aversion to an opinion rises to an immortal hatred of the person. If our great Creator has united any of our souls to bodies that are less infected with this vicious juice, we have reason to adore his sovereign goodness.

II. *Self-love and pride, and a vain conceit of our opinions,* another spring of uncharitable carriages. Did you ever see a weak and humble soul sensible of its own poverty and ignorance, and ready to esteem others above himself, easily indulge this uncharitable humour? Alas! poor foolish mankind is very prone to esteem itself wise and knowing. Little Laudillus, who is almost always in the wrong, has much ado to persuade himself, that he is as ever capable of mistaking. He secretly thinks all his opinions to be divine truths, and therefore he is very lavish in promoting error and heresy upon every notion and practice that differs from his own. He takes the freedom to chuse a religion for himself, but he allows no man besides the same liberty. He is sure that he has reason to dissent from others, but no man has reason to dissent from him. He sets up for infallibility without a papal crown, and fixes a see of ecclesiastical sovereignty on this side of the water. He awes some slavish spirits into submission, and they become treacherous to their own souls, and to the rights of human nature, by delivering up their faith and consciences to his imperious dictates: Then the man grows haughty, surly and severe, especially if he be advanced to any degree of honour and authority in the church: Then in his inflexible justice he delivers the humble and inquisitive christian unto Satan, because he does not assent and consent to all and every thing contained in his scheme; and he teaches perhaps his elder brethren the doctrines and discipline of the gospel, as Gideon did the elders of Succoth, *with the briars and thorns of the wilderness*; Judges viii. 16.

III. This hateful vice may be derived from a third original; and that is *a constant and friendly acquaintance with the men and books of our own opinion, and an avoidance of all the writers and persons that differ from us.* This has a mighty influence to beget and maintain uncharitable notions; yet this is the constant practice, not only of the unlearned, but of too many of the learned world. *Hermes sits all the year in his own cell, and never looks*

abroad beyond the clan of his own fraternity : Hermes reads the controversies as they are described only by one party, and disputes them over only in the books that are written on one side. He finds a great appearance of argument and scripture there, and then proclaims it impossible that the adverse party should shew equal reason or revelation : And thus he proceeds to censure them as *men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith, and twisting the scriptures to their own damnation*. Cicero in his treatise " *De natura deorum,*" marks this humour, and brands it, *Vestra solum legitis, vestra amatis, ceteros causa incognita condemnatis\**.

But let you and I, my friend, who delight in charity, let us converse a little with authors that differ from our present opinions, and we shall see their sentiments dressed up so plausibly, and set in so fair a light, that might easily persuade men of sincere consciences to embrace them ; and this will prevent us from censorious thoughts concerning our candid adversaries, and their disciples. There is scarce any thing that enlarges the mind more, and more disengages it from narrow and selfish principles, than a free converse with the virtuous and ingenious of all parties.

There is a memorable story to this purpose, concerning two neighbours in an unsociable town, who were always quarrelling about the private meeting and the parish-church : Both places of worship in that town were well supplied with preachers of good sense and serious religion : but each of them was the subject of unmerciful reproach between these two neighbours, whensoever they met, and their different methods of worship were mutually reviled ; the one as formal and spiritless, the other as enthusiastical and indecent : At last Pacifico their common friend persuaded them to hear each others minister, and accompanied them both one day to their different assemblies ; and they were both surprized to hear the gospel preached with a due degree of decency and fervour, both at meeting and at church ; And though they continued still to adhere to their own party, as judging it, in some respects, suited best to their edification ; yet they maintained hearty friendship, with each other, and delightful society in religious conference : Thus the quarrelsome mistake was rectified by better acquaintance : They lived many years together in peace ; they composed the animosities of different parties, that dwelt in the town ; they died in perfect charity, and left a sweet influence behind them, and a honourable example.

IV. A fourth spring of uncharitableness is, *our reading the word of God with a whole set of notions established before-hand*: And yet how common a method, and how constant is this ?

\* " You read only your own books, you love only your own, and you condemn others before you know sufficient reason, for want of knowing their opinions."

Diacon has long ago determined, that bishops must be superior to presbyters ; he has received ordination from episcopal hands : and hopes one day himself to be capable of ordaining others. Thus while he is growing up towards the mitre, he reads the scriptures only to confirm his own determined opinions. He stretches and torments many an unwilling text, to make it speak the language of his own thoughts. He neglects the passages that favour all other forms of government and methods of ministration ; or else he constrains them to mean episcopacy too : Every word that he reads, hath a diocesan aspect ; and the first verse of Genesis can prove prelacy, for ought I know, as it has been able heretofore to demonstrate papacy, when *In principio creavit Deus calum et terram*, decided the controversy, and set the pope above the emperor : For God made all things from one beginning, and not from two.

Synodias reads the bible with a presbyterian glass, and Fratris with a congregational optic : They can find nothing but their own opinions, and both of them wonder that Diacon should not see them too. Fratris turns over the scriptures with great diligence and meditation, and as often as he finds the word " church " there, he thinks of nothing but a congregation of faithful men ; as the church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, are so many single congregations. When Synodias meets the same word in his bible, he is often in the midst of an assembly of divines ; and especially when any power is attributed to the church, he is sure it must intend a classis of presbyters, or consistory of elders. When the same word falls under the eye of Diacon in his course of reading the New Testament, he cannot imagine any thing is meant short of a diocese : All his churches are or should be as big as counties or shires. And I might add, that when poor Parochianus the mason finds leisure to read a chapter, and lights upon the mention of a church in it, he thinks immediately of a tall stone-building with a steeple upon it, a bell or two, and a weather-cock. I might give the like instances of many other terms and expressions in scripture, to which men have unalterably fixed their several different ideas, and raised consequences from them, and interpret the word of God by them, without enquiring whether their ideas are conformable to the sense in which the scripture uses those expressions : And then it is no wonder that their schemes of ecclesiastical government are so different : And yet each of these prepossessed opinionators think their own exposition of the text so evident, that they chide the perverseness of all other men, as though they were resolved to wink against the light. It is like a person of a fretful constitution, whose eyes are also tinged with the jaundice, he quarrels with every man that he meets, because he will not consent to call all things yellow. Thus by the false light of affection in which



they behold some beloved texts, and their negligence of all others, or at least by the colours of prejudice that they throw upon them, each triumphs in his own sentiments, and pronounces the apostles and prophets of his side. Then he lets fly many a sharp invective against all the men that presume to oppose him; for in his sense they oppose the apostles themselves, and fight against the authority of God.

But when a man takes a bible into his hand without a preconceived scheme in his head, and though he may make use of systems to secure himself from inconsistencies, yet he puts them not in the place of the holy scriptures, but resolves to form his body of divinity by the New Testament, and derive all his opinions and practices thence: he will then find so many expressions that seem to favour the several contending parties of christians, that in some points he will perhaps be tempted to doubt of all opinions, and sometimes have much ado to secure himself from the danger of eternal scepticism: When in any doubtful point his judgment is led to a determination, it is always with great caution, and by slow degrees: He is not carried by violence to any dogmatical conclusion; he is modest in his assertions, and gentle towards all whose judgment and conscience have determined them another way, because he met with so many probable arguments on their side, in the time of his dubitation and enquiry that had almost fixed his opinion the same way too.

If I may be permitted to speak of myself, I might acquaint the world with my own experience. After some years spent in the perusal of controversial authors, and finding them insufficient to settle my judgment and conscience in some great points of religion, I resolved to seek a determination of my thoughts from the epistles of St. Paul, and especially in that weighty doctrine of justification: I perused his letter to the Romans in the original, with the most fixed meditation, laborious study, and importunate requests to God, for several months together; First without consulting any commentator, and afterwards called in the assistance of the best critics and interpreters. I very narrowly observed the daily motions of my own mind: I found it very hard to root out old prejudices, and to escape the danger of new ones: I met with some expressions of the apostle that swayed me towards one opinion, and others that inclined the balance of my thoughts another way, and it was no easy matter to maintain my judgment in an equal poise, till some just and weighty argument gave the determination; so many crossing notions, perplexing difficulties and seeming repugnances lay in my way, that I most heartily bless the divine goodness that enabled me at last to surmount them all, and established my judgment and conscience in that glorious and forsaken doctrine of the justification of a sinner in

sight of God, by the *imputation* of a perfect *righteousness*, which is not originally his own.

From my own experiment I can easily guess what confounding intricacies of thought others pass through in their honest search after truth. These conflicts did exceedingly enlarge my soul, and stretched my charity to a vast extent. I see, I feel, and am assured that several men may be very sincere, and entertain notions in divinity, all widely different. I confess that sometimes some opinions, or some unhappy occurrences are apt to narrow and confine my affections again, if I am not watchful over myself; but I *pray my God* to preserve upon my heart a strong and lasting remembrance of those days and those days, whereby he laid within me the foundation of so broad a charity.

V. *Fifthly*. Another cause of uncharitableness, is a *want of reflection, on the grounds of our own opinions*. We should be more just to ourselves, and more gentle to others, if we did but partially review the reasons why we first embraced our several principles and practices. Perhaps it was education determined us to them, then let us chide ourselves severely for building upon so careless and slight a bottom: Or let us be civil to the greatest part of mankind, who came by all their principles the same way. Perhaps we were led into particular notions by the authority of persons whom we reverence or love; then we should not upbraid our neighbours that have been influenced into different sentiments by the same springs. Perhaps we have felt interest sometimes ready to bias our thoughts, and give us a secret inclination or aversion to a party; let us then pity the frailty of human nature, and have compassion upon men whose judgments are exposed to so mean a bribery, and sometimes have been warped aside from the truth. Or finally, perhaps it was deep meditation, a daily search into scripture, and fervent prayer were the methods by which we pursued knowledge, and established our principles upon solid reason. Let us then be so charitable to those whom we contend with, as to suppose they sought after truth the same way, and then our contentions will have less fire and spleen in them; less of clamour and indignation against those that differ from us.

The true reason why we kindle our anger against our christian brethren that are not entirely of our party is, because we not only have the vanity to fancy ourselves always in the right, and them in the wrong; but we judge their consciences and their sincerity too, that they did not come honestly and fairly by their principles, while we never consider how we ourselves came by our own. But there are still more ways to arrive at this uncharitable temper: I must proceed to,

VI. *Sixthly*. Which is a common method, and thus to be

performed. If we will but trace the principles of those that dissent from us, through all the length of remote and feeble consequences, and be sure to find some terrible absurdity at the end of them, we shall not easily maintain our charity. O how often do we put their opinions upon the rack ! we torture every joint and article of them, till we have forced them to confess some formidable errors which their authors never knew or dreamed of : Thus the original notions appear with a frightful aspect, and the sectators of them grow to be the object of our abhorrence, and have forfeited their right to every grain of our charity.

Evangillo believes that Christ Jesus has completely answered the demands of the law in order to our justification, and that in the room and stead of all believers. Nomineus hears this doctrine, and thus begins his chain of severe and false deductions ; then, saith he, the law has no power to demand obedience of us ; then we are not to be charged with sin ; though we break the law hourly and profanely ; then we may contemn all the commands, sport with the threatenings, and defy God the lawgiver and the avenger. He proceeds then to pronounce Evangillo a wicked antinomian, and in the name of the Lord delivers him up to Satan, that he may learn not to blaspheme ; 1 Tim. i. 20. Evangillo, on the other hand who has been well instructed in the way of salvation, and has learned the duties of faith and hope, but is not yet so well improved in the charity of the gospel, hears Nomineus preaching up repentance and sincere obedience, as the conditions of our justification and acceptance with God to eternal life : He smites his breast with his hand, and cries, Surely this man knows no use of Christ in our religion, he makes void his righteousness and his death, he is a mere legalist, a papist, a rank socinian, he preaches another gospel, and though he were an angel from heaven let him be accursed ; Gal. i. 8, 9. Thus when men dress up their neighbours in all the strained consequences of their opinions with a malicious pleasure they pursue this thread of argument, they impose horrid conclusions which can never be drawn from their doctrines, and never leave the pursuit till they have pushed each other to blasphemy and damnation. Whereas, if the doctrines and the persons now mentioned were put into the balances of truth and charity, perhaps the principles of Evangillo would be found to have most weight of scripture on their side, and Nomineus more of the fair shews of reasoning : But neither the one would be found to throw Christ out of his religion, nor the other to make void the law : And both of their lives would appear shining in holiness, but that they want the bright garments of charity. Let me name

VII. A seventh spring of this uncharitable humour ; and that is, when we magnify circumstantial differences into substantial ones, and make every punctilio of our own scheme a fundamental

point, as though all the law and the prophets hung upon it, as though it were the ground and pillar of all the truth in the gospel. Crucius will not allow his dissenting neighbour to be a member of the christian church, because he separates from the modes of worship in the church of England; he cannot believe him to be a friend to Christ crucified, because he refuses to have his child baptised with the airy sign of the cross. Again the dissenting neighbour pronounces Crucius to be a mere formalist, and to have nothing of the Spirit of God in him, because he seeks not much to obtain the gifts of the Spirit, and scarce ever addresses himself to God in prayer without the assistance of a form.

Sabbaptes, that lives within two door of them, will not believe either of his neighbours to be a christian, because they have never been plunged under water, that is, in this sense they were never baptised: And both of them in requital agree to call Sabbaptes a Jew, because he worships only on a Saturday. Whereas the all-knowing God looks down into all their hearts, beholds the graces that his Spirit hath wrought there, owns them all for his children and the disciples of his Son, though they are not yet perfect in love. They have all one common God and Father, one Lord Jesus, one faith, one spirit of prayer, one baptism, though they quarrel so bitterly about times, and modes, and forms.

It is a very uncharitable practice to think that a man can never journey safely to heaven, unless his hat and shoes be of the same colour with ours, unless he tread the very tract of our feet, and his footsteps too be of the same size. It is a censorious and perverse fancy to pronounce a man no christian because every thought of his soul, and all the atoms of his brain are not just arranged in the same posture with mine. How ridiculously unreasonable it is for a man of brown hair to shut his brother out from the rank and species of men, and call him an ox or a lion, because his locks are black or yellow. I am persuaded there is a breadth in the narrow road to heaven, that persons may travel more than seven a breast in it: And though they do not trace precisely the same track, yet all look to the same Saviour Jesus, and all arrive at the same common salvation: And though their names may be crossed out of the records of a particular church on earth, where *charity fails*, yet they will be found written in the *Lamb's book of life*, which is a record of eternal love, and shall for ever be joined to the fellowship of the catholic church in heaven. This iniquity of uncharitableness has more springs than there are streams of branches belonging to the great River of Egypt: and it is as fruitful of serpents and monsters too: Itself is a Hydra of many heads; I have drawn seven of them out at length into open light, that they may be cut off for ever: But there are others still remain as full of fire and infection. Shall I mention

VIII. An eighth here, *the applause of a party, and the advance of self-interest?* Have we never observed what a mighty prevalence this has over the hearts and tongues of men, and inflames them with malice against their neighbours? They assault every different opinion with rage and clamour: They rail at the persons of all other parties to ingratiate themselves with their own; and when they find their account in it, their tongues are sharpened as drawn swords, they fight for honour like young volunteers, or like the switzers for pay. When they tear away men from their habitations, cast them into the noisome prisons, and put to death the ministers of the gospel, they boast, like Jehu when he slew the priests of Baal, *come and see my zeal for the Lord*; 2 Kings x. 16. And as he designed hereby to establish the kingdom in his own hands, so they to maintain the preferments and possessions, as well as the reputation they had acquired among their own sect. But Ah! How little do they think of the wounds that Jesus the Lord receives by every bitter reproach they cast on his followers! Nor will it be found a sufficient reason for the persecution of them one day, that they did not conform to human inventions. The Jansenists in France have made some reformation in the doctrines of popery, and they have been sometimes traduced for approaching the tents of Calvin: They have been in danger of being degraded and losing their spiritual dignities, and they are pushed on by this fear and ambition, to write at every turn some severe invectives against the calvinists, to shew that themselves are true sons of that uncharitable church of Rome.

Sicco has lately departed from a baptist society, and he hardly thinks himself sufficiently *come out of the water* till he is kindled into a flame against all those that baptize by immersion; he rails at his former brethren, to make the presbyterian and independent churches believe that he is a true convert: How art thou mistaken poor Sicco, to attempt this method of caressing thy new acquaintance? For they had rather receive a baptist into their fellowship, whose faith and holiness are conspicuous in his life, than open their doors to an uncharitable wretch that proves his conversion only by the change of an opinion, and placing his religion in railing.

Acerbion has left the communion of his father, and is become an ecclesiastic of high note in a more powerful and splendid church: He seldom puts a volume into the press without sourness and hard words in it, against the society which he has forsaken, his pen is dipped in gall daily, and he grows old in malice and censure: It is pity he should so far expose the church to which he now belongs, as to think that she will esteem him a more dutiful son, by how much the less charity he has for his dissenting brethren. And I am sorry also that there should be a church in Great Britain which has devoted christians to the

devil for little differences, and has exposed them to tedious and sharp sufferings for refusing to submit to particular gestures in worship, and airy signs, for wearing a short garment in prayer in the place of a long one, or black instead of white ; and some of her sons have delighted to execute these censures, when they have found much *gain* arising from such severe *godliness*. I could wish she had always exercised the same charity to weak consciences that she does to slender purses ; for she allows a christian liberty to “ poor beneficed men and curates, not being able to provide themselves long gowns, that they may go in short ones.”

IX. A ninth spring of this uncharitable practice is *fixing upon some necessary and special point in christianity, and setting it up in opposition to the rest, or at best in opposition to some one of the rest*. “ I have long observed, says an ingenious writer, that christians of different parties have been eagerly laying hold on particular parts of the system of divine truths, and have been contending about them as if each had been all ; or as if the separation of the members from each other, and from the head, were the preservation of the body instead of its destruction. They have been zealous to espouse the defence, and to maintain the honour and usefulness of each apart ; whereas their honour as well as usefulness, seems to me to lie much in their connexion : And suspicions have often arisen betwixt the respective defenders of each, which have appeared so unreasonabe and absurd, as if all the preparations for securing one part of a ship in a storm were to be censured as a contrivance to sink the rest.” Thus far Dr. Doddridge in a late preface.

And I think we may as well borrow the similitude expressly from the scripture itself ; 1 Cor. xii. 14—21. *The body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body ? And how ridiculous would it be if we should suppose “ the ear should say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing ? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling ? And if they were all one member, where were the body ? The eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee ; nor again, the head to the feet I have no need of you. Ver. 27. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

In the same manner, repentance, faith, and love are three necessary graces or virtues that go to make up a christian ; and I might cite several texts of scripture, where each of these three are made necessary to christianity. Is it not therefore a most unreasonable thing to set up either repentance, faith or love so high, as though the whole of christianity was contained in it, when it is evident that nothing else can make a christian, but

such a faith as brings with it repentance and good works, or holiness of life, or such a love as produces obedience and good works, which must be the effect of this faith? In christianity nothing avails but such a *faith as works by love*, unto all holiness; Gal. v. 6. *Repent and believe the gospel*, was the first preaching of Christ and his apostles; Mark i. 15. And in other places, faith is indispensably coupled with repentance; Acts iii. 19. xx. 21. Without repentance our sins will not be forgiven us, without faith in Jesus Christ we have no interest in his salvation. True faith must be such as *purifies the heart*; Acts xv. 9. And produces good works as the necessary evidences to prove our faith true; James ii. 17, 18. What a strange sort of monstrous christian would this be, who pretended to much faith, but had no love nor repentance? And as monstrous would that pretender be, who had love or repentance without faith. As *God hath set the members in the body, every one of them as it hath pleased him*; 1 Cor. xii. 18. so has he appointed faith, repentance and love to fulfil their several offices in the christian life. What a piece of madness therefore is it, and high inconsistency to separate those things which God hath joined in his gospel? Or to preach and paraphrase very long, and talk very much upon ever a one of these, so as to hinder that due respect that is to be paid to the other two? No man is or can be a true believer in Christ, if he has not repentance and love, producing good works, as well as that faith which is necessary to make a christian. Let us take heed therefore lest we give occasion by any of our discourses to exalt one of these virtues or graces to the prejudice of the rest, for the utter loss of either of them will destroy all our pretences to christianity.

When Solfido has formed one of his christians exactly agreeable to the shape and humour of his own imagination, and dressed him up in all the feathers of strict orthodoxy that he can find in the severest writers, and by a motto written upon his forehead has called him the man of faith, I am at a loss to know what christian church would receive him into their communion, when he neither professes repentance, nor holiness, nor true love to God or man. It has indeed some of the appearances of a christian statue, but it is a man without feet or hands for walking or moving, a man without life or activity to run the christian race, or to do any thing for God in the world. What glory can our Lord Jesus Christ receive from such a useless figure? What honour can such an imperfect image possibly bring to the gospel: Or what service can he be of in the world, or in the church?

X. The most common cause of uncharitableness, and the last I shall mention, is, that a *great part of the professors of our holy religion, make their heads the chief seat of it, and scarce ever*

*suffer it to descend and warm their hearts.* Jesus the Saviour has been discovered to them in a good degree of outward light, but has never been revealed in them with power, nor their souls changed by divine grace into the image of the gospel. While they boast of their orthodox faith they forget their christian love.

Stellino has stuck his brain all over with notions, and fancies his higher sphere sufficiently illuminated for the conduct of mankind that is round about him, and beneath him: But this set of notions is like a winter-night overhung with stars; bright and shining, but very cold. Natural affections have no room in his soul, it is too much spiritualized with opinions and doctrines. His divinity lies all in his understanding, and the common duties of humanity scarce ever employ his tongue or his hands.

If a man does but profess every tittle of his creed, and believe just as Stellino believes, he is declared fit for holy communion; and if he will but dispute warmly for the hard words that distinguish his scheme, and can pronounce Shibboleth well, he shall not be adjudged to death or damnation, but joined heartily to the fellowship of the saints, though his flaming immoralities proclaim him a son of Satan: Satan himself has perhaps a more accurate and nice skill of the controversies of divinity, than the best of our professors and doctors have arrived at; but his pride and malice are *chains of darkness*, and make a devil of him in spite of all his knowledge: Yet Stellino affects too near a resemblance to Lucifer, that fallen *son of the morning*.

Vices that are odious to human nature, and wild licentiousnesses of a bitter tongue which destroy all civil society, are very little faults in his opinion, when put into the balance with orthodoxy and zeal. If my conversation among men be blameless and honourable; if my practice consist of virtue and piety; if I profess a solemn faith in Christ *the eternal word, the only begotten Son of God*, who came into the flesh, who died to make a true atonement for the sins of men, and testify my unfeigned subjection to him, and declare the grounds of my hope? yet I must not be admitted to the special part of worship where Stellino presides, because I am not arrived at his degree of light, and differ from his expressions a little, when I explain the words justification and the covenant of grace. His lips are ever full of declamation and controversy, and he haraugues copiously upon the most affecting points of our religion; he talks much of the amazing condescensions of divine mercy, and of *the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man*; but it has not yet taught him love to his fellow-creatures, nor kindness towards his brethren.

Such another christian is Misander; he reserves the duties



of christianity which St. Paul describes, he speaks evil of all men but his own party, he is a *brawler* and ungentle, *showing meekness unto none*; and while he pretends *that the grace of God which brings salvation has appeared unto him*, he lives still in *malice and envy*, and wears the visible characters of the men of heathenism, *hateful and hating one another*; Tit. ii. 11, 12. chapter iii. 2—4. He flourishes and enlarges upon the gracious qualities of our Redeemer, our *great High-priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities*; Heb. iv. 15. yet himself has not learned from so glorious an example to *have compassion on them that are ignorant and out of the way*; chapter v. 2. but rather being exalted in his own knowledge, he condemns *his weak brother to perish, for whom Christ died*; 1 Cor. viii. 11. Take thy bible, O vain man, and read a few lines in the eighth chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, verses 1, 2, 3. *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth: and if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know; but if any man love God, the same is known of him.* And St. John will assure thee, *that he that loveth not his brother, knoweth not God, and if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*; 1 John iv. 8, 20.

Yet let not any think that I advance charity so high, as to place it in the room of knowledge and faith, or to make it a self-sufficient ground for our admittance into heaven at last: Nor can I suppose it alone to be a sufficient plea for a reception into any visible church of Christ on earth. A confession of the name of Jesus, with the most important and most necessary articles of his blessed religion, a declaration of my personal faith or trust in him, together with a solemn dedication of myself unto the Lord, may be justly required of me by that christian society into which I desire admittance. In default of these the biggest instances of charity will never constitute me a christian: *Except ye believe that I am he, saith our Saviour, ye shall die in your sins*; John viii. 24. *If a man strive for a prize, yet is he not crowned, unless he strive lawfully*; that is, according to the methods prescribed in the gospel, the knowledge and the faith of the Son of God; 2 Tim. ii. 5. and the sentence of our Lord is dreadful and peremptory. *He that believeth not shall be damned*; Mark xvi. 16. *With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*; Rom. x. 10. But without charity my faith can never be true, for it must be such a *faith as worketh by love*, and discovers itself by all the fruits of the spirit, *long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance*; Gal. v. 6, 22.

Thus far have we traced the vice of uncharitableness in many of the properties that belong to it, and the causes of it, and many instances in which it discovers itself in the world, and in

the church; and it appears a very shameful vice, and opposite to the religion of the blessed Jesus.

SECT. II.—*An Occasional Vindication of the Apostles from the Charge of Uncharitableness.*

But what shall we say to those who take the venerable names of the sacred writers, and charge them with the same scandalous practice? There is one Momus, who is well known in the world for a person that is ready to find fault with the best of men, and the best of things, if he can suspect any thing which he imagines worthy of blame in them. This man rather than not vindicate himself from the charge of uncharitableness, he will bring even the apostles themselves into the accusation, particularly St. Paul and St. John. Paul, says he, must be a very uncharitable man, for Heb. x. 25, 26. He tells us, that *if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.* Thus it is plain, he will not suffer a man to be guilty of any wilful sin, after his profession of christianity, but he damns him for it without hope.

Answer. But I would have Momus consider that these are the very words of scripture and inspiration, and not merely St. Paul's opinion. Nor is the sense true which he puts upon these words: It is by no means every wilful sin after we have received and professed christianity, that will bring us under such an irreversible condemnation; but this wilful sin, as it stands in the context, plainly refers to our entire quitting the profession of our christian faith, verse 23. and forsaking all christian assemblies, without repentance or returning to them, as verse 25. And it is no wonder if a man who roundly renounces christianity wilfully, and without persecution, or any compulsion, should be laid under this dreadful sentence.

Let it be also particularly remarked, that as these verses come in just after the apostle had been speaking of the atoning sacrifice for sin, which Christ himself offered, as a fulfilling of all typical sacrifices and atonements of the Jewish law, chapter ix. 10. he expresses this condemning sentence in this language, *there is no more sacrifice for sin*, chapter x. 26, 27. that is, if a man renounces the sacrifice of atonement which Christ has made for sin, *there remains no more sacrifice* for him to trust in, or to hope for, *but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* Thus it appears, that this wilful sinner is condemned for renouncing the only method of atonement provided for the pardon of sins, which it was one of the chief glories of the christian religion to reveal and establish.

St. Paul also is charged with high uncharitableness by this Momus for what he says; Gal. i. 8, 9. *If any man preach any*

*other gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed, and yet he owns, verse 7. that it is not another gospel, but merely a perversion of the gospel of Christ; and is this enough to be accursed for? Answ. Let Momus consider how grossly the gospel must be perverted, when it is turned into such a sense as the Galatians seem to have been taught by these troublers of their church, verse 7. it is such an error as would have carried them again into Judaism, with all its yokes of bondage, would have obliged them to be circumcised and to observe the Jewish festival days, months and years; Gal. iv. 10. chapter v. 2. Such an error as shews them to have run back to the ceremonies of the Jewish law of justification and acceptance with God, verse 4. Such an error as gave occasion to the apostle to charge them, if ye pursue it ye are fallen from grace, that is, from the gospel of grace: And that Christ would profit them nothing, would become of no effect to them, verses 2, 4.*

And after all it must be said these are the words of scripture, and of the Spirit of God, and not merely of St. Paul himself as a private writer; and will the man deal thus with scripture? You see to what lengths this temper will carry a man. But still he pursues his accusation against the apostles, and makes St. John to be grossly guilty of want of charity in his second epistle, verses 9, 10. *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, that is, the doctrine of Christ mentioned in the foregoing verse, receive him not into your house, nor bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him, God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.*

Now to answer the unreasonable censure of this Momus, let us enquire what this doctrine of Christ is; and where should we find the most important parts of it but in the same writer? Chapter i. verse 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;* Chapter ii. verse 2. *Jesus Christ, the righteous, is not only our advocate with the Father, but he is also the propitiation for our sins.* Chapter iv. verse 10. *God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and that every true christian is born of God,* chapter v. 1, 4. that is, as other verses of this holy writer in his gospel explain it, *he is born of the spirit of God;* John i. 13. and iii. 5, 6. It appears then that the errors of such whom the apostle would here exclude from our friendship, are such as do not acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the Messiah, or not to be a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men, nor allow that every true christian is regenerated and born of God, or of his Spirit, that is, by the powerful, renewing and sanctifying influences thereof, as other scriptures explain it, particularly John i. 12, 13. John iii. 3, 5. and as St. Paul expresses it; Eph. i. 19, 20. *By such a mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead.*

Again, I would ask Momus, why are the names of Christ and the Holy Spirit appointed so generally to be used in baptism, which is the ordinance which initiates us into christianity? Is it not to put us in mind that when we profess christianity we profess the chief articles that relate to him as our Saviour, viz. Jesus Christ to be *the propitiation for our sins*, we profess to be *born of the Spirit*, or regenerated and renewed to holiness by the Spirit of God? Now if a man asserts himself to be a christian, when he believes and professes neither of these doctrines, then St. John may be to blame indeed in denying the benefit of common christian friendship to such a man. But whither would this Momus lead us? What? would he make a christian out of such adversaries to the name and gospel of Christ as neither trust in him as *a propitiation for their sins*, nor hope to be renewed and made holy by the Holy Spirit of God? Let us learn of the heathen poet:

“*Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines.*”—

There must be some measures and bounds set to every general virtue, and even to christian charity itself. This does not extend to infidels in the same sense. Surely, there must be due limits set to every thing of this kind: They can scarce be justly called christians, and treated as such, let their profession be what it will, who renounce Jesus Christ in his chief design of coming into the world, as a propitiation for sin, and who renounce the Spirit of God as the effectual spring of our regeneration and holiness. If all deists and infidels may be received into the christian church, into our good esteem and friendship, those may also be our fellow-christians, who deny the most important principles of christianity: But let us take heed that we *do not give that which is holy to such* who have no claim to it; Mat. vii. 6. and give charity and christian friendship to those, who seem, according to the word of God, to have no pretence to it.

It has been objected indeed against this second as well as against the third epistle of St. John, that they have not sufficient proof of their divine original: Now it would be too large in this place to enter into a discussion of that question: But there is nothing said in this epistle that is disagreeable to the sense of other holy writers in other parts of scripture; and by our protestant writers these epistles have been generally represented as part of the word of God in the New Testament: Nor can I find sufficient reason to reject it, merely because some persons, that need a more abundant measure of indulgence and of charity than the scripture seems to allow, will not allow it this post of honour, and that is because it excludes them from our good esteem, from christian communion and friendship. Yet after all this censure of Momus and his followers, if any such there be, I would still hope and persuade myself there are some serious and pious souls

who have been honestly seeking after the truths of religion, and searching the word of God to find them, who may have indulged some incautious and unhappy hour, wherein they have suffered themselves to be led away into this great *snare and temptation of the evil one*; so that they have begun to doubt of this blessed doctrine of the atoning sacrifice for sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, though it is so strongly, so expressly, and so often asserted by several of the apostles in their writings.

It is my sincere and earnest desire, that God would speedily break these unhappy snares, whatsoever they are, by which their thoughts have been captivated into so dangerous a mistake; 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. that he would please to *open the eyes of their mind* by his enlightening grace, that they may not run on so far in this way as to be exposed to the loss of the benefit of this only propitiation for sin, and lay themselves open to that severe sentence of the word of God, that *there remains no further propitiatory sacrifice for them, but a certain fearful expectation*;—Heb. x. 26, 27. Forgive me, blessed Jesus, if any of the softer influences of animal nature have warped me aside, while I am treating of this glorious virtue of charity, to indulge these milder sentiments, and depart in any measure from the stricter sense and sentence of thy holy word.

### SECT. III.—*The Mischievous Effects of Uncharitableness.*

Now if we have not dwelt too long on this subject, viz. in tracing out this mischief through its several springs and properties, and if my reader be not quite out of breath, I would ask him to take another turn with me and walk down to a short survey of the same vice in its mischievous effects; that we may be more warmly animated to pursue this iniquity to the death: If it were possible, we would leave it neither root nor branch, name or memory in the christian world.

I. The first and most obvious mischiefs I meet with among christians of an uncharitable humour, are the constant disquiet of their own spirits, the vexation they give their neighbours, the injury they do to their own edification, and to the edification of all that converse with them. Singulario has a set of notions and rules whereby he adjusts his own creed and his practice; and whatsoever he hears in religious conference, or in public duty, that does not precisely square to his model, disquiets his ears, disrelishes with his taste, disturbs his conscience, and thus prevents all the benefit that his soul should receive from the discourse or worship.

I grant it very lawful for a man to be disgusted with a sermon, where the greatest part is spent in notions contrary to his judgment, and dressed up in language very foreign to his usual way of converse about divine things; this is shocking to the

spirit of the best christians, and the conscience is so nauseated with the largest part of the entertainment that his soul cannot be nourished, and it is proper for him to forbear attendance upon such a preacher, and chuse one more suited to the temper of his own spirit. But Singulario hath an aversion to a whole hour's discourse, because there were three sentences of a strain different from his opinion. He reaps no blessing from a sermon of excellent composure, of divine materials, of an evangelic frame and just method, because there is one expression in it that is the characteristic of another sect. He sits uneasy under a noble discourse of justification or of faith, because, it may be, the minister doth avoid the terms imputed, meritorious, condition and instrument; and mentions none of the tortured words of noise and party. I will not indeed commend a preacher that is always affecting to disguise his own opinions, and for ever hiding himself in ambiguous language, and that in points of moment, thereby to maintain the everlasting applause of all sides. But I must chide Singulario for the wry faces he makes at church when he hears but a word or two of contrary sound, or when his ears miss and long for a set of darling phrases.

Three years ago I was in company with Acharissa, a stout old christian of a very narrow spirit, and gave her a gentle admonition for the frequent reproaches she cast on the ministers of Christ, that did not preach exactly according to her humour; I blamed that petulant liberty which she took with all her neighbours and acquaintance, to censure them severely for every lesser difference of practice or worship: I recommended to her reading that valuable sermon of the reverend Doctor Tillotson, "Against Evil-speaking;" but I could not persuade her to peruse those few pages, not only because of that strong propensity she had to speak evil of others, but because it was the work of an archbishop; "which sort of office, said she, is a mere human invention, and the scripture knows it not." I know another name which has the same narrow spirit. Sequilla hath ever given up the conduct of her soul to the curate of the parish, and after many years' attendance on his ministry, in great security of conscience, is well assured that she shall go to heaven at last. Perhaps by some terrible providence, or by some plain word of scripture, she is awakened to a deep and frightful sense of sin, and danger of eternal death. She is visited by the curate, and though he saith some good things to her, yet she finds not the way of peace. A kind neighbour recommends to her some book of consolation written by a dissenter, but she refuses the book and the comfort at once, lest she should be guilty of that damnable sin of separation from the church. How can I ever, said she, expect the peace of God from the pen of a schismatic? And thus endures the racks of conscience rather than she will

indulge charity enough to hear or to read what a non-conformist hath written.

Presbycolo a christian of the same stamp, heard a sermon lately and commended it above measure, confessed how much light and love was kindled in his heart by it, and bestowed unusual strains of respect upon the minister; but Presbycolo, said I, "This man never had the hands of a bishop, or preaching-elder, laid upon his head to ordain him." At once I saw his colour change, his spirits sink, and he concluded that all the divine affections in his soul under that sermon must needs be counterfeit, "because now I know, said he, the preacher is no minister of Christ." O the wretched influence of this vice of uncharitableness upon feeble and deluded souls! It proceeds so far at last as to make persons scrupulous of attending upon any ordinance, lest the administrator should not be a man exactly of their stamp. Thus their hearts are vexed with everlasting disquiet, for they can hardly hear a prayer, or an exhortation, but they find some offence in it; like a man with a thorn in his hand, whatsoever he takes hold of gives him pain, but the cause lies in his own flesh. There are other instances of this kind to be met with in the world. Nitidelli wears his hair three inches below his shoulders, and it is ever well beautified with powder; he frequently eats of a dish of food where blood is one of the ingredients, and he often takes half a pint of red wine to his own share: He maintains serious religion at home and abroad: But Censorina cannot join with him in the special ordinances of worship. *It is a shame for him, she cries to wear long hair, he is a wine-bibber, and he abstains not from blood; nor can I be reconciled to him upon any terms, unless he retrench these horrible excesses. But he still goes on careless and regardless of the peace of his fellow-christian, and scorns her little clamours, rather than endeavours, by gentleness and compliance to satisfy or remove them.*

*Now walkest thou not charitably, O Nitidelli, for thou grievest thy sister with thy meat and garments, for whom Christ died: Rom. xiv. 15. But I would fain have Censorina learn also, that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Both of you therefore ought to follow after things which make for yeace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Verses 17, 19.*

Nor is this mischief confined to single persons: It makes a farther progress still, and infects the neighbour and acquaintance. Every Monday, in the evening, Crites sits at the head of a club that meet together to arraign and sentence the sermons of the foregoing day. "Did you mark, my friends, such an expression under the fourth head? It sounded harsh in my ears. Surely the man is not orthodox; pray acquaint your families of

the danger of his opinions, and forbid their attendance. Truly, replies Momion, he insisted so much on the grace of God, that he left but one quarter of his hour-glass for the duties of the gospel; I fear he is a supralapsarian, my spirit rises against him, and I must warn my acquaintance of his doctrine." A third person in the company begins to surmise that his morals are not good; "I have heard an ill story of a preacher not long since, saith he, and surely this must be the man?" And then he proceeds in a direct opposition to the grace of charity, as it is described by St. Paul; 1 Cor. xiii. 5. Tit. iii. 2. I easily believe all that is evil of him: I am provoked at him; I hope no good from him; I cannot bear his principles; I cannot endure his person; and I should rejoice in the seasonable death of such an antinomian as this is. Thus does the root of bitterness spring up into wide branches, it bears poisonous fruit, and many souls are troubled. Blessed be God who of late years begins to purge out this sour leaven from amongst us.

II. The next pernicious effect I take notice of, is, that an uncharitable carriage brings a disgrace and blemish upon christianity, beyond the guilt and scandal of heathenism; It is the character of the Gentiles indeed, that they were *hateful and hating one another*, but not for different principles of philosophy, which they professed, nor different methods of worship, which they paid to their gods. There were no civil wars proclaimed, nor courts of inquisition erected amongst them upon this account, though their controversies about divine things were not trivial, and they differed widely in the very foundations of religion; and as an ingenious author expresses himself on this subject, "Though poets have made the gods enter into factions and quarrels for commonwealths, yet commonwealths never did the same for their gods." But if the heathens had been never so much enraged, and quarrelled never so fiercely for the sake of opinions, and formalities; still they were almost infinitely more excusable than christians can pretend to be: For the very doctrines of most of their sects permit revenge; and they have many a bloody principle amongst them. But christianity is the most mild, the most gentle, and the most peaceable religion: Never a doctrine was taught amongst mankind, that hath so much of love and sweetness in it: Never a system, or rule of duties, wherein meekness and candour, charity and compassion are so prescribed and enforced.

Never was there a religion instituted by God, or invented by men, with so much goodness in the heart and soul of it, or so many charms and amiablenesses in the face. It is built upon the foundation of God's eternal and unchangeable love. It was love that assumed human nature, and became the great prophet and teacher of it, and the spirit of love in our hearts is its vital



spring within us: It is divine love dwelling in flesh, hanging upon a cross, bleeding and dying for enemies and rebels that hath purchased all the promised blessings of our religion; and it is the same love arising from the grave, and reigning in glory, that distributes these blessings to men: And in all the melting language of compassion and tenderness invites us to receive them: It was this love dwelling personally amongst men, calls himself our brother, and charges us to love all the professors of the same faith as brethren: He requires that we should be ready to *lay down our lives for one another*, as he did for us all: And orders it to be the distinguishing character of all his followers, *Hereby shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another*; John xiii. 34, 35. God himself is infinite and unseen love, Christ is love incarnate and visible: And a christian is or should be an effigy of that love graven to the life, by the finger of the divine Spirit. Now, for the professors of such a doctrine to quarrel about trifles, and grow malicious upon every punctilio of different sentiments, how grossly do they abuse the christian name? They rob their own religion of its due honour amongst men, and bring infinite shame and discredit upon christianity in the face of infidel nations. It is for the sake of this madness which is found amongst the pretended followers of our blessed Lord, *his name is blasphemed among the heathens*; and the conversion of the kingdoms of this world to the faith of Christ, rendered almost rationally impossible.

III. *Thirdly*, This uncharitable temper rages even to wars and blood; hath laid the churches of Christ desolate, and dispeopled many countries in christendom. It doth not spend itself in secret like a sullen humour, or a vapour of melancholy, but breaks out into public violence and disorder, and all that is near it feels the indignation. It sits brooding over *the eggs of a cockatrice*, and daily sends forth *a fiery flying serpent*, instruments of cruelty are in its habitation, and all its children are sons of blood and rapine. *O my soul, come thou not into their council; unto their assembly, my honour, be not thou united; for in their anger they have slain millions of men, and in their self-will they have digged up the foundations of a thousand churches. Cursed be their anger for it is fierce, and their wrath for it is cruel*; Gen xlix. 6, 7. These men of division at the last judgment-day, may justly expect to be *divided from Jacob, and scattered far away from the Israel of God. For God will render to every one according to their works*; Rom. ii. 16. And surely these bloody persecutions are such works as demand like revenges from a God of justice; if such as practice them die without repentance.

If you ask me the method whereby this uncharitable temper has advanced to such a degree of rage and barbarity, it is very

obvious and easy to be explained. At first these men assume to themselves the name of the church, and lodge in themselves a sort of infallibility, or at least pretend to a divine authority to determine finally all doubtful cases of religion, and to rule over the consciences of men. They set up the wretched trade of creed-making, and demand the belief of mankind: Then they give out decrees, such as Christ and his apostles never gave, and pronounce damnation against all that doubt or disbelieve them; though their *fables* are *not cunningly devised*, because they are made too big for belief. Some of them contradict the most substantial principles of sense, reason and christianity.

You will see this plainly exemplified in a few instances I shall give of their decrees and canons. As "Whosoever shall affirm that that there are more or less than seven sacraments, let him be anathemized, excommunicated, or accursed: Whosoever shall affirm that the substance of bread and wine remains in the eucharist, together with the body and blood of Christ, or shall deny the wonderful change of the whole substance of bread into the body, and wine into blood, which the catholic church calls transubstantiation, let him be excommunicated: Whosoever shall say, that extreme unction doth not confer grace, nor remit sin, nor ease the sick, let him be excommunicated\*." Thus oftentimes the same anathema and eternal death is denounced against such as disobey their decrees about matters of trifling importance; matters which they themselves can never pretend to be, in their own nature, necessary to salvation. "He that shall say a common minister can confirm as well as a bishop, let him be excommunicated: He that shall say, the ceremonies, the vestments, &c. in the celebration of the mass, are incentives to sin, rather than duties of piety, let him be excommunicated: He that shall say, a priest may become a layman again, let him be excommunicated: and whosoever shall say, that the hierarchy of bishops, presbyters, and ministers or deacons is not of divine ordination, let him be excommunicated." When this church has thus excommunicated and cursed christians better than herself, and cast them out of her arms, she gives them up to the secular power†, with an awful and deceitful charge, that the obstinate heretic shall not be hurt in life or limb; but with a full design that they should be tortured and destroyed. Having solemnly *delivered them to the devil* in their spiritual courts, the temporal executioner sends them out of the world; not *their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord*, but that they may be plunged immediately *into utter darkness* where Satan dwells.

It is the command of Christ to the Roman church, by Paul

\* Canons of the church of Rome in the council of Trent.

† See the History of the Inquisition.

the great apostle; Rom. xiv. 1. That such as were *weak in faith should be received to their fellowship, and not troubled with doubtful disputables*, such as the observance of *meats and days*, and things of like moment: But the Romans have now so far rebelled against this rule, as to admit persons into their communion upon no other terms than a blind submission to all the doubtful disputables which that church imposes. They had an order from St. Paul; Rom. xv. 7. *to receive all such as Christ had received*; and consequently to reject no others but those whom Christ rejects; but they forgot this charitable canon of our Lord, while they receive thousands to their communion which have no visible marks of the image of Christ, and reject thousands, and curse them to hell, whom the Lord Christ will acknowledge for his, and pronounce them blessed of his Father at the last day.

When they first begin to assume this sovereignty over faith and conscience, they use a shew of argument, and pretend to instruct and enlighten the weak and the ignorant. They admonish them to hearken to the church; but if the ignorant are still weak in belief, and cannot be convinced of the lawfulness of their ceremonies; then they send the sheriff and the jailor to carry on the dispute; a prison and the gibbet are the next arguments; and when reason and scripture will not assist them, they employ fire and sword, to *contend earnestly* for the fables that were never *delivered to the saints*; Jude, verse 3.

To draw up an account of the horrible effects of uncharitableness would be to transcribe the ecclesiastical history of many ages: Whole churches and quarters of the world, the eastern and western, have damned one another plentifully upon the account of imposed days, and trifles which the gospel leaves indifferent, or rather forbids. How many of the canons of ancient councils have been influenced in their formation by this assuming spirit, and as terribly enforced in their execution to the reproach and devastation of christendom? But it moves my grief and wonder, that a modern church that pretends not to infallibility should assume a strange dominion over our faith and practice. It asserts its own, "power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith; when in the very preceding words it confesses that the churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have erred, so also the church of Rome has erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith." It demands my admiration, that such a church should canonically denounce her excommunications in abundance, against those that dissent from her in some disputable things, while they retain all her professed doctrines of the christian faith.

And it is a pain and a shame to our eyes to look backward

upon other times, and to behold pamphlets written against toleration by such as are ministers of the gospel of peace, that perfect law of liberty. It was their opinion then, and they told the world so in print, that sectaries ought to be silenced by the civil power : Now sectary is a name of broad dimensions, and has a terrible stretch with it : the long scourge would in time reach all those who differ from the hand that manages that weapon of chastisement : None must be authorized to preach in any form; but by the solemnity of imposing hands, by a company of authorized men. Because some subjected themselves to the determination of a synod, they would make it the duty of all their neighbours to wear the same yoke; and thought others were bound to become slaves to the same dictates. But I forbear this charge, and almost wish it cancelled : For as the magistrate did not put in practice the uncharitable pamphlets, so those reverend and honourable writers have been taught to acknowledge the mistake of their zeal, when their own verbal rods were turned against them, and became real *scorpions* with stings and scourges a thousand-fold. The fathers have been dearly instructed in the value of toleration and liberty by most abundant retaliations. The children have learned to preach this part of the gospel well, and I am persuaded they will never forget it again.

If we turn over more ancient annals, the Marian days give us horrible examples of fiery zeal in the clergy, and the glorious reign of the succeeding virgin-princess is hardly to be purged from the stain of blood. Blessed be God who has put into the heart of our civil governors to restrain the fury of all spiritual administrators. The long and dreadful train of capias and goalers, prisons and plunderings, ruin and banishment, silencings and violent suppressions are no longer the attendants of the anathemas of any church among us. And I hope no church mourns the loss of them; though there are some anathemas that abide still as terrors to those *that are weak in faith*, and not very honourable monuments of that church's charity. In these late years the scene of Great Britain was a little shadow of Spain and France, where dragoons and the inquisition manage ecclesiastical discipline. We were brought to the very gates of "Aceldama." The agents of Rome were ready with their instruments of death. Adored be the divine Spirit that awakened the rulers of the church to behold the common danger, and raised in them generous resolutions and promises to exercise charity and temper towards their brethren. Glory to that God whose kind providence sent us a deliverer, and forbid England to become a field of blood and martyrdom : And new songs of praise are still due unto divine mercy, for establishing the person and heart of our Queen in the throne and

the principles of so glorious an example and predecessor. Her gentle government subdues the hearts of all her people to herself; her charity joins their affections to one another; her parental care and love reconciles christian parties, and her wisdom unites christian nations.

IV. The last mischief I shall mention, and which should fright us terribly from the peril of it, is, that "an uncharitable man wounds the very vitals of that religion, by which he hopes for eternal life." And whilst his fury rages against his brother for accidental differences, he shakes the very foundations of his own christianity, and endangers or prevents his own salvation; his boasted orthodoxy in opinion is made vain, while his practical ungodlinesses are so real; and his faith appears to be little better than that of devils, when he mingles so much of their malice with it. In vain does he glory in the brightness of his notions; in vain doth he presume "*darkness is past, and the true light now shineth: For he that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, he abideth in darkness, even till now*;" 1 John ii. 8, 9.

Such a wisdom composed of mere opinion and wrath can never lead aright up to heaven, for it did not descend from thence: *The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace: But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not. Whatever your pretences of truth be, this is but lying against the truth: This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, carnal, devilish*; James iii. 14—18. It is impossible there should be true faith without sincere love: *If I understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge, if I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and were destitute of charity, my pretensions to religion are the mere sound of noisy brass, or a tinkling cymbal*; 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. It is such a charity that suffereth long, that is not easily provoked, that beareth all things, and believeth all things, and taketh all things in the best sense, and thinketh no evil: It is such a charity as this that is a substantial part of our religion. Charity in the heart, is absolutely required to make up inward christianity; and the appearance of it in the life is a most necessary part of godliness.

It is true indeed, that all graces and virtues are very imperfect in this present state, and there is much of uncharitableness remaining in many a good man: But that man can never be good that has no charity. Zelotus has spent his life in declaiming against some little modes and gestures used in worship by his fellow-christians, or in imposing some uninstituted ceremonies on the consciences of his brethren. He hath stirred up the

magistrate to persecute some of them to prisons, and almost to death. He flattered his conscience with hopes that his zeal for the church should not only render him acceptable at the last day, but provide him a large reward. He lies now languishing upon a bed of sickness, on the borders of eternity, and is terribly awakened to behold his own mistake; whilst he stand within sight of the tribunal of Christ, and the face of the Judge, his former practice appears to his conscience in its true and frightful shape; the fire that hath animated him against his brethren, now flashes in his soul; and discovers its infernal source; now he dreads to be made an example of the same vengeance among devils, with which he hath pursued his fellow-mortals, he groans out his last breath in bitter agonies; cries to the God of love for mercy upon his departing spirit; and expires almost without hope. He is gone. But we leave his soul to the compassions of a God who can better pardon his mighty errors, than he would forgive others in their little mistakes. Thus dreadfully hath this vice of uncharitableness prevailed against the honour of christianity, and the peace of mankind. Thus sacrilegiously hath it taken away one of the brightest marks of the best religion, and that is love. It hath defaced the beauty of our holy profession, scandalized the sacred name that we bear, made a slaughter-house of the church of Christ, and deceived the souls of men to their own eternal ruin.

Just as I had finished this essay, Pharisaino happened to come into my study, and taking up the first leaf, read the title, and was persuaded this discourse must be written against himself. "No, said I, there is not any man alive personally intended in these papers, but if you please to peruse them, and shall apply the characters to yourself, I hope you will confess divine providence has led you into a conviction of your false zeal." Pharisaino sat him down immediately, and with a running eye passed through every page. And though the frequent wrinkle of his brow discovered his inward chagrin and disgust, yet he paid me many a ceremony; and "behold, said he, how language and fancy will dress up zeal like a monster to frighten men out of their fervour of spirit.

"I have heard, added he, that you have some skill in painting, pray draw me the figure of this uncharitableness in just and proper colours, this monster which you complain has so narrowed and disgraced, and murdered christianity." I will attempt it, Pharisaino, if you will furnish me with a sheet of large paper, and that of the fairest kind, to represent the christian church in this world. First, I will pare it round, and reduce it to a very small compass; then with much ink will I stain the whiteness of it, and deform it with many a blot; at the next sitting I will stab it through rudely with an iron pen; and when I put the last hand to complete the likeness, it shall be smeared over with blood.

## ESSAY VIII.

### *Of the Difficulties in Scripture, and the Different Opinions Christians in Things less Necessary.*

#### SECTION I.—*A short Account of these Difficulties.*

**C**ONCERNING the doctrines and duties which peculiar belong to the New Testament, I have generally concluded to be a good rule of judgment, that according to the degree their importance or necessity to salvation, such is commonly degree of their evidence; and the frequency of their repetition is, for the most part, proportionable to their usefulness. The great truths of our religion, and those practices of christian without which we cannot be saved, are described in the word God, in large and fair characters, so that "he who runs n read them." The visions and revelations of the mind and of God our sovereign, are written and made plain upon tables of the evangelists, or of the apostles; Heb. ii. 2. they not mentioned once and briefly, but many pages explain repeat them; they stand in a divine and convincing light, may easily be understood by those who with a humble and teable spirit, enquire what they must believe and do, in order please God. This remark is much confirmed by that prom which assures us that it should be so in gospel-times. The hi way to heaven is so plain, that *the way-faring men, or stran though they be fools in understanding, shall not err therein; xxxv. 8.* A man that labours in his daily calling, in the city the field, or a servant in the lowest rank of life, may, with application in their vacant moments, be acquainted with the necessary truths and duties of our religion; besides that the Sp of God is promised to sincere and diligent seekers, to faithful humble enquirers, and shall be bestowed sufficiently to infi them of the sure way to eternal life; Prov. ii. 1, 6. *If t criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understand if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid tures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and the knowledge of God; Luke xi. 13. Your heavenly Father s give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* And the Spirit is to guide the faithful into all truth; John xvi. 13.

The wisdom, the equity and the goodness of God seem to concur in fixing matters of necessary belief and practice in situation, that is, that they should be often and plainly expres. If there be any particular doctrine or duty which I find wri

but in one single text of scripture, or expressed but darkly, I should reasonably conclude the great God never designed that doctrine, or that duty to be of very great importance in the christian life: For a dark expression is much more easily mistaken, as to the true sense of it; and a single text is more liable to be miscopied, or dropped by a transcriber, or be misconstrued by a translator, or overseen and neglected by a common reader or hearer; and the great God would not put matters of high importance on so doubtful and dangerous a foot, and leave things necessary at such uncertainties, lest honest and humble enquirers should, after all their pains, mistake their way to heaven.

A sudden thought of the form and order of baptism, prescribed to us; Mat. xxviii. 18. made me at first suspect, that there must be one exception made to this rule, about the frequent repetition of any doctrine or duty necessary to salvation; but upon a further consideration and review of things it appears evident to me now, that though this appointment of the form of baptism was prescribed to be done in the name of the Holy Spirit, as well as of the Father and the Son, yet it was by no means necessary to the salvation of any man, and therefore there was no necessity of having it often repeated. Let us consider,

I. That the appointment of it is but once expressed, and that by one holy writer, and there is never an actual example or instance of this complete form of baptism practised in any place of scripture. Observe that remarkable text, Acts xix. 2. where St. Paul enquired of the young converts that were baptized at Ephesus, *Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? and they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.* He then enquired, *unto what were ye baptized? and they said unto John's baptism;* and Paul had told them that John taught them, *that they should believe on him that should come after him, that is, in Christ Jesus: when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* Whether they were baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit, or no, is not actually expressed; which is something strange, when that was the chief point of enquiry concerning their baptism into the Holy Ghost. Here also it may be observed, that those who were here baptized; Acts xix. 5, 6. immediately received the Holy Ghost; whence it may be very probably inferred, that some persons were baptized with the Holy Ghost itself, who were not actually baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost. Consider,

II. When the business of baptism is mentioned in several places in the epistles, it is generally declared that baptism was performed in the name of the Lord Jesus; Rom. vi. 3. "so many of you as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his



death ;" Gal. iii. 27. "As many of you as have been baptised into Christ ;" 1 Cor. xii. 13. "By one Spirit we are baptised into one body," that is, Christ, as in the foregoing verse, but I can find no mention of the disciples being baptised into the Holy Ghost.

III. Though I am ready to believe from many expressions in the primitive history of the church, that the baptizers did usually keep to this form of words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ;" yet it is evident from a long account which Grotius gives us upon this text ; Mat. xxviii. 19. that they used divers forms, that is, they sometimes expressed the Father by a periphrasis, "The God of all, or the God of the whole, the God and Father of the whole : Sometimes the Son was expressed by the Word, or the only begotten Son of God : Sometimes the Holy Ghost was expressed by the Spirit who inspired the prophets.

I might add, that upon their profession of the christian religion, sometimes it is called the profession of the remission of sins, or the catholic church, or everlasting life, but they never made a scruple of their being rightly baptised into salvation upon any of these accounts ; and I am persuaded that had the apostles themselves, or the primitive christians, thought it necessary to salvation, the form of baptism would have been more express in the history of it, and been more particularly repeated. I think therefore the rule may stand good still, that where a doctrine or a duty is mentioned but in one single place of the scripture, it cannot be of absolute necessity to salvation. I hope the reader will forgive this long digression, and then proceed.

On the other hand, where particular truths or duties are often repeated in scripture, and very plainly expressed in several places, it is hardly possible that they should be subject to these inconveniences. It is not to be supposed that the transcribers of the New Testament should make the same mistake in every place, where these propositions are mentioned : that they should drop them out of every chapter ; that the translator should misconstrue them in every text ; or that their misconstruction should always seem to make good sense in every context where they stand ; or finally that the hearer or reader should always overlook them when they are found in so many passages, and so often occur to his ear or eye : But it is very apparent, and all men must acknowledge that matters of less moment, and things not necessary, are not mentioned so often : And when they are mentioned, the scripture sometimes gives no determination or positive injunctions about them ; nor do the apostles determine the smaller controversies with that plain, exact and positive method of speech, which you find them use in the most substantial truths and duties. If we read the xiv. chapter to the Romans, it must

convince us of this assertion. St. Paul does not there decide the little controversies about observations of meats and days, but seems to leave them to charity. Nor are the lesser points of christianity half so often mentioned, or urged with half so much vehemence, as the grand duties of faith and love, repentance and holiness. In matters of lower concernment among the formalities and modes of religion, or even in some higher articles, whose circumstances and logical relations are not necessary to salvation, the scripture has its *divinita et fere adyta*, as divines call them, that is, almost insolveable difficulties, and things very hard to be understood by men in this state, at least by common readers.

Sometimes the matter is so sublime, so unlike all mortal affairs, and so divinely superior to every thing here below, that perhaps it was not possible to describe it fully and plainly in human words: And the more enlightened the writer or speaker was, the deeper and more inexpressible might the truths be which he reveals. Our Saviour has made some such discoveries at the latter end of his prayer in the xvii. of St. John's gospel. Such are the doctrines of the union or oneness of Christ with God his Father, and the oneness or union of the saints with God and Christ. Some things are constrained to be expressed in a human way less suitable to their own dignity, and yet even then they are not perfectly easy to be understood, for earthly metaphors will not convey to our thoughts a full idea of things divine and heavenly. When Christ had been teaching Nicodemus the doctrine of regeneration; John iii. 12. he adds, *If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* The apostle Paul, the most enlightened of all mere men, saw and heard some things among his visions and revelations, that were unutterable; 2 Cor. xii. 4. And some things which he has published for the use of the church, according to the wisdom given to him, are hard to be understood, as St. Peter himself assures us; 2 Pet. iii. 16. Again, I might take notice, that in matters which are prophetic both in the Old Testament and in the New, there are many dark expressions, many parables and hard figures of speech, which are made use of to express and convey some general and in distinct ideas of future events, which were not fit to be more fully revealed in that day, and which only the accomplishment was designed to explain to future days or ages, *when these things are come to pass, then shall ye know that I have foretold them;* John xiii. 19. and chapters xiv. 29. and xvi. 4.

The Spirit of God, for wise ends, hath expressed some things in particular seasons, whether doctrinal or prophetic, in obscure phrases, capable of a double interpretation. Other things are very briefly hinted, and the holy writer doth but just

glance at them in passing, and does not dwell upon them long enough to explain them, that being not his present chief design. Some words are so ambiguous and of various meaning in the same chapter, that it is not easy to determine their precise sense in each verse; and these words also transferred into our language may not have the same different meanings as the original, and perhaps too, may be determined to the wrong sense by the translators; but the vulgar can read only their own language, and their judgments are determined by the translator's opinion. The various meanings put on the words *νομος* the law, *εκκλησια* the church, *χειροτονια* to ordain, *επισκοπος* a bishop or overseer, &c. sufficiently prove this.

Besides, the sense of many a scripture depends not merely on the literal constructions of the words, but on the knowledge of the context, and on the consideration of the scope and design of the writer, and perhaps the deeper design of the Spirit of God that inspired him: It depends on the character and condition of the persons to whom he writes, into what errors or evil practices they were fallen, at what times, and under what circumstances these things fell out: All which it is impossible every mechanic should know, and but few scholars are well acquainted with: These difficulties in scripture occasion different opinions among the readers; and because each would impose his sense upon all the rest of christians, a thousand quarrelling *folios* have sprung.

There is another difficulty and shade of darkness which falls upon many texts of scripture, and particularly in the New Testament, from the extraordinary actions and modes of action in the primitive and inspired times. It is certain that some things recorded in the acts of the apostles, and occasionally spoken of in the epistles, refer only to the extraordinary and inspired transactions of those miraculous times, and cannot be imitated by us: Such are the communication of gifts by the imposition of hands, the healing the sick by anointing with oil, the multitude of useful speakers in one assembly, the talking various languages in public worship if an interpreter were present, &c. It is as certain also, that some things are recorded in some of those scriptures, as patterns and directions for our imitation in all ages. Such are the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's-supper, the choice of deacons, the ordination of overseers or bishops, the practice of occasional communion, &c. But there are some circumstances relating to these actions, concerning which it is hard to determine how far they belong to the extraordinary affairs of that day, and how far they are rules for our conduct in ordinary cases. Now from all these differences have arisen many laborious and angry volumes of noise and wrangle about *the mint*, *the anise*, and *the cummin*, about the dress and the fringes of religion, which have vexed the learned world, and disquieted and divided the church of Christ.

Notwithstanding all these difficulties in scripture, and the divided sentiments of men about them ; yet there is no room for the popish doctrine of the insufficiency of the holy scriptures ; no need of any living judge of controversies, or a seat of infallibility on earth ; for the grand doctrines and duties which are necessary to salvation, such as *repentance towards God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as a prophet, a high-priest, and a king, the necessity of universal holiness, pardon of sin through the blood of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal rewards and punishments in the world to come ; all these, I say, are written down in scripture, in as plain and express a manner as the nature and importance of them required ; and about these things persons of a sober, humble and honest mind cannot well mistake if they are diligent in their enquiry, and seek wisdom of that God who gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our own folly ; James i. 5.* Not only are all matters necessary to salvation written plain enough for every reader, but we have also, as I hinted before, the promise of the assistance of the Holy Spirit to teach us to understand all such revelations, that sincere and diligent men may not be suffered to fall into such a mistake as to fail of acceptance with God. Nay further, we have good encouragement to hope, that even in some things on which salvation doth not necessarily depend, but are only designed to promote the farther sanctification and comfort, peace and hope of the church, the Spirit of God will often assist the upright and humble seeker, yet still there will remain difficulties enough to exercise inquisitive souls, for I find no certain promise that God will always satisfy every sincere enquirer in the full meaning of all difficult texts.

“ I glorify thee, O my God, that thou hast not confined the knowledge of thyself to the wise and the learned world, but hast written down the way of salvation so plain, that a child may read and attain it. Let the scribes and doctors, and critics of the age wrangle about *the pins of the tabernacle, and the seats in the synagogue*, let them contend, even to blood, about the “*ofs,*” the “*auds,*” and the “*moreovers,*” of the bible, my soul shall dwell in peace, and rest on these pillars of safety, even the great and evident doctrines of the christian faith. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed thyself and thy Son unto babes, and hast not made it a matter of wit and criticism to be a christian ; Mat. xi. 25. The foolish and the base, and the weak things of this world are chosen to salvation, I Cor. i. 26.* and they understand, and believe, and practise all the necessary articles, while they may differ from each other in some lesser forms of worship and discipline, and are not able to maintain an argument on either side.

What is here asserted concerning the substance of some of

the less necessary articles of our religion, viz. that they are somewhat obscurely expressed in scripture ; the same may be applied also to the circumstantial topics, to the appendices, and the logical relations even of the greatest and most necessary points of christianity, as I hinted before. Though the practice of repentance, and the promises of pardon ; though justification by faith, and the death of Christ *as a ransom* for sinners, are so often and so plainly affirmed, yet it is not affirmed so often, nor so plain in scripture, what logical relation faith bears to our justification ; whether it is a condition, as some make it ; or a receiving instrument, as others suppose : Nor is it so indisputably and so evidently written in the word of God, whether Christ died as a conditional atonement for all sin, and a purchaser of salvation in general for all that are willing to accept it, or whether as a strict representative only of the elect, and to procure neither absolute nor conditional pardon for any sins but theirs.

It is evident beyond all doubt, that where the gospel comes *he that believes shall be saved* ; Mark xvi. 15. But whether faith saves us as it is a mere dependence on divine grace, or on the priesthood of Christ, or whether it saves us rather as a hearty belief of the gospel and the grace of it, even such a belief as comes to be the spring of our repentance and our holiness, this is not so exceeding evident as to leave no room for controversy. It is abundantly revealed in holy scripture, that without repentance of our sins we can never be saved, nor shall any of our iniquities be forgiven without a sincere conversion to God ; but to declare with the utmost exactness and full assurance what logical relation our repentance bears to our pardon, scripture hath not taught us quite so fully, nor so clearly described it.

It is sufficiently plain to every reader of the bible, that holiness of heart and life is of absolute necessity to our entrance into heaven, for *without holiness no man can see God* ; Heb. xii. 14. But how far, and in what precise sense this holiness and obedience to the commands of God can give a *right to enter into the gates of the city*, is something harder to determine ; Rev. xxii. 14. or what is that sort of right or title which our own sincere obedience gives us to the immediate possession of blessedness, though we are fully assured from several places in the word of God, it is very different from the right which we obtain by the obedience and sufferings of Christ.

In some places the sacred writer seems to mention one doctrine, while he is pursuing some one subject with warmth and zeal ; in other places of scripture, the contrary seems to be signified or hinted ; now both these in the literal sense, and without limitation, cannot be true : And which of these two texts must be reduced to the other, by certain distinctions and limitations in order to a reconciliation, is not so easy always to determine : for in

some instances it may happen that the proposition which is but implied in one text, is nearer the truth than another proposition which seems to be expressed in another place; which can only be decided by a due survey of the context, and the different designs of the writer, and a comparison of other scriptures.

Therefore if we will dispute about these solemn subjects, let our warmest zeal and our sharpest weapons be engaged against those adversaries of the gospel, who attempt to ruin the foundations of it: let us contend most earnestly for the defence of what God most obviously and incontestibly reveals; but our coolest debates, our candour and charity, rather than fierceness, should be employed about the points of more dubious discovery: At best we should maintain great moderation so long, till we find the lesser errors spreading like a secret gangrene, and drawing along with them dismal consequences, till they are observed to infect the more substantial parts of godliness, and endanger the vitals and very essence of christianity. If our reverend fathers and brethren have shewn a fiery zeal about these lesser errors, I would persuade myself their chief motive was a suspicion of danger and ruin to the gospel itself, in the liberty, in the purity, and in the glory of it, if they should have connived at these lesser mistakes, or treated them with a cold indifference: And it is possible that sometimes they might have reason for their suspicion and their zeal, though it may be confessed they were but men, and their fervor might sometimes exceed due bounds.

But, in general, as to these meaner points, moderation is our duty: *Whereto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, and if any be otherwise minded, God in his most proper season will reveal it also to them*; Phil. iii. 15, 16. It is as if the blessed apostle had said, that those who trust only in Christ and his righteousness, as the ground of their acceptance before God, shall be joyfully received to join their right-hand of fellowship with mine; and if they do but pursue holiness sincerely from the plainer motives of christianity, though they are not well acquainted with those most noble principles of it, *viz.* communion with a suffering, dying and rising Saviour as a representative, pledge and pattern of spiritual dying to sin, and resurrection into holiness, which are contained in verse 10. yet I will not disturb them about it, but hope God will discover it to them in his time.

Yet further, as the great doctrines of christianity and the necessary duties of it, are very much distinguished from the less necessary points, and the circumstantial of those duties, by their greater evidence and clearness of revelation; so the more substantial parts of the worship appointed in the gospel, may be distinguished from the less important modes and circumstances. Solemn prayer unto God, preaching of the word, administration

of the ordinances, baptism and the Lord's-supper, and a due attendance thereon, are plainly and certainly required of us that assume the name of christians in our sacred assemblies. But whether we may borrow assistance from composed forms in preaching, praying, and other administrations; or whether we must renounce all use of forms, books and notes to aid our invention, memory and expression in prayers and sermons, are mere accidental matters, and not written in scripture with so express a pen: So whether the person baptized must be sprinkled or immersed, and whether the communicants at the Lord's-table must sit, or lean, stand, or kneel, are less essential considerations, and have been the subjects of dubious enquiry.

Again, in the constitution, order and government of a church, the same distinctions may be made also. That persons professing the name of Christ should agree to walk and worship together at stated seasons in the fellowship of the gospel, seems to be a demand of the law of nature, and sufficiently confirmed by many directions or examples in positive expressions of scripture too; that every such congregation of faithful people, or voluntary society of christians, is a church of Christ; that they ought to seclude or put away from their number, the grossly ignorant, the scandalous, and the profane, and to *withdraw from those that walk disorderly*; 2 Thess. iv. 6. that there should be persons appointed to minister to them in holy things, and that the society should honour and maintain them; all these seem to be plain and undoubted duty.

But whether this society may receive and exclude members without or against the consent of their pastor; whether there must be any elders in a church distinct from and inferior to the pastor or bishop; whether the minister needs the imposition of the hands of several presbyters, or the superior episcopal consecration; or whether he be sufficiently ordained by the choice of the society, his solemn acceptance, and his own, and their devoting him to God in that office by fasting and prayer; these things are not quite so evident in the writings of the New Testament. And while we are required to *have no fellowship* with the openly wicked, though they are pretended professors of religion, yet we are commanded to *receive the weak in the faith*, and to hold communion with them in common christianity, though we may all differ in doubtful disputations.

#### SECT. II.—*An Insurrection of contending Christians.*

I am easily aware that the men of heat and party, will lift up their hands in wonder, when they read this catalogue and distinction of the affairs of christianity. I see them already kindling into rage against me; they encompass my tent, and proclaim war. And upon a review of their numbers, their insurrection and their zeal, I cannot find an advocate wanting for any

one sect or party, among the common professors of the religion of Christ in England. I see there " Merges and his neighbour Aspergio ; I find Sedentius and Genicola both there ; Piscopiou, Classicus and Antipas are come thither also. Each of them a prince of their tribe, and either a head or a very forward member of the family of their fathers. Just so the children of Israel began to denounce war against their brethren Gad and Reuben, when they built an altar of witness to maintain their communion with the rest of their tribes, while they were dissenters only in point of habitation, and dwelt beyond Jordan : These party-men are full of faith and certainty in every opinion ; they embrace none as brethren in Christ who do not wear their garb and livery, and talk not exactly in their language and phrases, nor will they hold communion with those that dissent from them in the least punctilios of the form or worship of christians. " If men depart from the truth, say they, they are in the way of error ; and it is all one whether they depart little or much, since they have forsaken the truth, we ought to forsake them."

These warm zealots are not used to admit of any doubt in the smallest circumstantial of religion, and because they have learned of their teachers to affirm all their tenets with equal confidence, they believe that the scripture reveals them all with equal evidence. A metaphor smiling upon their practice, is an express command. They can read their indispensable duty in a single and dubious example. A remote conclusion of their own drawing, at the end of a long chain of consequences, gives them restless conviction, and appears in their eye as bright, though distant, as the morning-star. A circumstance or two of matter of fact determines their judgment unchangeably, for or against an opinion, which at most is but feebly favoured by those very circumstances : a little criticism on a single Greek word in some single text of scripture, becomes a firm foundation for their faith : They force some text or other to prove every thing which they say, and when they have imposed their sense on the words of the holy writers, they are sure the evangelists and the apostles are of their mind. Each of them have picked up some scraps of the arguments of their party, and they fancy themselves well equipped and furnished for the defence of the truth.

Merges, a very honest man in the main, is newly come out of the water, and glows all over with zeal and assurance, that there can be no baptism without plunging : He makes a mere jest of baby-sprinkling, and declares that if we are not covered with water, we are not buried with Christ : No honest man, says he, could ever doubt that John's disciples were immersed at Enon, for the scriptures say, *there was much water there* ; John iii. 23. Aspergio, a bold talker, is as confident that sprinkling,



or pouring water on the head, is a true method of baptism, and is ready to say severe things against the practice of immersion, as if it were not only needless, but as they are ready to call it, foolish and sinful.

It is plain, saith he, in the word of God, that the apostles *were baptised with the Spirit*, which can never mean that they were dipped or plunged into the Spirit, but only that the Spirit was poured out upon them : And when the Israelites *were baptised into Moses*, it is plain they were only sprinkled with *the cloud and the sea* ; Mat. iii. 11. compared with Acts ii. 3, 17. and 1 Cor. x. 2. and therefore, says he, I wonder that any man should be so weak as to give himself the trouble of dipping when he has such texts as these to prove sprinkling.

Sedentius, a weak and warm dissenter, is just come from St. Paul's cathedral. Being urged by great curiosity, with much ado he obtained leave of his conscience to go thither and see men receive the Lord's-supper kneeling : As he returns he is almost ready to pronounce damnation against the organs and singing-men, for they are all, saith he, the limbs of Antichrist : He whispers damnation against these idolaters that bow before a piece of bread ; for they look as though they worshipped the host, and belonged to Rome. He is very positive that sitting is a posture of absolute necessity in that ordinance, for Jesus and his disciples *did sit and eat* ; Mark xiv. 8. 1 Cor. xi. 20. and since it is called the supper of the Lord, we must sit down while we partake of it, for every child knows that men are never wont to kneel at supper.

On the other hand, Genicola hates the presbyterians for their scandalous irreverence at the sacrament : " What, saith he, dare any man use so clownish and so rude a gesture as sitting, when he receives the seal of the pardon of his sins, and the emblems of the body and blood of Christ ? " And he forbids all such worshippers from his communion with this sentence, " *Procul, O procul este, profani* ; " that is, " hence ye profane creatures, " though he can hardly pretend to bring one text of scripture for his own practice : He is sure also that the surplice, is a sign or token of purity, and as our reformers teach, ought to be worn at prayer, for we must lift up hands of purity and innocence when we come before God ; and he finds the long white garment in these words, *Let all things be done decently and in order* ; 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

To me, saith Piscopion, it is as clear as the light, that no man, can be a minister of Christ, unless the hands of a superior man, even a diocesan bishop, have been upon his head ; and all the preachings and ministerings of such a presumptuous wretch, who was not thus ordained, are but *vain babblings*, empty trifles, and impudent usurpations in the name of the Lord : For thus

with the common-prayer-book, which was made by saints and martyrs, "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy scripture, and ancient authors, that from the apostle's time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's church; bishops, priests, and deacons." Thus he proceeds triumphant where the civil government is on his side, and will yield to no man in argument or dispute.

Classicus arises in warm opposition to prelacy, and asserts it an indisputable truth, that no minister of Christ is superior to another: I read saith he, in my bible, no distinction between bishops and presbyters; they are the same officers in scripture; and the power of synods is so plainly instituted at the council at Jerusalem; Acts xv. that I am amazed this should be esteemed a matter of doubt or difficulty; and I am well assured of this, because Timothy had the *hands of presbytery laid upon him*; 1 Tim. iv. 14. there is no man above or below a presbyter has any thing to do in ordaining ministers since the apostles are dead.

Antipas grows impatient at these bold assertions, and asserts with as much boldness, that the power of ordaining all sorts of officers in the church belongs properly to the brethren of a single congregation, and none besides have any authority to meddle with it, since the race of inspired men are dead and gone: The brethren have all the power in their hands, and it is the church or congregation alone that has any manner of right to chuse and approve and establish its own pastors, elders, overseers and deacons: For is it not said; Acts vi. 3. *Look you out among you seven men, &c.* And if this be done at the choice of deacons, why not of elders too? The learned say, that the word in Greek, which is used for ordaining of elders, signifies the choice or "lifting up the hands of the brethren to vote for them\*." Whatsoever particulars are disputed in church government, the power of the people must be ever acknowledged and received as a fundamental and immoveable truth.

Among all these combatants there is not one but is so positive in his own sentiments, that one would think they had received all their opinions by inspiration, or that Christ and his apostles had been precisely of their party, and had written their opinions down in express letters and syllables. And not only are they so assured of the truth of their tenets, but the vast importance of them too: And each of them grows angry that his own particular opinion should be reckoned among the less evident, or the less important points of religion: Their fury boils high, and their mistaken zeal and warm ferment of their passion swells every punctilio to a mountain, and makes every particle of their opinions fundamental: They do not observe how their swift career

\* Χειροτονω.

and violence carries each of them besides or beyond their text, and thus they are sometimes hurried on beside the goal of truth, and I am persuaded their assurance always runs too fast for their evidence, and reaches far beyond it.

They commend and practise vehemence as a virtue, and so far forget their bible as to believe all moderation to be a mere spirit of indifference and unworthy of a good christian. They maintain opposite notions, yet by their temper and conduct they all seem to approve each other's zeal for his own party, and with one consent they vote me a mere latitudinarian, a lukewarm professor, a citizen of Laodicea, who has not a spark of zeal for the gospel of Christ, the worship or the discipline of his church.

My dear zealous friends, be calm a little and let me speak before I am condemned, I do not deny many of these things which I call less important to be some way discovered in the New Testament, though not in so express and plain language as you suppose. The chief concerns of the christian church are so far prescribed by positive rules, by examples, or just inferences, that a serious reader, who is attentive and unbiassed, and who will exercise his reasoning powers, may find sufficient notices of all necessary truth and duty; according to my measure of light I humbly hope I have found it, and thereby regulate my practice. But still it must be granted, that things less necessary are not so plainly described as the bigger and more substantial parts of religion, nor graven in characters so large and obvious that every one must needs discern them. Christ Jesus hath been as *faithful in his house as Moses was*, and has delineated the form, pattern and order of it, so far as infinite wisdom thought necessary to carry on the grand designs of grace and the gospel: But some of the lesser pins in this spiritual tabernacle are not so graphically decyphered, as that every child may tell whether they must be round or square. There is nothing of so much weight depends upon them, and therefore there was no need for them to be so expressly described under the New Testament, wherein *bodily exercises profit little*; 1 Tim. iv. 8. but worship and religion consist more in what is spiritual and invisible\*.

Upon the whole then, since there are different degrees of evidence and clearness, wherewith some of the doctrines of faith, and the rules of worship and order in the New Testament are expressed, there ought also to be found in us different degrees of assent or assurance, wherewith we should receive these doctrines, or these rules of duty: for it is a certain and eternal rule of logic or reason, that "our assent to any proposition ought to be firm or feeble, just in proportion to the different degrees of evidence,

\* See the essay on the "Reasons why the Worship of Christian Churches is not so particularly Described as the Jewish," which you may find in the Treatise about the "Holiness of Times, Places and Persons."

whether they be brighter or more obscure." Here then is a plain and pretty general rule given us, whereby we may judge whether any particular opinion or practice be more or less important, and consequently whether our zeal for it should be warmer or cooler, *viz.* Is the evidence of this practice, or this truth in scripture more bright or cloudy? According to the light of evidence, such generally should our zeal be. Violence and fierce contention among christians, especially about matters of lesser moment, or of doubtful dispute, are infinitely scandalous to the christian name; and as they tend to ruin and destroy the churches of Christ, so in all ages they have greatly grieved the souls of those who love the interests of christianity, and wish well to Sion.

**SECT. III.—Some Reason why these Differences are permitted to arise among Christians.**

If it would not offend my readers, I would here come to an ingenuous confession, that the different sentiments and dreadful quarrels of christians about some of the lesser things of religion, and the dark and dubious expressions in scripture, wherein some parts of our religion are revealed, have sometimes been a sore temptation and sorrow to my heart, so that I have wished these doubtful disputables had been more clearly determined there. I have been plunged into the briars of this perplexity, when I have seen persons of devout soul, serious and humble, dissent so widely from each other, both in opinion and practice, and that in matters of some moment too, and even after long and honest inquiries into the meaning of God in his word. Under these difficulties I have said in my heart, "Why did not the God of wisdom and of love express every article of belief and duty in words of plainest revelation and precept, that we might have all read the same sense, and been all of one mind? Why did he leave the least point of our religion dubious or obscure, when, with a long foresight, he surveyed all the quarrels and rage, the infinite scandal, the cruelty and the blood, that in future ages would be the consequences of religious disputes?"

I have been pained at my soul, and felt an inward afflicting heaviness in such a meditation as this; nor could I ever satisfy myself with that profane answer which some witty men have given, *viz.* "That God, who might have made the rules of our duty plain and undisputed, chose to express them in words capable of several interpretations, that christians might be liable to be led into many different opinions, that hereby God might please himself with the variety of devotions that were paid him; and that how different soever their sentiments and practices might be, yet that his commands are equally obeyed by all the various kinds of worship and service, which the consciences of men sincerely conceive themselves bound to offer." This notion inclines to that wild opinion, which supposes that any forms or methods of wor-

ship are all equally acceptable to God, that there are more true religions than one: This savours so much of the deist and the libertine, and the disciples of the leviathan, that I could never admit it into my assent.

Yet it must be granted that his wisdom had some very valuable ends to attain in the way of providence, by permitting so many differences among christians; and if we had been secretaries to the King of heaven when he formed his decrees, we might have known perhaps some of these awful "arcana" of his government; but *who has been his counsellor*, or to whom has he given an account of these matters? *His paths are in the great deep*, and his providences are trackless through *the mighty waters*; *how unsearchable are his ways, and his judgments are past finding out!* Rom. xi. 35. I dare not pretend to write a complete "rationale" on all his infinite and impenetrable designs; yet my faith assures me that they have all the highest and divine reason in them. And I will take the freedom here to mention some of those considerations that have silenced my clamorous thoughts, pleased my inquiry, satisfied my conscience, and vanquished the dark temptation.

First, By these doubtful disputables among the accidental things of religion, God tries our sincerity, whether we will hold fast the substantial. The constancy and courage of a soul devoted to God is exercised and proved amidst the clamours and noisy contests of the men of party and angry zeal; and when it persevereth in a course of christianity, notwithstanding all these stumbling-blocks, it approves itself to God, its Judge and Rewarder. The differences of true christians in some parts of their faith and worship, have frightened and scandalized the hypocrite and the giddy professor; their heads have been turned round *with every wind of doctrine*, because their hearts have not been established in the way of holiness; they have cast off all the articles and practices of religion, because they find so many sects divided by their little particularities, and cannot precisely determine every circumstance of truth and duty. *There were divisions and parties, schisms and sects in the Corinthian church, and they must be*, saith the apostle, *that they are approved may be made manifest among you*; 1 Cor. xi. 19. Our Lord Jesus forewarns his disciples, that *offences will come*, and it is not possible that it should be otherwise; there shall be variance and strife in a man's own household: *But blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me; he that persevereth to the end, the same shall be saved*; Luke xvii. 1. Mat. xi. 6. There are many things in the christian religion that become *stones of stumbling, and rocks of offence*; blessed are the upright that hold on their course and resolution for heaven, and whose feet *stumble not upon these dark mountains*, because of their neglect to search out the truth, or their wilful obstinacy in dangerous errors.

Secondly, Not only our sincerity towards God, but our charity towards our fellow-christians is hereby put to the trial, and charity is the very livery of the disciples of Christ. *Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another; John xiii. 35.* The Lord hath commanded all his sheep to wear this mark of distinction from the world, how different soever their lesser opinions are among themselves. Where I behold the image of Christ my Lord stamped in legible characters upon my neighbour, can I love him with warm affection, though he never frequents the same place of worship with me, though he wears a garment of another shape and colour, prays in a set form of words which I cannot perfectly approve, and subscribes a creed of different expressions, though the same in sense and meaning? Can I receive this good man into my very soul, who eats nothing but herbs, and will not sit down at my table because flesh is eaten there? Can I love him at my heart that loves Jesus the Lord, though he will not religiously observe the festival of his birth or ascension? Or do these little words Christmas and Holy-Thursday set my heart at a distance from him, and make him forfeit all my charity? Such queries as these may be a touchstone of our graces, and the test of true love to Christ and his saints.

There seems to be something of this design in our Lord Jesus Christ, when he ordered his servant Paul to write the fourteenth chapter to the Romans, where the apostle, though he gives a hint of his own opinion and liberty in the gospel, with regard to meats and days, yet he doth not impose the same observations and abstinences on other christians; and though he was inspired, yet he leaves these things still indifferent, and calls them *doubtful disputations*. Now as *the trial of our faith, through manifold temptations, is much more precious than that of gold that perishes*, so the trial of our love passing through the smoky fires of contention and dispute, and not mingling therewith, is discovered to be a pure divine flame, and *shall be found to praise, honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen we love; 1 Pet. i. 7, 8.*

Thirdly, Perhaps our Lord might leave some lesser points of religion more obscurely expressed in his word, because he designed to continue a ministry in his church to the end of the world, or till he came again. While other christians have their hours and thoughts engrossed by the cares of this life, and want leisure and skill and means to acquaint themselves with all the difficult and more abstruse parts of religion, it is the business of the men that are honoured and employed in the sacred office to *give themselves to reading, to search into the hidden things of God, and explain the more doubtful paragraphs of his word unto men.*

I grant that the first and grand design of their studies and public labours should be to preach the gospel of the grace of God and reconciliation by Jesus Christ, and to make the necessary articles of faith and practice plain to the meanest soul: But a minister is also required to converse not only with those *scriptures which will make him wise to final salvation*, but with those also which may *thoroughly furnish him to every good word and work*; 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. that he may know *how to speak a word in season* to every weary soul, and to draw consciences out of perplexity which are vexed with scruples of less important things; to instruct them in the mind and will of Christ about the methods of his worship, and the order of his church, *to shew them the pattern and fashion of the house of God, and all the ordinances, and the forms and the laws thereof*: And that is a part of his duty, at proper seasons, in some of his public ministrations; for he must conceal nothing *of the counsel of God* from them, that may be useful or profitable to men: The methods of his worship, and institutions of his gospel, should be treasured up in his heart; and upon proper occasions, of private visit and conference, *the lips of the priest should make it appear that they keep knowledge*, that the law may be sought at his mouth, *for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts*; Mal. ii. 7.

Not that every man is bound to pay an implicit faith and blind obedience to the opinions and dictates of his bishop or presbyter. This is popish slavery wheresoever it is practised, and popish tyranny where it is commanded: But christians ought to give due attention to the advice and counsel of such *as are set over them in the Lord*; Heb. xiii. 17. 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16. Such as are solemnly devoted to the ministry of the gospel, and have addicted themselves to the study and search of the scriptures, and are chosen by the people to be their teachers, and set apart for that office in the way they best approve; and so far as their advice is conformable to the written word, they are to receive it as from some of the messengers of Christ.

We may ~~humbly~~ suppose a fourth design which God had in his eye when the sacred penmen wrote so many verses of holy scripture, which God knew were so difficult to be interpreted; and that is, that no christian might put the bible out of his own hands, or neglect to read and meditate and study the word of God; and that together with their reading they might constantly implore the presence of the Spirit, the enlightener and the comforter, to lead them into all truth. It is the duty of every man, so far as his capacity and opportunities of life will admit, to study the holy scriptures himself, and to see with his own eyes what he must believe, and what he must practise.

We should imitate the example of the noble Bereans; Acts xvii. 11. *who searched the scriptures with diligence, and brought*

the sermons of Paul himself unto that sacred touch-stone, to see if the things which he spoke were true or no : And after all our study, we shall find such difficulties that will convince us of the necessity of depending upon a higher teacher, even the Holy Spirit. Our blessed Saviour commands that we *search the scriptures*, and pray for the Spirit too ; John v. 39. Luke xi. 9, 13. And St. Paul prays unto God that he would give to the saints which were at Ephesus, *that Spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten the eyes of their understanding* ; Eph. i. 17. This *unction* which true believers *have from the Holy One*, makes known to them *all things necessary to salvation* ; 1 John ii. 20. And though we have no ground to expect that he will unfold to us every lesser difficulty, while we live in this world ; yet we may humbly hope that in those things which regard the forms of his own worship, and the means of his own visible glory amongst men, he will by degrees let some divine rays of light into the mind of him that seeks after truth with great diligence, fervent prayer, and most sincere designs. There are many instances to be given of plain christians that have been made the favourites of the enlightening Spirit, and have arrived at uncommon knowledge in christianity by these methods.

A fifth blessed end, and which is certainly attained in the providence of God, by leaving so many disputables in religion, is, that our souls are hereby drawn out to long for heaven, and pant after the state where there is no contention, no dispute. This prospect renders those happy regions more desirable whilst we are here, and more abundantly welcome hereafter.

It is impossible that any controversy should there arise to interrupt the worship of the church triumphant. It is eternally impossible to divide them into parties, or to disturb their repose. The doctrines of their profession are all written as with sunbeams, they are no longer the articles of faith but the objects of sight : *We shall be all taught of God, we shall see face to face, and know as we are known*. So much of the Holy Spirit dwells in all the saints, as a perpetual spring of revelation and wisdom. The discipline of that church can occasion no disputes, for the Son of God, in our nature, is the pastor or bishop, he keeps *the keys of heaven* in his own hands, and *the keys of hell and death*. The soul that is once admitted into that fellowship shall abide like *a pillar in the temple of his God, and shall go no more out* ; Rev. iii. 12. but the hypocrite and the unclean shall never enter there. The worship that is paid there is with perfect uniformity of mind and affection amongst all the happy spirits ; an unanimous consent in self-abasement, divine honour and love ; and perhaps when our bodies shall be raised again to make a visible church in heaven, worship may be performed with a glorious liberty, and with such a pleasing variety of form as glorified na-



ture shall dictate, and our exalted reason approve ; but still with the exercise of the same perfect love and delight among the worshippers, and under the influence of the same Spirit.

O the happiness of that upper region, where all the inhabitants are of one mind and one heart ! Every doubt shall for ever vanish, for we shall behold all things without a cloud. *In thy light, O Lord, we shall see light* and enjoy it ; Ps. xxxi. 7. Every quarrel shall for ever cease, for we shall dwell in the land of harmony and love. Though our capacities, perhaps, may be of different sizes, yet we shall see all divine truths in the same light, and therefore our sentiments, at least in things of importance, shall differ no more ; we shall be united to each other in the same band of love, nor can our affections be separated any more for ever : That light and that love springs from the ever-blessed God ; God the Creator communicating himself to all his holy and happy creation, and holding them fast to himself for ever, in and by that glorious person Christ Jesus his Son and image ; for *in him must all things be gathered together in one, and all things reconciled unto God in him, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven* ; Col. i. 20. then shall the prophecy of Zechariah be fulfilled, *the Lord shall be king over all the earth, there shall be one Lord, and his name one* ; Zech. xiv. 9. in the fullest meaning of that expression ; nor shall the saints be distinguished by different parties or denominations, but their hearts and their names shall be all one ; according to those expressions of unconceivable glory, wherein our Lord describes the things which are truly unspeakable, *all the saints shall be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us* ; John xvii. 21.

O with what pleasure have I often read, and methinks would be always reading, those words of a great man\*, spoken on the funeral of his fellow-saint. " When death shall have discombered and set us free from all sorts of distempers, and brought us into the state of perfect and perfected spirits, how delectable will the society be, when all shall be full of divine life, light, love and joy, and all freely communicate as they have received freely ! But above all that is conceivable in that other state, how delectable will the society be in worship, in the unanimous adoration of the ever-blessed God, Father, Son and Spirit ! O the inexpressible pleasure of this consociation in worship perpetually tendered with so absolute a plentitude of satisfaction in the dueness of it, and the gustful apprehension of what those words import, *Worthy art thou, O Lord* : Each one relishing his own act with just self-approbation and high delight, heightened by their apprehended perfect unanimity, and that there is among them no dissenting vote. Whence

\* Mr. Howe's Funeral Sermon for Doctor Bates.

it cannot be but to worship God in spirit and in truth, must be to enjoy him, and that he is not under any other notion, a satisfying object of our enjoyment, more than he is the object of our worship."

These are beams of celestial light for souls to drink in, and to live upon them while we are passing onward to these fair mansions through a wilderness of doubts and darknesses. These are words of harmony and love to entertain our ears, and make us deaf to the noise of a wrangling and disputing world. This is a heaven worth wishing for, while we are travelling to it through this tiresome earth, this unhappy stage of vexation and controversy : To this let us look with eyes of ardent expectation, and the devoutest wishes of souls : To this let us all aspire and hasten, who have groaned long under our own ignorance, and been burdened and grieved with the quarrels of the christian churches, and whatsoever name or party we have chosen in our divided opinions, let us unite our hearts and voices in this loud request, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.*

## ESSAY IX.

*An Apology for the Different Judgments and Practices of  
Sincere Christians, that are weak in Knowledge.*

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

**G**IVE me leave, my dear friend, to make a charitable apology for honest and upright souls, who maintain a strict course of piety and virtue, and yet appear to be unalterably determined for or against the communion of the church of England, upon very slight and feeble grounds: Perhaps we shall learn compassion to the weaknesses of our fellow-christians, if you and I together meditate on these following considerations: Let us take a survey how many are the circumstances and various occurrences of human life, which do sometimes powerfully determine the opinions even of good and sober men, to one or the other side of this controversy, whether they shall fix their communion in the church of England, or amongst those who separate from it. Here the first thing that naturally occurs, is the education of different persons, which has a mighty influence to form their opinions, and to fix their practice; and this, it must be confessed is not in a man's own choice; the providence of the great and blessed God, the over-ruler of all things, determines this affair in a wise and holy manner, whatever the final event may be.

Jonathan goes to worship every Lord's-day where his father goes, and as the child was never led to hear a sermon at a public church, so the youth grows up in a groundless aversion to it and the man stands at a wider distance, and can hardly be persuaded to venture in. By use and custom from his very childhood, he understands the methods of the dissenters' worship and the terms that are used in their sermons; and if by any strange occasion he is led to the church of England, he finds no profit by hearing a clergyman preach, for he does not clearly take in the expressions and the meaning; and it must be acknowledged, many of them have a different way of managing the word of God in their explications of it, different phrases and modes of expression, and too many of them preach doctrines different from their own articles and our common faith; these things are shocking and offensive to the ear, rather than instructing or edifying to a new hearer.

Besides, Jonathan has imbibed long prejudices against the modes of worship and ceremonies of the church, the forms, the gestures, the vestments, the responses, &c. and his soul is thereby mightily unfitted for edification by the prayers of the church of England, that are mingled and interwoven with them; he

palate is so much disgusted with this sort of entertainment before hand, that he either disrelishes or neglects whatever solid and wholesome food is set before him in the sermon that follows : I will not say there is nothing of this folly owing to the influences of his education ; but it is hard, if not impossible, to amend or prevent all the faults of this kind in the education of children, by the best and wisest of parents\*.

\* Since I have occasion, in this place to mention the education of children amongst the persons of the established church, and those that have separated from it, I could scarce excuse it to my own conscience, if I should neglect to make this solemn remark on both, viz. that there is something very dangerous that is early impressed on the minds of children of the one party and the other, and they unhappily learn it from the different respective catechisms, in which they are instructed.

The children who are educated in the church of England, as soon as they have learned to answer "what is their name?" they are immediately told in the next answer, that in their baptism, "they are made the members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." This arises from the doctrine they are generally taught, that baptism and regeneration are much the same thing, or that all men are regenerated by being baptised ; whereas in scriptures, baptism is but an emblem and representation of such a change of the heart, as regeneration requires and implies ; and for want of this distinction, the children usually grow up through all their stations in life, without enquiring whether they have had any such real change in their souls, as includes in it repentance for sin, and a turn of soul towards God and godliness, whereby a man is born again and becomes a new creature. And this necessary change, upon which the favour of God, and an interest in the salvation of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven depend, is very grossly and shamefully neglected by them through their whole lives, they always supposing as they have been taught, that all this work is done in baptism.

And for this reason many divines of the church of England have heartily wished that either these words in the catechism were a little altered, or that this answer should never be taught to children without explaining the meaning of it. Among the dissenters, one part of the education is usually learning the catechism; written by the assembly of divines at Westminster, Now in the 19th answer it is said, "That all mankind by their fall,—are under the wrath and curse of God, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever." And some persons have been so grossly unwise, as to assert under this influence, that there are children of a span long suffering the vengeance of God in hell, for their interest in the Sin of Adam. Now the very hint of such a notion frights children terribly, and while they are required to *love God with all their hearts*, it gives them a very terrible and cruel notion of the great and blessed God, who has ordained young children to these everlasting torments for the sin of Adam. There are some that deny this answer, and renounce this doctrine roundly.

Indeed there is one author that has endeavoured to explain it in a moderate way, and to make a just distinction upon this subject, and that is in the last question of a book called the "ruin and recovery of mankind." There it is shewn that all good christians, by their faith in Christ, are become the children of Abraham, and that they and their infant children have an interest in the promise made to Abraham, Gal. iii, 26, 29. viz. *that God would be their God*, and the God of a *free*," which gives abundant hope for the children of good parents dying in infancy, that they are translated to the blessedness of heaven, and the hope of a joyful resurrection by the covenant of Abraham. And it is the children of the wicked, who have never accepted of the covenant of grace, are left under the curse, that is, of temporal death, which Adam had incurred for himself and his posterity, and that without any prediction or promise of any resurrection at all. Now I speak of those who never sinned actually, nor enjoyed a state of personal trial for themselves in this world. "See the original writer." When these things will be corrected in the education of children, of the one side or the other, is only the providence of God can determine.

These things joined together, put a strong bias upon the judgment of the man, and it is exceeding difficult to be removed ; and it is evident that his prayers, his practice in religion, his secret acts of devotion, are all regulated by the instructions he has received from his parents or some of his teachers : This makes his spirit grow uneasy under ceremonious forms, and he is quite untuned for devotion by the very sound of the organ. These things must needs have a mighty force on the minds of young sincere creatures beginning their course of religion and christianity, to establish them in the non-conformist way. And I might also add, how rude and indecent a thing the plain and natural worship of the dissenters appears to one, that has been bred up to ornament and ceremony in the several parts of worship in the established church. By education and custom a particular form of religion is so mingled with their nature, and wrought into their constitution that you might as soon alter their palate, and change their taste of meats, as you can persuade their souls to dislike the ministry under which they have been brought up, and to forsake the mode of worship to which they have been trained. They are so positive they are in the right, that they never had any thought of calling these things to a new examination.

Secondly, The prejudice of the mind in favour of the dissenters grows yet stronger, if Jonathan has found his soul awakened to a fear of hell, and been effectually convinced of sin by the terrors of the law under the preaching of some Boanerges, some son of thunder in a meeting house ; and has been afterwards led gently into the knowledge of Jesus Christ the Saviour, and has been taught to apply himself unto him for salvation by humble faith. If the Spirit of God has made the preaching of pardon and grace, by a dissenting minister, effectual to calm the surges of his troubled conscience, and to lead him in the way of peace and holiness towards heaven, perhaps he feels his passions refined, his sinful appetites mortified, his temper changed from earthly and carnal, to spiritual and heavenly, how natural will his whole soul be carried out to love this ministry ? And he would not willingly absent himself one day from the teachings of this Barnabas, this son of consolation ; he despises all the finer flourishes of consequence, he can take no pleasure in the more polite, and perhaps more argumentative discourse of a doctor or bishop in the church of England ; but where he has found light and food, and rest for his dark and distressed, and hungry soul, thither he will go constantly to worship, and he calls that the sanctuary of the Lord, without once enquiring whether a parish church may not be the sanctuary of the Lord too ; nay perhaps his passion for the dissenters may rise so high as to deny the presence of God in the assemblies of the established church, or to allow very little of it there.

And by the same false method of reasoning may a churchman, whose soul has been brought to repentance and holiness by the ministry of the public church on which he has attended, almost hates the name of a non-conformist, and severely inveigh against them all as schismatics and foolish teachers, when perhaps he never ventured into a meeting-house, nor heard one sermon in any of their assemblies. So far is it possible for piety, ignorance and prejudice to meet in the same mind : But our God who knows the frame of human nature, looks down, and pities and forgives. A hearty tendency towards God, and a pursuit of heaven, is well pleasing in his sight ; though perhaps the traveller, through ignorance, takes many a wrong step, and performs many a duty not exactly conformable to the directions of the word.

Now, though this argument be sufficient to determine him to be a christian, in opposition to other religions, because other religions have not this power to sanctify him, yet it ought not to be sufficient for ever to determine him to a particular party of christians, because it was not the particular opinions of that party, but the substantial and great doctrines of christianity or the gospel, which are professed and pretended to by both parties, that were so powerful to the turning of his heart towards God.

After all this discourse, I would not be understood as though I encouraged this laziness of men, and neglect of due and just reasoning ; no, for reason is the talent that God hath given to be used in the affairs of religion, and he hath given us the rule of his own word for our determination, by which all our worship ought to be regulated, and not by human inventions ; and men are highly guilty in their neglect hereof : But a gracious God will forgive, for he knows our frame and our frailty. I believe God doth accept of such inward, sincere and experimental arguments as vulgar christians use to make or keep themselves churchmen or dissenters, Calvinists or Arminians. If they feel their souls raised to a more heavenly frame, and effectually engaged to the love of God, religion and justice, by attending occasionally on a ministry different from their education, sometimes they will be ready to separate even from a true church to which they belonged, for want of knowing the guilt and terrors and damnation that some men include in that hard word, schism ; and I persuade myself that a gracious God will accept of their upright designs and their honest motives, will pardon their separation, though it should prove unwarrantable, and bless their new communion to the advantage of their souls.

Thirdly, But suppose a man should forcibly divest himself of all former aversions and inclinations to the separate or the established churches, and enter into a sober search, and solemn debate with himself about the merits of the cause ; how few are

there, whose necessary affairs of life allow them time enough to go through the study of these laborious and intangled controversies? How small a part of mankind that are born to secular affairs, can, in these few hours of leasure, find out the depth of some of these difficulties? Who is sharp enough on the sudden to distinguish truth in the midst of the clouds of dust that are cast on it by the litigious wrangle of all parties? The soul of many a tradesman is but just of a size with his shop and business, and hath not strength of parts or improvement to attain great and accurate knowledge in any thing besides; and those whose ingenuity is greater, may easily waste all the spare hours of their life in treading the mazes of dispute about forms and ceremonies, and at last find themselves bewildered: Now I question whether such a man's head would lie easy upon a dying pillow, who had spent his time among briars and thorns, and neglected the fruit of the tree of life, or tasted but very little of it; he has been dwelling upon the moss and the ivy, and not gathered the product of those eminent branches of our holy religion, whence he might have extracted sweet cordials for a languishing and fainting hour.

Fourthly, Again, how very few are there amongst the giddy race of men that can so far annihilate their old opinions, and refrain so long from embracing new ones, till they have made a thorough scrutiny into the arguments and pretensions on both sides? Who can dwell for months together in the uneasy state of dubitation? Who is there that has power enough over his own thoughts, as to hold his judgment in suspense for a considerable season, till the matter in question be fairly debated and brought to an issue in the court of reason and scripture? How ready are we to incline our assent one way or another, as the various occurrences of life present shadows of argument for either opinion? A story of a wicked clergyman of the church will warp the inquiring soul of a plebian towards a meeting-house; and an old song of Charles the martyr will determine another's judgment against the cruel dissenters, and make him a complete churchman. A flash of rhetoric, a shew of reason, a warm sermon, and affections raised by a Tillotson at Westminster, or a Mead at Pinner's Hall, will immediately turn the mind from its equilibrium; and you know when a balance is just turned, though it be but by a grain of weight, it falls effectually on that side, and sometimes almost irrecoverably too.

When we have thrown off all old prejudices, it is not easy to secure ones self from new ones. When we have so far gained the victory over education and custom as to retain none of our ancient opinions, we are apt to fall insensibly under the power of the opposite doctrines, and become captives and slaves to new notions, merely because they are new. Novelty is as great a preju-

dice to fair reasoning as antiquity ; though perhaps not souniver-  
sally prevailing. And there is many a giddy and headstrong  
youth that has hastily embraced maxims and practices contrary  
to those of his parents, to shew how bravely he has broke all the  
fettors of education, and to make it appear that he thinks freely.  
When we push the boat off from the shore where it has long stuck  
in the mud, it is hard to prevent its being stranded on the ad-  
verse side. It is exceeding difficult to keep the mind in this me-  
dium of suspense till right reason determine it ; it is very  
troublesome to maintain the judgment in a poise till some weigh-  
ty and solid argument sink one of the scales downward, and  
equitably decide the depending strife of opinions ; there is need of  
continual caution and wary motions of thought : A doubting spi-  
rit is in pain, and willing to be released. We are very desirous  
to believe somewhat though upon slight grounds, that our souls  
may be at ease and fall to practice.

Fifthly, But suppose men should have leisure, and books  
and other advantages, joined with resolution and patience enough  
to endure the pain of dubitation, and the long fatigue of deep  
study and thoughtfulness ; yet how small is the number of those  
that are capable to distinguish betwixt real and apparent reason ;  
especially in subjects where the differences are of so nice and in-  
tricate a kind ? How few understandings are so acute, how few  
judgments so solid and just, so well formed and well improved,  
as to determine controversies so long and so much darkened ?  
Who can see through all the false shows and pretences of argu-  
ment, and discern the true gold from that which only glisters ?  
Turn you eyes inward, my friend, and behold a soul there that  
has more knowledge and judgment than hundreds of the animals  
that are round about you, and that you are forced to converse  
with ; and yet after all your unbiassed searches and labours, and  
earnest prayers, how hard a thing you find it to resolve the point,  
whether you ought to remain in the communion of a dissenting  
church, or become a separatist from them, and unite yourselves  
to the church of England. Now, if all your leisure, your ad-  
vantages, and your application, cannot fix your assent and prac-  
tice, infer then how vain a thing it is to expect that reason and  
argument should constantly determine and govern a blind, a rash,  
a ruined and a wretched world.

I confess, in things of greater importance, and necessity to  
salvation, our directions lie so plain, as to lead the most stupid  
souls that are honest and sincere, to the knowledge of truth and  
duty, unless it be here and there a man who violently breaks  
through the very language of scripture, and runs into great er-  
rors or irregularity of practice : But in things of less moment,  
how impossible is it that the generality of mortals should build  
every lesser opinion of theirs upon solid foundations and unsha-



ken grounds? Or how can we expect they should be able to defend every smaller circumstance of their practice by just reasonings?

If I were to recapitulate these things in short, I would draw up my charitable conclusion thus: Since our first apostasy from God has so perverted and spoiled our rational powers, and enslaved our minds to so many prejudices and passions; since the impressions of education and custom are unavoidable and necessary, deep and strong; since the affairs of the world that is under a divine curse, are so justly and unhappily ill constituted since capacity, leisure application, humility, and prayer, are all found together but in very few persons; and since the divine oracles, in matters less necessary, have so much obscurity in themselves, and so much thicker darkness cast upon them by contending parties, why should we be so much amazed or angry, to see so many different sentiments and practices among men of honest piety, and desirous of truth?

Farewell, thou dear companion of my studies, and if your light and knowledge should be so far improved by your further inquiries, as to lead you away from that communion, and the methods of worship wherein we have so often and so delightful joined; yet I hope that upon the review of this letter, you will maintain a very charitable opinion of

Your unenlightened friend, &c.

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**A CAVEAT**  
**AGAINST**  
***INFIDELITY.***

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**VOL. III.**

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PREFACE TO  
" A CAVEAT AGAINST INFIDELITY."

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**I**T was in the year 1722 these discourses were composed, and they have lain several years by me waiting for a more proper opportunity to be sent into the world. But deism and infidelity having made such violent efforts, of late, in this nation, and having obtained such unhappy success, as to draw away some from the faith of the blessed gospel, and to stagger others in their belief, I thought providence forbid any longer delay, and called me to add this attempt toward the restraint of a spreading pestilence.

It has not been my business and intent here, to produce the numerous train of arguments, whereby the christian religion is supported, and set them in a fair array. This has been done in many forms, and in many volumes by writers of the first rank, in our age, which are sufficiently known in the world, and received with just honour. Yet I take pleasure on this occasion to point to my reader two lesser writings lately published, which are worthy of his perusal. The first is the Lord Bishop of London's *Pastoral Letter*, written in defence of christianity, wherein, he has drawn into a narrow and comprehensive view, some of the most considerable arguments, for the vindication of our holy religion; and by exhibiting them, in a just and perspicuous manner, he has recommended them to the christian world. The other is Doctor William Harris's *Two Discourses*, wherein "the Reasonableness of Believing the Gospel, and the Unreasonableness of Infidelity, are Displayed in a Convincing Light. I could wish that believers and infidels would read these little books with a serious spirit.

There are two sorts of persons, in our age, who have not only need to have the evidences of our holy religion set before them, in their fullest view, but it may also be very proper to excite them to a diligent, faithful, and religious attention to these evidences, by representing the formidable and tremendous threatenings of God, against those who abuse the light they enjoy, and become infidels or apostates in the midst of divine advantages for faith. Happy should I be, if I could impress their souls, with a solemn concern and solicitude, equal to the vast and infinite importance of the subject.

The one sort of men have declared themselves unbelievers of the gospel of Christ: they have gone so far as to renounce the scriptures, and forsake christianity: Some of these set themselves to oppose it boldly by such assaults, either, of wit or argument, as nature hath furnished them with; and some join their attempts of reason and raillery together: May God recover them by his almighty grace! I fear there is but little prospect of recalling them to the faith, by any thing we can speak or write. There are others who have not abandoned the gospel, yet have had their minds so corrupted and perplexed, by some objections of infidelity, that they are reduced to a doubting state, whether the religion of Christ be divine or no, and are seeking after some determination by fuller evidence. I do not call these persons deists or infidels: I hope, as well as pray, for their establishment in the faith of Jesus, the only Saviour.

Now my chief design in this treatise, was to attempt a recovery of some of these doubting christians, or to stop them in their course toward apostacy, by representing the dreadful and eternal bazard of rejecting the gospel of Christ, if it should at last appear to have come from heaven: That those who think of abandoning the christian faith might see and be persuaded, that none of their pretences to natural religion can give them an effectual security, from the condemning sentence of the great Judge, if they shall to the last oppose and resist the light of evidence, that shines round the gospel, in our nation

and our day. I am well aware that my conduct and manner of argument, on this subject, will be represented as very uncharitable: Perhaps, I shall be told, that I assume the awful province of God, that I enter into the hearts of men, and pass a judgment concerning their sincerity, while I scarce suppose it possible for a man to be truly sincere, in seeking the truth, and yet to live and die an infidel, where the gospel is surrounded with its proper light and evidences.

I must confess it is a sensible grief to me, when I am constrained, by the word of God, to say any thing terrible and severe against my fellow-creatures, my partners in flesh and blood. I would hate and avoid all the characters of a censorious and uncharitable spirit. The gospel of Christ is a gospel of love, and while I preach it for the salvation of men, I would never mix my own wrath with it, nor would I willingly lie under the shadow of such an imputation. But when the great and blessed God, who has made this gospel, and who searches the hearts of men, has pronounced his wrath and damnation so often against those *who believe not in his Son*, it is he himself who does in effect declare, that they are not sincere in their searches after the truth: For I am persuaded he would never proclaim such vengeance from heaven against any sincere soul, that with humble diligence and faithfulness inquires, "What he must do to please his Maker."

The blessed God who has ordained the gospel of his Son Jesus, to be the means of the salvation of men to the end of the world, has certainly furnished it with sufficient evidence, for the propagation of it, through the successive generations of men, among all that are humble and willing enquirers after truth. The God of nature knows well how much light is necessary, both in the eye, and on the object, to convey the sight of it to those who are willing to see: The same all-wise God well knows also what capacity in the mind is requisite, and what degree of evidence is necessary to attend any revealed truth, in order to its being received by the honest and sincere soul: And his equity and goodness would never have suffered such a heavy curse to be denounced against unbelievers, if he had not foreseen, that nothing but some corrupt and guilty prejudices could withhold men from receiving the truth of the gospel, where it is accompanied with its necessary testimonials. It is not I, therefore, but it is the word of God that declares the unbelievers of his gospel to be insincere, while he pronounces such a curse upon them.

The holy and gracious lips of our blessed Jesus, who knew the hypocrisy and insincerity of the Jews, in his day, did often pronounce a sentence of death and destruction upon them; and, when he left the world, he repeated this condemnation upon all infidels, where his gospel should come with its proper evidence, *He that believeth not shall be damned*; Mark xvi. 16. The great apostle of the gentiles has assured us, *that they who believe not have suffered the god of this world, that is, the devil, to blind their minds*; 2 Cor. iv. 4. and he has confirmed the awful sentence, *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, or accursed, till the Lord come*; 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

Now, since these solemn denunciations of divine vengeance are frequently repeated in our bible, and make a part of that book wherein our religion lies, since we are bound to declare all the counsel of God, for the salvation of men, and *knowing these terrors of the Lord*, we cannot but set them before the faces of those, who are in danger of being drawn away from their steadfastness in the faith; that if they should at last perish in their own unbelief, they may not lay the blame upon the ministers of the gospel, and plead that they had no warning of this condemnation. It is, therefore, no instance of an uncharitable conduct, to point out to careless wanderers, that pit of fire and destruction into which they are hastening, unless they turn their feet to another path: It has been always counted an act of charity and love, to pluck the wandering traveller, from a fatal precipice, or affright him from approaching the brink of it, by displaying all the dreadful mischiefs, and the certain death that will attend his fall.

On this view of things, if any person shall be led by providence to look into these discourses of mine, whose thoughts have been entangled, and his heart drawn away to any degrees of apostacy, or whose faith of Christ and the gospel hath been shaken, by the cavils of men, I would beg one favour of him, for his own sake, more than for mine, and that is, that he would not turn over these pages as a matter of mere curiosity, nor let his wit loose upon them in wanton sport, nor toss the solemn subject about as an airy jest, or a matter of trifling dispute. This awful theme and controversy in Great Britain, hath, in my judgment, no less consequences attending it than everlasting life or everlasting death.

———“Non hic levia aut ludicra petuntur  
Præmia, lectoris de vitâ animæque salute certatur.”

The indulgence of a sportful fancy, or a ludicrous spirit in questions so divine and important, is not the character of an honest mind which seeks the truth, nor is it a likely way to find it. The great God, the Maker and Lord of all, and the fountain of all light and knowledge, is not wont to bless such triflers with divine irradiations. His awful majesty, and his tremendous justice, many times, leave them to *sport themselves in their own deceivings*, till they have woven a fatal snare for their souls, and his righteous judgment may give them up to perish for ever, in their own impious mirth and madness. If any wavering christian has a sincere desire to be established in the truth, and to save his own soul, let him set his conscience at work in the sight of God, while he peruses the books written on this subject. Let him examine, with an honest heart, whether it be not the utmost hazard of his immortal interest to depart from the christian faith, and to *forsake the holy commandments, that have been delivered to him*, in the gospel; 2 Pet. ii. 21. Let him see if he can find any other solid and substantial hope of the favour of God, of the pardon of his sins, and final happiness, such as will enable him upon just and rational grounds, to face death with courage, and enter into the immediate presence of a holy and offended God. May the Spirit of Christ accompany this essay, to guard his own divine religion, and make these discourses happily effectual, to establish the professing christian in his holy faith, to secure the wavering from apostacy, and to prevent the eternal ruin of souls. *Amen.*

*London, February 4, 1728-9.*

## A CAVEAT AGAINST INFIDELITY.

2 TIM. ii. 5 —If a Man also strive for Masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

### INTRODUCTION.

**T**HE life of a christian is not a state of indolence and ease : If we seek for salvation and eternal glory, in the way of the gospel, we must shake of sloth and idleness : There is some sacred skill and wisdom required in it, with a vigorous and holy exercise of the best powers of nature : Therefore St. Paul, in my text, compares it to those games or bodily exercises which were practised at appointed seasons by the Greeks, wherein they exerted their utmost care and activity : He uses the same comparison in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter ix. verse 24, 25. Where he speaks of being *temperate in all things, and striving to obtain a crown* : And he alludes to it in several other parts of his writings. The apostle John, or rather Christ himself seems to have some reference to it, in his epistles to the churches, where he proposes large recompences to them that overcome, and promises *a crown of life* ; Rev. ii. 10. and iii. 21.

These games were of various kinds, such as running a race, wrestling, fighting, &c. Now, for each of these kinds of contest, there were certain laws and rules ordained, as in racing, they must start from such a spot of ground, they must run such a road or track, they must reach such a goal, and approach it in a proper manner too : In wrestling, the law of the contest required them to be naked, that they might not take the advantage of each others clothing : In fighting, they must use only that sort of weapon which was appointed for the combat, &c. And though the crown which was given to the conquerors was but a poor *corruptible* one, as the apostle speaks, for it was made of the leaves of an olive, a laurel, a pine-tree, or of parsley ; yet, so much honour attended it, and so strict were the overseers of it, that none obtained this prize, though he took never so much pains, and shewed never so great activity, if he did not manage himself in all things, according to the rules of the game or contest. So a man, who seeks the prize of heavenly happiness, and aims at the crown of life and glory, must carefully conform himself to the sacred rules which God has appointed ; otherwise he may labour and strive in vain. I take this to be the precise meaning of the apostle in the text, and it gives us fair occasion to derive this doctrine :

**Doctrine.**—All our pains to obtain the heavenly prize will be lost unless we seek it in the right way and manner: *we shall not be crowned except we strive lawfully.* To render this doctrine useful and practical, I shall

I. Endeavour to shew what is the right way by which God has appointed us to seek eternal salvation, or what are the rules and laws of this sacred exercise, in order to obtain the heavenly crown.—II. I shall lay down some considerations to enforce and prove this doctrine, viz. that heaven must be sought only in this appointed way.—III. I would answer several queries and objections, which are commonly raised against it in our day, chiefly by such as disbelieve the gospel.—IV. I shall offer two or three general exhortations to christians, derived from this discourse.—V. Propose some preservatives against apostacy, or a departure from the true way of salvation.

**SECT. I.**—*The Rules to obtain Salvation proposed, and the Duties required in the Gospel, or the Necessary Articles of Christianity.*

The first enquiry is this, viz. “What is the right way to obtain heaven? What are the appointed rules whereby we must govern our belief and practice? The great and general rule is the divine revelation or word of God: For when man had lost his original state of innocency, and the favour of God by sin, God knew that his feeble reason, or the light of nature was not sufficient to inform him, what was necessary to recover his favour, and to direct him in the way to happiness; and therefore he took the first opportunity to acquaint his fallen creature man, that he would not for ever abandon him and all his race, but that there was some hope of his recovery; and he told him of a Mediator or Saviour, even *the seed of the woman that should break the serpent’s head*; Gen. iii. 15. that is, *he should destroy the works of the devil*, and repair the ruin which the temptations of Satan had brought in: And doubtless at the same time, the blessed God assisted the reason and conscience of Adam in his enquiries, what duties were to be performed on his part towards his recovering an interest in the love of his Creator. Nor has God been wanting ever since that time to give various discoveries of the right way of salvation in several successive ages, that mankind might be restored to his favour and image again.

The last, the brightest and the best of all these discoveries is that which he has made in the gospel, by his Son Jesus Christ, and by the evangelists and apostles in the writings of the New Testament: This book therefore contains the rules of that sacred exercise or contest, in which we must now be engaged to obtain *the crown of glory*. No pretences to the light of reason, no vain fancies of new revelations, no devices of our own heart must dare to oppose, or contradict the rules given us in this



holy book ; if we reject the gospel there is nothing will serve us instead of it. I will not here enter into the question how far they shall be accepted of God, who never had the word of God revealed to them, nor the gospel of Christ published among them. I reserve this for the end of my discourse. It is sufficient to say at present, that God, *the judge of all the earth*, will deal in righteousness and wisdom with all mankind, and he is not wanting in mercy to his creatures, who submit themselves to him according to the dispensation they live under. Where he has *given less, less shall be required* : But this is certain, that he requires of all men a conformity to the rules which he has made known to them ; and therefore wheresoever the gospel comes with sufficient light and evidence, as it has done to us in the British Isles, he expects that we should learn the rules of our holy race from thence, and conform ourselves to them, if we would ever *obtain the prize of glory*. But to descend to particulars : The appointed way, to obtain heaven under the gospel, may be comprized under the following heads, which I call the necessary requisites in order to salvation, and I have multiplied them into six particulars, that I might be more explicit and plain :

I. A knowledge and belief of the great articles of natural religion, whether they contain doctrines or duties\* : For though these, alone and in themselves, are not sufficient to save sinners, yet they are necessary in order to our salvation, and the gospel of Christ teaches and confirms them all. We must believe that there is a God, the one only true and living God, almighty, all-wise, and all-good, the Creator of all things : and we must believe that he governs the world which he has made, and does not sit idle in heaven, and let his creation run at random : but that as a wise and holy Ruler, he takes notice of the behaviour and conduct of all his reasonable creatures.

We must believe that there is a real difference between virtue and vice, between good and evil : And that this does not depend, as some have imagined, upon the mere customs and fashions of particular countries, or the will of princes, but upon the nature of things and the will of God. It is God, who has written it plain in our own consciences, and in the very frame of our rational souls, that it is our duty to fear and love him, to pray to him for what blessings we want, and to praise him and give him thanks for what mercies we enjoy, and to honour, worship, and obey him according to the discoveries of his nature and his will which he has made to us. And as it is our duty to know, and honour this God, so it is evident that atheism and blasphemy, and the neglect or contempt of God and things sacred, are high crimes and offences against him.

\* By the articles of natural religion in this place, I chiefly intend such as belong to mankind in general, without regard to his fallen and sinful state.

It is written also, in our consciences, with sufficient evidence, that it is our duty to *love our neighbour*, to be honest, and just, and faithful, and kind : And that cheating and falsehood, injustice and cruelty to our fellow-creatures are hateful vices and never to be practised. It would be endless and needless to cite texts of scripture to prove all this.

We must believe also, that this great God, the righteous Governor of the world, will call us to an account hereafter, how we have behaved ourselves here, and will sit *as a judge* upon our past conduct in this life. The light of nature tells us, there is some reason to hope, that he will reward us gloriously, if we are faithful and diligent, perfect and persevering in our obedience to all his will ; and it gives us just ground to fear, that he will punish us severely in a future state, if we are impious and perverse, and act contrary to the known rules of our duty. But the light of scripture gives us much clearer and surer discoveries of a heaven and a hell, a state of reward and punishment, *according as our works shall be*. It is the voice of reason, and it is the language of revelation, that there is a future state to set all things right, and to account for the scenes of disorder in this present life. " Without" the " faith of things unseen it is impossible to please God ; for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him : " Heb. xi. 6. Nor was there ever any revelation of grace, that God made to fallen man for his salvation, but it pre-supposed or included this article of a future state, and all the other doctrines of natural religion in it.

II. Another thing necessary to our attainment of the heavenly happiness is a due sense of our guilt and misery by reason of sin, and a humble confession of it before God : Some conviction of sin may be derived from our own experience, if we do but converse with ourselves, and take a survey of our own hearts and lives, and compare them with the law of God written in our consciences. Where is the man who has perfectly obeyed all the dictates of his own reason, and never contradicted this inward rule of duty ? Surely if we know any thing of ourselves, we must confess we are sinners ; we have offended God our Creator, and broken his laws : *We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*, we have lost all just hope of reward : *Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God ;* Rom. iii. 19. *There is none innocent, no not one*. Our own conscience accuses and condemns us, and subjects us to the just judgment of God. And not only must we be sensible of our being exposed to divine anger, by reason of sins actually committed, but we must also be acquainted with the corruption of our natures, *the body of sin* which dwells within us, and be abased before God because of those inward sinful inclinations,

and vain affections which are ever busy and ever starting up to defile our consciences, and pollute our lives.

The gospel of Christ makes a sense of sin necessary to salvation. *They who are whole, have no need of the physician; but only those who are sick: I came not, says our Lord Jesus, to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; Mat. ix. 12, 13.* This is the language of the Old Testament as well as the New: *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy; Prov. xxviii. 13.* *If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins: But if we say we have no sin, we make God a liar, and the truth is not in us; 1 John i. 8—10.* Now it can never be supposed, that those wretches are in the right way to salvation, who, either through stupid ignorance, or a great degree of pride and self-flattery, fancy themselves innocent: These proud vain creatures must be far from the path of salvation and deliverance, who are not convinced of their sin and danger. They are not in the way to obtain relief, who feel not their distress and misery. Such a haughty spirit of vain conceit *makes God a liar*, by contradicting the testimony that he gives in his word concerning all the children of men.

III. Sincere repentance is another necessary duty required in the gospel, in order to a sinner's salvation. Now this repentance implies a hearty sorrow for all our past offences, and a sincere return from sin to the love and obedience of God. The very light of nature and reason, which teaches an innocent creature to obey his Maker, does as plainly tell a sinful creature, that he must repent of his disobedience, that he must be heartily grieved for having broken the laws of his God, and that he must love and obey him for time to come, if ever he expect the least favour from him.

The scripture enforces this sacred duty of repentance continually upon the consciences of men; and the gospel of Christ being sent to the nations, *commands all men every where to repent; Acts xvii. 30.* It is the very word of Christ, *Except ye repent ye must all perish; Luke xiii. 3, 5.* Not only must we forsake sin, and avoid it in our actions, but we must hate it in our hearts, and fulfil all our duties from a principle of divine love wrought in us. Our wills are by nature averse to God and goodness, and turned toward sin and folly; we must therefore *repent and be converted, that our sins may be blotted out; Acts iii. 19.*

Our whole natures are vitiated and spoiled by sin, and we must be regenerated or *born again*, and made *new creatures*, that is, a universal change must pass upon all the powers of our natures, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, or we can never be fit for the enjoyment of God. It is only *the pure in heart that shall*

see God; *Mat. v. 8. Except a man be born again, be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God, nor enter into it; John iii. 3, 5.* That is, except his nature, which was sinful, be renewed unto holiness, so that he begin to live a new life, as a new born child, he cannot be admitted into the kingdom of divine grace: Except he be cleansed from the power of sin, by the influence of the spirit of God, as the body is cleansed from outward defilements by water, which is typified and represented in baptism, he cannot be saved; *for nothing that defileth shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; Rev. xxi. 27. and he that hath not the spirit of Christ to sanctify him, to enable him to mortify sin, and create him anew unto good works, such a one, is none of his; Rom. viii. 9.* that is, he does not belong to Christ, nor hath any interest in him as a Saviour.

IV. Another necessary rule we must observe is this, *viz.* To draw near to God, and to seek his favour by a Mediator. This seems to be designed in the words of St. Paul, which I have chosen for the foundation of this discourse. He that will be *crowned must strive lawfully*, and, in the following verses, he bids Timothy consider what he teaches him, and *remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to his gospel*: that is, remember that Jesus Christ approved himself to be the Messiah, the anointed Saviour, by his rising from the dead. This is the only lawful way of striving for the heavenly crown, that is, by Jesus the Mediator. This doctrine of the mercy of God to guilty creatures by a Mediator, was the plain design of the first promise made to Adam after his fall, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, as it is written; *Gen. iii. 15.* Those very words led him to a Mediator, that is, to one born of a woman, that should relieve mankind under the mischief Satan had brought upon them. This blessed Mediator and our Saviour has been always kept in view, through all the succeeding revelations which God has made to the children of men. The Messiah, the anointed of God, who was to be the *light of the Gentiles*, and *the glory of Israel*, and *the Saviour of men*, even to the *ends of the earth*, was continually expected by the ancient saints.

And in these latter days we are now bound not only to trust in God, manifesting his mercy through some Mediator, but to believe that *Jesus of Nazareth* is he, that the great appointed *Mediator between God and man*, is the man *Christ Jesus*; *1 Tim. ii. 5.* for Christ himself has said it, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins; John viii. 21.* It is sufficiently manifested in the gospel, that there is no other hope or refuge: *There is salvation in no other, nor is there any other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved*, beside the name of *Jesus*; *Acts iv. 12.* Our Lord assures us, *that he is the way*, that no

man comes to the Father but by him ; John xiv. 6. And he bid his disciples preach the gospel to every creature, he bid them not only tell the world, that *he that believeth shall be saved, but that he that believeth not shall be damned* ; Mark xvi. 16. Here let it be noted also, that we are not called to trust in Christ only as a Mediator, to intercede or plead for us, though this is part of his appointed work ; Heb. vii. 25. but we must receive him also as one who made *propitiation* or atonement for sin. This is called in Rom. v. 11. *receiving the atonement*. For he becomes *our propitiation through faith in his blood* ; Rom. iii. 25. And *if we sin wilfully* by a public obstinate rejection of him, under his character of a sacrifice of atonement, I fear we shall find that *there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of God's fiery indignation* to devour us ; Heb. x. 26, 27. This text seems to me to carry a solemn terror in it against those who pretend to be christians, and yet dare to deny that Christ made a proper atonement for sin by his death, since this doctrine of atonement for sins by the blood of Christ is so often and so expressly asserted in the word of God\*.

You see then, that trust in a Mediator, and in the mercy of God manifested through him, is a necessary part of our religion. This is that faith in Christ which is foretold so plainly in the Old Testament, that in him should the Gentiles trust. This is represented so often in the New Testament, as the great requisite of salvation, viz. the belief of Jesus Christ the Son of God to be the only Mediator between God and man, and a trusting in the mercy of God in and through this Mediator, a committing the soul into his hands, as a Lord and Saviour from sin and from hell : And it is called faith in his blood, to shew that we must trust in him particularly, as a Mediator of atonement. This is that faith of Christ that St. Paul preached wheresoever he preached the duty of repentance, as a necessary attendant of it, in order to a sinner's acceptance with God. Acts xx. 20, 21. Publicly, and from house to house he taught the Ephesians, and he testified both to the Jews and Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

V. A constant sincere pursuit of universal holiness, and perseverance therein till the hour of our death. This is also necessary in order to our arrival at heaven. We are entered into a race, when we are first converted, and set our faces toward heaven ; we must not turn backward, lest we lose the prize. We must keep the path of duty with sincerity and diligence, and, in this manner, we must run through the whole stage of life, till we reach the goal of death, if we would obtain the glorious *crown of righteousness*. It is true the gospel does not suppose or expect,

\* I do not tarry here to enlarge on the proof of the atonement of Christ for sin, having sufficiently proved it in my sermons upon Rom. iii. 25. See volume the first, sermons xxxiv. xxxv. xxxvi. page 473, &c.

that we should be innocent or perfect in obedience ; and therefore a gracious God has made provision for the repentance of christians, and their return to his mercy after their renewed falls and sins, otherwise *no flesh can be saved* : But it is our duty to stir up ourselves to arise and return to God with sincere sorrow, and then with greater watchfulness to set upon our duty, and make it appear through the course of life, that in our heart we hate sin and love holiness.

It is not the costly or toilsome performance of ceremonies, nor any long slavish labours in outward forms of godliness nor any painful mortifications of the natural body, and severe penances of fasting and scourging, that will be accepted of God instead of inward piety ; nor yet is that piety to be all inward and confined merely to the heart : but it must appear in the life too. *The grace of God that brings salvation, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and by our good works to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things* ; Titus ii. 10—12. Whatsoever particular neglects the great God may excuse, he will never dispense with a general neglect of holiness : For it is said expressly, Heb. xii. 14. *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. He is a holy God, and as compassionate and condescending as he is, he doth not lay aside one ray of his own holiness in order to display his grace, nor will he dishonour that glorious perfection of his divinity to save a world of sinners. The gospel and the grace of God that saves us, can save us only in a way becoming the holiness of his nature. No unholy thing shall enter into heaven.

We, who are engaged in this christian exercise, have much of strife and conflict to pass through : It is not only a race, but a combat also, and it implies wrestling and fighting : We must take up arms against the sins of our natures, and the corruptions of our hearts, as well as against Satan, and the temptations of this world. Then surely those that know not their spiritual dangers, who are not made sensible of the sins that dwell within them, have no reason to imagine or expect they shall be conquerors : They are not yet engaged in the spiritual warfare, nor apprized of their spiritual enemies : They are not in the way to obtain the prize. *If we live according to the inclinations of our flesh we shall die, but if we through the spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live* ; Rom. viii. 13. *They that are Christ's must crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts* ; Gal. v. 24. And it is not only *flesh and blood* must be opposed, but *principalities and powers of darkness*, and all the hosts of hell, as well as an army of temptations of this wicked world ; Eph. vi. 12. and if we lay down our weapons and give over fighting, we give up all pretences to victory, and lose the crown.

VI. A humble hope in the divine promises of joy and happiness in the world to come, is the last thing I shall mention. This is so necessary a grace, that it is said, *we are saved by hope*; Rom. viii. 24. And it is often put for faith itself, in the language of ancient prophecy; and in the writings of the apostles, Christ himself is called *our hope*; 1 Tim. i. 1. Unbelief of the promises, and despair of heaven cut off all the sinews of action, and will effectually prevent us from seeking and striving to obtain the prize: We must live therefore in humble expectation of future glory, *looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*; Titus ii. 13.

And the apostle's argument in 1 Cor. xv. 12—16. seems to make the belief and hope even of the resurrection of the body, a necessary part of our christianity also: For, *if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen; and if Christ be not risen, then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain, ye are yet in your sins*. For my part I must own, that where this gospel comes in such full light and evidence, as we enjoy it, I hardly know what to make of their christianity, who deny the doctrine of the resurrection. These are the substantial parts of our religion, and the chief rules of the christian race, or contest in which we are engaged in order to obtain the crown. And concerning these, I have endeavoured to make it appear from reason, or express testimony of scripture, that God, the great and blessed God, will not dispense with any of them in those persons who expect favour and salvation at his hands.

There are indeed many circumstantials that belong to our religion, which are by no means of equal importance with those substantial parts of christianity before mentioned. In many of these circumstances of our duty, it has not pleased the Spirit of God, to write the rules of them in so plain and express language; and therefore there may be very different sentiments and practices in these points, without endangering our salvation, without breaking the bonds of our christian love and unity. It is of infinitely more importance, that we believe that there is but *one God*, that he must be worshipped and served by his creatures, that there is an essential difference between virtue and vice, that there is a future state of rewards and punishments, that we are guilty creatures, and can obtain favour of God no other way but by a Mediator, that we must repent of our sins and have our hearts changed and renewed unto holiness, and live in the sincere practice of every known duty, and in humble expectation of future blessedness; I say, these things are of infinitely greater moment, than whether we must be baptized in infancy or riper years; whether that ceremony must be performed by dipping or sprinkling: whether the ordinance of the Lord's-supper must be received in the posture of guests t-si

ing at the table, in the posture of children standing round their father's board, to receive his distributions of bread and wine, or in the posture of humble supplicants kneeling and adoring; whether our ministers must be ordained, and our churches governed by bishops or presbyters, or how far the concurrent acts of the whole church have an influence in these solemnities; whether our prayers must be immediately conceived in our hearts, and invented as they are uttered in new expressions continually, or whether we may use forms written down before-hand: These things, and many others of the like nature, because they are not of such necessity, therefore are not so evidently determined in the word of God.

But as for the six general rules before mentioned, I do not see how we can expect that God should dispense with any of them, since he has appointed his written word to be the rule of his final judgment, and he seems to have required them in his word in so peremptory a manner. He that strives and takes pains to obtain heaven, with a neglect of these rules, I think we may boldly say, he does not *strive lawfully*, and he has no sufficient ground to hope that he shall be crowned.

#### SECT. II.—*Considerations to prove the Doctrine.*

I proceed now to the second thing which I proposed, and that is to lay down several considerations, which may serve to evince and prove the truth of the doctrine, and make it still more evident, that such as neglect the rules of God's appointment shall not obtain salvation.

Consideration I. "God alone has a right to appoint the way to his own favour, and he is jealous to secure this prerogative." God has the first and most unquestionable property in us as his creatures, and sovereign dominion over us as subjects. He has a right, and he only, to ordain in what manner we should honour him, and seek his favour. If we were innocent creatures, it is he must direct us to any special instances of our duty in that state of innocence, and tell us how we may keep ourselves in his love: Or since we are guilty and rebellious, he only can appoint the sacred methods to obtain his own favour again, and gain an interest in his compassion.

*The Lord our God is a jealous God, and will not suffer himself to be disobeyed or mocked in things that so nearly concern his own sovereignty. This is evident in the second commandment, where he appoints the method of his own worship: And though we may think paintings, or images to represent his glory, and his power, are very agreeable and proper to assist our sensible natures, yet he forbids every thing of this kind as mediums of divine worship, and he solemnizes the prohibition with an awful discovery of his own jealousy: He declares that*



he will avenge himself of those that dare to worship him in un-appointed or forbidden ways, even to the third and fourth generations. It is worthy of our notice, that when he charges the Jews of old, with some of their idolatrous abominations, he mentions this as the reason of his anger, that they practised things which he commanded not, neither came they into his heart; Jer. vii. 31.

When God designed his own worship to be attended with a variety of pomp and ceremony, he prescribed every part of it to Moses with great exactness: And when he had given an account how the tabernacle, and table, and the candlesticks, and the altars should be made, he gives him a charge that he should precisely follow the divine directions; Ex. xxv. 9, 40. *Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.* Now if the great God requires such accuracy, and such exact conformity to his rules in matters merely external, typical, and ceremonial, how much more may we suppose that he will be strict and severe in demanding a conformity to his own appointed methods of salvation in things of more solemn, more spiritual, and everlasting concernment?

Suppose a traitor guilty of death, should have orders from the king his sovereign to enter into his presence, dressed in the borrowed ornaments of the prince his son, and to be introduced by his hand in order to obtain pardon; now if this condemned criminal should resolve rather to come and appear before the king in some bright ornament of his own preparing, and without the mediation of the prince; would he not deserve to be frowned away from the throne, and sent directly to execution? Would not this be a new indignity offered to the king himself, and a fresh instance of rebellion and disobedience? So when we consider ourselves as rebels and traitors against the majesty of heaven, if we will refuse the methods of God's own appointment in order to obtain his favour, and will *walk in the devices of our own hearts*; this will be justly construed a continuance in our rebellion; and we must expect the sentence of death to be executed upon us; Is. i. 11. *Behold all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled; this shall ye have of my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

II. "All the ways of recovering the favour of God, that proud vain man would contrive for himself, are evidently fruitless and ineffectual, and if we consider them distinctly, each of them will appear to be insufficient.

Shall we come to God in the way of innocency, and pretend that we have done no harm? But we have before proved that *all men are guilty. There is none righteous, no not one*; Rom. iii. 15. Shall we come in the way of *hope and reliance upon the*

*general and absolute mercy of God, trusting that God will forgive our sins because he is infinitely good and kind? But the light of nature can give us no manner of assurance, that he will express his kindness and goodness in forgiving sinful men. This is a free act of his will, and there is nothing in his nature, or in our circumstances that obliges him to it. Nor in his gospel hath he given any promise of such mercy to be exercised, but through Jesus his Son: The grace of God that appears to men is only through Jesus Christ; Tit. iii. 4. He justifies us freely by his grace; but it is through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; Rom. iii. 24.*

Shall we approach to God in the way of humble address to him, and beg him to accept of our *repentances and mortifications*? But these can never atone for our past offences. What are the tears or sorrows, or little penances of a creature to make satisfaction for the affronts offered to God? Shall we come to God and hope for acceptance by *our best duties of righteousness*? But they are all imperfect, and the law of God in its perfect purity would condemn both us and them: Besides if they were never so perfect they could not make recompence for transgressions past. Shall we seek to *saints in heaven, or angels, or any higher rank of creatures to become mediators, advocates, and intercessors for us*? Alas! We have no acquaintance with them, nor do we know that any of our petitions can come to their knowledge: Besides, this office is so sublime and glorious, that it seems too assuming for them to undertake, unless the offended Majesty of heaven had appointed them to it: They are all utterly precluded by their want of sufficient merit, as well as by the designation of his Son Jesus Christ alone to that glorious office.

In vain shall sinful guilty man hope to come near to a holy and offended God, but by the death and righteousness of his own Son. Ever since the first Adam laid the foundation of our ruin, and divided us from God our Maker, by his sin, mankind has been still wandering farther from God, and rebelling against him; and it is the second Adam alone that can restore us to his favour again by his righteousness; Rom. v. 19. *As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man shall many be made righteous.*

But to proceed in shewing the insufficiency of sinful man to return to God by his own power or merit. All that we have insisted on here is but one part of our misery: We must look upon ourselves not only guilty of many past offences in the sight of God, but as having our natures ruined, and the powers of them enfeebled and broken by sin. We are dark, ignorant, and averse to God and all that is holy. We cannot learn divine things, savingly, without the teachings of the Holy Spirit: We cannot

gression : *It belongs not to thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense ; and immediately he was smitten with a foul disease, the leprosy rose up in his forehead, and he was thrust out from the temple, yea, himself hasted to go out, because the Lord had smitten him : And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and was cut off from the house of the Lord.* Thus we see that God will spare neither priests, nor princes, nor indulge kings to make an inroad upon his appointed forms of worship, or to alter any part of the ceremonies which he has ordained. "The Lord of Hosts is a great king and a jealous God."

There is yet a fifth instance, that, in some respect, seems to carry a more tremendous evidence of the jealousy of the great God in this matter, and that is written ; 2 Sam. vi. 7. When the ark of the Lord was brought up from the house of Abinadab in a cart, "Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it." Doubtless Uzzah did this out of a pious zeal to preserve the ark of God, and the things that were in it from being shattered : But the law of God by Moses, had ordained the priests only to bear the ark : verse 8. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error, and he died by the ark of God." Here does not seem to be any ambition or insolence in the heart, presuming to attempt forbidden work : But even where piety and zeal itself were expressed in a forbidden manner, the great God is so jealous of the honour of his appointments, that he struck the man dead for his mistaken zeal : The Lord our God, says David, *made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order, that is, by employing alone the levites and priests in removing the ark ;* 1 Chron. xv. 13. And this is left upon record as a warning-piece to affright us for ever from pretending to honour God, and to express our devotion for him in any other methods than those, which he himself has ordained, and consecrated.

V. "The huge contempt that God himself has thrown upon the ways and rules of his own appointment when their date is expired, gives us a plain intimation that he will accept of no methods of worship, but such as he appoints." How magnificent and illustrious, beyond all our present thoughts and expressions, was the worship of God in the tabernacle, and especially in the temple, when those buildings were first set up, the one by Moses the prophet, and the other by Solomon the king ? All the pomp and glory of the heathen temples and their golden idols, all the splendor of the vestments of the priests, and furniture of cathedrals and altars in the church of Rome, though the riches of the world seem to be amassed and laid out there, yet it falls incomparably short of the glory and grandeur of the

Jewish worship in the days of Moses and Solomon : But when the term of these ceremonies was once expired, and their great design accomplished in the death, the resurrection and intercession of Christ, what names of contempt does the Spirit of God cast upon them ? They are *elements of the world* ; Gal. iv. 3. *Yokes of bondage* ; chapter v. 1. *Weak and beggarly elements* ; chapter iv. 9. *The rudiments of this world* ; Col. ii. 20. *Mere shadows of good things to come* ; Heb. x. 1. *Carnal ordinances and a worldly sanctuary* ; Heb. ix. 1, 10. And even when the apostle is speaking of the glory of that dispensation, he calls it *the ministration of death* ; 2 Cor. iii. 7. especially when the gospel came in which is the ministration of life. And when he speaks of circumcision, which was the pride and boast of the Jewish nation, and was once the distinguishing mark of God's special favourites, he not only pronounces it unprofitable, but threatens the Galatians that *Christ shall profit them nothing*, if they run back to circumcision, and the rites of Judaism ; Gal. v. 2.

Now if the great and holy God lays such a load of contempt on modes of worship, which his own divine wisdom once contrived, and his own authority established ; if he himself throws upon them such reproachful and forbidding language, when the appointed term of them is expired, can we imagine this holy God will endure forms of worship of the fanciful invention of men, or that he will indulge foolish and sinful creatures, where his own appointments are revealed, to seek his favour by addressing him in methods which he has not appointed ? This must be a vain attempt, a fruitless labour and a foolish hope.

VI. " There are several express scriptures that declare Christ and his gospel, to be the only way of our acceptance with God ; and therefore, it is in vain for us to hope to attain the crown of glory if we strive not for it lawfully, or in these methods of his divine appointment." Several of these scriptures I have already cited under the first general head, where I enumerated the most fundamental doctrines and duties of the gospel, and proved that, without the practice of them, there was no hope. *No man cometh to the Father but by me* ; John xiv. 6. *Other foundation can no man lay than what God has laid, that is Christ Jesus* ; 1 Cor. iii. 11. Though the unbelieving Jews have a zeal for God, and Paul himself bore this witness for them, yet *they did not attain justifying righteousness*, but fell short of it because they did not seek it by faith in the Son of God, but by obedience to the works of the law of Moses ; Rom. ix. 31. And when our blessed Redeemer shall come *in flaming fire*, he shall not only pour out his vengeance on them that know not God, but on those also who obey not the gospel ; 1 Thess. i. 10. *It was the commission which our risen Lord gave to the*

apostles, when they were sent to preach the gospel, to let the nations know, that *he that believeth not shall be damned*; Mark xvi. 16. And at the close of the bible, the *unbelievers* are joined with *the murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and liars*, and are *cast into the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone*, by an express order from the God of heaven sitting upon his throne of judgment; Rev. xxi. 8.

The last of these considerations is sufficient of itself to evince this truth, that a sinful creature can never attain the favour of God and happiness, unless he pursue them in those ways, and according to those rules, which God has established in his gospel: But when we add all these six considerations together, methinks they should make a deep and powerful impression upon our consciences, and awaken us all to enquire whether we are engaged in the pursuit of heaven, according to the methods of divine appointment, and whether we are striving *lawfully* for the crown of glory. It will be a dreadful disappointment to labour hard by unlawful and unappointed methods, and at last to lose our hope and our crown, and our souls for ever.

SECT. III.—*Various Objections and Queries of the Deists Answered.*

It has been declared in the foregoing sections, what are the methods and rules of divine appointment, wherein we are to seek for eternal life and happiness: And several considerations have been offered to enforce this truth, that it is in vain for us to hope for the favour of God or life eternal, if we refuse to seek it by these appointed ways and rules. I come now to answer some queries which the deists and infidels of our age have raised by way of objection against this doctrine: And I hope, through divine grace, I shall be enabled to give so sufficient an answer to them, as may confirm the wavering christian against the danger of apostacy, and I would wish also that it might convince some of the unbelievers in Great Britain of their weak and hopeless pretence to future happiness.

*Question I.*—Is it not impossible, that a man should honestly practise a religion which he does not know, or which he does not believe? If therefore a man be not convinced of the truth of the christian religion, it may be justly said, that he does not know that is, he doth not know reasons enough to believe it: And will not this ignorance be a sufficient excuse for him in the sight of God the judge of all?

*Answer I.*—It is granted that ignorance is no crime at all where it hath been always utterly invincible in the very nature of things, and where there have never been any means of knowledge: Therefore an heathen among the savage nations or

Africa, where the gospel was never preached, or the name of Jesus never known, shall not be condemned for not believing in Jesus. It is granted also, that where the means of knowledge are exceeding weak and defective, and the glimmerings of divine light very feeble, as among the Laplanders and the northern Russians, doubtless ignorance doth very much extenuate the guilt of their superstitions, and their ridiculous methods of divine worship.

But in the land of Great Britain, and especially in the towns and cities of it, where these men of infidelity generally dwell; in Great-Britain, where the light of the gospel shines with glorious evidence, where christianity has been brought often to the test, and has maintained its ground in the midst of all the intellectual conflicts of a reasoning age; in Great Britain, where the proofs of our holy religion have been set forth in so convincing a light, surely the pretences of ignorance must be cut off here, especially among all persons who have had a tolerable education: And there is just reason to fear, that this ignorance has too much of pride or negligence, or obstinacy in it, and will be imputed by the great Judge, to the evil turns and biasses of the will and affections, more than to the weakness of the understanding: Nor indeed will our modern infidels bear to have it placed on this foot, from the high esteem they generally have of their own reason.

The scribes and pharisees in the days of our Saviour, might make the same pretences, that they did not know the gospel of Christ, that is, they did not see or know reasons enough to believe that Christ was the great prophet, or the Saviour of the world: But our blessed Lord, who well knew the sufficiency of the evidence which he had given to convince men of the truth of his divine mission, pronounces destruction upon those infidels. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins; John viii. 24.* And I think it may be said, that if ever there was an age or nation under heaven, since the apostolic age, which had abundant rational evidence of the truth of christianity, the inhabitants of the chief towns and cities of Great Britain enjoy that evidence; and especially the men of leisure and learning amongst them. So that this pretended ignorance, I fear, will at last appear to be too near a-kin to the pretences of the unbelievers in the days of Christ, and it is well if they do not fall under the same condemnation.

II. The great God, who is perfectly wise and perfectly just, well knows what allowances to make for every degree of ignorance which people may lie under, according to their various advantages or disadvantages for knowledge: Yet he has taken care in his word, both of the Old and New Testament, to let it appear, that ignorance in general is not always a sufficient excuse

for crimes committed, or for the neglect of duties commanded. The whole fifth chapter of Leviticus is spent in directing the ignorant sinner among the Jews, what he should do to make an atonement for his transgressions, verse 17. It is said, *if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord, though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity\**. The various forms of sacrifice that are there appointed, sufficiently discover that *the Lord will not hold him entirely guiltless*, that commits a sin of ignorance: And, this is done, that men might not hope to excuse themselves before the great God for their sins, merely by the pretences of ignorance and mistake. In the New Testament our Saviour hath expressly told us; Luke xii. 47, 48. *And that servant who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.* Here, let it be always observed, that wheresoever ignorant sinners are punished, for their errors, the ignorance is always culpable, and therefore it is in some degree voluntary and chosen. It must arise either from slothfulness or neglect of enquiry, or from some criminal prejudices against the truth. No man can be punished for ignorance of his duty, if in the nature of things it be utterly invincible.

**Question II.** But can any man believe what he will? or believe whatsoever he is bid to believe? Can I assent to any thing which doth not appear with sufficient evidence to my understanding to be true? The mind of man in this respect seems to be a passive power, and cannot receive any proposition, but according to the evidence or proof that attends it, and according to the strength of light, in which the mind discerns this evidence or proof. Now if the proofs of the gospel, and the arguments for christianity, do not appear to my understanding in a convincing light, I am not able to believe it: Why then must I be condemned for not believing what, according to the make of my nature, I cannot believe? The severity of this one expression of Christ, *He that believeth not shall be damned*; Mark xvi. 16. is even an obstacle to my belief of his divine authority; for surely the great God would never send a messenger, to pronounce damnation against men, for not assenting to what does not appear evident to them, that is, for not believing what they cannot believe: This would be like condemning men for not seeing what they cannot see, for want of sufficient light.

\* I confess it may be disputed here, in this law of Moses, whether the ignorance spoken of, be an ignorance of the law, or an ignorance of the fact; yet in the words of Christ which are cited afterwards, it is plainly an ignorance of the law that is described: And, in general, this levitical appointment sufficiently shews, that pretences of ignorance are not always a sufficient excuse.

*Answer I.* This threatening is only denounced against those, to whom the gospel is offered, with sufficient credentials. It cannot be denounced against any person, who has not enjoyed sufficient means of knowledge and conviction. No man shall be condemned for not seeing any object, when there is not light enough to discover the object to him. But, let it be remembered, that the great God, who is the Judge of all, well knows the faculties of men, and what degree of outward revelation is sufficient, in its own nature, to discover the truth of the gospel to every single person, who comes within the hearing of it, if he be sincere and honest to attend to that light and evidence. And this threatening shall never be executed on men of an honest and sincere mind, who were willing to receive all conviction, and attend with humble and diligent souls, yielding up their understanding and assent, whosoever there was sufficient evidence. Such condemnation belongs therefore only to those persons, to whom God himself knows he hath given sufficient outward revelation, or evidence of the truth of the gospel, but that through negligence of attention, or some culpable prejudice, they refuse to receive the truth, and believe the gospel. Our blessed Saviour well knew the pride and obstinacy of the Sadducees and Pharisees in his life-time, when after all his divine miracles, they would not believe his divine commission: It was in vain for them to pretend, they could not see sufficient evidence of the gospel, for our Lord knew he had given them evidence sufficient to convince souls, who were sincere in their enquiry; and therefore he pronounced, and repeated the damnation upon the proud and obstinate unbelievers; John viii. 21, 24. *If ye believe not that I am the Messiah, ye shall die in your sins.*

II. To refute this objection more effectually, let it be considered, that the judgment, that is, the power of assent or dissent to a proposition, is not a faculty so merely passive, as some men imagine it; for it is plain, that by our own choice or inclination we are capable of delaying our assent long, and abstaining from rash judgments; and we can by our own choice or inclination give a precipitate or hasty judgment, concerning an object without sufficient evidence; we can withhold or suspend our judgment or assent, where the evidence is weak till it grows stronger; and we can also withhold our judgment or assent, by an unwillingness to receive into our mind the full light and strength of clear evidence, where the proposition to be believed, is displeasing to our inclinations. Thus it is manifest, there is much of the will mingled itself with the exercises of the understanding in our acts of judgment. We are justly pronounced criminals, and God may condemn us for a rash and hasty assent to a mischievous error, because we did not withhold our assent till we saw fuller evidence and proof: And we are as justly pronounced criminals,



and are condemned justly, for withholding our judgment, and refusing our assent to an important truth, where God sees and knows the light and evidence, to be sufficiently strong for our conviction.

There are some errors that we are ready to receive into our assent, upon very slight argument and insufficient evidence, because there is a secret inclination in us, that they should be true, according to the old Latin saying, "Quod volumus facile credimus," what we wish to be true, we easily believe: And there are some truths, which we are very backward to receive into our assent, though the evidence be never so strong, because we are unwilling they should be true. Perhaps these truths do not agree with our former notions, they contradict our old opinions, or condemn our present practices, or perhaps they thwart our honour or interest, we shall be exposed to shame or hardship, or loss in professing them, or we must change our party if we believe them, or finally because we do not at present see the way fully, to reconcile them with some other things, which we have received and believed to be true. Now if the mind be under any of these influences, and therefore delay and deny its assent to plain evidence, it may become criminal in the sight of God, for hearkening to any one of these prejudices, rather than to the plain divine discoveries of truth, when it is proposed either by the light of reason or revelation.

I might here make use of the very same similitude, that is mentioned in the objection, and shew how a man may see an object, even though it be placed in a dusky light, when he is very desirous of seeing it, and when he uses the utmost vigour and effort of his eye-sight for this purpose: And on the other hand, if he does not exert his visive powers with vigour, if he will wink a little, or will turn his eyes aside, or raise a dust before the object, he may be said not to see it; but the true reason is, because the object upon some account or other is displeasing, and he is unwilling to see it. Now if the life of this man, depended on his seeing and laying hold of this object, he must die without hope and without pity: It is in vain for him to pretend, that he did not see it, when either he winked a little, or raised a dust about it, and thus abused the day-light, and prevented his own sight of the only object that could save him. In such important concerns as the affairs of eternal salvation, let our infidels take heed that this be not their case. Jesus the Son of God is the object proposed to them, *to lay hold of as their only refuge* from death and hell, and the light is so strong in which it is set, that thousands of wise, rational and cautious men have seen it, and embraced it, and found salvation: Let them take heed therefore *of winking in the day-light, and of raising a dust by wanton and unreasonable cavils: let them examine the secret workings*

their souls with the strictest care ; for if it should be found hereafter, that there was external light and evidence enough for their conviction, and the fault lay only in their prejudices or their inattention, this will justly expose them to the terrible and condemning sentence of God. -

*Question III.* Is not sincerity\* in the practice of what we believe, of much more importance in religion, than the truth of our opinions ? Is not sincerity even in the practice of a true religion, the only thing acceptable to God therein ? And if there be the same sincerity in the practice of a false religion, surely God will accept of man's sincere endeavours to serve him, and will easily pardon and pass by all his ignorance, his errors and mistakes.

*Answer I.* Though sincerity be a necessary ingredient in all the practices of true religion that can be acceptable to God, yet it is not sincerity alone that is made the term of our justification and acceptance, in the constitution of the gospel, but *faith in Jesus Christ*, or trust in the mercy of God through Jesus the Mediator. *Moses describes the righteousness of the law*, that is, the way of justification by the covenant of works, as it is figured out to us in the external legal covenant of Sinai, in this manner ; Rom. x. 5. *The man that doth these things shall live in them : But the righteousness of faith which we preach, saith the apostle, that is the way of justification and salvation under the gospel, speaks thus, if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved : For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation ; v. 8—10.* So Rom. i. 16, 17. *The gospel is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth, for it is written, the just shall live by his faith.* Mark xvi. 16. *He that believes shall be saved.* Eph. ii. 8, 9. *By grace ye are saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast.* Neither Abraham nor David amongst the Jews, were justified by works, but by faith, that is, not by the sincerest works of righteousness, which they themselves performed, but by trust in the divine mercy, according to the revelations of it in their various ages, and in various degrees. Rom. iv. 3—6. *Blessed is the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works, to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, that is, his faith or dependence on the pardoning mercy of God through a Mediator, is the only appointed way of obtaining justification : It is not his own works, for he has none suffi-*

\* By sincerity in practice I here understand, a performing the duties of religion, according to the best of our present knowledge, and the utmost of our abilities.

cient for this end : But his trust in *that God who justifies* and accepts *the ungodly*, that is, persons who have no sufficient godliness for their justification : The only thing that man can do, which shall be imputed or reckoned to him in order to justification, is his faith or trust in the mercy of God, who justifies us freely, without any merit of our own works in our justification : And he doth this by virtue of the *redemption that is in Christ*. This is the sense of this verse, according to the whole scope and design of the fourth chapter ; for the very design and scope of it is to shew the self-emptying nature of that faith, by which we must be justified, as the design of the fifth chapter is to declare the object of it, Jesus Christ. This is the language of the New Testament, this is the appointment of the gospel.

I grant indeed, that the gospel requires also repentance, and sincere submission and obedience to all the will of God revealed in his word, as well as trusting in Jesus Christ, if ever we would be accepted of God, and obtain heaven : And there are many substantial and indispensable reasons for it in the economy of the gospel. It is the very design of the gospel to recover men to holiness, by a sense of pardoning grace : *We are accepted in the beloved, that we may be holy and without blame before God in love* ; Eph. i. 4, 6. We are not fitted for salvation, and the heavenly blessedness unless we are sanctified : *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord* ; Heb. xii. 14. We cannot evidence our own faith to be true and saving, unless it abide in us as the spring of all good works. It is *only faith that works by love*, that is available to eternal life ; Gal. v. 6. Therefore those that have believed must remember, that they are *redeemed from an evil world*, as well as from hell : They are *redeemed from a vain conversation*, as well as from guilt and misery, that they may be *a peculiar people unto God, zealous of good works* ; Tit. ii. 14. But all this will not prove that sincerity in our works of obedience to God, is the appointed term of our pardon of sin, our justification or acceptance in the sight of God under the gospel, without faith or trust in Jesus Christ, as the great Mediator and Reconciler. Still our acceptance with God is eminently referred to faith, and that as it stands distinct from works, though it must be such a living faith as is the spring of holiness.

But to bring the matter as low as possible, suppose it should be allowed, as some contend, that our sincere endeavours to serve God by works of holiness, should be joined with our faith in Christ, as the condition of our pardon, and should be made the very matter of our justifying righteousness in the New Testament, yet no man that honestly reads the scripture, can ever suppose that this sincerity in our duties, is there made the term of our justification, without the belief of a Mediator, or that it is sufficient to procure pardon of sin, and acceptance with God

without faith in Christ, that is, where the gospel is preached with its clear proofs and evidences.

And now as we have considered the way of salvation by faith, as it is described in the gospel, and seen the promises made to it, so let us also take a short review of the threatenings that stand bent and pointed against those who refuse this only way of salvation. John iii. 18. "He that believeth not on the Son of God is condemned already, because he hath not believed." Ver. 36. "He shall not see life, the wrath of God abideth on him." Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth not shall be damned." 1 John v. 10, 12. "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself : He hath eternal life begun in him ; " but he that hath not the Son hath not life." 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9. "They who obey not the gospel, shall be punished with everlasting destruction, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire. Now surely he is a bold man that will dare venture his final and eternal state of happiness or misery, upon his own pretences to mere sincerity in the practices of any other religion whatsoever, in opposition to such awful expressions of the gospel of Christ, and especially in such an age and nation of light and knowledge, where the gospel appears with so much divine evidence about it.

II. If the heathen or infidel nations, with all their sincerity, are described in the New Testament as having no hope of eternal life, even where the gospel had not been published, surely much less ground is there for hope, where the gospel is known and refused. Consider a little what sort of descriptions the Spirit of God gives of the heathen world, because they were without a divine revelation, and without the gospel, either in a patriarchal or Jewish, or in a christian form ; Eph. ii. 12, "They were without Christ, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Eph. iv. 8. Alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." Col. i. 21. "Alienated from God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works," &c. Read the dismal corruption and wretched state of the heathen world more at large ; Rom. i. 29—31. Eph. ii. 1—3. Now if the heathen nation sare said to be utter strangers to God, to be without God, and to be without hope, because they are without any gospel, without Christ, and without the promises, these things have not been revealed or conveyed to them, much more shall persons who live in a land of gospel light, be pronounced to be without God and without hope, if they refuse to believe in Jesus Christ, who has been revealed to them, and whom they have been taught to know from their very cradles. What hope can they have, who shut their eyes against the light that shines so gloriously round about them : Whatsoever mollifying sense may be put upon some severe expressions of scripture, in favour of the heathens, who

never had the gospel, surely there is none will be allowed to those who have so blasphemed and abused it.

III. If sincerity in the practice of a false religion were sufficient to procure the divine favour, then ridiculous and inhuman superstitions of all kinds, blood and murder, and cruelty, would be effectual means to obtain the favour of God ; for these have been practised by many people in the world, and that with great zeal and sincerity, and sometimes as a piece of religious worship. Can you imagine, that the ancient heathens were not sincere in the practice of their ceremonies, in their laborious and painful rites of worship, when they put themselves to so much self-denial and torment in the performances of them ? Think of the dreadful and bloody penances to which some of them have devoted themselves : Think of their cutting and wounding of their own flesh with knives and lancets : So did the prophets of Baal, whether they were Jews or heathens ; 1 Kings viii. 18. Think of the agonies of parents, when they offered their own children to brazen idols, and burned them in terrible sacrifice to Moloch : Count over the “ thousands of rams, and the rivers of wine and oil, the fruit of their body for their transgression, and the first-born of their flesh for the sin of their soul ;” Micah vi. 7. Think of Curtius and the Decii among the old Romans, that devoted themselves to death, to appease the anger of their gods. Think of the wretched devotees at present in Malabar, who throw themselves under the chariot wheels of a heavy idol drawn by a hundred men, that they may be crushed to death, and thus pay honour to their god ; survey all these, and then tell me whether these worshippers are not sincere or no. What have you to shew as signals and tokens of your sincerity in religion, comparable to these poor blind heathens ? And yet after all, can you ever suppose these bloody and dreadful works of devotion, these consecrated acts of murder were acceptable to the great God, or could procure peace with heaven, under a pretence of their sincerity ?

Let us survey another scene of madness, which yet appears to be sincere zeal among some of the professed enemies of the people of God in all ages. When they have been sending christians to the lions, to slaughter and death, when they have given up the beloved sons and daughters of God to fire and sword, to *famine and nakedness* ; to the teeth and talons of wild beasts ; some of these bigots seem to have been sincere in their designs to honour the powers of heaven, and to offer these barbarous sacrifices to appease the god of their country. The Romans imagined that the toleration of christians, who were blasphemers of their gods, brought plagues and distresses upon their armies and kingdoms, and therefore they devoted them to death to please the god whom they worshipped. Now will any of our deists tell us, that these inhuman persecutors were accepted of God,

and in the way to his favour and eternal life ; and yet we have our Saviour's own word for it ; John xvi. 2. *Whosoever killeth you, will think he doth God service, that is, he sincerely thinks so.*

I grant Christ foretels this eminently concerning the Jews : The unbelieving Jews persecuted the christians even to death, in the sincerity of their zeal for God, and dyed their hands in the blood of christians, in order to render themselves more acceptable to the God of Israel. St. Paul himself tells you, that he was one of them. Acts xxvi. 9, 10. I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. I punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even to strange cities." And Gal. i. 13, 14. "Being exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers, I did persecute the church of God beyond measure and wasted it. Phil. iii. 6. If I may speak of my zeal, I have sufficient proof of that, being a persecutor of the church. Was Paul in the way to obtain divine favour by such cruel and inhuman methods as these ? Could such guilty practices against his fellow-creatures render him a worthy object of the divine love, or obtain for him eternal life, because he was sincere in them ? It has been sometimes observed, that persons under the unhappy influence of these evil principles of religion, have grown up to be most fierce and barbarous murderers, in proportion to their sincerity and zeal : But surely they are not accepted with God in proportion to these bloody practices.

That sincere zeal in a false religion will not obtain justification in the sight of God is sufficiently declared by the apostle Paul, to all that believe the scriptures : For he pronounces concerning himself, that he was *the chief of sinners* upon this account, viz. his zealous persecuting the christians ; 1 Tim. i. 13, 15. And that he did but just obtain pardoning mercy because he did it ignorantly ; but he does not pretend to the least claim of merit on the account of his sincere zeal. He bears witness also concerning the Jews his countrymen, that they had a *zeal for God*, though it was a blind one, and without knowledge ; Rom. x. 2. They followed after *righteousness*, that is, to obtain justification by the works of the law, but they did not attain to the law of righteousness, that is, they could not find justification or acceptance with God in their way of procedure, because they sought it not by faith ; Rom. ix. 31—33. or in the appointed way of the gospel.

IV. If sincerity in the practice of a false religion were sufficient to entitle us to the favour of God, yet no person can lay claim to the favour of God on this account, since I may venture to say, no man ever was constantly sincere in practising every point

and tittle of what his conscience directed him to, and required of him as his duty. It is very possible, that a man may be sincere in some single actions of life or worship, who is greatly defective as to his sincerity in other parts of his behaviour. Where is the man that can stand up and say, "I have constantly served God to the utmost of my knowledge : I have loved him with all my heart ; I have loved my neighbour as far as conscience told me I ought to do, and fulfilled every duty to God and man, as far as I knew it, and was able to perform it, and that without any wilful transgression or negligence ?" I am verily persuaded no man can say, his own conscience has always excused him, though in many actions men may have been justified to their own consciences. Now if men will venture to build their eternal hopes upon this presumption of God's acceptance of their sincerity, even where their religion is not true, let them see to it, that they sincerely and constantly fulfil their own invented law of righteousness : Let them take care that their honest and sincere obedience to their own light be continual, uniform and complete ; or else they may justly expect that God and their own consciences will come upon them one day with dreadful demands\*.

V. Suppose it were granted, that the sincere practices of a mistaken or false religion, could render us accepted of God, and suppose yet further, that we could be perfectly sincere in this practice, without one failure, yet we ought to enquire whether we have been sincere also in our search after the true religion : For if we have failed here, and been negligent and careless in our search after the right way to please God, our greatest sincerity in a false way can pretend to no merit, and can give us but little hope. It is not an irrational and thoughtless sincerity, an ignorant and stupid zeal in a mistaken religion that came to us by chance, or that we slightly took up from a principle of sloth, or were led into by culpable prejudices, that can ever make a just pretence to the favour of God : And therefore if we should allow, that in the darkest nations of the earth, where men have scarce any advantages for knowledge, God would accept of their sincere follies and superstitious, yet we have no reason to expect it in a land of such light and knowledge, where we have the greatest advantages to be informed of the true way of worship. The great God who made all the powers of our nature, expects

\* Perhaps it will be said, that sincerity does not imply such an uninterrupted constancy of obedience as I represent, but that it is consistent with some failures in point of known duty, if these failures be attended with hearty repentance, and a resolution of future care and watchfulness.

To this I answer, that the gospel and the revelations of grace in scripture allow this sort of sincerity and accept of hearty repentance after sin, through the interest of a Mediator : But the light of nature doth not allow of any sincerity in obedience, if it be interrupted by one wilful sin ; for the light of nature can never assure us that any one wilful or known sin will be pardoned, nor that any repentance will be accepted. The discovery of this is pure grace.

the use of our understandings to enquire out truth and duty, as well as the activity of our will and affections, and our lower powers to practise it. He expects that we should give diligence to search and find out the true religion in the midst of such rich advantages, as his providence has conferred upon us. He gives us no indulgence to go on in the practice of a false religion, and hope for the pardon of our sloth and negligence, and forgiveness of our thoughtless and stupid errors, on the mere pretence of sincerity in the practice of them. This leads me to the next question.

*Question. IV.* But if I am sincere in seeking out the truth, shall not my sincere endeavours to find out the true religion, and to practise agreeably to my knowledge obtain acceptance with God, even though I should happen to fall into mistaken opinions, and practise a false religion instead of the true ?

*Answer I.* Sincerity in the search after truth, has so many and various ingredients in it, that I fear the unbelievers in Great Britain would make but a poor pretence to sincerity, when called before the bar of the great and righteous God, and would find it a dangerous thing for them to have built their whole hopes and expectations on this pretence, while they have rejected the gospel of Christ his Son. The several qualifications which are required to make up sincerity in the search of a true religion, are as follow :

I. "A watchful and diligent disengaging ourselves from all the secret and culpable prejudices that hang about the mind, and lead it astray from truth;" A restless and constant endeavour to free ourselves from every evil influence, every wrong bias and turn of mind, that might lead the understanding astray in its enquiries, or may warp the judgment in its determination. Now these are very numerous.

1. There are some prejudices that arise from the influence of those who are our superiors, either in riches or power, or wit and learning, or years, &c. *Have any of the rulers believed on him?* John vii. 48. was thought to be a good argument in the days of Christ against his gospel : And it is an argument of the same stamp, which vulgar souls in our days make use of : Are not many of the polite gentlemen, and fine wits of the age weary of christianity ?

2. Our friends or acquaintance, or companions, have a strange influence also upon the mind, and by their constant conversation prejudice it for, or against particular opinions. Even a sober youth who happens to fall into heathenish acquaintance, by the perpetual impressions of their vile discourse may become a heathen too.

3. *Some prejudices arise from the fear of ridicule and shame*



among our associates, and those with whom we converse : And many a young person is turned aside from attending to the evidences of christianity, lest he should be made a jest among his profane company, if he profess himself a believer of the gospel.

4. There is sometimes a strong and unhappy prejudice against the religion of Christ, arising from the faults and follies of those who profess to be christians : These disciples of infidelity never consider that follies and faults of as heinous and criminal a kind, are daily practised by their fellow-infidels : The old heathen philosophers who professed the religion of nature, were shamefully guilty of many vices contrary to the dictates of natural reason, and yet the religion of nature is true and good still, so far as it goes : And christianity may be divinely true notwithstanding the iniquity and madness of some that pretend to profess it.

5. Another set of prejudices arises from pride of mind and self-conceit, presuming that the reason of man is sufficient to direct itself in the paths of happiness, without receiving any discoveries from God. It is pride also that suffers us not to submit to receive the doctrines of revelation, when there is any thing in them that we know not presently how to reconcile and explain : And this spirit of pride and arrogance tempts some of the deists to abandon all their bible, because the word of God contains some deep things in it which are not fully understood by men.

6. Sometimes an affectation of novelty warps the mind aside, and leads it astray in its enquiries after truth, and for this very reason some men do hardly receive the doctrine which has been the ancient faith of their ancestors. New things have a strange and subtle influence to allure the heart away from old truths.

7. The pride of thinking freely for ourselves, and throwing off all the bonds and fetters of education, has had a licentious and unhappy influence on some minds, to lead them off to infidelity. They scorn to follow the dictates of tutors, and renounce the beat of religions, because they were born and bred in it.

8. There is another set of prejudices that arise from *the lusts of the flesh*. Christianity seems to have too much strictness in it for those men who would give themselves a loose to sensual delights : And thus their own vicious inclinations darken their understandings : First, they secretly wish and desire that a doctrine so self-denying may not be true, and then they are easily led to fancy and pronounce there is no truth in it. Every slight turn of wit, and faint colour of reason, is sufficient to carry off their minds from the gospel, whose passions are carried off already.

9. And it may be there are others who are under the influence of this wicked prejudice, viz. "I have begun to cast off

christianity, and therefore I will go on : I have declared myself a free thinker, and I cannot go back." On this account they harden themselves in their unbelief, and they are unwilling to hearken or attend to any reason or evidence that might make them believers, or incline them to receive the gospel, after they have once given up their name and honour to infidelity. Now these and other prejudices of the mind must be all laid aside, before we can pretend to such perfect sincerity in the search after truth, as will justify us at the bar of God in the choice and practice of a false religion\*. And though in the main we may have some real design to find out the true religion, yet which of us will dare to venture our everlasting hopes upon a mere presumption of our freedom from all these evil influences, these faulty prejudices that stick so close to mankind? I am ready to persuade myself that there are not many of the deists and infidels in this nation, who examine their hearts closely in this matter, and after all can pronounce themselves most sincere and unbiassed searchers of the truth.

II. Another qualification requisite to sincerity, is "a hearty inward solicitude about these important concerns; a fervent and longing desire of the soul to find out the knowledge of God, and the right way to salvation." It is not a cold wish or two after divine truth, once now and then, that is sufficient to prove a man sincere in his enquiries. A sincere soul will feel an inward and penetrating concern agreeable to the momentous subject. There are too many who content themselves with a general unaffected consciousness, that they are willing to find out the truth, but this design makes no answerable impression upon their spirits as a matter of prime importance and of infinite concern.

III. Sincerity requires also, "a laborious diligence in searching after the knowledge of the truth, and industrious use of every help possible to be attained in our station and circumstances." It applies a due attention to every argument, and giving them their full weight; a seizing every beam of light honestly,

\* Since these papers were in the press I met with a paragraph in Doctor Harris's excellent discourses of the "Reasonableness of Believing," &c. which I take pleasure to transcribe here. "The sincere and upright will always readily embrace the divine revelation. Whatsoever prejudices and mistakes they may labour under from the weakness of their understanding, and the impressions of education, as soon as ever they discern the evidence of it, they will resign to the superior claims of truth, against every lower consideration or remaining difficulty and doubt. Shew them that it is the will of God, and they readily yield and submit. When the insincere on the other hand, governed by their interests and other prejudices, will reject the plainest truths and greatest evidence, which is against their interest, and they will start little cavils, and raise endless objections, and fortify their minds against the strongest evidence, to support some shadow of false quiet, and appear infidels upon principle: Or else without allowing themselves to reason about it, they will bear it down by mere force, and oppose it with violence and malice of heart, which was the case of the unbelieving Jews."

as soon as it appears to the mind, as a man that seeks after hidden treasure, would cheerfully receive every hint of discovery, would follow the first glimmerings of the gold or silver ore, and trace out the rich vein through the bowels of the earth. If we would prove ourselves sincere, we must not be tired or discouraged by a few obstacles in our way. We must search for wisdom as silver, and dig for understanding, as for hidden treasures:—*Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; Prov. ii. 4, 5.*

Whereas many of our modern infidels, when in their searches they find a dark sentence, and a few difficulties in the language of scripture, they labour not after a solution of them, but gladly lay hold of every objection, and content themselves with these little evils as a sufficient argument to reject it all at once, to abandon the law of Moses, and the prophets, Christ and his gospel. Such a temper and spirit, such a cavilling and contentious practice, will fly in the face of a man, when he shall pretend to plead sincerity before God.

IV. “Perseverance in this honest and diligent enquiry is another ingredient of a sincere search after truth.” It is not the work of an hour or two, or the labour of a few days, but according to our state and circumstances in the world, we must continually search till we have found some solid satisfaction, and till our minds can rest in some doctrines of religion, upon just and reasonable grounds; Hos. vi. 3. *Then shall ye know the Lord, if ye follow on to know him.*

V. Sincerity in searching out the truth, requires also “great humility and meekness of spirit, a holy sense of the importance of this enquiry, a consciousness of our own weakness, and of the many prejudices, the false lights, and the dangers that attend and surround us both within and without in our enquiries, together with constant and importunate prayer to God for his assistance. All these are necessary ingredients of such a sincerity in the search after true religion, as will approve itself to God. We must not be self-sufficient and conceited of our reasoning powers, but under a sense of our weakness and danger of mistake, we must be instant petitioners daily at the throne of God, that he would not suffer any delusive prejudice to blind our minds, nor well-coloured errors to lead us astray; that he would order all things in the course of his providence in so favourable a manner, as may tend to guide us into the path of truth. A sincere enquirer is able to appeal to God who knows all things, “Thou seeest the honest desire of my soul, and the sincere, inward and intense breathings of my heart, to find out the way to thy favour: All my desire is to know and please thee my Creator, and therefore I daily seek thy directions.” We must not only *incline our ears to wisdom, and apply our heart to understanding, but we*

must cry after knowledge, and lift up our voice to heaven. For it is the Lord who giveth wisdom; Prov. ii. 3, 6.

VI. It belongs also to a sincere search after truth that we are "careful and zealous in the practice of every thing, that we have already found out in religion." All the duties toward God and man, that reason and natural light discover to us, must be fulfilled by us, with a holy and religious industry and watchfulness: And we must with a constant jealousy and solicitude of soul, abstain from every thing that would displease God. It is for the righteous that *God layeth up sound wisdom*; Prov. ii. 7. "He giveth to those that are good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge;" Ec. ii. 26. And our blessed Lord himself tells us; John vii. 17. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Doing the will of God as far as it is known, is a necessary requisite in order to obtain farther knowledge. Now when our modern deists have fulfilled all these rules of sincerity in their search after the true way of salvation, I am verily persuaded they will continue no longer in their infidelity, but rejoice to receive the gospel of Christ. However, it will be time enough for them to make their own pretences of sincerity in the search after truth the ground of their expectations of divine favour, and to plead it at the bar of God, when they have carefully practised all this sincerity, which has been now described.

And yet if any should boldly declare they have practised all this sincerity, and yet they are not convinced of the truth of the gospel; before I quit this head, I would address myself to them with one enquiry more, and that is, if you imagine that you are now truly sincere in your present search, have you been always thus sincere in your enquiries, ever since you began to doubt of christianity? Have you not indulged such an immoral conduct, such sensuality, such a love to vicious pleasures, such pride of your own reason, such self-sufficiency, such a bantering spirit, such *lusts of the flesh*, or *lusts of the mind*, such criminal prejudices, or such guilty practices, as may have provoked God to punish you one of these two ways: 1. Either in the course of his providence, "to take away those means and advantages for knowledge, which you have once enjoyed and abused:" Or, 2. "To withdraw all the common influences of his Holy Spirit, and leave you to the weaknesses and wanderings of your own spirits, and to give you up to a judicial blindness, even though the outward means of knowledge may remain?"

There are many amongst the ancient Gentiles, and many amongst the later worshippers of anti-christ, who have fallen under these just and heavy judgments. There have been men who held the truth in unrighteousness, and would not practise reli-

gion so far as they knew it, nor *glorify God* so far as they were acquainted with him; and they have been given up to "vain imaginations, their foolish heart has been darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" instead of philosophers: They became ridiculous idolaters, and worshipped birds and beasts, and creeping things, instead of God. The righteous "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, because they did not like to retain him in their knowledge;" Rom. i. 18—27. There have been many Jews and heathens, who have had the gospel preached to them with sufficient evidence; but when they had refused to receive it, the ministry of the gospel has been taken away from them, the apostles and preachers have been called off from such an unfruitful spot of ground, and have left that town, that country or nation in double darkness. See the History of the Gospel, and the Acts of the Apostles. Our Saviour threatened this judgment to the unbelieving Jews, and it has been executed not only on them, but on the other sort of infidels besides.

Or if the means of knowledge have continued among them, yet they have been forsaken of God, and given up to blindness of mind. This also seems to have been the punishment of multitudes of the Jewish nation. And St. Paul foretels the same terrible judgment upon some degenerate parts of the christian world. "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, God shall send them strong delusions that they shall believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness; 2 Thes. ii. 10. This has been evidently fulfilled in some members of the anti-christian church.

Now if this be the case, there is need of deep repentance for past insincerity and negligence: There is need of great humiliation of soul before an offended God, in order to make up the character of present sincerity: There is need of *strong cries* and prayers for pardoning grace for the time past, as well as for present light and assistance in all further enquiries after the truth.

Thus I have gone through the several requisites of sincerity, which the great Judge of all may require and demand at the hands of every one who rejects the gospel under pretence of its insufficient evidence. And I think upon the whole, it appears to be a very dangerous venture for those that renounce the religion of Christ, in our age and nation, to trust entirely to this pretence of sincerity in their enquiries; since I fear upon a strict examination, their pretences will be found very defective and insufficient.

*Question V.* But if God insist upon such severe terms in judging of our sincerity, then no christian can be saved any more than a deist or an unbeliever: For without sincerity in a true

religion, you grant there is no salvation. But may not a deist be as sincere and upright as a christian, both in the searching out his religion, and in the practice of it? The great God who created us, knows the frailty of our natures, he sees the prejudices with which we are surrounded, and the weaknesses to which we are continually exposed, and if he will make allowances to christians in the practice of their religion, why may we not suppose his merciful nature will incline him to make the same compassionate allowances to the sincere and honest infidels, while they are seeking after the right way to please him.

I answer, First. The light of evidence and the force of argument, wherewith the gospel is surrounded in the present age, seems to me to be so strong and convincing, that I cannot but say there is great reason to doubt, whether in the enlightened towns and cities of Great Britain, there can any man live and die an honest and sincere unbeliever, that is, whether any man who hath a mind sincerely ready to submit to evidence, and hath used his utmost diligence in searching out the truth, can always remain a professed infidel; this I have intimated before, and I shall give the reasons of this opinion more plainly under the next question. But I proceed now to a second answer: The christian who feels and mourns thus over the weakness of human nature, the strength and bias of the passions, the powerful prejudices which stand round us, and the many frailties that attend and defile our best endeavours has greatly the advantage of the infidel in this case. For the bible, which we believe to be the word of God, is the book of his grace, and there he has promised favour to the upright, he has taught us what a door of mercy he has opened for repentance, under our returning frailties, and what compassionate allowances he will make for the transgressions and failings, and lamented weaknesses of those who are in the main, sincere and diligent in their service of God; and it is in these promises the christian finds hope: But the light of nature and reason, which is the only hope and refuge of the deist, can never give solid rest and peace to his soul, under a sense of these frailties; for it cannot assure him that God will make any of these allowances, or that he will accept of any repentance.

The great and holy God, who sees all the vicious turnings of our spirits, whether we be deists or christians, and who beholds all the criminal inclinations, and false biasses which our minds have indulged, can discover all these in a glaring light to the eye of our souls, and lay us under the evident and heavy condemnation of our own consciences. Now when this is done, the deist being made deeply sensible of the defects and flaws of his own sincerity, throughout the course of his life, has nothing to plead or hope but unpromised and uncovenanted mercy: The christian sees and confesses himself guilty before God, repents

and mourns over his wanderings, and flies to the promises of mercy, and to the covenant of hope. *If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who can stand? But there is forgiveness with thee: Ps. cxxx. 3, 4. And the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin; 1 John i. 7.* But the deist has no such promise of favourable allowances, no hope in this atoning blood: He has renounced the sacred promises of grace, and refused the blood that was shed to make atonement.

*Question VI.* Are there not some deists, that have taken more pains in the search of true religion, than the greatest part of christians have ever done? Christians in our age, receive the religion of Christ, from their education, they owe their christianity to their being born in Great Britain, in this age of the world, when the whole nation is christian: But the deists are the men of enquiry into the grounds and reasons of what they believe. If sincerity, in the practice of a true religion, which came to us by education, will save one from the wrath of God, and yet the same degree of sincerity in our enquiries after truth, will not save another, if he happen to mistake the true religion, and light upon a false one, then it is entirely owing to chance, or to pure divine favour, that a man happens to be saved: There is no worthiness nor honour belongs to the christian, that he is in the right way, nor has he any merit above the infidel. At least, may it not be justly so pronounced concerning those christians, who never searched into the grounds of their religion, but took it up entirely from their education?

*Answer I.* One might reply to this reasoning partly by way of concession, and say thus, if this objection were left in its full force, so far as to ascribe the salvation of christians, to pure divine favour without merit, I do not see any evil consequence from it: For it is the design of God in his gospel, that man should not have the praise or merit of his own salvation ascribed to himself, but that *he that glories should glory in the Lord; 1 Cor. i. 31.* and that all the honour of our salvation and happiness should be attributed to God alone. We are all sinners in the sight of God: *There is none righteous, no, not one; Rom. iii. 10.* And if by the secret methods of his providence and special favour, he has trained up some persons in the knowledge and belief of the truth, without much enquiry or labour of their own in searching for it, and if he has by his own Spirit wrought powerfully in our hearts, and made this religion, in which they were educated, effectual to change their corrupt natures, to form their hearts and lives to holiness, and to fit them for the heavenly world, let his name and his grace be for ever adored. *Who is it has made us to differ? What have we, even the best of us, that we have not received? 1 Cor. iv. 7.* This is the language which the word of God teaches: For the time and place and family wherein

we were born, all the outward and inward helps we enjoy, all the advantages which we have above others, are owing entirely to rich and free mercy, and therefore God will not allow his people any room or ground for boasting.

It is evident to the world, and must be universally acknowledged, that the great God, the Maker and Lord of All, may appoint the birth and habitation of his creatures in what nation, in what household, on what spot of earth he pleases: and yet this very appointment will make a vast difference between some mortals and others in their advantages for knowledge and salvation. Now if this almighty and sovereign God in the course of his providence please to give me a birth in Great Britain, where the religion of Jesus is professed, and give birth to others in the wilds of America, where the true God is not known, what injustice is there in his conduct: If he train me up by the divine impressions of his grace, in the religion which I received from my christian fathers, to a fitness for the heavenly world, while the American savages are left almost as ignorant as the brutes, through their own universal neglect to improve their reasoning powers, *who shall say unto God, what dost thou?* Let my soul adore him with all humble thankfulness, and with ardent love for his distinguishing mercy, and leave the *Judge of all the earth* to account with the Americans: He will do them no wrong.

II. But, in the second place, I answer, however some deists may have been more laborious in their search after the true religion, than several christians have been, who have believed the gospel at first because their parents taught them so, yet I believe it will never be found that any deist, who has renounced the gospel, has arisen to those degrees of sincere piety, in his devotion toward God, and sincere love to his fellow-creatures, as these christians have arrived at. Doubtless, there are many believers in the name of Christ, who were never acquainted with any of the principles or objections of the deists, who never had any scruple in their thoughts about the truth of christianity, and never troubled themselves to search whether their religion were true or no: But the grace of God has made the belief of this religion in which they were born and educated, effectual to change their hearts, to sanctify their natures, to make them hate every sin, to draw out their love to God and their neighbour, to fill them with every virtue and every pious disposition, and to fit them for the sacred employment and the blessedness of heaven: And this is an inward, a solid and rational testimony and evidence of the divine original of christianity, as I have proved at large in the several first discourses both of my first and second volumes of sermons, published some years ago. This inward experience of the sanctifying power of the gospel, especially where it rises to a high degree, is a just, and effectual, and constraining conviction to



them, that the gospel of Christ is true. *He that believeth has the witness in himself*; 1 John v. 10. These christians, even though of the meaner and lower rank of understanding, arrive at such divine virtues as the deist with all his pretences to reason and knowledge never arrived at. Thus the great God honours the sacred religion, that he has given to men with the produce of that sincere piety, in plain, humble, and unlearned christians, which is not to be found amongst infidels; hereby their faith is confirmed, and hereby they are fitted for the heavenly felicity.

III. But, to cut off all other pretences at once, I think we may dare to affirm, as I have intimated before, that if any disbeliever of the gospel of Christ in Great Britain, with his utmost labour of soul, with great watchfulness, humility, and fervent prayer, seeks after the knowledge of the truth by all proper means, and at the same time practises with an exact and careful conscience, all the duties that he can find out by the light of reason, he will certainly be led into *the belief of the truth*: He will have such abundant evidence of the gospel of Christ given to him, as shall turn him from an infidel into a christian, and I give these reasons for it:

Reason I. God himself has promised in his word, that a diligent, humble, and faithful enquirer after true wisdom, that is, religion, and the knowledge of God, shall not be disappointed, but shall obtain his end. This is the evident purport and intent of several scriptures cited before; Prov. ii. 4. *If thou searchest for wisdom as for hidden treasures, and liftest up thy voice to the Lord for understanding, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord.* Ec. ii. 26. *For he giveth to those that are good in his sight, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.* Luke xi. 9, 13. *Seek and ye shall find, ask and it shall be given you.* John vii. 17. *If any man will do the will of God, then shall he know concerning the doctrine of Christ, whether it be of God or no.* James i. 5. *If any man want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* The blessed God who makes such promises as these, remembers them well, and will not fail to accomplish them to the sincere enquirer, and the humble petitioner.

II. God has confirmed the religion of his Son Jesus, with the awful sanction of a most dreadful curse, *He that believeth not shall be damned*; Mark xvi. 16. Now an infinitely gracious God will not suffer a humble, zealous and honest enquirer after himself, in the midst of gospel light, to run into such pernicious errors as to incur an eternal curse. His mercy therefore will certainly irradiate humble and sincere souls with a heavenly sunbeam, and effectually secure them from final unbelief and dam-

nation. It is God himself has wrought in them this honesty of heart, this sincere zeal of enquiry, and he will fulfil the work of his own hands and lead them into truth and peace.

III. The light of nature, which the deist professes to take for his guide, if duly followed, will certainly lead him to believe the gospel: For it will powerfully incline a honest mind to believe, that a religion which is so worthy of all the perfections of God, and so suited to all the necessities of man, a religion so divinely attested by prophecies before, and by miracles afterward, and surrounded with other powerful arguments, must needs come from God; since the light of nature assures him, that the God of truth will never suffer such heavenly seals to be set to a falsehood or an imposture: For if it be an imposture it comes from hell, and God would never let it bear the manifest signatures of heaven. Upon this view of things, it appears to me pretty clear and conclusive, that a deist in Great Britain who is really sincere, and persevering in his enquiries after the truth, will sooner or later become a christian, and that the mercy of God will never suffer him to live and die an infidel.

*Question VII.* "Do all unbelievers in all ages, fall under that sentence of damnation?" If we had lived in Judea in the days of Christ, and had seen the miracles with our eyes which Christ is said to have wrought, we might have perhaps found evidence enough in them to have believed the gospel: Surely that dreadful curse, which you speak of, can be pronounced only against those who resisted their eye-sight, and would not believe it: But the case is quite altered at this distance of time and place, when we have only an account of these wonders delivered down to us in books, which were said to be done almost seventeen hundred years ago\*.

To this I answer, it must be granted, that as several of the miracles of Christ were performed in the sight of multitudes, so those persons who had the happiness to be eye and ear-witnesses of them, in that one respect, have some advantage for faith beyond those who live in distant ages: But if we should enter into a detail of this enquiry, it may be we should find that the men of letters in this nation, and in our day, are favoured with more advantages for faith, and several other springs of evidence which compensate the loss of that one: And upon the whole survey and just balance of things, comparing their times with ours, perhaps it would appear, that we in this age have equal or superior reasons for the belief of the gospel, be-

\* See an undeniable and convincing proof of the "Reasonableness of Believing the History of the Gospel," though written so long ago, and the "Unreasonableness of Infidelity," in an excellent sermon lately published by Doctor William Harris.

yond what most of them enjoyed, who lived in the time of Christ or his apostles. To this end let us attend to the following considerations :

I. Though there were several persons blessed with the actual sight of many of these miraculous works, yet there were also multitudes who lived in the age of miracles, who perhaps never had opportunity to be actual eye-witnesses of one single miracle wrought by Christ or his apostles. *Herod had long desired it*, and yet it was not granted him ; Luke ix. 9. Many there were who asked our Saviour to *shew them a sign from heaven*, but he did not think proper to gratify their humour, nor was it fit that signs and wonders should be made too common : Sometimes he reproveth their curiosity, and calls them *a wicked and adulterous generation*, probably because he knew their obstinate and cavilling temper, that they derided his preaching, and did not give due credit to the many undeniable reports that were made concerning his miracles, and therefore he would shew them no new ones. Observe farther, that as there were many in the days of Christ, who never beheld one of his miracles actually wrought, so it is most probable there were multitudes who never saw above one or two of them : There were but comparatively few of the same persons, who happened to be often actually present, and were eye-witnesses of very many of these different wonders ; for though they *were not done in a corner*, yet they were wrought in distant towns and villages, where not a quarter of the same persons could be present. As for their knowledge of the rest of these miracles, which their own eyes saw not, it must be conveyed to them by the report and testimony of others : And perhaps these reports might not be always so just, so exact, so authentic as the narratives which we enjoy, because these were committed to writing by the apostles themselves who saw them.

It is probable also that few of those persons who lived in the days of our Saviour, had ever so large, so particular and so complete an account, as we have of all the various miracles which are transmitted down to us in the histories of the gospel. If then many of them never saw one miracle, if those who saw one or two, must come at the knowledge of the rest of the miracles of Christ the same way that we do, that is, by report, and if we have a much larger and more complete account of them, than most of the Jews were favoured with, and that by as sure and credible a report, that is, by the writing of eye-witnesses, I would humbly enquire whether this may not compensate, if not over-balance their advantage who lived in that age, even though they saw a miracle or two with their own eyes. Surely all that collection of the miraculous works of Christ, and the gifts of the blessed Spirit to the apostles, whereby wonders were wrought

in several nations for many successive years, which is conveyed down to us by early and authentic records, which are not charged with forgery, and which are the surest preservers of ancient facts, may at this distance of time, lay as strong a foundation for our faith, and give us as just an evidence to the gospel of Christ, as the two or three miracles, or perhaps some single one, which was the most that might be seen by a great part of their contemporaries.

The same spirit of cavil and unbelief, which reigns now in the hearts of men, and makes so warm an opposition to the light which attends the gospel in our day, would, in all probability, have vented itself even under the very blaze and splendor of these divine operations. They could have found some philosophical contrivance for the solution of the heavenly wonder; they could find reasons to doubt of some of the circumstances of the fact; they could suspect that the blind or deaf, or dead persons did not pass under sufficient scrutiny before he was healed or raised, that they might be assured he was really deaf, blind or dead. And thus a miracle or two would not have convinced their own eye-sight. In short, it is too evidently true, in every age, what our blessed Saviour says in his age, that they *who will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rose from the dead*; Luke xvi. 31. But it is time to proceed to the second consideration, to shew that the men of enquiry in our day, have probably as strong an evidence of the truth of the gospel, as they might have had if they had lived in the days of Christ.

II. Let it be observed, that there were some predictions of the ancient prophets relating to the gospel, which have been fulfilled since our Saviour went to heaven: Particularly the unbelief of the Jews, and their being rejected out of God's favour, and the multitudes of Gentiles flocking in to Christ. There have been some prophecies spoken by our Saviour himself, which have been since accomplished in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the calling of the Gentile church, the persecution of the apostles, the crucifixion of St. Peter, &c. There have been also other predictions of the apostles and apostolic men fulfilled since that time, viz. the nature, the principles and the rise of anti-christ, which was foretold both by St. Paul and St. John, the binding of St. Paul at Jerusalem, the universal dearth in the days of Claudius Cæsar, both predicted by Agabus, &c. All which joined together, give an additional strength to the evidence of christianity in our day.

III. Reflect also on the amazing success of the gospel among the nations: How it gained surprizing victories over great men and philosophers, how it made its way through armies and palaces, how it triumphed over the opposition of enemies,

But I reply, that this is not true in fact, concerning the greatest part of mankind: For howsoever some few of their wisest men might have this opinion, yet the bulk of the heathen world always did, and do to this day worship the various idols themselves as so many gods, and disown the one true God. Ask the old Greek and Roman writers, ask the travellers of modern ages, they will agree to tell you, that the people generally worship and believe this variety of gods.

Perhaps it will be said, that none of them could be so sottish, as to adore the very images of gold or silver, wood or stone, as their gods, but they adored some divine power, which they supposed to inhabit those images, after their fancied consecration of them. But the prophet Isaiah will answer, that the *smith and the carpenter* exert their labour and skill, they make the figure of a man, out of a mass of metal, or the trunk of a tree, they fall down to it, and worship it, they pray to it, and say, deliver me, for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood better, so brutish are they and ignorant; Is. xli. 6, 7. xlv. 17, 19. I add yet further, that others of them who were not so grossly stupid, as to worship the very metal, the wood or stone, yet, they paid adoration to Bacchus and Mars, to Juno and Venus, to fabulous deities or mere names, or to devils, whom they supposed to dwell in these images; but the only true God was far from their thoughts: And is this a religion worthy of the Majesty of heaven, or fit for him to accept at the hands of creatures whom he has endued with reason?

And as for those few among them, who have acknowledged the one true God, even their wise men and philosophers, they complied with national idolaters, they held the truth in unrighteousness, that is, they unrighteously restrained the truth, which was in their consciences, or concealed it amidst all their unrighteousness of practice. They acted contrary to the light and dictates of their own consciences, and yielded themselves servants to the vile and idolatrous customs of their country, in many of their ridiculous and impious rites and ceremonies: They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the images of birds, beasts, and fishes, and worshipped creatures even while they knew the Creator. And can these men have any claim to the favour of God, who would not dare to bear a testimony to his name and glory, among idolaters? These men, who when they know God, they glorified him not as God, but turned his glory into a lie; Rom. i. 21, 23. As for the nations who own the one true God, which are chiefly the Jews and the Mahometans, the various ceremonies, with which they now worship him, cannot be supposed to be agreeable to his majesty, or to render the worshippers the objects of his delight; let us consider them distinctly.

The nation of the Jews has had the gospel of Christ preached to them, but they have put the mercy of God far from them,

and abandoned his salvation; Acts xiii. 46. Their forms of worship, though they were once appointed by God himself, yet their term and season is expired, and they are now divinely abolished. Besides they practise to this day what their fathers were guilty of in the days of Christ, viz. *They make void the commandments of God, by the multitude of their own traditions*; Mat. xv. 8. and superstitious rites which they have invented. God has directly cast them off; and rejected them, because they rejected his Son Jesus; they were once his beloved people, but now are *not his people, nor beloved*, for they persisted in their hatred of the beloved Son of God, and most of them have conceived the utmost aversion to the name of Jesus.

The Mahometans own the true God, and practise many duties of morality: But how ridiculous and irrational is a great part of their religion or worship? What a silly book is the "Alcoran," which is their bible? God requires a reasonable service; Rom. xii. 1. But how many absurd fooleries are mingled with their articles of faith and practice? Where shall we find any national religion besides the christian, that hath the countenance and support of reason; With what wild and impudens fables do the writings of Mahomet, and the tales of his followers, furnish and fill the minds of the Turks and Persians, in Europe and Asia, and the Moors and barbarians, in Africa? And what numberless tenets and rites are found in their religion, which have no manner of evidence or defence, from the light of nature or common reason: After all, if there are any persons found among all these nations, that have been, or shall be accepted of God, it is not their various ceremonies, or superstitious fopperies, that are the objects of his delight. These are rather, so many errors and faults in their religion, and stand in need of forgiveness. The only just ground of hope, that any of them can have of divine acceptance, arises not from their own ceremonies, but from their observance of some precepts of the light of nature, some broken traditions of divine revelation, some fragments of the gospel, and pardoning grace, delivered down from Noah, Abraham or Moses, or derived from their acquaintance with the revealed religion of the Jews or Christians, as I shall shew under the next question.

II. If God had a mind to accept the various religions, which men have invented, and would delight himself in their diverse fantastick forms of worship, why did he ever reveal to men any peculiar religion at all? Why did he appoint sacrifices to Adam? Why further discoveries to Noah? Why circumcision to Abraham? Why a variety of rites to the Jews under Moses? And why did he manifest himself in the last place, by Jesus Christ his Son, and appoint a religion that surpasses them all, to be preached to all nations? I take these several revelations now for granted, since it would be too long to prove them here.

Now, since he hath revealed peculiar ways of pleasing and honouring him, and obtaining his favour, and that to various ages and nations, it is evident, that he did not design to give a loose to the wild fancies of mankind, to contrive a religion, each for himself, and to resolve to be pleased with any superstitions which they should invent. If the servants of a family, or the subjects or officers of a kingdom, had special forms of service and duty assigned them, in order to please their superior, surely no prince, nor master, could be pleased with their humorous and fantastic pretences, to please or gratify him in another way, under the neglect of his own appointments.

However, this is sufficient for us, that since we in Great Britain, have a divine revelation so well attested, we are not left to our own fancy, to invent a worship for ourselves: Nor will the great God ever be pleased with those, who reject his divine contrivances, and counsels in the gospel, and pretend to find new ways of their own to obtain his favour. The very pretence is too assuming and presumptuous for a creature ever to hope for acceptance by it in the sight of God his Creator.

*Question IX.* But have not heathens and infidels been saved as well as Jews and christians? Did not Job and his four friends in Arabia, Melchisedec king of Salem, and Jethro the priest of Midian, and Cornelius a heathen soldier, a centurion in Cesarea all find acceptance with God, though they were Gentiles or heathens, and worshipped him in a different way, from Abraham and Moses, and the nation of the Jews? Did not God sufficiently shew his approbation of them and their religion, though some of them lived near enough to the families of Abraham and Israel and might have acquainted themselves with their instituted way of worship? And doth not Peter's speech to Cornelius confirm this? Read the story; Acts x. 1, 2, 3, 31, 34, 35. *There was a certain man in Cesarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision, evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thy alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Then Peter being sent for opened his mouth, and said, of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. Why then man not a philosopher in China, a heathen in America, or a deist in Britain, if he follows the dictates of the light of nature, worshipping the true God, and practising the common duties of morality, find acceptance with God?*

*Answer.* The last part of this question, has, I think, a sufficient answer given to it under the former questions, when proved that the mere light of nature is not sufficient to secur

salvation to sinful and fallen man. What further force is added to this objection by the instances of Job, Jethro, Melchisedec, Cornelius, &c. I shall endeavour to answer in the following propositions, and herein, declare my sentiments with freedom, "How far any of the heathens may hope for salvation, and how little hope there is for a modern deist enjoying the full light of christianity."

**Proposition I.** Since mankind have broken the laws of their Maker, and are become sinful creatures, and guilty before God, they have cut themselves off from all hope of obtaining his favour and final happiness, by the law of innocency. *There is none righteous, no, not one:* They are all fallen short of glory and immortality: Their own consciences, upon a just enquiry, must lay them under condemnation, *Every mouth is stopped, and all the world is become guilty before God*; Rom. iii. 10.

**II.** The light of nature which informed innocent man, that he must obey God in all things, may reach so far, as to inform sinful man, that he must repent of his transgressions, that he must endeavour after new obedience, with a persevering constancy; and it may direct him to apply himself, to seek forgiveness and acceptance with God, by humble and fervent prayer: But this light of nature cannot teach him to make atonement for sin, nor could ever assure any man, that his repentance shall be accepted so far as to obtain forgiveness\*. The utmost stretch of the light of nature, is well described in the practice and hope of the Ninevites, in the book of Jonah, chapter iii. verses 8, 9. *Let man neither eat nor drink, but be covered with sackcloth; that is Let him abstain from his usual refreshments and pleasures, and cry mightily unto God: Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way: Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* The hope of the light of nature, even in a repeating sinner, can reach no farther than, *a who can tell, whether God will accept it?*

**III.** Since the light of nature and reason, could not inform a guilty creature, what is necessary and sufficient to atone for sin, or appease the just anger and resentment of God against it, nor assure him, that an offended God would ever be reconciled to him, notwithstanding his repentance, it pleased God in his infinite mercy, to make a revelation or discovery of pardoning grace to our first parents, in and by some glorious Mediator or Saviour, and to tell them that this Saviour shall be *born of the woman, that he should destroy the works of the devil*, and relieve mankind from the curse and misery, in which the temptation of Satan, and their own guilt had involved them. This is the sense of the

\* See the "Insufficiency of Natural Religion," proved at large, in Mr. Thomas Halyburton's Excellent Treatise on the Subject, in quarto, and Mr. Nathaniel Taylor's "Preservative against Deism," first and second part, octavo.



five volumes, as it has been abundantly explained and proved by many writers, wherein God intended that the seed of the woman should be bruised on the serpent's heel, and that the serpent should crush the heel of the woman's seed. Upon the first sacrifices of beasts were instituted to preserve these two animals in the memory of man, and that God would punish the serpent, and that God would provide a sufficient sacrifice in his own time, to expiate sin.

It is very probable that God did not leave our first parents without some clearer explication of the first promise, some plainer notice of the intended grace, and of the future Saviour. It is likely, that he acquainted them with the person and nature, and degree of bloody sacrifices, and taught them more particularly in what manner to receive his mercy, and how to please him in other necessary parts of worship and duty. For we cannot suppose that God left mankind for almost two thousand years, to live upon the mere words of Gen. iii. 15. nor can we reasonably believe that Moses in so very short an abstract of the affairs of mankind before the flood, relates all the transactions that passed between God and man, nor all the revelations that God made to them of his grace, and the way of salvation by a Mediator.

IV. All the persons of the successive generations, which arose between Adam and Noah, might have learned the necessary lessons of duty and grace, from Adam and Eve, and from those of their posterity, who conversed with them; and this is very easy to be supposed, by reason of the length of life, with which mankind were favoured in that early age of the world.

V. As Noah had received by tradition from Adam, the divine lessons, so doubtless, he had them as it were confirmed and renewed to him by his frequent converses with God; wherein he received some further assurances of divine mercy, and further instructions in particular duties and privileges, viz. He was indulged to eat flesh, and to kill the beasts of the earth fit for food and sacrifice, by the clean beasts coming by sevens, and the unclean beasts coming by pairs, to be saved from the flood, if he did not know this before. Yet further, he received a command to eat no blood, and an order that the murderer of man should be put to death: And besides all this, he had God's covenant sealed to him, and his posterity by the rainbow.

VI. Noah being the second great patriarch, or father of all mankind, it is evident that the covenant of grace, or God's dispensation of mercy to sinful man, was revealed to all mankind the second time in and by him: For Noah was the progenitor of all men after the flood; and as he was a *preacher of righteousness*, doubtless he diffused this useful and important knowledge to

\* See Doctor William Harris's "Sermons on the Messiah," and his explication of this text; Gen. iii. 15. and Doctor Sherlock now bishop of London, in his discourses of the "Use and Intent of Prophecy," Discourse the third.

sons, and committed it to their care, to be conveyed to his posterity. Note, I shall call this the patriarchal religion to distinguish it from the Abrahamic, the Jewish and christian.

VII. Since the days of Noah, there has been no new or other revelation of the mercy of God, and the duty of men made universally to all mankind.

The revelation of further duties, which was made to Abraham, belonged only to his posterity, and did not oblige the rest of the nations to circumcision, &c. The further requirements of various duties and ceremonies, that were given to the Israelites by Moses, obliged only that one nation to the observance of them. Though it must be acknowledged, the other nations, who had communication with the family of Abraham, and the nation the Jews, had rich advantages for the knowledge, preservation, and practice of the religion of Noah, by their communication with the posterity of Abraham and Israel. The gospel of Christ, indeed, which was revealed near seventeen hundred years ago, requires the faith and obedience of all, to whom it is clearly known with clear evidence, whether Jews or gentiles; but I question whether it has been yet thus published to more than half of mankind. So that this truth still abides firm, that the religion of Noah was the last revelation made to the whole world.

VIII. From these considerations, it will follow, that whoever among men, between the days of Adam and Noah, believed and practised the religion of Adam, if they had no further revelation given them, were accepted of God: And whosoever between the days of Noah and this day, have practised the religion of Noah, if they have had no further revelation brought to them, have a plain and evident interest in the favour of God, and the blessings of salvation, according to the promises made to Adam and Noah, and the religion which was severally prescribed to them. Now here come in the hopes of grace and salvation for Melchisedec and his four friends in Arabia, for Melchisedec in the land of Canaan, for Jethro a priest or prince in Midian, for Cornelius a Roman Soldier in Cesarea, and perhaps for several persons of other nations who have been accepted of God, though they were not of the seed of Abraham, of the nation of Israel, nor ever heard of the gospel of Christ: The religion prescribed to Noah the second father of all mankind, is certainly sufficient for their pardon, and acceptance with God, supposing it to be the true religion which was ever prescribed to them.

Here I ask leave to tarry a little, and answer two or three objections, before I proceed to the ninth proposition.

*Objection I.* Does not St. Peter tell the elders of Israel when he had preached Christ to them; Acts iv. 12. That there is *not* salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven.

given amongst men, whereby we must be saved? And thence, some persons may infer, that the actual knowledge of the name of Christ, and faith in him, since his religion was instituted, are absolutely necessary for the salvation of all men. To this I answer,

First, That the apostle in this place, does not assert the actual knowledge of Christ, to be necessary to all men, but only, that there is but one Saviour provided for all men under heaven and that is Jesus Christ. Now as the patriarchs and the ancient Jews were saved by *Jesus of Nazareth*, and by virtue of his atonement, without knowing his name, and before he came into the world, so might those gentiles, if they maintained the substance of the patriarchal religion, be saved by the atonement of Christ, without the actual knowledge of his name. But I answer in the second place, That if the gentiles might be saved, by observing the patriarchal religion before the coming of Christ, they might also be saved by the same religion, where the name of Christ was never preached: For the coming, or not coming of Christ, can make no difference in the religion of those nations which never heard of it.

*Objection II.* But we do not read that Melchisedec or Cornelius, offered sacrifices as Noah did, or kept close in all parts of faith and practice to the religion of Noah.

*Answer I.* We read that Job and Jethro offered sacrifices; Job i. 5. Ex. xviii. 12. And it is very probable, that Melchisedec did so too; for though he was a priest of intercession, and prayed for Abraham, and blessed him, yet this does not at all forbid our belief of his receiving, and preserving the institution of sacrifices from his ancestor Noah: Whether Cornelius offered sacrifices or no, the scripture is silent.

And as for the other parts of Noah's faith and practice, as they were derived partly from reason, and partly from revelation, though they were lost among several nations in a few ages, yet it is very probable that they were conveyed down through several ages in some other nations, and especially among those who had any commerce with the Jews: For the chief thing, which the Jews themselves required of their proselytes of the gate, in order to their share of happiness in the world to come, was their conformity to the precepts of Noah. Those who practised them, were called the *devout* or religious *persons*, and the men *that feared God* in Acts xiii. 16, 43. and Acts xvii. 4, 17. among whom the apostles obtained the largest harvest of Gentile converts in their first preaching the gospel. And probably, these are the same precepts in the main which were enjoined by the apostles, in the xv. of Acts to the converted Gentiles, excepting only that sacrifices were omitted, since the great sacrifice of Christ was offered. Thus it is evident that Noah's religion was

in the main, kept alive in some of the Gentile nations, especially by such persons among them, as had most conversation with the Jews before their dispersion; and after their great dispersions by many captivities, there were several other persons among the Gentiles, who by this means got acquaintance with the true God, and the religion of the proselytes of the gate, which was the religion of Noah.

The expression of St. Peter concerning Cornelius; Acts x. 34. is very easily explained by this view of things. *Of a truth, I perceive God is no respecter of persons*, that is, I who was once involved in the common prejudices of my countrymen, and thought the Jews only were to be favoured, with the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, I am now convinced, that God does not respect men of one nation more than another, *but in every nation whether Jew or Gentile, he that fears God, and works righteousness*, that is, he who practises the duties of that religion which is prescribed to him, *is accepted of God*. St. Peter does not say, a man may be accepted in every religion, but only in every nation; for Cornelius was probably a believer and practiser of the patriarchal religion, and was in a saved state, and reconciled to God, though he did not know the peculiar means which procured that reconciliation.

You will say then, why was St. Peter sent to *speak words to him whereby he should be saved*? The plain meaning is, that Peter was sent to teach him those particular transactions of divine grace, and the doctrine of the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whereby God saves sinners; that by this means he might have clearer discoveries of his own acceptance, and be assisted in the ways of holiness, with incomparably more advantage and comfort, than ever he could have attained by following his imperfect notices of the patriarchal religion, and the precepts of Noah. As for the sacrifices and abstinence from blood, and things strangled, which were parts of Noah's religion, it is not certain, how far Cornelius knew, or complied with them; I therefore proceed to a second answer to the objection:

II. If through length of time, and the wide dispersion of some nations, and the negligence of their fathers, many of them lost some parts of the religion of their ancestor Noah, yet several of them, might retain the most substantial and necessary articles of it. If they practised sincere love to God, and trust in his mercy, through some expected, but unknown methods of reconciliation, together with sincere repentance for their sins, and diligence in their endeavours after holiness, we have reason to hope, that a gracious and condescending God would accept of their hearty desires and endeavours to please him, while they believed and practised according to the utmost degrees of the discovery of grace and duty, that ever were conveyed down to them. It is

God alone who is their Ruler and Judge : He knows, how much doctrine and duty is necessary, for the salvation of every man, under the particular dispensations and advantages he enjoys : His mercy will make favourable allowances, for what parts of the patriarchal religion they never learned, because their fathers had lost or neglected, or forgot them : And he knows how far to make allowances of forgiveness also, for what tolerable follies and lesser superstitions, they or their fathers have added, if it has risen from an inward sincere and mistaken desire to please him. But God alone is a sufficient judge in this case, and we must leave them to his judgment.

*Objection III.* But in the New Testament the scripture does not seem to speak of the heathens, as having any knowledge of divine revelation, or as practising the religion revealed to Adam, or Noah, or Abraham, but as left to the light of nature, to the law written in their hearts, and to their own consciences, accusing or excusing them ; Rom. ii. 15.

*Answer.* It is so indeed with the bulk of the heathen world, for most of them seemed by that time, when the New Testament was written, to have forgotten the religion of Noah : But then, consider what a wretched state or condition it is, in which the scripture represents the bulk of the Gentile nations, because by their own and their fore-fathers' negligence, they had lost all the revelations of grace. They are filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, full of envy, murder, malice, haters of God, without natural affection, covenant-breakers, implacable, unmerciful ; Rom. i. 29—31. Given up to work uncleanness with greediness ; Eph. iv. 19. Strangers to all the covenants of promise, without hope, and without God in the world ; chapter ii. 12. And if amongst this wretched herd of sinners, there should happen to be here and there one in a thousand, that humbly followed every glimmering track of divine light in his own conscience, and earnestly entreated the favour of God, I shall account for such a man's hopes in the tenth proposition.

IX. As for those families or nations, to whom God has made any new and further revelations of his mind and will, beyond the religion of Noah, and enjoined other duties upon them, they can have no hope of acceptance with God, unless they comply with these new revelations, and perform the duties enjoined. Let us consider them particularly : If the seed of Abraham, who received an evident and authentic account of Abraham's religion, utterly refuse circumcision, or renounced their faith in the seed of Abraham as a Saviour, they must account for it, to God their Judge, nor do I see how they can claim his favour. If the Jews, before the coming of their Messiah, renounced the law of Moses, and rebelled against the discoveries of grace and duty, that were made to their nation, I see but little grounds for their

hope. If the Jews or Gentiles, who have ever heard the preaching of the gospel of Christ, in its clear light and evidence, renounce the gospel and this Saviour, and rebel against this grace, I cannot find any claim, that they can have to the forgiveness of sins, or to their acceptance with God and eternal life.

X. Where there is an entire and invincible ignorance of all God's appointed methods of grace, both patriarchal, Jewish and christian, if there should be any person humbly asking forgiveness of God, and diligent in following every dictate of his own conscience, and longing after some further discoveries of divine grace and his own duty, I will not deny but that God may condescend to save him, through the extensive merits of the Mediator, by sovereign and unpromised mercy; though he cannot claim the pardon of his sins or acceptance with God, because he has no revelation of grace made to him. Or if God see it necessary to acquaint him with any explicit methods of his grace, in order to his salvation, I am persuaded, wheresoever he finds such a sincere soul, he will inwardly illuminate him, by his own Spirit of revelation, or will send an angel or an apostle to him, as he did to Cornelius, to *speak words to him, whereby he shall be saved*; Acts xi. 14. And I have given this as one reason of it before, viz. because, if there can be found any such humble sincere seeker after God, it is God himself has wrought this religious temper in the heart, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands.

XI. But the modern deists, who are obstinate in their infidelity, and the apostates in our age and nation, who have renounced their faith, can take no manner of sanctuary under the examples of these men, Job, Jethro, Melchisedec, and Cornelius; nor can they borrow a grain of ease to their consciences, nor one glimpse of hope from all the concessions I have made in favour of the heathen nations: For they have much clearer light manifested to them, than any of the persons I have been speaking of, either in ancient or modern times, and some of them at least, seem to wink against the sun-beams, content to dwell in darkness, and fond of heathenism. I would ask any of our English infidels this plain question, Whether Cornelius himself could have claimed or expected acceptance with God and salvation, if he had refused to believe, and obey the doctrines and duties of the religion, which God revealed to him, by the means of an angel and an apostle? And if they themselves abuse so glorious a light, as shines among them in Great Britain, not only Job and Melchisedec, and Cornelius, but even the poor Muscovites and Laplanders, and all the blindest part of the heathen world, will rise up against them in the great day; even Sodom and Gomorrah, the negroes and hottentots of Africa, and the wild American savages, will stand in judgment against them, and condemn

them. Those who have been, as it were, *exalted to heaven*, as Capernaum and Bethsaida were, in the discoveries of the gospel, and yet obstinately reject it, what can they expect but the fate and sentence of Capernaum and Bethsaida, that is, *to be thrust down to hell*, without pity or hope of pardon? Methinks, I feel a pain at my heart, when I am forced to use such language. But *knowing the threatenings and terrors of the Lord*, we endeavour to *persuade men*; 2 Cor. v. 11. that they would not oblige him to the terrible execution of them. O may divine light and preventing grace, overpower their chosen darkness, and lead them captive to the *obedience of faith*, and thereby to everlasting glory!

*Question X.* Suppose a man has taken great and sincere pains in searching into the evidences of the christian religion, suppose him heartily desirous to receive conviction of the truth, attentive to the force of every argument, and engaged in daily supplications to God, to lead him into the right way of salvation; and yet, after all, he solemnly declares, that the evidences, at present, arise no higher in his judgment, than to a mere probability: Suppose he can get no further than just to say, "I do rather think the gospel true than false:" Is such a one bound to practise christianity?

*Answer.* Yes, by all means: And that for these three reasons:

I. In such sort of questions, where the truth and evidence depend much upon matters of fact, which were done in past ages, and distant nations, such as ancient miracles and prophecies, &c. we cannot arise to such a natural or mathematical certainty, as we may in questions about things present, which are the objects of our senses, or about propositions in geometry, where our reason sees the strongest proof and undeniable demonstration. In such questions, therefore, as the ancient prophecies and miracles, which support the truth of the Jewish or the christian religion, we can arrive only at a moral certainty, by the use of our reasoning powers on these evidences: This moral certainty, is built on such a degree of evidence, that it is hardly possible in the nature of things, that the contested proposition should not be true. It is with this moral certainty, the generality of men in England believe there is a pope at Rome, that there is a king of Spain, or that they make fine silks in China, or that king George reigns in Great Britain. Now, if our evidence rises but to a probability, it ought certainly to influence our practice, since a moral certainty, which is all that I here plead for, is but the highest degree of this kind: We do not expect demonstrations in such a case, though the assent sometimes is so just and so strong, that, in many cases, it may be well called assurance. We may boldly and truly say, we are sure,

hat there is such a country as China, such a city as Rome; we are sure, there was such a man as king Henry the eighth of England, and Alexander of Greece; we are sure there was such a person as Jesus Christ in Judea, that he wrought miracles to prove his divine mission, and that he taught a doctrine which came from God.

II. In a great part of the actions, which we perform in human life, we go upon much lesser probability, and think we have sufficient ground to act without a full assurance: We go to visit our friends at an appointed hour, because it is probable, we shall meet them at home: We travel from place to place, because it is probable, we may find the persons we seek, and do the business we design: We send to market for food, because it is probable, that flesh and herbs are there waiting to be sold: We make bargains about goods which we never saw, because it is probable, these goods are worth our money, and will be conveyed to us: We run great risks by sea and land, we venture our substance, and even life itself, across the ocean, and through a thousand dangers, upon mere probabilities: If therefore, it is but a probable thing, that the christian religion be true, it is the undoubted duty and interest of every wise man, to endeavour to secure the salvation, which the christian religion proposes by the practice of all its appointments: For if we neglect it, even according to our own opinion, it is probable, we shall be forever miserable; and if we practise it, it is probable, we shall be saved: And the very probability of securing infinite happiness, and of escaping infinite distress, is sufficient to set a wise man heartily to work.

III. There is no doubt, but, in the primitive times, there were many, both Jews and heathens, who were not arrived at a complete certainty, and full assurance of the truth of the christian religion, at first, when they professed it; but the arguments, on the side of the gospel, seemed, in their judgment, to be stronger than those against it, and therefore they embraced the religion of Christ: This is manifest from several of the writings of the apostles, wherein they endeavour to establish young and doubtful converts in a firmer belief of the gospel, and to guard them against wavering. Many of these came afterwards to be firm and established christians, confessors, and martyrs for the truth, and sealed it with their blood. The light of evidence, which shines round the gospel, though it be great and glorious in itself, yet to a dim eye, or to a man but half awakened, may appear like the dusky twilight, or the faint and early dawn of the morning, but just discovering the path to happiness. Yet let the honest traveller to immortality, pursue his way by this feeble light; it is the best guide he has; let him not lie still or loiter, because he does not discern his path, with an indubitable assurance, nor see his way surrounded with meridian splendora.



It is sufficiently manifest, even to these doubting souls, that all other religions which pretend to revelation, fall vastly short of the excellencies of christianity; and that the gospel is far preferable to all of them, both as to its own inward worth, and to its outward evidences. If natural religion appear never so excellent in their eyes, this very religion of nature is all included in the religion of Christ. And if they have but a glimpse of evidence for the gospel, reason itself would require the practice of it; since it is an additional ground for their hope of divine favour, agreeable to reason and superadded to the light of nature. And if, after all, their belief of the gospel should prove a mistake, and the religion of nature be the only truth, yet they can never imagine the God of nature, will condemn them for adding faith in Jesus Christ to the religion of nature, since it had probable evidences to support it. Let persons, therefore, who are in these circumstances, together with their practice of natural religion, trust in Christ, and obey the gospel. Let them proceed in their honest search into the evidences of christianity: Let them love and value this religion as far as they see it to be true: Let them pray earnestly for increasing light and conviction of the truth, and not nourish their doubts and multiply their scruples, by a wanton curiosity, or a cavilling spirit. Let them *do the will* of Christ, as far as they know it, that, according to his promise, they may know, more assuredly, *that this doctrine is of God*; John vii. 17. I can hardly suppose that such a humble, sincere supplicant, and zealous enquirer into the truth of God, shall be left to continue year after year, and to live and die in so fluctuating and doubtful a state of mind.

If I had lived in this frame of soul, and should be suddenly seized with mortal sickness, I would not only trust in the infinite mercies of God, as I was passing into the unseen world, but I would keep fast the little hold that I had of Jesus, the Saviour. A merciful God, who has no where forbid sinners the use of a Mediator, would never abandon and condemn me, for my sense of my own unworthiness to appear in his holy presence, and for making use of the mediation of such a person, who has the best characters, and pretences to the honour of that blessed office. But on the other hand, if God has indeed appointed one only Mediator between himself and his sinful creature man, and if he has given me some feeble knowledge of his name and office, and yet I refuse to accept of his interest, because I have not full assurance of it, and will venture into the immediate presence of God, without him, I should have just reason to fear a terrible repulse, and an everlasting exclusion from all the blessings of his love.

*SECT. IV.—General Exhortations to Christians, derived from the foregoing Discourse.*

All our reasoning and argument should tend to practice

If we are christians, and profess the faith of Jesus, we must cheerfully receive *exhortations* as well as *doctrine*.

**Exhortation I.** Is it of such infinite importance, to know which is the true religion, whereby we may please God and obtain eternal happiness, "then christians, let our hearts be filled with gratitude, and our lips with praise, that God has brought us up in the knowledge of the truth." We are here in a state of probation for eternity: The race is set, the goal is fixed, the prize appointed, and the various rules are divinely prescribed, by which we must conduct ourselves in this important race. Happy are those mortals, to whom God has made known the nature of this contest, the appointed laws of it, and the glorious prize. We can never sufficiently adore and bless the name of our God, who has brought us into being, in such a nation, and in such an age, wherein the gospel of Christ is published, that gospel, which contains all these momentous discoveries.

What is it but rich and peculiar grace, that has appointed our birth in Great Britain, where the name of Christ and his gospel are known, while millions of our fellow-creatures, made of the same flesh and blood, are travelling onwards to eternity, with few or none of these advantages? O! why was not I born among the wild and brutal nations of Africa, where they know neither themselves, nor their Creator? Where they are not taught, nor have ever learned their own apostacy from God, and their necessity of a Saviour? Why was not my soul united to a human body, in the midst of the American wilderness? Why am not I one of those fierce and ignorant savages, who know nothing of the dignity of human nature, nor have any acquaintance with the true God, their Creator and their Judge? And yet they are hastening onward, as fast as days and hours can convey them, into an invisible and eternal state, utterly ignorant of that heaven, or that hell, which awaits all that depart thence: Who is it that has made me to differ? What is it but divine sovereignty and rich mercy, that has appointed my station in the land of christian knowledge? Is it not all owing to the free and unmerited love of the great God, that he has made such an amazing distinction between me and others? They are making haste into eternity as well as I; but their way before them is all darkness, for they have lost the ancient divine light given to their ancestors of old: And when they pass from this world into another, they must venture in the dark, and without any clear and solid hope; for this is the character of the bulk of the heathen world, that they are *without God*, without Christ, and *without hope*, both in this world, and in that which is to come. What an I do but stand still and adore that rich mercy, that has conferred upon me so vast and so distinguishing a privilege that *reaches into the eternal world?*

Come, *bless the Lord with me*, all ye happy souls, and *highly-favoured* of God! who have been led into the knowledge of the gospel, from your younger years, and educated in the christian faith. Happy youths! who are not only born in such a land of light as Great Britain, but have enjoyed the blessing of religious parents, who have taken care to instruct you, in the great things of your salvation. You have had your tender minds impressed with christianity betimes, and stamped with the divine religion of Jesus. Like young Timothy, *from your very childhood, you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise to salvation*; 2 Tim. iii. 15. Favourite creatures! who have been nursed up in the knowledge of your Creator, from your very cradles, and who have imbibed *the words of truth, and the doctrine according to godliness*. Happy souls, indeed, who have been preserved, by divine providence and grace, from sucking in those prejudices against the gospel of Christ, which have been the poison and the destruction of multitudes in our age! *O bless the Lord with a joyful heart, and awake all the powers of nature within you to bless this God of grace, who has cast your lot in a pleasant situation, in a land of knowledge, in a family of divine light and mercy*. He has taught you betimes his law and his gospel, his justice and his grace; he has let you see your guilt and misery, and your effectual relief. As for many other families and other nations, *they have not known them, praise ye the Lord*; Ps. cxlvii. 20.

II. "Since you have been divinely favoured, with the knowledge of the right way to heaven, walk in it with all holy diligence and care." Since the rules of this sacred contest, for the prize of glory, have been revealed to you, and set before you, awaken all your powers into activity, and strive *that ye may obtain the crown*. It is not enough, that you know the right path which leads to heaven, if you are not engaged heartily in the christian race. A mere knowledge of the laws of it, will never bring you to the goal, nor entitle you to the heavenly prize. He that would be crowned must fight, must run, must strive, and exert all the powers of nature, according to the methods prescribed by divine grace, that he may be found an overcomer.

List yourselves, therefore, under the banner of Jesus, *the Captain of your Salvation*, by a most solemn profession of his name, and devotion of yourselves to him. Mortify all your irregular appetites; subdue your dear and darling sins; resist every temptation to iniquity; *keep under your bodies*, and every bodily inclination, that opposes the purity and perfection of the spirit. Let no pride or envy, no malice or revenge, no sensuality or intemperance, no cruel, or covetous, or selfish principles reign in you. *Abstain from fleshly lusts, that war against the soul*; 1 Pet. ii. 11. *Every man that strives for the mastery, must be*

*temperate in all things.* And if the ancient Grecians practised this self-denial to obtain a corruptible and withering crown, much more should christians, in their pursuit of one that is *incorruptible*, and which *never fades away*; 1 Cor. ix. 25. Run with such vigour in this holy race, as though there could but one of you obtain the prize, *forgetting the things that are behind*, stretch forward still, with the prize in your eye, till you lay hold of it; Phil. iii. 13. Let no hardships discourage you, no enemies or dangers sink your spirits. He that holds out *to the end, the same shall be saved*; Mat. xxiv. 13.

Since the gospel of happiness is set before you, in so clear a light, be zealous to comply with all the holy commands of it. Give yourselves up to Jesus, as your Saviour and your Lord. Trust in his atonement for the pardon of all your iniquities: Commit your souls to the conduct of his word, and to the sanctifying influences of his Spirit: Imitate the blessed pattern of so great a Leader, and follow him who has marked out the way to life and immortality. *If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience against the law of Moses, received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Son of God, and has been published, and conveyed down to us from those that heard it*; Heb. ii. 2—4.

Let us not deceive ourselves with vain hopes, and make our knowledge of all the disputed points of christianity and the mere orthodoxy of our opinions, the ground of our expectation of future glory. Let us not indulge so gross a mistake, as to put mere notions in the room of practice. An enlightened head was never designed to serve instead of a sanctified heart, neither in this world, nor that to come. No forms of religion, though they are divine, no doctrines, no articles of faith, no outward rites and ceremonies of worship, though revealed and prescribed by God himself, will answer for the defect of a holy life. Could you know the glories of the person of Christ, and discourse of all his offices with the exactness of an angel, or some unbodied spirit; could you practise all the forms of external christianity to perfection, yet all these would never recommend you to the divine favour, without an inward and sincere love to God and men: Without this, even the chiefest of the apostles would be but *sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*; 1 Cor. xiii. 1. A christian of the brightest notions, and the most refined speculations, can make no just pretences to a heavenly hope, unless he has found the sweet influence of the doctrine of Christ reforming his heart, refining his inward temper, and fitting him for the business and blessedness of heaven. If we would be crowned, we must not only know the laws of this holy contest, but we must also run

and strive, and fight and wrestle against all oppositions, and persevere to the end.

III. "Be solicitous to *adorn the doctrine of God, your Saviour*, with a life of such piety and goodness, as may render your faith illustrious and amiable to the world, even to atheists and infidels." There is something in sublime virtue and pure religion, that strikes the eyes of men with a sacred light, and commands the veneration of the soul, and that sometimes in opposition to their own principles of sin and darkness. Disbelievers of the gospel, may first be won over to a good esteem of our religion, by the holy and heavenly behaviour of those who believe; and at last, they may be drawn to the knowledge and faith of what once they despised. The apostle Peter recommends this way of arguing to the pious women of his time; 1 Pet. iii. 1. and some of them perhaps were not able to dispute much for the truth. And divine life has powerful argument in it; it is a light that not only shines but burns. And on the other hand, set a severe guard on yourself, that by your unholy conduct and vicious indulgencies, you never give occasion to the deist to blaspheme, and to estrange his heart farther from the gospel. What a dreadful thing would it be, if at the bar of Christ an infidel, a condemned infidel, in all the anguish and fury of despair should stand up and tell me, "It was your unchristian and unholy life tempted me first to think there was nothing in christianity; your crimes made me an apostate from the faith, and it is by your sins that I perish for ever."

IV. If you have any solicitude for the honour and preservation of the gospel in the world, if you have any tender concern for the souls of posterity, and the eternal happiness of the rising age, "use your utmost endeavours to plant the seeds of christianity in children, and to propagate the faith of Christ to the next generation." See that they learn to understand the principles of the christian religion betimes, and that they be not contented with words and syllables, and repeating terms and phrases by heart. Terms and phrases without understanding, will be but a poor defence against infidelity. Teach them the meaning of every thing in the catechisms which they treasure up in their memory, and let them know what it is they are taught to speak and believe. Lead them also into the reasons of their belief of the gospel: Give them some arguments why they are christians; furnish their minds with something to say in vindication of the religion they profess, that they be not baffled and beat out of it by every witty jest, or every cunning cavil of the adversary. But I forbear to enlarge here, because I shall speak more on this head in the next section. In general, remember that the gospel is entrusted with you for the next generation, and if they lose it and perish through your neglect, the blood of their souls may be dreadfully required at your hands.

V. " Watch against every temptation to apostacy from the christian faith, and endeavour to guard and fortify your children and friends against seducers." Perhaps, in this dangerous age, you may have met with some allurements to infidelity, or your younger friends may meet with them. Satan has many busy emissaries, many subtle agents, who *with fair words* entice the souls of men away from the gospel of Christ. Or perhaps, you may have been attacked by the scoffs of wanton companions, and it may be, some of their impious cavils have hung about your imaginations, made too deep an impression upon your spirits, and entangled your thoughts with some of the artifices of infidelity. Oh ! take heed of these dangerous snares, as you love your own souls ; and let young christians be warned against them betimes ! Harken to the exhortation of your friends who love you tenderly, who have met with the same temptations, and have answered them all, by the just principles of reasoning, and by the strength of a holy faith. With utmost zeal and affection for your souls, we exhort and testify, *this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand* ; 1 Pet. v. 12. We have found it so, and desire from our hearts, that you may find it so too. Hear the blessed apostle Peter expressing himself thus, to the christians to whom he wrote, who in those primitive days, were continually in danger of *being drawn away from their steadfastness* by the subtilty, or by the reproaches of the unbelievers of that age ; 2 Pet. iii. 17. And may the following directions or advices by the divine blessing become effectual preservatives to your souls, against the danger and mischief of infidelity, which is a growing evil, and a spreading plague of the age wherein we live.

SECT. V.—*Preservatives against Apostacy from the Faith of the Gospel.*

*Advice I.* " Acquaint yourselves with the evidences of the truth of christianity, as far as your time, your capacity, and your circumstances of life will admit." Enquire into the true grounds and reasons of the christian religion. Endeavour to furnish your minds with such arguments as will justify your own conscience in the belief of the gospel, and will firmly support your profession and practice of it as rational creatures. God requires that a creature of reason should be a reasonable worshipper.

Though it is an invaluable privilege to have enjoyed a christian education, and to be trained up in the principles and practices of the true religion, yet do not content yourselves to take up your religion only upon trust, and under the mere influence of the authority of your fathers. Dare not build all your faith and hope merely upon your education, in a land which professes the gospel of Christ. It is a very dishonourable thing, to have no more reason to give why you are a christian, than a young Turk has why he believes in Mahomet : for then if you had been born

and brought up in Turkey, you had also been a Mahometan. The doctrine of Christ, as it is in itself the best of religions, so it is built upon the brightest evidences and the most solid foundations, and such as are sufficient to convince the reason of every honest and sincere enquirer.

Think of the inward evidences that belong to our religion itself. Observe how completely it contains all the doctrines and duties of the light of nature, and exalts them all to a nobler perfection, than ever any of the ancient sages of heathenism could arrive at. Think how happily all the defects of natural religion are supplied by the gospel of Christ. Consider how honourably this religion answers all the ends and designs of God as a Creator and a Governor, and all the necessities and the desires of his intelligent and immortal creature man, since he is fallen from God, and cannot restore himself. And what more can be desired in a religion revealed from heaven\*?

Meditate on the external proofs of the gospel of Christ. Count over the many divine wonders wrought by our blessed Saviour himself, and the amazing powers communicated to the apostles, in confirmation of their doctrine†: Behold the exact accomplishment of many prophecies given to the world in ancient days, which have been fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah, and his followers‡. Observe the sincere honesty of the first propagators of this religion, who were eye and ear-witnesses of the glorious facts upon which christianity is founded‡. Think of the wondrous progress that this religion has made in the world, and triumphed over all the opposition of princes and philosophers, of men and devils; and you will find a divine power has gloriously attended it, and evinced its original to be divine§.

Endeavour to gain a "solid and rational satisfaction of the truth and divinity of the holy bible." There are sufficient reasons to prove that this is a book of divine revelations, which God has made in divers ages of the world, and given to men upon special occasions, in order to lead them into the knowledge of himself, and the right way to obtain his favour and eternal life. Many of the writers of it wrought miracles, to confirm the truth

\* A treatise in quarto, lately written by Mr. John Reynolds, and entitled "The Religion of Jesus Delineated," is a valuable book to shew the real inward excellence and glory of christianity.

† "See *Miscellanea Sacra*," Essay I. and Mr. Samuel Chandler's "Vindication of the Christian Religion."

‡ See Mr. John Reynold's, "Third Letter to the Deists," which is an unswerving management and improvement of this argument, for the truth of the christian religion.

§ See several of these arguments put together in a plain and convincing manner in the bishop of London's late "Pastoral Letter," 1728. Most of them are treated more largely in Doctor Samuel Clarke's "Discourses of the Certainty of the Christian Revelation."

of what they taught, and the rest of the sacred writings are authorised and confirmed by men who wrought miracles. Acquaint yourselves with some of those books which have been written, especially within these last thirty years, to prove and establish the truth of the religion of Christ, in opposition to the deists and infidels of our age: And furnish yourselves with just and rational answers to the chief cavils of our adversaries\*, that you may not be surprized on a sudden by *the subtilty of men who lie in wait to deceive*, and be robbed of the richest treasure of your souls, and of your everlasting hope. Remember the sacred advice of the apostle; 1 Pet. iii. 15. *Be ready to render, to every man that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you.* Be ready furnished to give every man an account why you are a christian.

II. "Have a care of mingling the pure religion of Christ with any human additions, either of doctrine or duty: For this corrupt mixture will give the adversaries of our faith a vast advantage against you:" When you shall have framed or received such articles of faith, or rites of worship, as the gospel does not contain, and you call this the christian religion, you disgust an unbeliever, and tempt him to renounce the whole, because of the vanity, folly, or absurdity of your additions.

Doubtless, this has been the case frequently in some christian countries. The papists have added so large a medley of their own to the pure religion of Jesus, that the more rational and thinking men, in Italy, are generally supposed to be deists; for they can never think that such sort of christianity as is practised among them, can be a religion that came from God. And I wish there had never been any reason to complain in protestant nations, that such inconsistent schemes of doctrines, or of ceremonies, or both, have sometimes been vended for true christianity, as has given an unhappy occasion to infidels to suspect the truth of the gospel itself. Learn therefore to distinguish well, what is pure and simple christianity, from all the additional matters which have been mingled with it: For pure christianity will bear a much better defence, and you will stand more stedfast in the belief of it.

Now, to this end, I would advise you to converse much with *the word of God*, and especially with the New Testament, which is more eminently the rule of our holy religion. It is there you read the doctrines and duties of the gospel, free from all the additions of men, delivered in the language of unquestionable

\* Doctor Nichols in his "Conference with a Theist," in five parts, in two volumes octavo, has many solid solutions of their cavils, and their proposed difficulties, though perhaps, in order to humour the deists, and give them fair play, he has dressed up their arguments in a little too ludicrous or facetious a style. And he dwells too long and too learnedly on many of them for the use of common christians.



truth, and in the words of a divine teacher, even *the Holy Spirit*. There you learn the precepts and rules of piety and virtue, pure and unmingled with human *traditions*. Let this book be your constant Counsellor, for it is an infallible guide. Learn your religion from this book, and see that you receive nothing, as an article of your faith or practice, but what is contained therein. Converse much with those parts of scripture, wherein the most important doctrines of christianity are written, and the greatest and most necessary duties of it are plainly prescribed and taught. Particularly acquaint yourselves with the history of the life and death of Christ and his divine instructions, as they are recorded in the four gospels. Read the epistles of St. Paul to the Romans, and to the Ephesians, and value most those discourses and writings of men, which come nearest to those divine standards. Treasure up in your memory such passages of scripture as are best suited to teach and confirm the chief articles of your faith and practice, and let them be written upon your heart. The more instruction you get from the word of God in his holy religion, the more you will love it, and be established in it: And you will not be so soon *shaken with every wind of doctrine*, as if you borrowed all your knowledge of christianity, merely from the forms and the lessons men have taught you\*. Remember that *Christ Jesus is your only Master and Lord*, and he is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*; Heb. xiii. 8.

In all the momentous enquiries and concerns of your religion, whether they be points of faith or practice, run continually to this sacred touch-stone, the word of God, and try every thing by this unerring rule. Frame your belief and your conversation according to this divine model. All builders, whether they labour in wood or stone, take care to have their rule, their square, their plumb-line always at hand to direct their work, and to prove the truth of it. We are also builders of our heavenly hope upon *Christ the divine foundation*. Let all our belief and profession, all our labours and advances in this sacred work, be regulated by a perpetual recourse to the sacred rule that God has bestowed upon us, that our faith may stand the trial of men in a day of temptation, and that our work may stand the test, and approve itself to God at the last day, in the face of men and angels.

\* Perhaps, it may be necessary, in this place, to insert a caution, lest any should imagine I would here exclude catechisms, larger or smaller, and turn out systems of divinity from the use of the schools, churches or families. This is very far from my thoughts: I am a constant friend of, and advocate for these compendiums or systematical writings: Their use and advantage is so great, that I think it hardly possible to teach any religion well, and particularly the christian without them. And that I advise here is, that children and youth should be led with all due speed, as their understandings admit, to see the articles of their catechisms contained in their bibles, and proved plainly by the word of God: And that they should be led by degrees to derive their knowledge and faith more immediately from the bible, and build their religion upon it.

III. "Ever maintain upon your spirits, an awful sense of the evil and guilt of your past sins, of the holiness and justice of the great God, who has threatened to punish sinners with everlasting misery, and then the gospel which discovers pardoning grace will be ever dear to you, and Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour, will appear so desirable, that you will never part with him." Be strict in the observation of your own heart and life, and compare it frequently with the perfect law of God : And then you will find such daily and continual returns of guilt upon your conscience, by the evil working of your passions, by the disorders of your spirits, by the frequent commission of sins, and the defects of your best duties, that you will highly value the gospel of Christ, the discoveries of divine grace, and the doctrine of reconciliation by the blood of atonement. Make use of every fresh commission of sin, as a means to awaken your first sense of the great and dreadful evil of it, and of your desert of death and hell, for the violation of God's holy law : This will make you love the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ : You will delight in contemplating the glory of his person, who could become an all-sufficient sacrifice to expiate the guilt of your iniquities, and to deliver you from everlasting death.

If you lose this tenderness of conscience, and look upon sin as a little or harmless thing, it is no wonder that the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ sinks in your esteem, and you will be easily drawn away from the gospel of Christ. A common, cold and unaffecting complaint of the infirmities of human nature, and the general notion of the mercy of God, will be ready to make such a stupid conscience easy, and you will be tempted to run back from the gospel of grace to the religion of nature : But if you keep upon your own hearts, a perpetual deep sense of the heinous evil and dreadful demerit of sin, the cavils of infidels against the gospel will have but little force upon your souls, unless they could shew you a better way to obtain forgiveness than the atonement of the Son of God.

IV. Take all occasions to observe the inward corruption of your own nature, the sinful tendencies of your spirits, the evil passions which dwell in you, your natural aversion to strict holiness, and your weakness to fulfil those very duties which the light of nature requires. And at the same time, survey the temptations of a sinful world, which lie all around you, and attend you in every motion, to allure or affright you from God and goodness. While these things are fresh and lively upon the spirit, you will maintain a high esteem for the gospel of Christ, wherein there is so much relief given to the weakness of nature, by the force of divine motives, and by the influences of the Holy Spirit. There are rich treasures of grace provided to rectify the disorders of our

degenerate nature, *and to make us conquerors over the temptations of the world.*

Meditate often on your own weakness, to practise what conscience dictates, and God and reason command. Think of the perfection of the law of God, that it reaches to your very thoughts, and then think what a *low* or evil principle *there is in your members, warring against the law of your minds*, and ready at every turn to *bring you into captivity*; Rom. vii. 23. Think how weak you are to subdue the sin that dwells in you, and to resist the temptations of a corrupt and degenerate age. Then you will highly esteem the gospel, which furnishes you with the most powerful assistances for this end, and you will find that no religion on earth pretends to any such valuable relief, under this distress and impotence. There is no salvation or remedy for ruined man, comparable to that contained in the blessed gospel.

Then you will value the powerful and heavenly motives, which the gospel proposes to awaken your hatred against sin, to turn your unwilling heart to strict holiness, and to change the corrupt inclinations of your souls. Such glorious motives are derived from the love of God, from the serenity and peace of conscience, from the fears of an eternal hell, and from the hopes of eternal happiness, as no other religion can furnish you with. You will then see how gloriously the gospel animates all the professors of it, to pursue great and exalted degrees of holiness, by the illustrious examples of the saints in all ages, and by the practice of Jesus the Son of God at the head of them. Heb. xii. 1. *We have a blessed cloud of witnesses gone before us, who assure us from the experiments they have made, that sin may be subdued, that temptation may be resisted, that corrupt nature may be formed into the likeness of God, and that those attainments which seem impossible to man, when left to the mere principles of nature, have been possessed by the disciples of Christ, and the believers of his gospel.* And above all remember the promised aids of the Holy Spirit, to enlighten our dark minds, to subdue our rebellious wills, to change our unholy natures, and bring them into a conformity to God and his Son. The aids of this Spirit, are promised and given to those who seek them in the right way, by addressing God the Father in the name of his Son Jesus Christ.

V. Think now and then of the wretched and deplorable state of the heathen world, who have no knowledge of the gospel of Christ, and remember what you owe to this blessed gospel. Alas, for the heathen nations! In what gross darkness their souls are! How confused and absurd are their notions even of the true God, and the religion of nature? How ridiculous is their worship? How cruel and barbarous are many of their

superstitions? How are they immersed in vice? How abominable are many of their practices, and how profligate are their lives? How few of them have either thought or acted agreeably to the principles of reason, or to the dignity of human nature, or to the last revelation that was given to their fathers, that is, the religion of Noah? What a dismal account does St. Paul give of them, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, and knew them well! They were "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:" They "turn the truth of God into a lie, and his [glory into the image of corruptible things, beasts and fishes, and worship the creature more than the Creator;]" Rom. i. 25—30. They are enslaved to the devil, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, they have their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance and blindness of their heart, and give themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness;" Eph. ii. 17. iv. 18. I know I have cited several of these scriptures before, but I cannot help the repetition of them on this occasion. Several other such dismal and shameful accounts does the apostle give us of their state and practice. Travellers in modern ages, inform us of the same miserable corruptions, and impious manners of the savages in the wilds of Africa and America: And perhaps we had been in the same state to this day, if the light of the gospel had never shone on the British Islands.

It is true, there have been some few countries of the heathen world, a little reformed and polished by the light of nature, and by some commerce with the lands who have enjoyed revelation: But let it be remembered, that the greatest part of them have lost their traditional remains of the religion of Noah, and are over-run with brutish ignorance and impiety: Many of them worship the devil instead of the true God. Let it be observed also, that it is concerning the learned and polite nations of Greece and Rome, that St. Paul brings in such a black catalogue of impious and abominable practices: It is the gospel that has refined the nations where it has been received, it is the gospel that has taken off the brutal character, and made them act like men. What were the ancient inhabitants of Great Britain? Their light of nature and reason lay buried under a heap of wild superstitions, and bloody practices, before the gospel appeared among them: Nor is there any reason to think, that we should have been

wiser or better than our ancestors, if we had never heard of Christ and the bible.

Our modern deists and apostates from christianity, are too vain and assuming, when they pretend to have spun out of their own understandings, any such schemes as they would give us for the religion of nature, as though they borrowed nothing from the prophets and apostles. Why did not our infidel fathers in the days of Cassibellan and Arviragus\*, frame as good a system of religion as their infidel sons pretend to do? It is the light of the gospel has opened the understandings of men, and awakned the natural light of reason, to display itself in fairer colours: and yet with a profane ingratitude they deride this divine light, and with strange vanity they boast of their pretences to a better religion than the bible has taught us. But let us who wear the honourable name of christian, give glory to the grace of our Saviour, while we survey and pity the heathen world immersed in wickedness, and in brutal follies. Let us remember and adore *the rising Sun of Righteousness*, that has scattered the clouds and thick darkness from amongst us, and has introduced *the light of life*. And then let us ask ourselves this plain question, "are we willing to part with this bible, and renounce this gospel?"

VI. "Meditate particularly, on the glorious and inestimable advantages that are derived to us from the religion of Christ, the blessed change of our state here in this life, the glorious *hope in death*, and the joyful expectation of future felicity." What an amazing difference between a blind heathen, who knows not the true God, nor loves him, nor performs his duty to him, and an enlightened christian, who knows and loves, who worships and obeys his Creator and his God! Between a pagan drenched in brutal vices, in shameful immorality and impiety, and a disciple of Christ cleansed from his sins in the blood of Jesus, and *renewed in the image* of his heavenly Father! What a glorious and joyful difference between the inhabitants of Corinth, when they were *fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, abusers of themselves by unnatural lusts, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners*, and the same persons when *they were washed, when they were justified, when they were sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*; 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. What a surprizing and blessed change among the other Gentiles, when instead of *the works of the flesh, uncleanness, witchcraft, hatred, wrath, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and revellings*, they were blessed with *the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*; Gal. v. 19—23. If christianity hath not made this change every where

\* Two Princes of Britain, one in the days of Julius Cæsar, and one in the time of Domitian.

conspicuous, it is because men take up with the mere name of a christian, and rest there contented, but neither seek nor desire the power, and spirit, and life, of this divine religion in their hearts or their conversation.

But let us pass on from the scenes of life to a dying bed, and meditate the infinite advantages attending that important hour, which are derived from christianity and the gospel. Behold a heathen, whose course of life hath been made up of folly and guilt, now lying down in the dust, groaning and expiring, as a brute groans and expires, stupid and thoughtless of immortality. See another perhaps deceiving himself with vain dreams and fables of a sensual and luxurious paradise in some invisible regions: Think of these wretched creatures, laden with the guilt of all their past sins, entering into an unknown eternity, without Christ, without God, and without any just and solid hope.

Or come to the bed-side of a modern infidel, in his last moments, who in his days of health, apostatized from the faith of Christ, and renounced and derided the gospel: Perhaps you will find him like a hardened sinner, obstinately deaf to all thoughts of God and religion, to all the monitions of his friends, and the remonstrances of his own conscience, unable to bear the reflections of his mind, and therefore subduing them all, resolved to plunge himself headlong into the abyss of futurity, and take an immense leap from one world to the other in the dark. Another of the same tribe, perhaps, with some difficulty has persuaded himself, that his sins have not been many nor great, because he has neither been guilty of theft, murder, or adultery; and therefore with much ado he supports his spirits by a philosophic courage, and a laboured hope, that the infinite mercy of God will forgive his follies, though he has abandoned all the revelations of mercy, and the promises of pardoning grace. Behold a third, whose awakened conscience cries too loud for him not to hear it, and scourges his soul with cutting reproaches for his past crimes, while he lies on the edge of life, within the view of the judgment-seat of God: Now the little cavils against the bible, that passed for arguments in his gay and healthy hours, appear to have no force in them: Those impious jests which he threw out wantonly against the gospel, afford him not the least glimpse of merriment, but pierce his heart with inward and sharp remorse: All his feeble and false pretences to sincerity, which once gave him a little thin shelter, now vanish, nor will make so much as the shadow of a screen from the dreadful presages of approaching vengeance: He groans, he dies, under the keenest anguish of despair, and leaves behind him a terrible warning to succeeding apostates.

But let us leave these dark scenes of infidelity and terror,

and approach the dying-bed of a christian, whose religion has been the business of his heart and life: see the holy man lying cheerful under the pains of dying nature, rejoicing in the hope of the pardon of sin, and a reconciled God, keeping fast his hold of the promises of mercy, and of Jesus the Saviour, by repeated exercises of faith and love, meeting *the last enemy* death, with a serene joy in his countenance, and with triumph in his soul, quitting flesh and blood, and all the scenes of mortality with a sacred delight, and entering into a new world of perfect holiness and perfect peace, to dwell for ever with his God and his Saviour. Upon such a comparison of things, such a survey and prospect as this, where is the man that would not say, *Let me die the death of a christian, and my last end be like his?*

Come, let us dwell a little on the glorious discoveries of the heavenly world, which the gospel has made, till our desires are warmed, and our zeal kindled to pursue and enjoy these sacred and sublime felicities, which infinitely transcend all the fancies of a heathen paradise, and rise high above our own present ideas. It is the happiness provided for saints in a future state, to dwell with God; to see, know and converse with him, even with that glorious infinite Spirit who made them; to receive everlasting impressions of his love, and to love him again with most intense delight and satisfaction of soul; to be for ever present with *Jesus the Son of God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*; Heb. i. 3. to survey all his wondrous glories, and to learn the amazing transactions of his grace, his early counsels, his condescending labour and sufferings for the salvation of man; to be swallowed up in holy pleasure in the midst of those transporting wonders; to dwell in the midst of angels and archangels, blessed spirits of high rank and dignity, creatures of penetrating intellectual powers, and of unsullied purity; to converse with fellow-saints, freed from all the infirmities of fleshly nature; and to maintain a holy intercourse of knowledge upon all things divine and human, upon every theme that is worthy of the notice of a blessed and immortal spirit.

This is part of the business of that heaven which separate souls enjoy: But *the resurrection of the body* makes a large addition to these scenes of felicity, when the soul shall be again furnished with corporeal powers, and shall be entertained with a rich variety of objects suited to those powers, all conspiring toward the more complete satisfaction of the indwelling spirit. There our whole nature shall take in such objects *as eye has not seen, as ear has not heard, nor the heart of man conceived*; 1 Cor. ii. 9. and all with an intense relish of sacred pleasure. And above and beyond all this, the eternal duration of this holy and happy state, spreads a new satisfaction through all the inhabitants of that happy world: This completes our heaven

indeed, when we shall feel ourselves in the midst of the possession of those joys which we are firmly assured shall have no interruption, no end.

Let us meditate on such a heaven as this is, which our Lord Jesus Christ proposes to all his disciples. There is no such recompence of virtue, no such refined and noble delights to be found among all the fables of the heathen poets and priests, or the dark reasonings of heathen philosophers. They are but very poor, imperfect and foolish stories, that the best of those philosophers tell us, concerning the happiness of souls in the future state: Mean and low pleasures some of them have proposed for virtuous minds in the other world: Others of them tell you, that these delights shall have an end by an universal revolution of all things, and the souls of the blessed coming to act their parts again in this world, after a long distance of years: And the best of these reasoners have sometimes owned themselves at a loss, whether there be any state of futurity, or no; whether, there be any reward for the righteous beyond the grave. It is the *appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ*, that has not only discovered to us the eternal purposes of divine love, and the grace which was given us in *Christ Jesus, before the world began*, but it is he also, *who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel*. And it is in the virtue of these things, that the apostle Paul rejoices in his present sufferings, and is not ashamed of them; 2 Tim. i. 9—12. *For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day*.

If we would stand fast in the faith of Christ, let us imitate this blessed man: Let us think much and often of the final prize of glory: Let this *incorruptible crown* be kept ever in our eye, and it will have a sweet and powerful influence upon us, to keep close to the rules of the sacred contest, in order to attain the crown and prize. The glories promised in the gospel to overcomers, will sweetly constrain us to run this holy race, and to *fight the good fight of faith*, till we obtain the crown.

VII. "As God hath set forth the mediation of Christ, and the influences of the Spirit, for the life of our souls in his gospel, so let us daily live upon Christ, and his Spirit, by holy dependence and resignation of soul." Let your trust in him be constant and explicit: Never address the great God in worship without a direct eye to the Mediator. Live upon his atoning sacrifice, and his powerful intercession under a continual sense of your sins and defects: Let the name of Christ be ever dear to your thoughts, and rest on it, as the only foundation of your hope of acceptance: Apply yourselves constantly to seek the influences of the good Spirit, under a sense of your own weakness and insufficiency. I have been often thinking, that the great neglect of



these two doctrines and blessings, viz. the proper atonement of Christ, and the promised assistances of the Spirit, among some of those who profess to believe the gospel, has been one considerable occasion of the growth of deism among us. For when christians themselves shall make these peculiar privileges and chief glories of our revealed religion needless, a sceptical person is ready to fancy, that the light of nature is sufficient to teach us all the rest, and then what need is there of revelation? Remember the sacred names into which you are baptized: Surely the great and blessed offices of the Son and Spirit, are designed to run through our holy religion in the practical parts of it, to the end of the world. Ever follow this method of access to God the Father, by the mediation, death and intercession of his Son, and through the aids of the blessed Spirit. Let this form of religion be wrought into the very temper of your spirits, in an habitual manner, till you feel your soul *live by the faith of the Son of God*, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, as you feel and find the animal life of your body preserved by the constant repeated appetites of hunger and thirst, and the satisfaction of them by proper meat and drink. St. Paul was in no danger of departing from the doctrine of the gospel while he could speak from his own inward experience, and say, *the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me, and given himself for me; Gal. ii. 20.* And this naturally leads me to the next advice.

VIII. "Though, you have attained never so clear an evidence of the truth of christianity by reason and argument, yet, never rest satisfied without the power and pleasure of religion wrought deep in your hearts." Never content yourselves with the mere outward forms of a christian, and a cold round of duties, according to the dictates of the gospel: Such a circle of formal practices, even of the best religion, will be but a poor drudgery, and a heavy task, which you will be ready to relinquish in a hour of temptation, if the power, the love, and delight of this religion be not rooted in your souls. This is what the apostle means; Eph. iii. 13—19. when he entreats the Ephesians, *not to faint at the tribulations which attend the gospel, and therefore he prays for them thus, viz. That God would grant according to the riches of his glory, that ye be strenghtened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.* When you find your faith in Christ, as you high-priest, giving a glorious relief to your soul, under a sense of guilt, and imper-

lections; when you feel the doctrines of his grace, speaking peace to your conscience, and pardon through the blood of the Son of God; when you experience a divine and universal change, wrought in the very temper of your spirit by the influence of the precepts and the promises of the bible; when you find such a sacred love to God and men, as the gospel recommends, wrought in your hearts by this gospel; when your perverse appetites and sinful passions are mortified by the power of this religion, and your souls are made holy and heavenly, and fit for converse with God, you will then have an inward, settled and comfortable evidence within yourselves, that this is a divine religion indeed; 1 John v. 10. *He that believes has the witness in himself*: And you will not easily be turned aside from the belief and profession of this gospel, for you have felt it to be *the power of God* for the salvation of your souls.

IX. "When you are satisfied of the truth of christianity, upon just and reasonable grounds, make it your constant prayer to God the Father of spirits, to establish you in this faith, and to preserve you from every temptation to infidelity." As we must invoke the divine assistance, to lead us into all truth, in our first enquiries in religion, so we must be constant addressers at the throne of grace, that the same divine Spirit, the enlightener and instructor, may dwell with us, to establish our souls in the truth; and especially, in such a day of temptation as this is, we have need to be more constant and importunate in our petitions to heaven on this account. It is the Spirit of God that enlightens us in the knowledge of the gospel, and he *seals our souls unto the day of redemption*. He continues the communications of his own light to those that seek it. He is promised to *abide* with the disciples of Christ for ever, and to *dwell in them* as a spring of light and holiness. If we begin to grow self-sufficient, we begin to depart from the gospel, and we lay ourselves open to the power of every temptation. Solomon, the wisest of men, assures us, *he that trusts in his own heart, is a fool*; Prov. xxviii. 26. And the man that presumes upon his own understanding, or his own strength, is very near to apostacy. Peter was a terrible instance of this folly: He boasted of his courage above the rest of the disciples, and he was the only man that denied his Lord.

X. "When you are once established upon just grounds, in the faith of the gospel, do not rashly expose yourselves to temptation." Do not run into free conversation with infidels and apostates, without a plain call of providence. A needless indulgence of dispute, and fondness of controversy upon this subject with subtle men, *who lie in wait to deceive*, has too often exposed young christians, and shaken their faith. Though there be various and abundant proof of the truth of the gospel, and it may be well defended upon the foot of right reason, yet every

one is not fit to enter into these debates with men of wit and learning, who are engaged on the side of infidelity. Common plain christians should rather abstain from such sort of conferences, as will fill their minds with cavils against the scripture, and objections against the gospel. You know not what unhappy impressions a profane jest, or a shrewd cavil may make upon your spirits: And as the devil is an enemy to the doctrine and kingdom of Christ, so we have just reason to believe, that he is ever ready to assist the infidel party. Where the gospel is published with sufficient evidence, St. Paul tells us, that *it is the God of this world that blinds the minds of those that believe not*; 2 Cor. iv. 4. And he is ever ready to help them to raise a dust, and to blind others.

A witty scoff thrown out against the truth, may pierce the mind deeper, and stick longer than a solid argument to support the truth. How well soever you fancy yourself settled in the principles of your holy religion, yet perhaps you may hear some new subtle objections, or some witty turn upon the sacred history of the bible, that may weaken your belief, when you have not an answer ready at hand, to ward off the force of it. Some have been taken and ruined in our age by these *snures of the devil*, who have thought themselves as safe as you. If the providence of God plainly call you into an infected house, and evident duty require you to venture your life in the midst of the pestilence, you may humbly hope for divine preservation and security: But if you venture without a call, you have reason to dread the event. A sincere and humble christian may be led by the course of his duty into such dangerous company, and he may hope for the assistance of the Spirit and the grace of God, to *fill his mouth with arguments*, and enable him to defend his faith with holy skill and courage: But if he mingle himself in such sort of conversation at every turn, without any evident call of providence, and out of a mere idle curiosity of spirit, or from a presumption of the strength of his own faith or arguments, he has but little reason to hope for divine protection from these dangerous and fatal snares.

XI. "When you see just reason to believe the gospel of Christ, and have your faith confirmed in it by solid evidence, let not every objection and cavil which you cannot answer, shake your steadfastness, and cast you into doubts again." This is the common practice of infidels, whereby they deceive themselves, and it has been part of their craft in all ages, in order to deceive others; they turn away their eyes from the bright evidence which is given to the gospel, and wink at the glorious lights that surround it, while they dwell on some little darkneses that attend it. They call off the eyes of others from the rational and convincing evidence, in order to fix them upon some of these obscurities and

difficult passages in scripture, which are not so easy to be explained or accounted for, by reason of our great distance from the times, when those affairs were transacted, and those parts of scripture were written. And it is by these subtle methods, that they obtain their chief success, and deceive unwary and unstable souls. It is your safest way therefore, to keep your minds intent upon the plain force of argument, drawn from miracles and prophecies, and gifts of the Spirit, as well as from the inward excellencies of christianity, whereby it is sufficiently proved to be a divine religion; and let not any little cavils which are raised against particular passages in the bible, entangle your thoughts or shake your faith, which is built upon such firm and rational foundations. While reason itself stands on the side of christianity, let not a few puzzling questions make you forget the force of that reason which establishes the gospel.

The venerable and pious Doctor Owen spake excellently well on this point, at the end of his little treatise on the "Doctrine of the Trinity." "It is a rule among philosophers, that if a man on just grounds and reasons, had embraced any opinion or persuasion, he is not to desert it merely because he cannot answer every objection against it. For if the objections wherewith we may be entangled, be not of the same weight and importance with the reasons on which we embraced any opinion, it is a madness to forego it on the account thereof." And much more must this hold amongst the common sort of christians, in things spiritual and divine. If they will let go and part with their faith in any truth, because they are not able to answer distinctly some objections that may be made against it, they may quickly find themselves disputed into atheism.

When we have taken a just survey of the arguments whereby the religion of Christ is supported, when we have seen and felt the united and convincing force of them, let us rest established in our faith: It is not an advisable thing for private christians, out of a curious or wanton humour, to hearken after the cavils of infidelity, no more than to frequent such company. It is unsafe for them to attend to the quarrels which the men of profane wit have raised against the word of God: Nor should they do it unless divine Providence calls them to it as part of their duty, and gives them time and leisure to enter anew into the controversy, to lay open the objections, and to search out sufficient answers to them. Where any of these objections hang about the mind of a humble christian, let him speedily propose his scruples to a skilful minister or a learned friend, that he may get rid of them as soon as possible by clear and just solution of the difficulty that perplexes them.

Avoid the first workings of apostacy in the bottom of your heart: *Take heed*, says the apostle to the converted Hebrew

*lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, and lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin ; Heb. iii. 12, 13.* While you give ear to the little criticisms and sophistries of the adversary, remember you are upon slippery ground : Look well to your feet, lest you are betrayed on a sudden, and carried away into frightful lengths of doubt and darkness, for want of a helping hand near you. It is true, the gospel of Christ has strong and immoveable foundations richly sufficient for the support of it ; there are abundant vindications of it published in the world, against all the assaults of wit and reasoning. But a sly and perplexing sophism may be cast into the mind and seize the soul in an unguarded hour, when you may not have an answer ready at hand, and the poison may penetrate too far, and corrupt the mind before the antidote is found and applied.

XII. "Maintain a solemnity of spirit, and a serious temper of mind in all your enquiries and discourses on a theme of such everlasting importance." While our modern deists affect to shew themselves men of wit, and make a jest serve for an argument, they do not appear to be in good earnest, enquiring the way to please God and save their own souls. God and souls, and eternity are no trivial ideas. It is no ludicrous matter to treat or discourse of them. Such jesters have no reason to hope for divine irradiations. If you have occasion to speak of the obscure and difficult parts of scripture, do it not in a trifling humour, or with a licentious levity of spirit, nor indulge your lips to mix them with sneer and merriment. It is dangerous to jest with weapons that will wound the soul. When christians give themselves a loose, and venture at this rate upon the border of profaneness, they may be left of God, and be righteously given up to a spirit of unbelief. There are those who once thought themselves believers in Christ, but by sporting on the borders of this precipice with wanton and unwary feet, they have found themselves carried down strangely into the deeps of apostacy : They have at last learned roundly to renounce Christ whom they worshipped, and ridicule the gospel which they once revered ; they have been plunged into vices which they once abhorred : they have let go the name of Christ, and God has let them go out of his holy keeping, till at last they have become perfect heathens in every sense, without virtue or truth, without hope and without God in the world. The Almighty Governor of the world has made some tremendous monuments of justice and vengeance ; his warning-pieces demand our awful notice.

XIII. "Think often how much safer you are in the profession and practice of christianity, than if you should relinquish the gospel, and change it for mere natural religion." And the

ion is plain, for the doctrine of Christ contains every thing in which natural religion pretends to discover. All that is necessary by the light of nature for us to believe and practise, both in regard to God and man, is included in the holy bible. Therefore if the deist be in the right, the christian is certainly in the wrong for he worships the one true God, and fulfils his duty towards his neighbour; and there are none who pretend that will damn or destroy men for entertaining a few other principles, which had so much evidence of coming from heaven to supply what was deficient in the light of nature, even if they should not at last be found to be true, since they are perfectly consistent with all our duty to God and man. But on the other hand, if the religion of Christ be divine, then the infidels, especially in Great Britain or in London, who have such glorious advantages for knowledge can hardly excuse themselves, or refuse for acceptance: For they deny those very parts of christianity which are necessary to supply the defects of the light of nature. They deny the atonement of Christ, and the pardon of sin through the virtue of his atonement; they deny Jesus Christ the great prophet and the Saviour of mankind; whereas God himself has told us by commission from the Father, *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins*; John viii. 24. They deny the special and necessary doctrines of that gospel which was commanded to be preached to the world, with threatening, *He that believeth not shall be damned*; Mark 16.

XIV. "Consider seriously the dismal state of apostates who depart from the gospel of Christ, and renounce their faith in Jesus the Saviour." Consider the threatenings, the dreadful threatenings of the word of God pronounced against apostasy. Such solemn words as those with which the apostle warns the christian Hebrews, dwell ever upon your mind in all the sacred presence and divine terror of them; Heb. ii. 2—4. *If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?* Heb. vi. 4—6. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly word, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put to an open shame.* Heb. x. 26—30. *If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for*

to create your souls anew, and form you to a divine temper : You have felt the sweet and constringing influence of the love of the dying Saviour, and found your hearts melted into holy and divine affections, and impressed with his sacred image : You are become his sincere and devoted servants, zealous for his honour here on earth, and in some measure prepared for his enjoyment in heaven. Eternal life is begun within you, and you have a witness in yourselves that the gospel is true, *even the record God has given of His Son*, viz. that *eternal life* is to be found in Christ, for you have found it in him ; 1 John v. 10. *He that believes has the witness in himself* : and I trust the grace of God, who has wrought this glorious change in your natures, and *has begun this divine salvation within you, will carry it on and fulfil it to the day of the Lord.*

You have entered in this sacred contest, and are daily struggling for the mastery against the world, the flesh and the devil : you have learned the rules that belong to this holy strife, and while you thus go on to *strive lawfully*, you may rejoice in the prospect and assurance of being crowned : You have been early acquainted with the laws of the christian race, and you have seen the heavenly prize set before you in such a light, as that you are allured to wish and to run for it, as your highest hope and blessedness : You have set your faces toward heaven in the christian path, and have travelled on thus far in the way of faith, penitence and holiness. Hold on your way, maintain your ground, the crown is not far off, *the end of all things is at hand* ; Jesus Saviour, the Judge, and the Rewarder *is at the door* ; see *that no man take your crown* ; Rev. iii. 11.

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**THE HARMONY**  
OF  
**ALL THE RELIGIONS**  
WHICH GOD EVER PRESCRIBED TO MEN,  
AND  
*ALL HIS DISPENSATIONS TOWARDS THEM.*

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The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This ensures transparency and allows for easy verification of the data.

In the second section, the author outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze the data. This includes both manual and automated techniques. The goal is to ensure that the data is as accurate and reliable as possible.

The third section provides a detailed breakdown of the results. It shows that there is a significant correlation between the variables being studied. This finding is supported by statistical analysis and is consistent with previous research in the field.

Finally, the document concludes with a series of recommendations for future research. It suggests that further studies should be conducted to explore the underlying mechanisms of the observed effects. This will help to build a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated.

## PREFACE

### TO "THE HARMONY OF ALL RELIGIONS."

RELIGION, in the most general sense of the word, signifies that veneration or regard, which man pays to God, his Maker. This veneration is directed, according to the various perfections of the divine nature discovered in the various relations in which we stand to God. All this is internal so far as it is found in the heart; but, it is also to be expressed outwardly in the life, by the tongue, or the several powers of action, according to the occasions which are given us in the course of providence. Religion includes in it, all that adoration we pay to God, because of his transcendence, our acknowledgment of all homage and obedience due to our sovereign, our fear, our love, our imitation, our trust or dependence, submission, &c. according as we conceive of him, as the first and original, as wise and powerful, as holy, just and merciful, as our ruler, Governor and Judge.

Outward expressions of these inward sentiments of the mind, whether by gesture, or action, are to be regulated by the dictates of nature or so far as that reaches; as for instance, nature seems to direct the lifting up of the hands and the eyes to God, in our solemn addresses to him, bowing down, or standing, or prostration in prayer to God, and laying hands on the head of another, when a blessing is pronounced on him, or implored for him; the voice of joy and singing is directed by the light of nature, in speaking praises of God, or in our holy rejoicing before him; groaning and sighing seems to be the language of nature also in our complaints to God; the hand upon the heart, denotes an appeal to God concerning our sins, &c.

These inward and reverential sentiments of the mind, may be also expressed by, or attended with a variety of other rites and forms, which God has prescribed by revelation, in the several ages of his church: and God has a right to prescribe them; for he only knows in what manner he himself ought to be honoured or worshipped. Sometimes he has appointed certain sacrifices from particular food, sometimes putting off the shoes from the feet, sometimes offering sacrifice to God by fire, sometimes washing or sprinkling with water or blood, sometimes eating or drinking as a holy festival, &c.

Added further, also, religion includes in it all our personal duties towards God, and our social duties towards our fellow-creatures, as well as our duties of piety towards God, so far as they are performed from a principle of love, obedience and love to our Creator: For this principle turns the several actions of life into religious actions, which otherwise would be only natural but merely moral or virtuous. Scripture favours this representation. The apostle James seems to suppose it thus in the first chapter, last verse; *Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* These moral actions done from a supreme regard to God, that is, from a true sight, and as under his authority and approbation, render them truly religious.

When man was first created, and in his state of innocence, he was bound to perform all his duties towards God and man in perfection; and he had power to perform them; and these performances were his justifying righteousness in the sight of God, according to the law of nature and innocence. In his fallen and sinful state, he is still bound by the light of nature and reason, to perform his duties towards God and man; and that in a perfect manner too, for

the law of God is eternal and relaxes not its demands; and though man is continually failing in his obedience, either in thought, word, or deed, yet that conscience, within him, which teaches him the law; Rom. ii. 14, 15. accuses him when he breaks it.

The religion of a fallen creature, according to the light of nature, requires also some additions of duty more than a state of innocence, viz. confession of our faults, sincere repentance of every sin, and addresses to God for mercy, with hope in his forgiving grace, together with a return to diligence in new obedience after every fall or transgression, and a constant zeal to subdue and mortify all sinful inclinations and perseverance therein till death. This runs through every dispensation of grace. And since none of these works are so perfect in the best of men, as to fulfil the demands of the law of God, or to justify the man before God, therefore after all, if fallen man be ever justified, that is, pardoned and accepted of God, it must be by his trusting or depending upon divine grace, in whatsoever way it is or shall be manifested. This is the only thing, beside what I mentioned before, that remains for him to do in order to his acceptance.

Observe here, I do not say, that this is sufficient to procure certain pardon, or to obtain the justification of a sinner; for natural reason cannot assure us that an offended God will forgive all our past sins, upon this practice. But this I may boldly affirm, that reason directs to this practice, as the only way wherein we can reasonably hope for the favour of God, and acceptance before him. And, as this is the plain and obvious doctrine which the light of reason teaches, so this was practised, not only by Abraham and David, but by all the good men of old, in every nation who wrought righteousness, and were accepted of God; Acts x. 35. This is St. Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, or trust in the grace of God without the works of the law, which he insists upon in his epistles to Rome and Galatia, though it has most unhappily been perplexed and obscured by noisy controversies. In these papers, among other things, I have endeavoured to scatter those clouds, and set this divine truth in a most natural and easy light.

Since the blessed God saw the light of nature after the fall, insufficient to give the sinful creature any solid assurance of pardon and acceptance, he condescended to make some special revelations of his mercy and his will, to perishing mankind; and this he has done in several ages of the world, and in particular nations. Therein he has been pleased to reveal some further doctrines for men to believe, and some further duties for them to practise, which are not written in the book of nature: And they are such as these, viz. That God is ready to forgive all those sinners who return to him by sincere repentance, and who trust in his mercy, according to the different discoveries of it: That he will assist humble creatures in their return to God, and in their hearty endeavours to practise their duty: That he has appointed a Mediator, by whom sinners are to be restored to his favours. That this Mediator is *the Son of God*: That he was to be born of a woman, to spring from the house of Abraham, and the family of David: That he should be the great peace-maker between God and man, to reconcile sinners to God, and to restore them to the image of his holiness; that to this end he should not only fulfil the law of God, but also endure many sufferings, and die for sinners, as an atoning sacrifice, in order to free them from guilt, and deliver them from deserved destruction.

Again, he has made known to men also, that this Jesus Christ the Mediator is raised from the dead, is ascended to heaven, and there governs all things, till he shall return to judge the world; and that the dead shall be raised by him, to receive their final sentence from him, either a sentence of eternal misery, or everlasting happiness.

It is amongst these discoveries of grace and duty, that we must rank the several sacrifices, which God has appointed men to offer, and that not only of

sheep, and bulls, and goats, but also of corn and wine, &c. Some-  
times particular places, wherein he would have worship paid to  
times particular seasons set apart for public worship: Amongst  
ordained various ceremonies of washing and sprinkling persons  
denote purification from sinful defilements, and finally that we  
præ honour God in his latest and best institution, by washing of  
water, by eating bread and drinking wine, according to his  
mandates and appointments.

Some of these truths, and the practice of these duties, when or  
they were revealed and required, became a proper part of the  
religion in those places, and in that time: For their inward veneration  
to be expressed by these outward transactions in obedience to  
the chief design of these things in the various ages and places, was  
ranked, by degrees, in a way of emblem or figure, that *God is  
recovering the sinful world to himself*, that he is recovering men from the sin  
of their fall, by the mediation of Jesus Christ, his Son, and by the  
gift of his grace or his blessed Spirit, and to engage them to comply  
with this reconciliation and recovery.

The general design of God to recover sinners, as manifested in these  
dispensations, may be called the covenant of grace proposed to men. It  
was revealed all at once, in its various and complete glory and beauty, but  
in successive ages, and that to particular persons, and by them to the rest  
of the world, as the great God appointed; viz. by Adam to his posterity, by  
Moses, by Abraham to his family, by Moses and the prophets  
and by Christ and his apostles both to the Jews and Gentiles.  
The various dispensations of God with men, and his appointments manifested to them,  
distinguished into the several corresponding dispensations, which  
are the subject of the discourses in this book, and I think they are each of  
them distinguished from the other, by one or more special sign or emblem of

The discovery of this gospel, or covenant of grace, was not made all  
at once, but in slow degrees, to answer some evident, and some unsearchable  
purpose, so it was four thousand years, before it was fully revealed  
to the apostles of Christ, and that under several dispensations of in-  
struction. Since the days of the apostles there has been no new dispen-  
sation of a new divine religion. Every former dispensation of the gospel,  
to save all those to whom it was made or proposed; and it was  
the religion by which all who were under it, were actually bound to  
obey, till the next dispensation was revealed to them. This is  
the reason that it needs no argument for the proof of it.

We must add also, that almost every following dispensation of  
the covenant of grace does, in some measure, help to explain the scriptural  
prophecies which went before. As for instance, the dispensation of  
the gospel shed some light to the patriarchal darkness: The dispensation of  
the law shed numerous rays of illumination on the types and shadows of  
the gospel. St. Paul, in his epistles, has taught us to understand many of  
the prophecies relating to those graces and blessings of the Messiah and the gospel,  
which were signified by them.

We have a complete view of this covenant of grace, as it is held  
forth, if we confine our thought merely to the short representation  
of the covenant, in their first discoveries of each dispensation. It is only  
one of all the successive editions of this covenant, which can give us  
a complete apprehension, and the justest idea of it, in any one edition, or  
one dispensation. Each of them casts a signal and sensible light  
on the prophecies, and whatsoever was truly glorious in the whole of them, is  
gathered up and united in the last dispensation, that is, christianity,  
and the prophecies and emblems of former ages, and reveals and  
things, that seemed then to be veiled in darkness.

It should be remembered here, this short scheme of the dispensations of God, or the various religions of men, does not pretend to argue or debate much on any point, nor to trace out, and answer the objections that might be raised against these several religions; that would have required a large volume; these arguments are therefore to be sought in other writings. This is only a compendious arrangement of the discoveries of the grace of God and the duty of man, in such an order as God has prescribed them, and such as may best shew their consistence, their reasonableness and equity; and this may go a great way towards the evidence and proof of these representations, without long argument and dispute; for there is nothing but truth, which, in every part and view of it, is constantly consistent with itself, whether we consider it as contained in scripture or represented by right reason.

## HARMONY OF ALL THE RELIGIONS

*ever prescribed to Men, and all his Dispensations towards them.*

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### INTRODUCTION.

Public dispensations of God towards men, are those only constitutions of his will and government, revealed or manifested to them, in the several successive ages of the world, wherein are contained the duties expected from men, and the blessings which he promises to bestow on them; the sins which he forbids, and the punishments he threatens to inflict on such sinners: Or, the dispensation may be described more briefly, as the appointed way of God's dealing with mankind, considered as creatures, and as accountable to him for their behaviour, in the present world and that which is to come. Each of these dispensations of God may be represented as different religions, or, different forms of religion, appointed for men in the successive ages of the world.

Since it comes to pass, that in describing the several dispensations of God towards men, or the public dispensations of God, we do not enter into his eternal designs, or the secret and inward order of his grace, either with, or concerning the children of men, in order to bring them into his covenant of grace, nor do we enter into his early and divine transactions with Christ Jesus, in the covenant of redemption, in order to the salvation of men: But it is sufficient, here, to set forth the outward operations of God's mind and will to men, in his public dispensations towards them, in the several constitutions of the universe, or those several constitutions of the world, which will either justify and reward, or condemn and punish them, as he is their supreme Lord and Judge. These are most properly signified by his dispensations towards men, which I propose as my present theme.

We must here take notice, in the first place, that nature, or that religion which arises from the nature of God and from their relations to God and one another, runs through every one of these dispensations, whether in a state of nature or after the fall. And wheresoever divine revelation hath not given man positive, express and particular notice of his duty, there the light of nature or reason is supposed to come in both before and after the fall of man,

to clear up what is doubtful, and to supply what is wanting; even as revelation is to supply us, where the light of reason is defective or dubious.

Therefore, though our natural duties to God, viz. fear and love, trust and obedience, prayer and praise, together with the duties of justice, truth and love to our neighbour, must be supposed to belong to every dispensation; yet there was no necessity of repeating them continually under every dispensation, since the law and light of nature plainly dictate and require them; I desire this may be always kept in view.

IV. And under every dispensation, whether in innocency, or since the fall, there has been some further revelation of the mind, and will of God to men, some new doctrine or duty, precept or prohibition given for men to believe or obey, beside or beyond the mere dictates of the light of reason, or mere natural religion; and these are called positive laws or commands, as the others are called natural or moral. Among these I am ready to suppose, the observation of the sabbath, that is, some appointed day for rest from labour, and for public worship, holds a considerable place, for it seems to me to have been instituted in paradise during the state of man's innocency; Gen. ii. 3. and I think it has run through all the dispensations of God to man, though not with equal evidence. And perhaps this appointment may have always carried in it some type or figurative promise of a state of rest and glorious worship, after all the labours of our state of trial are finished.

V. In each of these constitutions or dispensations, there is also generally some outward visible emblem appointed of God, to be a sign, seal or pledge of these blessings to be bestowed on man by God himself; and there is some visible ceremony, some outward action or abstinence enjoined on men, as a seal or pledge of their acceptance of, and compliance with this constitution of God.

VI. These two things have been often joined in one and the same emblem, when it is considered on one side as appointed by God, and on the other as to be performed by man. Such a double use had all the sacrifices of atonement in the dispensations of grace before Christ. The divine appointment of them sufficiently denotes the mercy of God, and the actual performance of them, testifies that those men accepted of God's covenant, and consented to it, that is in a way of outward profession.

Now let us proceed to describe the several particular dispensations of God and the religions which have been prescribed to men.

CHAP. I.—*The Dispensation of Innocency, or, the Religion of Adam at first.*

I. As soon as God had created man upon the earth, he

placed him under the first dispensation, that is, that of *innocency*: wherein Adam, considered as the father and common head of mankind, being formed *in the image of God* innocent and holy, and standing in his favour, was bound to a perfect performance of all the duties of the moral, or law of nature which related to God, or to himself or to his fellow-creatures; and he had powers given him by the God of nature, sufficient for the performance of them\*.

II. This dispensation is commonly called the covenant of works, because the work done by man would have fully answered the demands of the law of God, it would have been his justifying righteousness, and have entitled him to the reward, *Do this and thou shalt live*, are the terms of that covenant; Rom. x. 5. This was his religion.

III. And God seems to have engaged himself to bestow immortality or eternal life on Adam, upon condition of his persevering in the perfect obedience, by the emblem, sign or seal of this covenant, which was the tree of life planted in the garden of Eden, of which if man eat he should *live for ever*; Gen. iii. 22. There was a virtual promise in this emblem, sign or pledge. But, besides this intimation of a reward by the tree of life, it may be almost inferred by the light of reason, that where God is a commander of any self-denying virtue, or of any difficult duty, he will also be a rewarder of it; for he will make it appear, he is good as well as just, in all his commands, and designs the happiness of his creatures in case of their obedience. And, in this view of things, it is most highly probable, that if mankind had stood innocent, and there had been no death through all generations, they would have been after some state of trial and obedience†, translated by degrees to some advanced state of happiness, in some heavenly paradise; for earth itself could not have contained them in all their increase and multiplications under the prolific blessing of heaven.

IV. There was also a threatening of death upon man's disobedience in express words; and the emblem or sign of it, was *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*; and innocent man was commanded to abstain from eating of the fruit of this tree, as a special pledge and test of his obedience to God. Gen. ii. 17.

\* Note here. Whatsoever particular precepts or prohibitions the great God might give to his creature in a way of special revelation, man was bound to obey them all, by that general law of nature, which requires the creature to obey its Creator in all things.

† It is not certain that the posterity of Adam, if their father had stood innocent, and passed his trial well, would have had any dangerous state of trial, in their own persons, whether they should be happy or miserable: One would rather suppose they would only have had a proper state of probation, as to greater or lesser happiness, according to their degrees of labour and duty. But this matter is not plainly revealed.



*In the day thou eatest thereof, in dying, thou shalt die, that is, thou shalt be subject to many afflictions and diseases, and at last to death itself.*

V. Now, that this constitution or covenant was made with Adam, not for himself only, but for his posterity also, so as to interest them in the blessings or the curses of it, according to his obedience or disobedience, will appear from the effects of his actual disobedience or fall.

For when this covenant of works was broken by the sin of man, he and all his posterity with him, lost their holy and happy state, and were subject to sin, misery and death. Rom. v. 19. *By one man's disobedience many were made sinners, or guilty and subject to death.* Rom. v. 12. *As by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* It is plain that sin is imputed to them by death's passing upon them. The words following seem to imply it, viz. *sin is not imputed where there is no law, but death reigned, that is, but sin was imputed, therefore there was a law or constitution which imputed it, and from this spring of iniquity and guilt, all men are become sinners, and come short of the glory of God, that is, that glory and happiness which they had at first, and that further glory which God had promised if they had not sinned.* All mankind are born encompassed with sorrows and troubles, and with an inclination to evil, more than to any thing that is good: And even infants before actual sin are subject to death, as well as those who are actual sinners: For *in Adam all die*; 1 Cor. xv. 22. and Jews and gentiles, that is, all mankind *are by nature children of wrath*; Eph. ii. 3. *As there is none righteous or holy, so there is none happy; no, not one*; Rom. iii. 10.

VI. Now, since this is the scriptural account of the effects or consequence of Adam's sin on all his posterity, it is but reasonable and equitable to suppose, that if Adam had continued innocent and happy, all his posterity had at least come into the world innocent and happy also; and perhaps, been confirmed in their innocence and happiness by the same righteous constitution. A God whose name is love, and his nature justice and goodness would be supposed reasonably to deal thus with his creatures.

VII. But Adam and his race are fallen and sinful creatures now: And though we cannot with perspicuity and full assurance determine so well what sort of circumstances might have attended us, if our first parents had continued obedient; yet this we know by the word of God, by experience in ourselves, and by observation of others, that we are now in a sinful and unhappy state, prone to sin from our childhood, and liable to acute pains, sufferings and death, even in our infant age, before any actual transgressions as well as afterwards.

VIII. This was the dispensation of God towards man, or

his covenant with him in his original state of innocency, even the covenant of works ; which being violated by the sin of Adam, and thereby his posterity being brought into unhappy circumstances, it pleased God, out of his rich mercy to provide another and a better covenant, even the covenant of grace ; which is a wise, holy and merciful constitution of God for the recovery of fallen man to his favour and image by his Son Jesus Christ. Now the different dispensations, under which mankind have been placed ever since, are but different editions or manifestations of this covenant of grace to men in several ages of the world.

CHAP. II.—*The Adamical Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace or the Religion of Adam after his Fall.*

I. The first dispensation after the fall, was that constitution of God to recover guilty and sinful man to the holiness and happiness, which was given to our first parents, Adam and Eve, to be conveyed by them, with religious care, to all their posterity, who suffered by their fall. This is the first edition of the gospel, or the covenant of grace. Herein God promised by the *seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head* ; Gen. iii. 15. or as it is now explained by St. John : 1 John iii. 8. and might be then, perhaps, explained by God himself, that the promised seed came to *destroy the works of the devil*. This was the general blessing of this dispensation, as expressed in that early age of the world. It intimates the design of God for the salvation of men, by some mighty Saviour, who should be *born of a woman*, and should recover them to the image of God, and his favour, from which they fell by the temptation of the devil : And though it was not clearly revealed at first, what this Saviour was to do or suffer, in order to reconcile God and man, yet all the further steps and gradual blessings of this reconciliation in every age of mankind, are owing to the undertaking and the promise of this Saviour ; and all tend to accomplish this first promise.

II. The duties herein required of man, were repentance for past sin ; a return to new obedience, and sincere love to God, with a humble faith or trust in his mercy : This is an acceptance of the covenant of grace. All this, indeed, is not expressly recorded in Genesis ; but probably God made a more explicit discovery of these things than is written in so short a history : And these things are plainly and expressly required in several of the following dispensations.

Besides, the very light of nature, under every dispensation of grace, requires all this, even repentance, faith, love and obedience, to be practised by every sinner that would find mercy of God : And what is plainly written in the law of nature is not always repeated so distinctly in every dispensation of grace, as I intimated before. This dispensation also, and perhaps, all the

following require further, that man should not only have faith or trust in general in the divine mercy, but as it is particularly promised to be manifested, by some mighty Saviour, as far as he is revealed to them, who should be *the seed of the woman*, or one of her offspring, and who was afterwards called the Messiah, that is, the anointed or the Christ, and was to be expected under this character.

III. The great and final blessing to be expected, under this first dispensation, as also, under the following dispensation of grace, is not immortality, or a continuance in life without dying : The blessed God has determined that diseases and afflictions, mortality, and death, which were brought in by sinning, or by the breach of the law of innocency, should so far remain throughout all the generations of men, as to be a constant memorial of that broken law, and of the evil of sin. Since, therefore the good men of all ages, as well as the bad, pass through these diseases, sorrows, sufferings and death : And there is but little distinction made between the righteous and the wicked in this life by the providence of God ; it remains, that the final blessing of good men under all the dispensations of grace, must be some felicity to be enjoyed in a future world or another life : And that is the happiness of the soul in the everlasting love of God, and in the sense of his love, when the body is dead, together with some obscure hints of the resurrection of the body. These blessings were more clearly revealed by degrees, as the dispensation of grace went onward, and especially in the last dispensation that is, christianity. But, even in these early times, God translated Enoch, a most holy man, to heaven without dying, in order to give notice to the world by a visible example, that there was some future state of reward and felicity for such a walked with God.

IV. The emblem or sign annexed to this dispensation, was the appointment of sacrifices to be offered ; and it is justly inferred from the words of Moses, that with the skins thereof man was clothed, since beasts were not then slain for food ; Gen. iii 21. These sacrifices were figures of Christ, the seed or son of the woman, the great Mediator between God and man, and the true sacrifice of atonement, by which God is reconciled, and man is secured from deserved misery, as the skins of beasts secure him from harm. This is called the Adamic dispensation of grace, which in the proposal of it belonged to all the family of Adam, that is, to all mankind, for he taught it to them, and accordingly righteous Abel offered his sacrifice of a lamb, with acceptance before God ; Gen. iv. 4. This dispensation reached till Noah's flood.

V. Observe, that under this first, and under all the following dispensations of the gospel or covenant of grace, as they are

proposed to men, the natural law of innocency, which is usually called the moral law, not only with all its precepts, but with its penalties too, abides in force; and is by no means abolished: It stands perpetually in full power, and is written in the heart of man by nature; Rom. ii. 14, 15. to command every man to fulfil the precepts of it perfectly, as well as to condemn every man who does not perfectly fulfil them: And the only way of his release from this condemnation, is, by his acceptance of the dispensation, or the covenant of grace, by repentance and trust in the divine mercy. Thus though every man enjoys the common blessings of life; and by God's long suffering is invited to repentance, and is put under some general and external proposals or encouragements of the covenant of grace, yet he lies under the sentence and curse of the broken covenant of works, till he stands intitled to the blessings of the covenant of grace, by his own acceptance of it.

VI. Let it be yet further observed, that reason and the law of nature, not only dictate our duty where revelation is silent, but the whole moral law in the precepts of it, was taken into every dispensation of the gospel, as a part of it, to be the constant and everlasting rule of man's duty; for this law partly arises from the relation of creatures to the God who made them, and partly from the mutual relation of creatures to each other, and therefore it is unchangeable. And a perfect obedience to all the commands of it, is required under the dispensation of grace, as well as in the law of innocency or covenant of works; for if perfect obedience were not required, then imperfection would not be sinful.

VII. You will say then, what is the difference between the two covenants? I answer here, one great difference lies in this, that under the law of innocency or covenant of works, the perfection of our own personal works of obedience, answering the demands of the law, was to have been our justifying righteousness, and was the only condition of obtaining the blessing promised, that is, immortality and eternal life; and nothing short of this perfection was accepted of God: No law can justify those who are under it, unless it is perfectly obeyed. Here was no pardon of sin provided, nor any encouragement or promise given to repentance. But, in all the dispensations of the covenant of grace, though perfect obedience to the moral law be still required, and this law continue to condemn those who break it, yet, for the sake of the Mediator, and of what he was to do and suffer, this condemning sentence is taken off, or reversed by the mercy of God in this new covenant: our sins against every law, and all our imperfections of duty are pardoned, and our souls are accepted of God unto salvation, if we accept of and submit to the dispensation of grace; that is, if we return to God in a way of humble repentance

for sin, with faith or trust in the discoveries of his mercy, so far as it is made known, or revealed to us, in our age.

Or, perhaps, we may better describe this our acceptance of and submission to every dispensation of grace, by such a faith or hope in the mercy of God, so far as it is revealed, as raises in the heart an unfeigned repentance for having displeased him with a sincere and hearty love to him, which love produces a holy obedience to his will, or an upright and hearty desire to obey it, as far as it is made known to men. This last seems to be the most natural and proper way of describing our acceptance of the covenant of grace, under every dispensation, because it is a hope or trust in the mercy of God, which is, and must be the spring of true repentance, and new obedience in every sinner; for where there is no hope there is no encouragement to repent, or return to God; Ps. cxxx. 4. *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared, loved and obeyed.*

VIII. Hence it comes to pass, that as under the covenant of works, man was to be justified by his own perfect righteousness of works commensurate to the demands of the law; Gal. ii. 12. and Rom. x. 5. So, under every edition of the covenant of grace, men, who can be no more justified by their works, because they are imperfect, are to be justified by their faith, or dependence on grace; as Rom. iv. 1—16.\* But this faith in the divine mercy, and forgiveness, doth in the very nature of it imply or in the necessary consequences carry with it, a hearty acknowledgment or confession of guilt, or want of righteousness in our selves, as well as a sincere return to God, and constant desire to please him, arising from that humble trust or hope in pardonin grace. Thus Abraham and David, under their different dispensations, were both justified by faith, or trusting in mercy, without a righteousness of works, as well as St. Paul and the Roman under the dispensation of christianity, as is most evident in Rom. iv†.

IX. To make this yet more evident, let us consider that the very light of nature, which requires of every creature a perfect obedience to all the will of God requires also of every sinner

\* This doctrine is the chief design of the third and fourth chapters to the Romans. See the note on the words *πιστις* and *ελεος* at the fifth section of the viii. chapter of this treatise.

† Though God justified good men by faith, and not by works, under every dispensation of the covenant of grace, as the New Testament informs us; Rom. iv. yet there was no necessity, that every good man, who was justified should know this doctrine expressly and distinctly, under every darker dispensation of God. It was enough if they practised repentance and new obedience, under the influence of faith or hope in the divine mercy, or a belief of the grace which God revealed. This runs through the chapter in Heb. xi. God forbid, that we should suppose the knowledge of these christian controversies, and sublime doctrines, to be necessary to the salvation of every good man, under the darkness of those early dispensations. How far this accurate knowledge may be supposed to be necessary, under the New Testament, I will not debate here.

perfect repentance and a complete return to universal obedience to all the commands of God. But this cannot be done or expected under our present degenerate state: And therefore, wheresoever men do truly repent of all sin, and return unto God with a honest heart, and sincerely, though not perfectly obey his commands, and comply with the requirements of that dispensation under which they live, from a hope of the favour and mercy of God, and under a sense of their failings do trust in divine mercy, so far as it is revealed, they shall have this faith or trust in the grace of a forgiving God reckoned unto them, and accepted of him unto their obtaining a justifying righteousness, that is, unto their pardon and justification, or their having a right to impunity and eternal life. This is righteousness; and this is the plain sense of Rom. iv. 3, 5. *Faith is counted or imputed for righteousness.*

It may not be improper to dwell a little upon explaining this text. Observe here, first, that righteousness often in scripture, does not signify acts of righteousness, but a right to life, and so it is to be construed in this place. Observe, secondly, it is not said that faith is imputed or counted *instead* of righteousness which would have required the word *ὑπὲρ* or *ἀντὶ*: But it is *πιστις λογίζεται ἡς δικαιοσύνη*, that is, faith is imputed or reckoned to our account, as an important or necessary thing, in order to our having a justifying righteousness, or a right to impunity and life. Survey the whole verse; Rom. iv. 5. *to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is imputed for righteousness*; that is, it is not the works of obedience which any man performs, that are or can be counted or imputed to him, in order to his justifying righteousness or justification; for when he first commences a believer, he has no good works, and when he has any, they are all imperfect, and answer not fully the demands of any law of God: But it is his faith or trust and dependence on forgiving grace, on the account whereof God accepteth and *justifieth* those who have been *ungodly*, even before they have actually wrought any such works of righteousness, whereby they might pretend to a justifying righteousness of their own, having had no time or opportunity for it.

Some interpreters make *ἀνομῶν*, the ungodly, in this place to signify the Gentiles, as in some other scriptures; and so it stands as a parallel of *Abraham's being justified by faith*, in his uncircumcised estate, or before he obeyed God in being circumcised as it follows, verses 9, 10. But still it is faith, and not works which must justify such sinful creatures; as the best of mankind are in the sight of God; because faith implies an acknowledgment of the imperfection and insufficiency of our best works, and a dependence on the forgiving grace of God. As I take this to be

the true meaning of such texts of scripture, so it must be granted that the scripture teaches us elsewhere to add also, that the constant and persevering endeavours of such penitents after obedience and holiness, shall be approved and even rewarded by grace, so far as finally to obtain heaven and complete salvation, through the meritorious undertaking of the Mediator.

X. As this has been a matter of much controversy, let me endeavour to make it yet more plain to every reader. The best of men in this world have not a righteousness of works commensurate to any law of God whatsoever; for their faith and repentance, and even their sincerity are all imperfect, and do not fully answer the demands of God under any dispensation: But we are saved by a humble and hearty acknowledgment of sin with a perpetual trust or dependence on true grace; always supposing our faith to be attended with a return to God by repentance and constant endeavours to please him. And though faith or trust in the mercy of God be in itself a work of righteousness and though it be attended or followed by repentance and love and worship and holy obedience, yet in the matter of our justification before God, it is not considered as a work of righteousness, or as fully answering the demands of any law of God whatsoever, and thereby claiming justification, by that law; but it is considered only as an act of the soul, whereby it humbles itself, empties itself, renounces itself and its own works as a sufficient ground for justification according to any law, and whereby it depends or trusts merely in the grace of God through a sense of its own guilt and imperfection. As when a son hath grievously offended his father by breaking his righteous laws or command and then throws himself down at his father's foot, and waits and hopes for pardon and acceptance, this hoping and waiting do not justify him as a work of righteousness, but merely as renouncing all self-worthiness, and as a dependence on mercy; is not considered so much as an obedience to his father's law, but as it is an acknowledgment of guilt, and trust in mere mercy. And this seems to be the true design of St. Paul, in the representation he makes of the matter, throughout the four chapters of Romans, which is the chief place in the bible, where this matter is most expressly and directly treated of, and argued

XI. Thus our acceptance with God arising from faith and not works, none have any reason to glory in the presence of God: Justification by faith cuts off all boasting. And indeed this seems to be one main design of the blessed God, in appointing our justification under all the dispensations of the covenant of grace, to be obtained not by works but by faith, or trust in his mercy, viz. that since pride and self-sufficiency was one great spring of the first sin and ruin of mankind; this pride of man might be humbled, *that no flesh should ever have the least ground*

for boasting; and that the salvation of man might appear to be all from God, and be acknowledged to be a work of mere grace; Rom. iii. 27, 28. Rom. iv. 2, 16. Eph. ii. 9. *Therefore, it is of faith and not of works* that boasting may be excluded.

XII. And the apostle adds, *therefore it is by faith, that it might be all of grace*; Rom. iv. 11. Therefore, neither the acts of love or zeal, or repentance, or fear, or worship, or any other actions of obedience are appointed to be the mediums or proper means of our justification, under any dispensation of the covenant of grace, because these actions carry in them an appearance of our own doing something for God, our answering the demands of some law, and this would make it look like justification by a law of works: But faith or trust is that act of the soul, whereby we renounce our own works as the ground of our justification or acceptance; we acknowledge our own imperfection, unworthiness and insufficiency, and give the entire honour to divine grace by our dependence on it. We are saved by grace that God may have the glory of all.

XIII. It is worthy of our observation here, that though the violation of the first covenant or law of innocence exposed us to the curse of God, and brought us under many frailties, afflictions, and death itself, which are not cancelled and removed at regeneration or repentance; yet by the covenant of grace all these calamities which continue to attack human nature, lose their sharpest sting, and are sanctified to our advantage; they are made use of to help forward our repentance and sanctification, and our growing fitness for heaven. Even temporal death itself, which follows all these painful evils or curses, is also turned into a blessing, because it is made a means of delivering our souls from this body of sin and sorrow, and of introducing them into the presence of God, and the commencement of our heaven and happiness.

Thus much shall suffice concerning the covenant of grace in general, and concerning the first edition of it\*.

### CHAP. III.

#### *The Noachical Dispensation; or, the Religion of Noah.*

I. The second edition of the covenant of grace was the dispensation of Noah after the flood: He was the second father of mankind. It is sufficiently evident what an universal taint of

\* Since St. Paul in his discourses on the Doctrine of Justification to the christians at Rome and Galatia, makes it appear, that the constitution of the covenant of grace represents not only christians to be justified by faith, but even Jews and patriarchs, David and Abraham; I thought it necessary to introduce this doctrine, in my Representation of the First Patriarchal Dispensation, and to dwell something longer upon it here, because it runs through all the dispensations of grace and is common to them all, and adue knowledge of this, will render the whole scheme easier to be understood.



iniquity had spread over all the race of Adam, when God the governor of the world saw it necessary in his wisdom to destroy mankind from the earth, for their abominable transgressions: *because all flesh had corrupted its way upon earth*, so that there was not one person, or not one family left who maintained the purity of religion, besides Noah and his house? Gen. vii. 1.

II. Therefore, after this universal destruction by the flood, God was pleased to repeat and renew his dispensation of grace in another public edition of it unto Noah. It is true, this covenant is said to be made, not only with Noah, *but with his sons also, and with every animal*; Gen. ix. 9, 10. *that the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh*: But it is sufficiently evident that there was contained in it the covenant of grace or salvation, for this was the great design of God in all his other covenants with men, since the fall; and if mankind be no more destroyed by a flood, it is that the covenant of grace may save men in following ages.

III. This edition of the covenant of grace, contained in the same blessings, promises, and duties, with that of Adam after his fall, and probably the same sacrifices also: Here were superadded some further precepts about the distinction of meats the prohibition of eating blood, the punishment of murder, and the promises of the church of God in the family of Shem, as well as the promise that *the earth should no more be destroyed by water*. Note, that this promise manifested the grace and long-suffering of God to men, in order to call them to repentance after the flood. Of this promise the rainbow was an appointed emblem or pledge, token or sign; and as such it stands round the throne of God, and Jesus the Mediator in Rev. iv. 3.

IV. This dispensation was published, not only to Shem but to Ham and Japhet also, that is, to all mankind after the flood, by their father Noah, who was a *preacher of righteousness*; 2 Pet. ii. 5. By this dispensation Job and Melchisedec also were saved, with many others in that early age of the world.

V. Let it be observed here, that though we have a very short account of this dispensation in scripture, yet as Job probably lived under it, there are some bright discoveries of the resurrection of the dead, and of future happiness for good men, among the speeches of Job, especially in the xiv. and xv. chapters.

VI. Observe also, that this has been the last dispensation of grace which has been made known, and offered to most of the heathen nations, or their fathers, even to all such as were not descended from Abraham, and have never heard of Jesus Christ. All these therefore abide under Noah's covenant.

CHAP. IV.—*The Abrahamic Dispensation ; or, the Religion of Abraham.*

I. When the great God saw that the greatest part of mankind in some generations after the flood, had let go the knowledge and worship of the true God, or mingled it with many superstitions and idolatries, he resolved to chuse out a special family for himself, in which the true religion should be continued through all ages, until the coming of the Messiah, and by that means also to the end of the world. For this purpose he chose the family of Abraham, who was a descendant of Shem, the son of Noah. First, *God called him out of his own country*, that he might leave all their superstitions and corruptions behind him, and then he appointed him to live in Canaan, a land overrun with idolatry and iniquity, that his house might be a standing monument for God, and a preservatory of true religion and virtue, in opposition to the degeneracies of the nations who dwell all round him.

II. The next edition of the covenant of grace was therefore the same covenant of Noah, continued to Abraham and his family, with some clearer promises of the Messiah or Saviour. *The gospel was preached to Abraham*, viz. that the Messiah should arise from his posterity to bless all nations of the earth in due season; Gal. iii. 8. This was the third edition of it, and was distinguished by the addition of a new blessing, viz. *a promised inheritance in the land of Canaan*, as an emblem or type of heaven, and future happiness.

III. And here it should be observed that the promises that *God would be the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob*, which are construed by Christ into the resurrection of the dead; Luke xx. 37. as well as the other promises of an inheritance which was typified by Canaan, were understood by Abraham so far as to mean *a heavenly country*, and a future recompence as St. Paul informs us; Heb. xi. 10—16.

IV. Besides all the duties before required, God was pleased to add another special duty to this dispensation, viz. the peculiar precept of *circumcision*, which was enjoined to Abraham and his posterity. It was given partly *as a seal of his justification by faith*; Rom. iv. 11. and partly as a sign or emblem of the mortification of sin, and consequently of true repentance, as the commencement of it. Whence it came to pass in after-times, that the scriptures *speak of the circumcision of the heart*, to signify sanctification, and to manifest the internal and spiritual design of this outward emblem or figure. And it should be observed, that while Moses is using this language, in one place he requires of the Jews to *circumcise their own hearts*; Deut. x. 16. and in another he promises that *God would circumcise their hearts, and the heart of their seed to love God*, &c. Deut. x. 6. whence we

may infer that it is God who promises to enable us by his grace to perform the duties which he requires. This runs through every dispensation.

V. This covenant is usually called the dispensation of Abraham, which in the literal sense, belonged chiefly to his family or posterity by Isaac and Jacob; but in the more spiritual sense, as it is explained by St. Paul in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, it extended to all nations, and included all the good men among the Gentiles, who are the spiritual seed of Abraham, as St. Paul often represents them. See Rom. iv. 11—16. Gal. iii. 9, 29. though it was hardly possible they should know this so clearly, till Christ or his apostles explained it.

VI. In this dispensation of Abraham, it is therefore worthy of our observation, that the whole course of his life, from the time he was called from Chaldea to his death, was a continual series of acts of faith, or dependence on the promises and mercy of God, with acts of entire submission to his providence and obedience to his will. This faith and dependence of his, was so exemplary, and so well-pleasing to God, while he constantly acknowledged his own insufficiency, and trusted to the all-sufficiency of God, and to the promises of his grace, that he hereby became as it were a pattern or precedent of the way of man's acceptance with God, or justification by faith: Gen. xv. 6. compared with Rom. iv. 3. We are to be justified as Abraham was, when *he believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness*, that is, he was justified or accepted of God.

His submission also, and his obedience to the will of God in difficult trials was so honourable in that early age of the world, that hereby he was appointed a pattern to all future ages of obedience, as well as of faith. And the apostle Paul makes much use of the history of his life, in recommending his faith and obedience to their imitation; and those who practise it are called *the seed of Abraham*, and are said to be *blessed with the blessing of Abraham*; Gal. iii. 9.

VII. So great favour did he obtain in the sight of God, that God was pleased to bestow the special blessings of the covenant of grace on his posterity, Isaac and Jacob in the following generations, and to give them the land of Canaan also in possession. In the household of Abraham and his posterity, God set up a visible church for himself, which also was continued in their families after them. This church in the days of Moses was formed into a national church, as we shall shew immediately; and thus continued till the coming of the Messiah or Christ, who was born of this race of Abraham, a great many ages afterwards, according to the ancient promise.

VIII. Here is a remarkable controversy and dispute among Christians, whether the promise or covenant, made by God and with the seed of Abraham in Gen. xvii. and in many other places, where God promises to be *the God of Abraham and his seed*, is to be construed to extend to his carnal seed, the Jews, in any of the spiritual blessings signified thereby? Or whether the spiritual blessings signified thereby, belong only to the spiritual seed, who are the imitators of his faith and obedience, whether they be Jew or gentile. And then it is debated, whether the spiritual seed of Abraham, under the New Testament, that is, true Christians have any spiritual blessings promised, or entailed to their children by the strong assertions of Paul, concerning their interest in Abraham's covenant, and whether their carnal seed or offspring, have any general and infinite title to spiritual blessings, by virtue of these and the promises to Abraham, as the father of the faithful: But I not willing to embarrass this short essay with any such long and unhappy controversies.

IX. Let it be observed that these three early dispensations or covenants, are called the patriarchal dispensations, because they were first communicated to those three patriarchs, Adam, Noah and Abraham.

ART. V.—*The Mosaical Dispensation; or, the Jewish Religion.*

I. The same gracious covenant or gospel, was revealed further to the seed of Abraham, or the Israelites by Moses, together with the same seals or emblems of sacrifice and circumcision, which signified atonement for sin, and sanctification or purification of the human nature, God was pleased to discover this to Moses, as a fourth edition of the covenant of grace, and by him to the family of Jacob, who was the grandson of Abraham; that is, to the nation of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai; but not to the other nations of mankind: Though the other nations might and did reap considerable advantages by God's setting up this one nation upon the earth as a beacon on a hill to spread the light of true religion far around. This was called the Levitical or Mosaical or Jewish dispensation. And it is plain from Heb. iv. 2. *That the promise, that is, the true covenant of grace, or way of salvation, was preached unto them, as well as unto us, though their dispensation is oftentimes for special reasons, called the law in scripture\*.*

\* It is necessary to take notice here, once for all, that the word "law," is used in various senses in St. Paul's epistles. Sometimes it signifies the moral law, or ten commandments, sometimes the five books of Moses, and sometimes, the whole Old Testament; sometimes it means the peculiar covenant of Sinai, and at other times, it includes the whole Jewish dispensation, or the covenant of grace, as it was exhibited to them, with all its legal or Levitical appendices. It is only the connection in which this word stands, that can distinguish and ascertain to us, in which of these senses the word "law" is used; and I hope

II. Under this Jewish dispensation, the moral law, in all its duties, and the will of God in many and various particulars of his authority and his mercy, were more explicitly set before men. Their encouragements also to repentance and hope in divine grace for eternal life, grew greater by the many *precious promises* and blessings, both of pardoning and sanctifying grace, revealed to them, and many intimations and discoveries of the mercy of God, which they enjoyed. This was also eminent signified by the dwelling of God amongst them, both as their God and their King, in a visible glory, in his tabernacle or temple, upon the *mercy seat*, in the holy of holies.

III. Here also, there were a multitude of new emblems added, that is, new ceremonies, new signs and pledges, both of the blessings of God and of the duties of man, as well as types and figures of the characters and offices of the Messiah or Mediator; all which are usually called the Jewish ceremonies, and are too many to be enumerated here. The chief designs of them were, first, to give the Jews a ceremonious worship in that infatuated state of the church, that they might not be tempted by the pomp and ornaments of heathen worship, to run into their idolatry. Secondly, to unite them as a nation in one form of religion and government, and to make and maintain an evident distinction of them from the rest of the nations round about them, who are called *Gentiles*, which in the Latin, Greek and Hebrew languages, signifies the nations. Thirdly, to typify and figure out to them the various glories of the Messiah, and of the gospel in the duties and blessings of it, under the veils and shadows, and figures of that age, which are more clearly explained under the New Testament.

IV. As this dispensation was begun by Moses, so it was carried on in the nation or church of Israel, during all the time of the judges, the kings and prophets, till the coming of Christ or rather till his ascension to heaven, and pouring down of the Spirit. The business and design of the prophets, was not to introduce any new dispensation among the Jews, but to give them further assurances of the coming of the Messiah, or the promised Saviour, to keep him in their view in every age, and keep their hopes alive, even in their lowest estate. The prophets gave them also, more particular descriptions of his character and offices, in order to prepare them for believing in him, when he should come. They spoke more particularly of the promises of pardon of sin and of the sanctification of our natures by the Holy Spirit, with hints of a future state of recompence for the good and bad among

what I have here written, will go a great way towards shewing us, what the holy writer means by it, in any particular text, and how to understand his sense and his reasoning, which is of great importance, in learning the difference between the law and the gospel.

mankind ; all which appear more eminently, in the writings of David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

V. It was also a further design of the prophets, to put them in mind of their duty, to reprove them for sin, and by many motives and examples, by invitations, threatenings and promises of every kind, both temporal and spiritual, to encourage, to warn, and to reform them, to awaken them to repentance and trust in divine mercy, and the practice of holiness, in order to their temporal benefit, and their eternal salvation ; and with all, to maintain their obedience to the law of Moses, or the whole Levitical dispensation, which carried in it, the covenant of grace. So saith Malachi, the very last of the prophets, in the end of his prophecy ; Mal. iv. 4. *Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb, with the statutes and the judgments ;* for these were appointed to continue till the Messiah came, even till the Lord, who was *the messenger* or angel of the covenant should come to his temple, who was to be introduced by John the baptist, under the name and character of *Elijah the prophet*, as is expressed, chapter iv. verses 5, 6. compared with chapter iii. verse 1.

#### CHAP. VI.—*The Peculiar Covenant of Sinai.*

I. But it must necessarily be observed here, that in this dispensation of Moses, there was several outward precepts or ordinances, which were partly ceremonial or sacred, and partly civil or political, together with divers promises of a carnal and temporal kind, superadded to the gospel of grace and salvation ; which precepts and promises, together with all the ten commands, considered distinctly and apart from the gospel, made up that Sinai covenant, which separated the Jews from the rest of the nations, and which was really in the nature of it a covenant of works. This is evident, because their works of obedience were to be their justifying righteousness, so far as to preserve their lives and comforts, in the land of Canaan, as Moses expressly teaches them ; Deut. vi. 24, 25. “ And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as at this day : And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments, before the Lord our God.” Now this is very different language from what St. Paul speaks to the Romans, and to the Galatians, when he describes our righteousness for justification before God, according to the covenant of grace and salvation.

And if in any instances, the Jews had broken the rules or laws of this Sinai covenant, in outward actions, or ceremonial defilements, they were bound to offer particular sacrifices, or to apply themselves to special washings or fastings, or other methods of purification or atonement, and to a viable reformation ;

and then in the way of a law of works, they were absolved from the penalties threatened, that is, they were pardoned and freed from outward punishments, by the performance of these works.

III. But this Sinai covenant considered alone, was never designed to be that covenant of grace, whereby they should obtain salvation, or heaven and eternal life from God, as the Lord of souls and consciences. St. Paul expressly says, *that these sacrifices, or rites of purification, could not make them perfect, as pertaining to the conscience*, nor could they take away sin, or reach any further than *the purifying of the flesh*; Heb. ix. 9, 13. and this evidently appears to reach only to the present life, from this consideration among others, that in the law of Moses, there were no sacrifices, atonements or purifications, ever appointed for capital crimes, such as adultery, murder, blasphemy, idolatry, &c. nor for spiritual sins, such as pride, malice, envy, atheism of heart, and such like; nor indeed for any offence whatsoever of a moral kind, which was not visible and injurious to the public welfare.

Nor did any of their sacrifices, do any more than set them right, as to the state or visible church. St. Paul gives a hint of this, when in Acts xiii. 39. he says, *ye who believe, are justified from all those things, by Jesus Christ, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*. This Sinai covenant, therefore was made only between God, as the political Head or King of that people, and the Jews, as his national subjects, or at most but as sitting on the mercy seat, on a cloud of glory, as the visible Head of a national visible church: And it was not designed to reach to the concerns of another world. It was as I have said, by the works of obedience to this political or outward covenant, that the Jews, whether considered as a nation, or a visible church, or as single persons, were entitled to long life and peace in the land of Canaan, and temporal blessings therein; and their by notorious violations of it, either as a nation, or as single persons, they forfeited these blessings\*.

\* It is not improper, to make this observation by the way, viz. that God dealing with whole communities, with societies, cities, or nations, through a series of ages of the world, in the visible dispensations of his common providence as government, has been very much, according to the tenor of this covenant of works, which he made with the Jews at Sinai, that is, according as their public outward behaviour should be, whether virtuous or vicious, so his visible blessing or visible punishments should attend them as proper recompences. And if they should by their iniquities, provoke God to punish them, yet upon their visible repentance and reformation, there should be a release from their bonds of punishment, and a restoration of their blessings; always provided, that they had not sinned in so very provoking a manner, as to be given up by God the Governor of the world, to utter ruin and desolation. Plain evidences of this may be derived from the Canaanites, Sodom, Nineveh, Babylon, and some others.

And there is this plain reason, for this part of divine conduct, viz. *whenever single persons or individuals, have practised either virtue or vice, if they are not rewarded or punished in this world, there is another world, or a full*

IV. Let it then be well considered, that this Sinai covenant between God, as their national king, and the Israelites as his subjects, which is often called the law in scripture, and sometimes the first covenant, taken separately and apart by itself, was a very distinct thing from the covenant of grace, and was but a moral appendix to it. Yet the covenant of grace, or that word of pardon of sin and eternal life, which more evidently or more secretly ran through all the dispensations of God since the law, was included in the Jewish dispensation also, as the most eminent part of it: This gospel related to their eternal concerns with God as the Lord of conscience. This in some clear expressions, and in many types and dark hints, *was witnessed by the law and the prophets*, as Rom. iii. 21. And it was this gospel, which both Abraham and David, and the pious Jews were justified, and saved with an eternal salvation: St. Paul proves this in Rom. iv.

That great apostle in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians and Hebrews, is often teaching them, that this Sinai covenant, this law of Moses with all the ceremonies of it, could not give them life; Gal. iii. 21. that is, peace of conscience, with pardon of sin and eternal salvation; nor was this Sinai covenant ever intended or designed by God himself for this end, and it was due time *disannulled for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof*; Heb. vii. 18. yet the carnal Jews were very fond of plying it to this sense and purpose, expecting that *the blood of bulls and goats should take away their sins*, and this law of ceremonies should *make the comers thereunto perfect*, and cleanse their conscience in the sight of God, as the Lord of souls and consciences.

And this is the reason why St. Paul gives them so frequent warnings against this mistake; particularly in the third and fourth chapters to the Galatians, where he represents the law as a covenant of works, which curses them *who continue not in things written in the law to do them*; chapter iii. verse 10. and represents the difference between this law and the gospel, by the difference between mount Sinai and mount Zion or Jerusalem, in which Zion stood, the one as leading to *bondage*, and warning the Jews under guilt and fear, the other as giving liberty, and life, and peace, chapter iv. verses 21—31. And this is for the same reason that Paul says; Gal. v. 3. that *he that is*

righteous, in which the righteous God, as the Judge of All, can, and will reward or punish them: But communities, cities or nations, belong only to this world, and are all dissolved, and have no being in the other, and can neither be rewarded or punished there as public bodies: And therefore God who exercises visible judgment on earth, when he pleases, will frequently reward or punish communities publicly in this world, to shew his love to virtue and piety, and his aversion to all wickedness, and to preserve an awful sense of his holiness and government among the children of men.



*circumcised*, as hoping for salvation by this covenant of Sinai, *he is a debtor to the whole law*. Nor can he be saved this way, unless he obeys it all perfectly; and he that seeks salvation by such a covenant of works, *is fallen from grace*, or has left the doctrine of grace, verse 4.

V. Now, since this law of Moses taken by itself, as the mere Sinai covenant was in the very nature of it a sort of covenant of works, *for the man that doth the commands thereof, shall live by them*; Rom. x. 3. Lev. xviii. 5. hence it comes to pass, that in the writings of St. Paul, who was well acquainted with all the dispensations of God, the law of Moses in some places is not only called the first covenant, to intimate another or clearer dispensation of grace to follow it, but it is brought in sometimes also as a representation or specimen of that original covenant of works, or law of innocency, which was made at first with man for immortality and eternal life; which law all mankind have broken, and by nature they all lie not only under the commands; but under the curse of it; and therefore by it *no man can be justified* or saved, as in Rom. iii. 19, 20. and x. 5. Gal. iii. 10, 12.

It is evident from several verses in these two epistles to the Romans and Galatians, that the Sinai covenant does certainly represent the original covenant of works, and the curse of it under which all men lie by nature, for it is said that Christ had redeemed the Galatian Gentiles, as well as St. Paul the Jew, *from the curse of the law*, by bearing the curse for them, verse 13. but the Galatians were never under the law of Sinai, nor did that law curse them, any otherwise but as breakers of the original moral law of God, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*; verse 10.

VI. And indeed we may take notice, that the original covenant or law of works which required perfect obedience, in order to man's justification or acceptance with God, is frequently exhibited and represented up and down in the writings of Moses, and set before the Israelites in many views, and that for several wise purposes: as, 1. To shew them what was the perfect rule of obedience and duty which God required of man; and, 2. To instruct them how much God insisted upon perfection of righteousness, in order to justification by their own works in his sight. He did this, also: 3. To convince them that they had all wretchedly transgressed this law of works, and broken this covenant of perfection: and, 4. That they might despair of eternal life by this law; and that after all their necessary endeavours to obey this law, they might still betake themselves to faith, or a dependence on the pardoning mercy and grace of God; in short, it was to lead them to trust in that gospel which is contained in the general promises given them by Moses, and typified by the sacrifices of their Sinai covenant, and other ceremonies.

VII. St. Paul himself in his writings make use of these *allegoric* representations of the law of works, sometimes for this purpose. See Rom. iii. 20. *By the law is the knowledge of whether it be the Jewish law of Sinai, or the original law of innocency.* Again, Rom. v. 20. *The law entered that sin might abound;* which at least must have this sense, that the Jewish law was introduced in the multitude of its precepts, in the perfection of its requirements, and its repetitions of the moral law or law of innocency, that sin might evidently appear to abound among men, and that by the law they might be so deeply infected of sin, as to *become dead to the law*, as St. Paul was; ii. 19. that is, that they might be dead to all hopes of eternal life by the law of works, when they saw the number of its precepts, the perfection of its demands.

VIII. Thus by the law the Jews might gain, not only the knowledge of sin, but also of the curse of death that was due to it. Rom. vi. 23. *For the wages of every sin is there pronounced to be death;* and Gal. iii. 10. *cursed is every one that continueth in all things written in the law to do them.* And thus Paul writes, that they might be excited to fly to the grace of God to obtain pardon, or justification, or a justifying righteousness by their dependence on grace through Jesus Christ. Gal. iii. 24. *the law was our school-master, strict in its precepts, and severe in its threatenings and punishments, to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

He that diligently reads St. Paul's epistles to the Romans and Galatians will find much of this sort of reasoning about the Jewish law; supposing it to contain in it, or at least to represent and figure out, the first covenant or original law of works, by which we sinful creatures can never be justified, and according to which many of the Jews were ever ready to hope for justification by their own works. And probably, when the ten commandments of this law, were pronounced from mount Sinai, it was called by Moses; Deut. xxxiii. 2. *a fiery law*, because it was attended with such lightning and thunder, storm and terror, as a design to represent the curses of God, which attended every sinner, who had broken his general original moral law, as well as those who wilfully should break any particular law of God's making; Heb. xii. 18.

IX. Thus, though the word "law," in some scriptures represents the covenant of works, yet in some other places of St. Paul's writings, the law of Moses, or the law and the prophets, comprising the whole Jewish dispensation, is brought in by the apostle, as exhibiting the gospel, though, not in its fullness, and as witnessing to the covenant of grace, or the manner of obtaining righteousness or justification by faith; by which Abraham the patriarch, and David the Jew, and all the Jewish

saints were pardoned, justified, and accepted of God, unto eternal life.

And indeed this covenant of grace, or gospel of salvation through faith in the mercy of God by a Mediator, with all the benefits thereof, viz. pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification and heavenly glory, was included therein, was *witnessed by the law and prophets*, and was typified by many shadows and figures of the Mosaic dispensation. See Rom. iii. 21. and iv. 5—7. and Heb. iv. 2. *To them was the gospel preached, as well as unto us*, as the words should be translated: Even that same gospel, which was preached to Abraham; Gal. iii. 8. That gospel, which was *the blessing of Abraham*, containing the promise of the Spirit, to be received by faith; Gal. iii. 14. as well as the hope of righteousness. See this made further evident by St. Paul, explaining the types of that dispensation; Heb. chapters ix. x.

X. It may be objected here, indeed, that the Jewish dispensation could never include in it the covenant of grace, because Paul the apostle, and Jeremy the prophet, both say, concerning the gospel, *Behold the days come, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel,—not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, when I led them out of the land of Egypt: But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, in those days saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more*; Heb. viii. 8—12. by which it seems evident, that the first or old Jewish covenant, did not promise sanctification of the heart, and pardon of sin, which are promised in the new covenant, or the gospel of Christ.

To this I answer, that the Jewish covenant of Sinai, taken alone by itself was, as I have said before, a temporal covenant, or law of works, and an emblem of the original covenant of works, and did not include spiritual and eternal blessings, viz. pardon of sin and sanctification of heart: and yet it was upon this Sinai covenant, that the carnal Jews depended, and would depend for these blessings, or for acceptance before God. But the whole Jewish dispensation taken altogether, did include these spiritual and eternal blessings in it, and they were bestowed in some measure on all the Jewish saints, though they were mingled with many darkneses, and left the people under great fears of death, and many doubts and much bondage of soul; as Heb. ii. 15. and x. 1—3. Gal. iv. 24. But in the days of christianity, and the proposal of the gospel to the Jews, these better promises of pardon and sanctification are much more numerous more clear and explicit, and led sinful men more directly into this

salvation by Jesus Christ, as the Reconciler, and by the Holy Spirit, as the Sanctifier, and these blessings are bestowed in much greater abundance. This occasions it to be called *a new covenant*, though in truth, it is only a new and fairer edition of the ancient covenant of grace, much brighter than that which the Jews had at first, which was so mingled with, and partly obscured by the Sinai covenant.

XI. Thus it has been made evident, that the law of Moses' including the Sinai covenant, was so far an emblem of the original covenant of works, in the rigour of its commands, *do this and live*, and in the severity of its punishments, *the soul that sinneth shall die*; Gal. iii. 12. *The man that doth them, shall live in them*; and verse 10. *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*; and it was also an emblem of the covenant of grace, and the benefits thereof, viz. pardon and sanctification in the purifications and atonements appointed by water and fire, and bloody sacrifices; Heb. ix. 9. 13, 14, 24. and x. 1—4. *The law had a shadow of good things to come*: It contained figures for the time then present: *The holy places made with hands are the figures of the true*, and the patterns of things in the heavens; the Greek words are *Σκια, παραβολη, υποδυματα αλητευτα*, &c. and the apostle argues upon this supposition; *if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer, mingled with running water, as in Num. xix. 17. sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, that is, to the removal of ceremonial defilement, how much more shall the blood of Christ—purge your consciences from dead works, that is, from works deserving death, to serve the living God.*

XII. But we must remember also, what I said before, that the law of Moses was not only an emblem, but was really a covenant of works, so far as it related to temporal blessings, in the hand of Canaan; and it was really a dispensation of the covenant of grace, so far as it contained in it various promises of eternal pardon and inward sanctification, and God's acceptance of those that repented of their sins, and trusted in his grace, so far as it was then revealed.

XIII. It is a further remarkable evidence of this truth, that St. Paul distinguishes the two different ways of justification by the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace, by texts cited from the law of Moses. See Rom. x. 5. compared with verse 6. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, saying, that the man who doth those things shall live by them: But the righteousness which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, say not who shall ascend into heaven, &c. the word is near thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach," &c. Here you see, is both law and gospel,

contained in Moses' writings, if we can but learn to distinguish them, and not confound them.

XIV. Nor indeed can I think of any other way, to account for this conduct of St. Paul, in citing so frequently the law of Moses in different parts of it, both to prove the universal condemnation of all mankind, both Jew and Gentile, by the law of innocence or covenant of works, and also to prove our justification by faith, through the grace of the gospel. This is the only clue, that I can find to lead me into the sense and meaning of the apostle in such texts, and the only method that I know of, to reconcile the reasoning of that great and holy writer, in the account he gives us of the Jewish and christian dispensations. But I now proceed.

· CHAP. VII.—*Of the Christian Dispensation.*

I. Notwithstanding God had done so much before in several ages, towards the salvation and recovery of mankind, from the ruins of their fall, and had set up his church in the Jewish nation, to maintain the light of true religion there, within sight of the Gentile kingdoms round about, yet the Gentiles multiplied their iniquities and idolatries, and the Jews turned almost all their religion into superstition and empty formalities, so that true vital godliness and morality were in a great measure lost out of the world. Therefore the blessed God saw it a proper season to put an end to this dispensation of Moses or Judaism, and to bring in the last and best of all the dispensations, and that is christianity, which is revealed to us in the New Testament: This is the last edition of the covenant of grace, and is eminently called *the gospel*. Herein we have many plainer discoveries of the transactions of God with men, even from the creation; we have much clearer notices of our duty, and many richer promises of divine grace, than ever we had before, with greater assistances and encouragements to repentance, faith and holiness.

II. All this comes by *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the promised seed of the woman, the Messiah, &c.* *The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; John i. 17.* Jesus, who was the Son of God, before all worlds, the appointed Mediator of the new covenant, foretold by Moses, and by the prophets, is now actually come down from heaven, and dwelt with men. In his incarnation, his poverty, his preaching, his holy life, his many miracles, his obedience and death, in his sacrifice of atonement, his burial and his resurrection from the dead, in his ascension to heaven, his intercession and exaltation to the kingdom, he fulfils the various offices of his mediation which the ancient prophets foretold, and which the apostle have described, and explained to us, viz. that he was a teacher

*of righteousness, a prophet, an example of holiness, a high-priest, a sacrifice, a Saviour, an intercessor, a king, and a head of life to his body the church, both spiritual and eternal.*

III. As in this dispensation of Christ, revealed in the New Testament, we have a fuller and plainer discovery of our fallen state, our guilt and danger, our degenerate sinful natures, and our weakness to all that is good; so also we have much brighter manifestations made of the pardon of sin, and justification of our persons, the methods of its procurement by the obedience, offerings and death of Christ, which made a proper atonement for sin, the adoption of us into the family of God, the sanctification of our natures by the influences of the Holy Spirit, to enable us to repent of sin, and mortify it daily, together with all our consolations in life, and hope in death. And besides all this, the future state both of saints and sinners, the resurrection of the body, the everlasting happiness of good men, and the eternal misery of the wicked, are brought much nearer to our view, as motives to our duty, and support to our hope: And they are set much plainer before us in all the blessings and the terrors of them, together with the duties of faith and love toward the Son of God our Redeemer.

IV. As I have also before observed, that the whole system of natural duties, or the whole moral law, is taken into every fiction of the covenant of grace, so in the New Testament also, in the dispensation of christianity, it should not be forgotten, that we have a much larger, clearer, and fuller explication of the moral law in all the parts and precepts of it, with the more particular application of them to the occurrences of human life, and a more express notice, that they reach to the thoughts and desires of the heart, as well as to words and actions: So that our love and duty to God, to our neighbours, and ourselves, was never so plainly and fully set forth, either in the light of reason, or by revelation, as it is in this last dispensation. This is sufficiently evident in the sermons of Christ, and in the writings of his apostles. To these I add also, the special exaltation of the duty of love to our neighbours, and forgiveness of injuries to a superior height in the gospel of Christ. *Our love to one another* is made the sign and token of our christianity; and our *love even to enemies* is required and enforced by the love of God to us, and an universal kindness of heart and life, proceeding from love to God and man, frequently prescribed.

V. Under this dispensation, almost all the former emblems of the covenant of grace, required of us as duties, are entirely taken out and abrogated; and the chief, if not the only emblems, signs, or seals, required in it are *baptism* and *the Lord's supper*, which are usually called the two sacraments. This new covenant

of God by faith, and that righteousness which is through the of Christ; as in Phil. iii. 9. because it implies an acknowledgment of sin and imperfection in our works, and a dependence on the mercy or grace of God, as manifested clearly in the gospel, through Jesus the great Mediator: trust in Christ, who is called the Lord our righteousness xxiii. 6. and who is made of God righteousness to us; 1 Cor. that is, we are justified for the sake of his doings and sufferings.

V. And therefore this faith is called *faith in Christ, in his name, faith in his blood, faith in his righteousness*: iii. 24. John i. 12. Rom. 25. 2. Pet. i. 1. to shew that we must trust or depend on Jesus Christ, our Mediator, and what he has done and suffered, for our pardon and acceptance with God, or our justification \*. It is he hath wrought out the perfect righteousness, by his obedience and sacrifice, which is perfectly well pleasing to God, and perfectly satisfactory to whom we had offended, and which are the true and only ground and foundation of our pardon, justification or acceptance with God.

VI. Thus we are justified by faith or trust, as an appointed medium, to be performed by us, in order to our intercession for this blessing; and we are justified by the righteousness of Christ or his obedience unto death, as the only foundation or ground of it: We are justified also by the free grace of God, as the author of this blessed transaction, and we are justified by the gospel or covenant of grace, as the great rule of divine conduct or government in this affair.

VII. Nor should it be forgotten in this place, that as sin is more clearly described or represented, in the New Testament as the spring or head of all that sin, condemnation and death which are imputed, or derived, or any way conveyed to posterity; so our Lord Jesus Christ is called the second Adam

\* Here let it be observed, that the words πίστις and πιστεύω, which con-  
return upon us in reading the Greek Testament, should be frequently trans-  
lated by *trust* and *trusting* in God, or Christ, especially where the preposition  
is added to it; and it should not be so often called belief or believing; but  
not such a mere assent to the gospel of Christ, as excites hope or trust in  
and so draws forth the soul to love God, repent of sin, and fulfil the duty  
of holiness.

The Hebrew words which imply trust and dependance in the Old Testament  
are represented often by πιστεύω in the New Testament, as well as those which  
signify belief or assent: And therefore David, in the Psalms, where he expresses  
inward actings of his soul towards God, is ever using the words *trust* and *have*  
the translators of our New Testament should have much oftener used  
express the true meaning of the words πίστις and πιστεύω in the sacred writings.  
John xiv. 1. *Ye trust in God, trust also in me*, Acts xvi. 13. *Trust in the Lord*  
*Christ, and thou shalt be saved*. Mark vi. 22. *Have trust in God*. Acts xx. 31.  
*Trust in God, and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ*. Rom. iii. 25. *He is set forth*  
*trusting in his blood*; and many other places. This is the  
protestant divines in their opposition to the papal

1 Cor. xv. 45, 47. because he is the head and spring of that righteousness or justification, and right to life, which are also imputed, given or conveyed to all his seed or posterity. As the children of men, the seed of Adam fell into condemnation and misery, by the disobedience of Adam, their head and representative; so believers in Christ are his seed, and are raised also to justification, life and happiness, by the active and passive obedience of their representative or surety, even the Son of God, of whom the first Adam was a type or figure; see Rom. v. 14, 18, 19. *As, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men, that is, all those who are justified, to justification of life. For as, by one man's disobedience, many were made, or constituted, sinners, by a certain appointment or covenant; so, by the obedience of one, many shall be made, or constituted, righteous, by another agreement or covenant: And they are interested therein by free gift on the part of God, and by faith or dependence on their part, as I said before.*

**CHAP. IX.—Sanctification or Holiness Necessary as well as Faith.**

I. But let it be always remembered, as under all the former dispensations, so under the christian, that this faith can never justify us if it be a *dead faith*, that is, such a faith as produceth no good works; that is, where there is time and opportunity for them; James ii. 17, 18, 20. *It is only that faith that works by love*, that is of any avail to our salvation; Gal. v. 6. *To trust in the grace of God, and to persevere in sinning against the authority of God, are subversive and destructive of one another: And the great end and design of God, in saving us by his grace, is to restore us to his holy image, and our duty, and to a willing obedience or submission to his authority, and by all these to make us capable of everlasting blessedness.*

II. The very light of nature teaches us, it is in vain for rebels to expect or hope for favour from God, the Ruler of the world, while they repent not of sin, but abide in a state of wilful rebellion. The scripture always supposes our return to God, by repentance, and continued endeavours to please him, if ever we would be received into his favour. It is absurd to imagine or suppose the contrary opinion.

It is granted that the obedience which we can pay to any laws or commands of God, under any dispensation of grace, is not so perfect as to answer all the just demands of God in that dispensation, but has still some sinful defects in it, and therefore it cannot become a *righteousness sufficient to justify us*, or pronounce us completely righteous in the court of God: yet reason itself constantly assures us, that God is too wise and too holy a being, to pardon and accept, or justify any creature who continues



in constant and wilful disobedience. This would be a mere substitution of his grace to the service of sin, and the encouragement of farther disobedience. This would be to make God the patron of iniquity, and Christ the minister of sin; Gal. ii. 17. This would be *turning the grace of God into wantonness*; Jude verse 4. And this exceeding great mercy of God, the best apostle supposes, should be a sufficient guard against wilful sin while we hope to be justified by faith. *If we are justified by faith in Christ, what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid; Rom. vi. 1, 2.*

III. Besides this same apostle assures us, "that we are chosen, adopted, and forgiven, for this very end, that we might be holy and without blame before God in love; Eph. i. 4. Therefore is our conscience purged by the blood of Christ, from dead works, that we might serve the living God; Heb. ix. 14. Therefore are we redeemed from sin and hell by the precious blood of the Son of God, that we might be freed from the power of our iniquities, and become a peculiar people zealous of good works; Tit. ii. 14. Our holiness is one chief design of God, in all the exercises of his grace: And as we seek to frustrate his design, if we hope for his acceptance without pursuing holiness, so he will frustrate all our hopes.

IV. And, it is upon this account, that holiness of heart and good works in life, where there is opportunity for them, insisted upon as necessary to our final salvation through all ages; and perhaps in one or two places of the New Testament it is mentioned as necessary, even to our justification, as well as to final salvation: Not that our best works of holiness are a complete righteousness as to answer the present demands of God under the gospel, but because they are necessary to show the truth of our faith, and to render it a living justifying faith, which could not justify us if it were a *dead faith*, or *without works*; it is a working faith that must justify us, as good works evidently prove the truth and life of our faith.

V. The apostle James argues this matter particularly in the last half of his second chapter\*. viz. That works must be added to our faith to make it a justifying faith. From all which is plain, that in whatsoever scriptures faith is said to be without works, it can mean no more than this, viz. that we are pardoned and accepted of God through our faith, trust our confidence on divine mercy, and on the mediation of Christ, in the sense of the imperfection of our best works, and their in-

\* Yet it is not amiss to observe here, that the apostle James, when he speaks on this matter, in the second chapter of his epistle, speaks of this as a mere assent to the truth revealed, for it is such a faith as devil does not arise to a serious and humble hope or trust in the mercy of God for complete salvation, according to the gospel, which alone is supposed to be necessary to *good works*.

answer the demands of any law for righteousness or justification. But still in other scriptures we are told, it must be such as *works by love, purifies the heart*, and wheresoever there opportunity, it produces the fruits of holiness in our lives; and therefore good works in this sense are needful to secure our justification, as well as they are very necessary, on many accounts, to honour God in this world, and to make us meet for final salvation. Thus the free grace of God in our justification is honoured, and yet holiness is effectually secured in all them that are saved.

VI. To conclude this head, let it be remembered, that since faith and repentance, and holiness of heart and life, are all necessary, in order to our salvation under the gospel, it is of infinitely more importance to see to it, that we pursue and practise his faith, repentance and holiness, than to be nicely and critically skilled in adjusting the logical relations of these christian virtues to our salvation, or our justification, or in ranging them artificially in their proper place and order. The most skilful, most zealous, and most orthodox person, will certainly fall short of justification and salvation, if he has not these good qualities of faith and holiness found in him; and the weakest in knowledge shall be justified and saved, in whom these qualities and characters are found.

CHAP. X.—*The Commencement of the Christian Dispensation; or, when was Christianity set up in the World.*

I. This last and best dispensation of grace, viz. the christian religion was not properly set up in the world, during the life of Christ, though he was the illustrious and divine Author and Founder of it: And the reason is plain and obvious, viz. because many of the peculiar glories, duties and blessings of it, as they are described in the Acts, and in the sacred epistles, did really depend upon those facts, which had no existence in Christ's own life-time, viz. *his death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation*. It was not proper therefore, that Christ should publicly teach these doctrines of his atonement for sin, of faith in his blood, of his royalties and intercession in heaven, and our relying upon them, &c. in too plain and express a manner in his own life-time, because it would have given too much offence to his hearers; and his wisdom taught him to preach the truths of the gospel to men, *as they were able to bear it*; Mark iv. 33. John xvi. 12.

II. Therefore it was but seldom that he mentioned these things in his own personal ministry; and it was but just at the end of his life, that he instituted the second sacrament, or the Lord's supper, which discovers plainly, and in most express language, the blessed doctrine of his atonement for sin; and it was

after his resurrection he completed the form of the first sacrament or baptism, wherein our regeneration by the Holy Spirit is represented, and the Holy Spirit is expressly named.

III. The kingdom of Christ, therefore, or the christian dispensation was not properly set up in all its forms, doctrines and duties, till the following *day of Pentecost*, and the pouring down of the Spirit upon the apostles from our risen, ascended and exalted Saviour. It was just before his ascension, that our Saviour told them, that they should *preach his gospel to all nations*, when they had received the promised Spirit, and *they were to tarry at Jerusalem, till they had received this power*; Luke xxiv. 42. The preaching of Christ, and his life, his death and his resurrection, laid the foundations of his kingdom, but it was the preaching of the apostles, after he ascended to the throne in heaven, that actually set up his kingdom here on earth.

IV. The three or four years of Christ's personal ministry upon earth, were a sort of medium, or a hour of twilight between the darkness of Jewish veils or types, and the clear daylight of the gospel or christianity: It was rather a removing away the rubbish of traditions, superstitions, and corruptions of truth and duty, &c. as a preparation for the kingdom of Christ, in the world, than the very constitution of that kingdom. Accordingly the preaching of Christ ran thus; Mat. vi. 17. *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* And the petition in the Lord's prayer corresponds with it. Mat. vi. 10. *Thy kingdom come.*

He himself preached only to *the Jews and Samaritans*, and forbid his apostles to go quite so far at that time; for as he would not suffer them to preach to the *Gentiles*; so neither to carry their ministry into Samaria; Mat. x. 5. whereas his gospel was designed for the heathens also, even for all mankind. This he often intimated in parables, during his public ministry on earth. He foretold them also, that he had *many things to say to them, which they could not bear* at that time. See John xvi. 12. And several other things which they heard and saw in secret, which related to the setting up of his kingdom, they were charged *not to declare, till the Son of man was risen from the dead.* Mat. xvi. 20. and xvii. 9. and *what they heard from him then in the ear, they should afterwards publish, as upon the house-tops.*

V. Thence it follows, that in order to learn all the doctrines and duties of the christian religion completely, we must not only consult the history of the four gospels, which contain the life of Christ and his personal ministry, but we must also consult the *Acts of the Apostles* after his ascension, together with their *epistles to the churches*: for therein, this our holy religion is more completely discovered and explained in many particulars, rela-

; to Christ's atonement for sin by his death, our pardon and justification by faith in him, his intercession, his headship of the church, his kingdom over all, his final judgment, &c. For all this was more fully revealed to the apostles, by their conversation with Christ about *his kingdom, forty days after his resurrection*; Acts i. 2. and by the large effusions of the gifts of the holy spirit upon them, when he ascended to heaven, and sent them to plant and propagate the christian church throughout all the world.

VI. And though *the apostle Paul was the last of the apostles*, that is, was called by Christ himself, after his ascension to heaven, yet we who are of the Gentile nations, are more particularly to learn our religion, in the several doctrines and duties of christianity, from his writings, who was in a more especial manner commissioned to be *the apostle of the Gentiles*; Gal. ii. 7, 8. and who revealed *this mystery* of preaching the gospel to the Gentile world, which was not revealed to the other apostles well understood it. *He received his gospel from Jesus Christ himself, by revelation*, as he tells us; Gal. i. 1, 2. And *he came not a whit behind the other chiefest of the apostles*, either in knowledge or gifts, or labours, in success, or in sufferings; but was more eminent and glorious, in his active and passive services for Christ, than any other, and perhaps than they all. 1 Cor. xv. 10. and 2 Cor. xi. 16. And he hath left more of his epistles behind him, for the use of the Gentile churches, than all the rest put together.

It is moreover evident, from several of this apostle's writings, that he had a most peculiar insight into the various and different dispensations of God to man, from the beginning to the end of the world. His writings, therefore, eminently demand a perusal, if we would learn our lessons of christianity.

#### CHAP. XI.

*The Gradual Change from Judaism to Christianity; and the Jewish and Gentile Christians at last united in One Body.*

I. It is also from the writings of St. Paul, this great apostle, and from his practice and conduct, that we must chiefly learn the gradual procedure of God, in the abolition of the Jewish dispensation, and the complete introduction of christianity into the world, or among all nations, both Jews and Gentiles, which change has some difficulties attending it; but I think may be made easy by the following account.

II. Let us first take notice, that among all the former dispensations of grace, there was none but that of Adam and Noah, who were the two common fathers of all mankind, which was designed for all the nations of the earth, till the dispensation of christ was introduced. By this last dispensation, the heathen nations, as well as the Jews, even all mankind, wheresoever the

gospel comes, are called to repentance and salvation. Mat. xxviii. 19. *Go teach all nations.* Acts xvii. 30. *He now commands all men every where to repent.* Rev. xxii. 17. *Whosoever heareth let him say, come; and whosoever will, let him come.* As for the two dispensations of Abraham and Moses, they were more confined to a particular family, and to their posterity, which made up the Jewish nation. The nations of the Gentiles, had indeed, some acquaintance with these transactions of God with Abraham and the Jews, partly by their traffic, but chiefly by their captivities and dispersions. These were greatly useful indeed, to preserve and restore the knowledge of the one true God, not only among the neighbouring heathens, but among distant countries, Greece, Persia, Assyria, Egypt, &c. And as these things prepared the way for their receiving the gospel, so many prophecies of old did plainly foretel that the last dispensation, or the kingdom of the Messiah, should extend to all nations.

III. Though the apostles by the general words of their commission, which was given them at Christ's ascension; Mat. xxviii. 18—20. had an early right to preach the gospel to the heathen nations, yet this was made evident to them, by slow degrees, and consequently, their execution of this commission was gradual, according as divine wisdom saw proper, to enlighten them, and as divine providence conducted them.

IV. The first public ministration of the gospel in its glory, was to the Jews only: It began at Jerusalem in *the days of Pentecost*, when *the Spirit* was poured out on the apostles, and other disciples, in the form of *cloven tongues*. As they were ordered to *begin at Jerusalem*; Luke xxiv. 47. so it was a most illustrious success, which attended the first opening of their commission: For, on this great day, *three thousand souls were converted*, that is, among the native Jews, and the proselytes of the temple, or complete proselytes, who were reckoned as natives, though they came from various nations, as appears, Acts ii. 5—11. Some time after this, *five thousand more were converted at Jerusalem*; Acts iv. 4. *and the number of believers still increased, and many priests received the faith*; chapter vi. 7.

V. After this, the gospel was preached to the Samaritan Jews, whose predecessors were a sort of mingled people, and derived partly from Jews, and partly from heathens; Acts viii. 5. Then the christian converts proceeded to preach the same gospel in foreign countries; *but still to the Jews only*, though they dwelt at *Phenice, Cyprus, Antioch, &c.* Acts. xi. 19.

VI. The next sort of converts, who were received into the christian church, were such as the scripture calls the devout or worshipping Gentiles, or men fearing God; many of whom

the proselytes of the Jewish gate\*, and who all owned the true God. Cornelius and his house seemed to be the first in this rank of converts, at the preaching of St. Peter in Acts x. 44, 48. After which, the gospel was preached to these devout Gentiles, at Tarsus in Cilicia, at Antioch in Syria, and in other places.

I. And by degrees, St. Paul, having further and speedier success than him, than the rest of the apostles had, and being eminently made the apostle of the Gentiles, preached Christ to the devout Gentiles, for their conversion. Perhaps Sergius Paulus the governor of Cyprus, was the first fruit of the conversion in this rank; and the first great harvest of the conversion of idolatrous heathens, was probably at Antioch in Pisidia; Acts x. 7, 14.

II. Though the apostles themselves, as well as other preachers, might have learned by the many parables of Christ, and the express words of their great commission at first, that *the gospel should be preached to all nations*, even to all the heathens; and though it was foretold by so many of the prophets, and the prejudices of the Jewish nation, cleaved so close to some of the apostles for a season, that they could hardly tell how to admit the conversion of the idolatrous Gentiles should receive the gospel, or be admitted into full communion with christian churches; or even that the gospel was designed for them, at least till they were first proselytes to Judaism: But by much conversing with Barnabas and Paul, and by many glorious successes of the gospel among the idolatrous Gentiles, and the influences of the Holy Spirit on their minds, they were convinced and encouraged at last, to let the gospel of Christ have this general flow, and to be preached among all the heathens.

All this while, many of the Jewish converts to christianity, were bound to practise all the Jewish ceremonies; and imagined that whoever would come into the church or synagogue of the Messiah, they must come by the way of Judaism, *they must be circumcised*, and become Jews first, and practise the law of Moses, in order to be christians, though in reality, the law, in some sense, it was almost going so far out of the way. And this was the occasion of the great debate in the synod of Jerusalem,

It has been generally taken for granted, that the distinction between the proselytes of the gate, and the proselytes of the temple, or of righteousness, was very ancient, and was maintained among the Jews in our Saviour's time, and the next following ages: If this should prove to be a mistake, it will be a very important difference in the scheme I have proposed. The gospel was first preached to the Jews, then to the devout Gentiles, who owned the true God, and who were proselytes in any sense or no, and then to the idolatrous Gentiles; for it is evident, that the devout Gentiles were nearer to the faith, and might reasonably attend to, and accept the gospel much sooner than the idolatrous Gentiles.

where the famous decree was made about abstinence *from eating blood, and things strangled, &c.* Acts xv.

X. During these times, those devout Gentiles, who might be proselytes of the Jewish gate, and were converted to the christian faith, and probably also all the gentile christians\* who had been before idolaters, were for a season laid under the restraints of that apostolical decree against *eating blood, things strangled, and things offered to idols*, lest the Jews or Jewish converts should take too much offence, and scarce admit them into their communion, as being polluted. And it is not improbable that those were the restraints laid by the Jews, during all former ages, on the proselytes of their gate, or those gentiles who were allowed to live within the towns or cities of Judea. This decree was transmitted round the gentile churches; Acts xvi. 4. who probably at that time, were made up of some idolatrous gentiles, as well as devout gentiles, or the Jewish proselytes of the gate.

XI. It was for a very good reason, that the sin of fornication, which was always immoral and unlawful, was joined in that prohibition with *blood and things strangled, and things offered to idols*, because the heathens, by their eating blood, and especially in their idol-feasts, were tempted to fornication and many pollutions; and therefore this moral prohibition is set before their eyes together with the other ceremonial prohibitions, to keep them more effectually from these practices, while they gave such offence to the Jewish christians, and the Jews.

XII. But as to those other ceremonial prohibitions, this apostolical decree seems to be but a temporary constitution or restraint; because some time afterwards the apostle Paul did not keep the Corinthian converts, who had been idolatrous gentiles, under this restraint; but permitted them to eat things offered to idols, wheresoever their liberty could not be made *an occasion of offence, or stumbling* to other weaker christians, such as had not learned the complete liberty of the gospel of Christ, so well as they; 1 Cor. viii. 7—13. And when these practices ceased to give offence to Jews or Jewish christians, I can see no reason why the proselytes should not be free also, or why they should have more restraint laid on them than others.

XIII. That the prohibition of eating *blood and things strangled*, as well as of *things offered to idols*, was but a temporary rule, may further appear from the early and original reason of this

\* I add, and probably also, all the gentile christians who had been idolaters and were then converted, might be restrained, as far as the proselyted gentiles were at this season; because the reason of it is the very same, viz. lest offence should be given to the Jews, and Jewish christians. For, by the way, I may say, it is scarce to be supposed, that the converted proselytes, or devout gentiles, who were so much better men, and so much nearer to the truth, should have heavier bonds laid upon them, when they received Christ, than those idolatrous gentiles, who were much worse men, and farther from the truth.

bition, viz. because the life or blood of the animal was claimed for God, and given to God, *to make atonement for the soul*, which was expressly asserted; Lev. xvii. 10—14. And by the *pouring out the blood* before God on the ground, the flesh was, as it were, sanctified to the use of food for the eater. And not that this was the chief reason why eating blood was prohibited to Abraham and his sons, and it was derived down to the patriarchs, together with the doctrine of sacrifices. And so long as blood in any manner of appearance of making atonement in sacrifice, was, till the dissolution of the Jewish state; so long was blood forbidden to the Jews, and to those gentile christians, especially who dwelt near them, or conversed with them. But when the Jewish state was dissolved, and all such brutal sacrifices were wholly abolished, then Judaism vanished, and gospel liberty more established; and there could be very few or none to give offence at the eating of blood. And then perhaps St. Paul's doctrine to other gentile churches became universal, and set them free as, "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink;" Col. ii. 1. "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles eat, asking no question for conscience-sake;" that is, not enquiring whether it were dedicated to idols, or whether it were killed in the Jewish manner, by pouring out all the blood, and 1 Cor. x. 25. *for to the pure all things are pure*; Tit. i. 15. "I know and I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus there is nothing unclean of itself, but let no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way;" Rom. xiv. 13, 14. "Meat cometh us not to God; neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse;" 1 Cor. viii. 8. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified," not by pouring out the blood, but *by the word of God and prayer*; 1 Tim. iv. 3, 4, 5.

XIV. But the gradual change from Judaism to christianity may be more fully understood, if we attend to this which follows. In the Jewish dispensation there were three sorts of laws, viz. moral, ceremonial, and political:

1. The moral laws were everlasting, and belonged to all the dispensations of God, which relate to the children of men in all ages, whether patriarchal, Jewish or christian, and were never to be abolished.—2. The political laws of the Jews were the civil laws of that nation, which God, as their supreme king or political lord, gave them by Moses, to be observed in their country, so long as their state or polity subsisted. The gentiles were never bound by these laws; and therefore when they turned christians, their conversion could by no means bring them into a subjection thereto; for christianity makes no alteration in the civil governments of this world. The Jews or subjects of the government of Judea, especially while they resided in the land of Judea, were the proper subjects of these



political laws, whether they received christianity or no. And therefore Jewish christians in Judea complied with them till their polity was finished by the destruction of Jerusalem.—3. As for the ceremonial laws, they were particularly designed, not only to distinguish the Jews from other nations, but also to be types and figures of the blessings of the gospel; and therefore as they are wisely appointed to foreshew these blessings of christianity, and to be a distinguishing mark of the Jews, so they were as wisely worn out and abolished when christianity was introduced, and the *partition wall* of distinction between Jews and gentiles was broken down. *They were but shadows or figures for the time being, and must vanish when the substance appeared.* St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, chapter ix. and x. and to the Colossians, chapter ii. evidently uses this argument for their abolition, the great design of them being fulfilled.

XV. It is plain therefore, that these ceremonial or religious laws were not lawful for the gentile converts out of Judea, to observe at all, as St. Paul writes in his epistle to the Galatians, *If ye are circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing*; Gal. v. 2. since they were never appointed for the gentiles by the great God, nor imposed upon them by Christ; and he is zealous to maintain this their liberty against all Jewish impositions and impostors, who would persuade the gentiles to be circumcised, and to observe their ceremonies.

XVI. As for the Jewish christians, though they were not obliged to observe them as matters of religion, after the setting up of christianity, yet since all the Jewish nation were so much prejudiced in favour of these ceremonies, and since the Jewish christians, and even some of the apostles, could so hardly be brought off from them, they seemed to be indulged for a season in this practice.

And even St. Paul himself, who was a Jewish christian, at particular times engages in the practice of them; not as things which he believed necessary in order to serve God, but as mere lawful and indifferent things, and as matters of present expediency, which were wearing off, waxing old and vanishing away, as Heb. viii. 13. that is, they were vanishing as fast as Judaism hastened to its period, and as fast as human nature could bear the wearing out of its old prejudices: And therefore *he became all to all at that time that he might gain some proselytes*; 1 Cor. ix. 20—22. “To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. I am made all things to men, that I might by all means save some.” Therefore *he took Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess, and circumcised him*, when he sent him out as a preacher; Acts xvi. 1—3. in order to ingratiate him with the Jews, or lest he should give offence to the Jewish christians: Therefore

consented to go through the rites of a purification as after the Jewish manner ; Acts xxi. 23, 24, 26. sly has God, the ruler of the world, condescended to as of men, by indulging these indifferent things for several parts of his transactions with them, and in , because human nature can hardly be led all at once it a change of principles and practices.

There might also be another reason for St. Paul Jewish converts, to comply with some of these cere- a season, because the ceremonial and political laws Jews, were so intermingled, that it was sometimes it, if not impossible, to distinguish the one from the while the Jewish polity lasted, several of these cere- s might be complied with by Jewish christians, ivil government of the Jews, considered as parts of or government, though they might know their own n and release, which Christ had given them from all monies, considered as matters of religion\*.

. But after the destruction of Jerusalem and the l the dissolution of the Jewish state, their political as monial laws were utterly abolished ; and by this time, e remaining apostles, but all the Jewish christians, ore clearly into the knowledge of their own liberty in s, and their freedom from every thing written in the es, which was not moral. Then the differences be- ewish and gentile converts were taken away, and by y came more perfectly to unite themselves together in es of christian communion, in their several churches world, according to the frequent directions and ex- at St. Paul had given them in the xiv. chapter to the id several other parts of his writings. See on this excellent dissertation of Mr. Benson, at the end of phrase and notes on Titus. Thus much shall suffice he five dispensations of the covenant of grace.

haps, it may be worth enquiring, whether those ceremonies, which d purely religious, might not be appointed, partly for the public our of God, when he resided in a bright cloud in the tabernacle as the visible Head of a visible church on earth : And though he visibly in the second temple, yet when he rent the veil of the- eath of Christ, and when the Holy of Holies, which was his pre- was thrown open and common, then God ceased to have any ap- sidence there, and their church-state was in a great measure dis- ving, if I may so express it, driven God from among them, by

And from that time their religious ceremonies might be so far become needless ; yet they were indulged for a season, as indif- the Jewish christians, who had been used to practise them, till the e temple, or God's visible palace, were utterly destroyed, and f a visible church, were scattered through the earth.

CHAP. XII.—*Of those who have had no Revelation.*

I. As for all the persons, the families and the nations of mankind, who have lived under these various dispensations of grace, it is evident that they have had the means of grace and salvation set before them, to recover them from the ruin of the fall of Adam. *If they neglect this great salvation, they must perish with great justice.* But as for those who by their negligence and iniquity of their fathers, have lost all notices and traditions of all divine revelations, and of all the dispensations of grace, and particularly of the last of them which their fathers enjoyed, whether it were patriarchal, Jewish or christian and which they were entrusted to convey to their posterity these have nothing remaining, but that knowledge of God, his law, his government and his mercy, which they could derive from the light of nature, and reason, and observation. An indeed, there were many religious observations which they could and ought to have made on the nature and mercy of the great God, and his gracious providence, his long-suffering and his continued benefits, as well as from the working of their own consciences, *in accusing or excusing their conduct, & from which they might infer something of grace and hope.*

II. It appears by their daily experience, that they are sinners: Conscience tells them much of their duty, shews them the law of works, accuses them of sin, and condemns them thereby. The daily providence of God, shews them that they have *time and space to repent* of sin, and trust in his mercy: he hath given them the common comforts of life, and *filled their hearts with food and gladness*, and thereby *he hath left himself not without witness*, both of his power, government, and goodness to them: Acts xiv. 17. He hath intimated to them hereby, *that they should seek after God and his mercy, if they might haply find after him, and find him*; Acts xvii. 27. supposing they should or might know *that the long-suffering and forbearance of God should lead them to repentance*; Rom. ii. 4. So that, at least they might reasonably say with the Ninevites, to encourage their repentance and their faith, *who can tell but God may be gracious?* Jonah iii. 9.

III. All this, with many other things, seem to give us some notice, that the sinful race of the heathens and savages, even those who never heard of the gospel, in any revealed dispensation of it, are not left merely in the condition of fallen angels to perish unavoidably without any hope, or any grace to trust in, or without any encouragement or motive to repentance.

IV. It is true, their light is but dim, and their means of grace run very low; yet if there shall be found among these

persons or nations, any *who fear God and work righteousness*, do repent of sin, and hope in a merciful God, we believe they all be accepted of him, through an unknown Mediator as Corneilius was: For this fear of God, repentance and hope is God's work in their hearts, and he will not condemn the penitent man; Acts x. 35. Prov. xxviii. 13. Nor will he destroy his man's good work in the heart of man, nor shall any penitent and righteous creature perish for not knowing and believing those revelations of grace, which he never heard of, and which he could never know or believe.

CHAP. XIII.—*The Last Judgment.*

I. When all the dispensations of grace are finished—then comes the great day of judgment. Then all mankind, who have acted their parts on the stage of the world, in the several successive ages, shall appear together; those who are known to death, shall arise from the dead at the call or summons of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is appointed *Judge of the living and dead*: That is, of those who shall then be found living at his appearance, as well as of those who shall be raised from a grave.

II. In that great and solemn day, *every man shall be judged according to that dispensation of grace, under which he lived*, whether it were that of Adam or Noah, Abraham, Moses or Christ: And sentence shall be passed upon every man *according to his works*, that is, according to his compliance or non-compliance with the rules of that dispensation.

III. Those who have refused to repent of sin, and to trust in divine mercy, so far as it was revealed in the dispensation under which they lived, they stand already condemned by the original moral law of God, or the law of innocence, which they have broken; and they shall have that condemnation, as it were publicly sealed upon them, for refusing to accept of offered grace. John iii. 18, 36. *He that believeth not, is condemned already:—and the wrath of God abideth on him, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.* But those who have repented of sin and trusted in grace, and lived according to the dispensation under which they were placed, they may hope the condemning sentence of the broken law is reversed, and that they shall be publicly acquitted and absolved from their guilt, they shall have their imperfections publicly forgiven for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered, they shall be accepted and their good works approved, they shall be acknowledged as the children of God, and be adjudged to eternal life, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*; Mat. xxv. 34.

IV. Here let it be observed, that in the sense of the gospel

pel, good men while they are here upon earth, stand justified in the sight of God, as we have seen before, not by any righteousness of their own works, for they have no such righteousness but by faith in his mercy, through a Mediator. This is for honour of divine grace, which justifies them freely through redemption that is in Christ; Rom. iii. 24, 28. and iv. 5. yet in day of judgment, men shall be justified or condemned according to their works and their words in the sight of the world; Rom. 13—16. Mat. xii. 37. because this public judgment is appointed for the honour of divine equity or justice, to make it appear all the world, that God distributes rewards and punishments to persons who are fitly qualified for the one or the other; Is. iii. 1. "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked? it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him. And our Lord Jesus Christ, the appointed judge of all men hath the same orders to execute, for "he shall render to every man according as his work shall be; Rev. xxii. 12, 14, 1. "Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gate into the city. But the dogs, sorcerers, idolaters, liars, &c. are all without," they are excluded from heavenly blessings, by the Judge of all the earth, for they are utterly unfit as well as unworthy to enjoy it.

V. To make this matter yet plainer, and to reconcile the different representations which are given of our justification by faith in this life, and our justification by our words and works in the day of judgment, it must be considered, that every Christian who is admitted into heaven, may be said to have a two-fold right to it, viz. there is a right of inheritance which is by faith whereby we are justified, and become *the children of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*; Gal. iii. 26. Rom. viii. 17. being interested by the free gift of God in the benefit of his Son's purchase that is, the inheritance of heaven: And there is also a right of congruity or fitness, which arises from actual holiness of heart and life, whereby we are prepared for the actual possession of this inheritance. So an infant may have a right of inheritance to his father's estate, by his birth or adoption; but he has not a right of congruity or fitness, till he grow up to twenty-one years, or to the age of discretion and capacity to enjoy it; and then he is put into the possession. I think this distinction will sufficiently reconcile the appearing difficulties.

VI. As for those persons, those nations and ages, that have so far lost all the revelations and dispensations of grace, that they know nothing of their own duty, or of the grace of God but what the light of nature teaches them, they shall be judged according to those teachings of the light of nature, or that know

ge of God, of his law and his government, of his grace and his duty, which they might have arrived at by the right exercise of their conscience and reasoning powers. This seems to be the use of those words of the apostle, Rom. ii. 12—15. *as many have sinned without law, that is without a written or revealed law, they shall perish without law; and as many as have sinned, or under a written or revealed law, they shall be judged by the law; the Gentiles which have not any written law, are a law to themselves, which shews the work of the moral law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing or excusing them.*

But how far divine compassion shall exercise itself in unpromised ways towards any of those persons or nations, who by the negligence and iniquity of their parents, had lost all the revelations of grace, is to be left to the wise, the righteous and the merciful Judge of all men.

CHAP. XIV.—*Conclusion of this Essay.*

I. A due survey of these dispensations of God to man in this world, perhaps may enable us to understand many parts of the Bible much better, since it will happily account for many difficulties in the Old Testament and the New, which seem to me very hard to be solved in any other way, to the satisfaction of a diligent enquirer.

II. And as I have been led into this scheme and manner of receiving the transactions of God with men, by a diligent perusal of the holy scriptures, rather than by any human creeds, confessions or systems, either ancient or modern, so I cannot but recommend the serious consideration of it to those who are resolved to follow the same method of study, and read the scriptures, to learn from thence the articles of our christian faith and practice. Let them like the noble *Bereans, search the scriptures, and see whether* this representation of divine things does not come very near to the truth, and make scripture more easy to be understood by shewing the connexion and consistence of every part of it with all the rest.

III. It is confessed after all, there may be several difficulties still attending this scheme of the dispensations of grace, and perhaps some mistakes in it; I am but a weak and fallible creature, and *the ways of God are unsearchable to man, and his judgments past finding out*; Rom. xi. 33. But let it be observed, that among a hundred men, every one can much sooner find faults in any system of divinity, or in the scheme of any science, than one of them will draw up a scheme or system which hath no difficulties.

IV. It has been often found, both in human and divine sciences, that when some particular parts of a scheme or system

appear a little disagreeable to our sentiments, as perhaps they do, we are presently ready to correct them ; but we find a little time those supposed corrections, or their necessary sequences will not comport with other most plain and truths, that relate to the same subjects, and we then are to retract our corrections. While men in this frail state searching *into the deep things of God*, we must be content with some remaining darkneses : If there be any short sum of these transactions of God with men, which is more conformable with itself, which is nearer to scripture, and has fewer difficulties than this, I shall be glad to receive it and submit to it. *O Send out thy light, and thy truth ; let them lead us to the hill, let them bring us to the tabernacles of thy grace, and mansions of thy glory ; Ps. xliii. 3. Amen.*

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THE  
***STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS***  
OF  
**HUMAN REASON ARGUED.**  
IN FOUR CONFERENCES.

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## PREFACE

### THE STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF HUMAN REASON.

and familiar conferences it is never required that such a just account of language should be observed, or that men should be conversant with exactness of method, as in a set or studied treatise on any one theme. Occasional incidents frequently arise, and turn the discourse on aside into an unexpected channel: Or sometimes, perhaps, we are on the same subject; and the same sense may be repeated again. And in such a course of discourse some freedoms of thought and expression may break in, which stand in need of the candour of those that hear them, and it is not to be expected in such cases. Let it be noted also, that when persons of different opinions are introduced in a free discourse, the narrator is not bound to support that one or any of the parties present happen to utter: He will not support every thing that Pithander urges in vindication of the sufficiency of human reason in matters of religion; nor dares he venture to make all the concessions on the side of its sufficiency, nor advance positions that Sophronius the moderator hath done in this dispute. On the whole, if there be any thing suggested in these conferences on any occasion Logisto and his companions, who are under temptations to be vain, to bethink themselves a little; if it may awaken any of them to consider and raise some doubts about the sufficiency of their boasted reason, and then to see and confess the necessity of divine revelation, in order to bring the world, and to restore mankind to true religion and the favour of God, the writer hath attained his chief design, and shall rejoice in the

There is no objection which the author has found in any public writing against this book, but such as are already expressly and in plain language proposed by Logisto, and answered by Pithander or Sophronius. He treats such opponents to read the book over before they write against it, and they treat it with insult, and pronounce victory and triumph on their side. The chief objection which the author has heard of, that is raised in conversation against these conferences, is, that the author argues so strenuously as he might have done, nor pursue his cause with sufficient vigor and constancy; but that he seems to be too soon and too easily convinced by the reasoning of his antagonist or the moderator, in the subjects of controversy between them; whereas our moderns would have scorned to have dropt the argument, or yielded up the point without more contest. To this the author asks leave to reply, that if he had read the books whence he drew Logisto's argument, the objections would think better of them; for they are not borrowed from the writers. Nor has he ever represented Logisto falling under content where he thinks the arguments of Pithander or Sophronius carry weight and convincing power with them: He confesses, indeed, that he had drawn the teasing saw of controversy further, and prolonged the dialogue beyond this point, perhaps it would set the writers on a juster view, agreeable to their own practice; but still it would have been mere cavilling instead of disputing, it would have rendered the

reading tiresome, and have swelled the volume too much. Besides, the character of Logisto is an enquiring deist, not a resolved and obstinate unbeliever; and if he had been represented and supported in all the windings and turnings of a sophistical caviller, who avoids the light, and who would never be satisfied, this would have thrown Logisto quite out of his character. However, if any of the modern disbelievers of revelation complain that the author has represented them as too fair disputants, as feeling the force of an argument too soon, and as yielding to just conviction beyond what they are in reality, he hopes he may obtain an easy pardon for this sort of injury, from gentlemen who make such high pretences to a sincere search after truth, and a ready submission to the power of reason. As for any improvements that are made in this second edition, they chiefly consist in some additional force given to particular arguments, some further illustrations of what might appear less evident, and other small corrections interspersed through the whole work.

THE  
**STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS**  
OF  
**HUMAN REASON ARGUED.**  
IN FOUR CONFERENCES.

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FIRST CONFERENCE.

The declining sun had abated the heat of the day, when Logisto took his customary walk through the fields which bordered on his own estate. Having roved onward in meditation, to a greater distance than he first designed, it came into his thoughts he had not paid a visit for two months before to his neighbour Logisto: So he called in at his door, to pass away an hour with him in friendly discourse, as they were sometimes wont to do upon any profitable theme that might offer in the vast and extended range of religion or learning.

Logisto was a young gentleman of much larger circumstances; and as he had a sprightly genius, so he had taken some pains to cultivate it, and was a great admirer of human reason. He had often of late fallen into company with some of our modern infidels, and for want of due caution, and better acquaintance with the true grounds of christianity, he had unhappily adopted too many of their opinions. Yet the man had a candid and seemed to be sincerely desirous of truth: He was ever inquiring after some further evidences of the christian doctrine, and was heartily attentive to the objections that were made against it. He had now seen somewhat more than thirty years of life, and he thought it was high time to settle his belief and his practical matters of religion, on a foundation that might justify his conduct to his own conscience, and to God his judge. He was desirous to receive an argument from the lips of laity or clergy, and would converse freely with a christian minister, in hopes to derive light and instruction from him: Nor would he treat that class of men with those disdainful airs which are become so fashionable among the pretenders to infidelity. Logisto had appointed to spend that very evening in a set conference with his neighbour, the Rector of the parish where he dwelt, upon that important point of controversy, "Whether human reason were sufficient to guide and conduct mankind to future happiness?"

Pithander was a man in years, but of vigorous parts, nevertheless declining in his reasoning powers: A person of a grave and manly deportment, and a pious life, becoming his character: He was a warm advocate for the christian faith: He preached the gospel with zeal and diligence, to the edification of his flock, and had lately read some writings of his excellent diocesan, drawn up in an epistolary way, upon the subject of the present designed debate, wherein the insufficiency of human reason in matters of religion, was strongly maintained. He publicly recommended these pastoral letters to the diligent and serious perusal of all his parish; for he was charmed with these writings, as the best vindication of our holy religion, which he had ever met with in so few pages, and highly valued it as a noble defence of christianity worthy of a christian bishop.

Pithander had just entered Logisto's house, in order to fulfil their mutual appointment, and they were gone down to an elegant summer-house at the lower end of the garden, before Sophronius knocked at the gate. When he was admitted he chose to take a turn on the grass-plot, while the servant went to give notice to his master. Logisto espied him afar off, for he was of a tall and comely stature, which, together with his grizzled hair, had rendered his person more distinguished and conspicuous. "See here, saith he to Pithander, a proper moderator for our intended debate, if you please to allow Sophronius to bear a part in the conversation of the evening." "I have some knowledge of him, replied Pithander; he is a gentleman of good reading, and generally a pretty fair reasoner: Were it not for one thing, I should like him very well for a moderator; for I think he is in the main an honest man: But he indulges such a latitude of thought on some subjects, that I expect he will too easily allow reason to be a sufficient guide to lead heathens to heaven; for he not only speaks favourably of the presbyterians, but I myself once heard him say, that he believes even the papists and the quakers may have some good things among them, and some good men too?"

"Good Sir, said Logisto, when shall we have done with all these party distinctions, and this narrowness of spirit? Must charity be always a dangerous thing? If you know Sophronius, you know a man of ingenuity and honour; he hath a certain sagacity with him, whereby he spies the force of an argument at once; and knows the vast difference there is betwixt disputing and cavilling: He can tell you immediately where an objection pinches hardest, and is so honest as to feel and confess it, even when it is urged against his own opinions. He goes generally to church, and I take him to be a very sincere believer in his bible; and upon this account my good friend, I have more reason to say, he is unfit for a moderator in our present dispute, than

you can have to think him so, on account of his moderation and his generous charity. I am well assured that he is no bigot, that he never runs into any extremes, nor follows any opinion for the sake of party : I think we may safely take him for a moderator between us ; and I shall be glad to have him not only shew us what he observes of strength or weakness in each of our arguments, but shall request his final sentiments on the theme of our controversy." Upon this Pithander soon agreed to the proposal : " Let him, then, said he, hear our present debates, if you please, and pronounce at last on the subject." By this time Logisto's servant had got down to the summer-house, and having told his master of his new come guest, he was ordered immediately to wait on him down the long myrtle walk, and let him know how much his company was desired. When they had paid mutual salutations, Logisto informed Sophronius of the intent of their meeting, of the subject of their intended conference, and of the office to which they had both appointed him ; and they joined to intreat his consent. After a few becoming excuses, Sophronius chose rather to obey their order, than to disappoint the design of the evening : And see, said he, the sun grows low, therefore let your debate commence. Upon this Logisto began :

**LOG.** My business, Pithander, is to prove, that *human reason, without any revelation from heaven, is sufficient to guide and conduct mankind in a way of religion, to the favour of God, and future blessedness.* Now that we may understand one another perfectly, and keep up the same ideas of the terms we use, throughout the whole dispute, I will try whether first we cannot settle the sense of them to our mutual satisfaction.

**PITH.** Then let us hear, sir, your explication of the terms.

**LOG.** I question whether I can do it better than a late writer on this subject has done : I will make use of his words therefore, which are contained in the first page of his book : I have just bought it : Here it lies by me in the summer-house, and I will read the lines to you, sir, with a very little alteration. " By reason, I understand that faculty or power of the mind by which men discern and judge of right and wrong, of good and evil, of truth and error, and the like. By matters of religion, I understand not merely the practices of piety toward God, but of virtue and sobriety with regard to our neighbours and ourselves, and in general all those things which men are accountable for to the Maker and Governor of the universe ; and thereby render themselves the proper objects of reward or punishment. By guidance and conduct in matters of religion, I understand an ability or capacity, if carefully and faithfully exercised, to discover what are these duties of piety and virtue, or what it is which man in reason and equity is accountable for, and which will render him the proper object of divine favour or displeasure ; and likewise a

capacity to discover such motives to enforce the practise of these duties, as will be a balance to all those temptations which the present constitution of things unavoidably subjects him to. And by a sufficiency to guide and conduct a man in matters of religion, I understand such a capacity or power in man, when duly exercised, as is sufficient to answer these purposes without any thing superadded; and which will render him in justice and equity inexcusable if he miscarries." Give me leave to add this one thing, that by mentioning future blessedness in my state of the question, you see I intend to declare my profession of the immortality of the soul, and a state of rewards and punishments to be dispensed in the other world, by God the righteous Governor and the Judge of all, according to our behaviour in the present state. Well, Pithander, do you agree to this account of the terms we shall use in this dispute?

PITH. Yes, I think I do, sir; for I see nothing necessary to be objected against it at present.

LOG. Then, since we have settled the meaning of the question, I will now enter upon the argument, and endeavour to prove the sufficiency of human reason to guide and conduct men to happiness, in a way of religion, though they have no revelation.

PITH. I think, sir, it will be necessary for us still to enquire, and agree yet more particularly, how far this idea of religion reaches, what are the chief articles it comprehends: that is, what are those truths which are necessary to be known and believed, upon which these duties depend; and what are those duties which are necessary to be practised, to obtain the favour of God and happiness in another world?

LOG. I perfectly approve of your proposal, sir; and when we have settled these articles, let us see first, whether reason be not sufficient to guide or instruct us in the knowledge of them all; and afterward we will debate, whether the same reason cannot by them conduct us to heaven; that is, whether reason has not a sufficient natural power by proper motives to enforce the practice of the duties which it teaches us, and bring us thereby to happiness. These are the two things which I mean by guiding and conducting.

PITH. I consent to this method, sir; and since perhaps you and I shall hardly agree at once upon all the articles of this necessary religion, I dare venture to propose that Sophronius may be desired to reckon them up, as an impartial person between us. I hope he will not fail to do justice in this part of the argument.

LOG. Pray, Sophronius, please to take this trouble upon you: It will be no difficult matter for you, who are so well acquainted with these disputes, to tell us at so short a warning, what mere reason makes necessary for man to believe and practise, if ever he would hope to obtain the favour of God.

2. Since you both request it, gentlemen, I comply, and give my thoughts in this matter; and I hope I shall only such articles as you will both assent to the necessity and such as I hope also you will both believe to be sufficient there is no divine revelation.—Doubtless man must believe, in the first place, *that there is a God*, and that *is but one*; for God is too *jealous* of his honour and his and too much concerned in this important point, to lavish his favours on any person who *makes* himself to become his rivals, or who exalts a creature, or a creature, into the throne of God. He must believe also, that God is a being of perfect wisdom, power and goodness, and that he is the righteous Governor of the world.—Man must also believe that he himself is a creature of God, furnished with a faculty of understanding to perceive the general difference between good and evil, in the most important instances of it; and endowed with a free will, which is a power to chuse or to refuse the evil or the good: That he is obliged to exert these powers or faculties in that manner, both toward God and toward himself, as well as toward his neighbour. I do not insist upon it, that he must know those things explicitly, and in a philosophical manner: but he must have some sort of consciousness of his own natural powers, and be able to distinguish, to chuse or to refuse good or evil, and to be sensible of his obligations to enquire and practise what is good and to avoid what is evil.

For the duties that relate to God, man is obliged to worship with reverence, to honour him in his heart and life, on account of his wisdom and power manifested in the world; to adore his majesty, to love him, and hope in his goodness, to give thanks for what instances of it he partakes of, to seek to him for what he wants, and to carry it toward him in all things as toward his Father, his Lord, and his Governor.—He must know that since God is a righteous Governor, if he does not make the world happy in this world, and the wicked miserable, then he must be another world, wherein he will appoint some happiness for the good, and misery for the wicked; or in general, he will at some time or other distribute rewards and punishments to all men, according to their behaviour: For this has a very powerful influence unto all holiness of life, and every part of it, which will hardly be practised without these motives.

For the duties which relate to other men, every man must believe, that as he is placed here amongst a multitude of creatures of his own species or kind, he is bound to show truth or veracity, justice and goodness toward them, according to the several relations in which he may stand, as father, brother, son, husband, neighbour, subject, master, buyer, seller, &c. And with regard to himself, he must



know that he is bound to exercise *sobriety* and *temperance*, and to maintain a *due government* over his *appetites* and *passions*, that they run not into excess and extravagance. And finally, since every man will frequently find himself coming short of his duty to God and man, and betrayed into sin by the strength of his temptations, his appetites and passions, in the various occurrences of life, *he must repent of his sins*, be sincerely sorry for what he has done amiss, *humbly ask forgiveness of God*, and endeavour to *serve and please him in all things for the time to come*, and he must exercise a *hope or trust in the mercy of God*, that upon repentance and new obedience, God will forgive sinners, and take them again into his favour.

PITH. I grant that these articles seem to be the sum and substance of natural religion, and the most important and necessary parts of it : And I thank you Sophronius, for so particular an enumeration of them : Though if I had a mind to dispute, I would enquire, whether there were not some more particulars necessary to complete true religion ; I mean the religion of *sinning creatures*, in order to obtain the favour of God ; and if I should strenuously insist upon these things, Logisto, perhaps you would find it hard to exclude them utterly from such a religion as shall be effectual to salvation.

LOG. And if I had a mind, Pithander, to dispute too, I would say, here are several more articles brought together than I thought of, and our friend Sophronius hath named rather too many fundamentals for a heathen to believe and practise. But in the main, I confess, I know not well how to reject them with justice ; and, to avoid contention, for the present I will submit to this enumeration, and we will argue upon them.

SOPH. Gentlemen, I would fain have this matter well adjusted and agreed between you in the very beginning of your debate, that there may be no altercation about it afterward. If you please therefore, I will very briefly give you my reasons, why I suppose these articles of belief and practice to be sufficient, where there is no revelation, to lead men into the favour of God, and also why I can allow of very little abatement of them ; though I am satisfied, *many persons*, since the world began and even *some of the christian faith*, have been saved without any *formal knowledge* of them in a regular scheme of propositions. First then, I can hardly think that a God of holiness and justice will require less than what I have represented, in order to obtain his favour, and future happiness : For those persons must be very unfit inhabitants for heaven, where happiness consists in the *knowledge and love of God*, who have never learned on earth to know, and love, and honour the only true God, or who do not acknowledge him as Governor of the world, nor hope nor fear any rewards or punishments from his hands, or who bear no *true love to their neigh-*

in themselves by any rules of *sobriety*, but allow injustice and intemperance, or who never *repent* of their sin, and ask God to forgive them. On the other hand, those who are sober and fear, who love and honour *the only true God*, who desire to know his will, and to obey it as far as they are able, and are sober with regard to their own conduct, and diligent with regard to their neighbours, who are sensible of their duty, and sincerely repent of sin, who are sensible of the greatness of God, and hope in his mercy; these persons are certainly in the main approved of God, notwithstanding their many failings. And I think God is too merciful to condemn such persons to everlasting punishment, because they are those who sincerely love and obey him, though their many sins and failings may deserve it.

Please to remember also, that God himself has testified to the apostle Peter; Acts x. 35. In every nation he that doeth right and worketh righteousness is accepted with him, and he supposed that any man can do it full perfection.

Well, Pithander, what have you to say against these words of my part, I think they carry great force with them: may both readily give our assent. I will therefore argue with you, if you please?

I am very unwilling to oppose what Sophronius has said, but I think he will not take it ill, if I ask the favour of an answer to the question, before I give my complete assent to it, and then the debate begin.

With utmost freedom, Sir, propose any objection, and I will give a fair answer to the difficulty you propose, and if I cannot give force of it, and retract my opinion in this matter; I am ready to learn and receive instruction from any person, particularly from gentlemen of your cloth: though I am not without my understanding and conscience to *no master but*

Well, Sir, since you thus roundly profess yourself a free man, I would take the freedom to enquire, whether in every age and country, and in every mercy which God has made to sinful man, there has not always enjoined some *positive institution* and ordinance, above the mere duties which the light of nature or conscience dictate to innocent or sinful man? When he gave the law to Israel, did he not give them any hope of favour after their sin, did he not give them the sacrifice, at least as a shadow or token of *atonement*? Did he not give them some faith or hope in a Mediator or Saviour, viz. *Moses*, that should break the head of the serpent, *the works of the devil*? Was not this positive institution continued also to Noah and to Abraham, together with the promises and prophecies of a Messiah given to Abraham, and a promise of favour or trust in him? Were not the same positive

institutions and requirements of sacrifice and trust in a *Messiah*, a *Saviour*, given to Moses and the Jews, together with many other rites and ceremonies, in order to their acceptance with God? And when Jesus Christ came into the world, a *faith* or *trust* in the *Messiah*, or trust in the mercy of God *through him*, was made a necessary qualification of our acceptance with God, besides repentance and new obedience, and an humble desire of forgiveness of past offences. I grant indeed, that the ordinances which were given to Abraham, to the Jews, and to the gentiles to whom the *gospel of Christ* was preached, were not required of all the world. The special rules given to Abraham obliged the *families of Abraham*; those given to Moses obliged only the Jews; the particular and positive duties of christianity could oblige no families or nations but those to whom they were once made known but the positive institution of sacrifices, and the hopes of some promised Saviour were appointed to Adam and Noah, and their families, and these appointments therefore belong to *all nations of mankind*, for they were given to them all in those two general fathers of the world. My query now is, whether or no any nations under heaven, who never heard of Christ, can have any comfortable hopes of acceptance with God if they practise not these positive duties of revelation, viz. sacrifices and trust in some Mediator or Saviour, over and above the natural duties of repentance, asking pardon of God, and new obedience, which the light of nature requires of every sinner?

SOPH. Your query, Pithander, is of great importance in this controversy; and I am glad you started it, that I may clear the stage for your further dispute, and make your work the easier on both sides. I will not dispute with you about the divine institution of sacrifices after the sin of Adam, for this is very probable, though not expressly revealed: And I will readily grant, that in every further discovery of divine mercy to sinful men, there hath been generally something of such positive institutions required, as well as the natural duties of repentance and future obedience, &c. But let us consider these few things, viz. First, That God is a being of infinite goodness and holiness in himself, and delights in it in his creatures, and therefore must delight to exercise some mercy toward those who are holy, who return sincerely to his fear, and love, and holiness, and are so far partakers of his likeness, even though they happen to be ignorant of all positive institutions. Let us consider, in the second place, that the duties of repentance, the fear and love of God, and new obedience, and a humble seeking of pardon at the hands of God, are much more proper and more important qualifications to fit a soul for the favour of his Maker, and for heavenly blessedness, than any positive rites or appointments whatsoever. And let us, in the third place, consider yet further, that God hath made

he avowed rule of our duty and of his dealings with men, loves and values *mercy more than sacrifice*; that is, that seems and prefers the natural duties of morality and piety any positive rules or rites; and this he hath frequently stated in the Old Testament and the New, as well as the nature teaches it.

Now upon all these considerations, I think, we may be bold that if these duties of true repentance, humble requests of forgiveness, and endeavours after new obedience, be performed according to the present utmost capacity of a sinful creature, who acquainted with any positive duties of divine institution, *will surely shew himself well pleased with such an humble state*: We may, I think, infer with some assurance, that God *never utterly exclude such a person*, and finally banish him from his favour merely for want of his practice of some positive duty or institutions which he himself never heard of by any revelation and which he could never come to the knowledge of by the exercise of his reason.

Besides, Sir, if we consider the accounts which scripture has given us of those who were the beloved servants of God in ancient times, even his chief favourites, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David, &c. you find them indeed offering sacrifice according to the positive institutions of God, but you find very little of their own personal trust in a Mediator, or Saviour, or intercession of God through a Mediator: much less do we find any evidence of the actual exercise of their faith in any atoning sacrifice of a Messiah to come. But besides their duties of repentance, prayer, pardon, and new obedience, &c. their hope seems generally to have been fixed on the mercy of God himself, without any peculiar exercise of faith through a Mediator, so far as we learn by their devotional writings, or the history of their own relations with God: I do not say, they did never place their trust in such a Messiah, or Saviour to come: for I believe some of them had such a fiducial regard to him: But I may venture to say that we find very little of this in their own devotions, even when several of them had this future Saviour revealed to them in heaven, and to the world by their lips or writings.

As for the doctrine of atonement for sin by the death of this Saviour, though I suppose it to be the real *ground and foundation* of the pardoning grace that ever was dispensed to mankind, though I conceive it to be a most important, if not a necessary part of the religion of Christ, where the gospel is fully published, yet Peter did not know it a little before Christ's death; Mat. 16. when his fondness for the person of Christ would have led him to neglect his sufferings: and Cornelius was accepted of God before he was taught the doctrine of Christ or his atonement: *his piety and charity, came up before God and*

were graciously accepted ; Acts x. 4, 25. Upon the whole view of things, I think, from scripture and reason together we may justly conclude, that where Christ and the gospel are published, all humble sincere penitents, asking pardon of God, and hoping his mercy, though they know nothing of the particular way or method wherein it is, or hath been, or shall be revealed, shall not fail of pardon and acceptance with God at last, nor miss of some tokens of his favour. This grace hath Jesus procured, and God will bestow it.

PITH. Your way of arguing, Sir, carries so much light and conviction in it, that I cannot well deny your argument. And I am inclined to believe, that my excellent diocesan, the present bishop of London, in his second Pastoral Letter, was much in this sentiment when he expressed himself, p. 46. in these words. *As to the heathens, though the light of reason is but dim, yet they who have no better light to walk by, and who honestly make use of that as the only guide God hath given them, cannot fail to be mercifully dealt with by infinite justice and goodness.*

LOG. I am very glad the reasoning of Sophronius is so happily supported by the authority of the bishop, and both together have persuaded you to yield up this point, that God, will accept penitent sinners without their actual trust in sacrifices, or any positive rites of worship.

PITH. I am not ashamed to confess, Sir, that I pay great honour and deference to the sentiments of my superiors in the church ; yet I would willingly see good reason also for what I believe : And I declare now, that I can give my assent in the main to what Sophronius hath delivered. If any little scruple remain, it will be adjusted in the course of our debate. But before you begin your argument, Sir, I entreat you to remember both the precise point of question, and the extent of it, and that is, *whether human reason, in the present state of things, be sufficient to guide all mankind to such a degree of the knowledge and practice of religion, as our friend has described, such as may intitle them to the favour of God and future happiness.* Permit me therefore, Sir, to mention four particulars, which are to be excepted or excluded from the present dispute, as not being the proper and precise subject of it.

LOG. Let us hear, Pithander, what are the four things you exclude from our debate ?

PITH. In the first place, Sir, be pleased to observe, that we are not enquiring, whether the reason of man, in its original powers of innocency and perfection, could find out all the necessary parts of natural religion, viz. the knowledge of his Maker, and his duty to him and his fellow-creatures, as Sophronius has described them, so far as to secure to himself the love of his Maker in that innocent state : But whether man, in his present corrupt

and degenerate circumstances, who is ready to mistake error for truth, whose reason is much blinded and biassed, by the prevailing influences of flesh and sense, and perpetually led astray by appetites and passions, and so many thousand prejudices which rise from things both within him and without him; I say, whether human reason, in this degenerate state of man, be sufficient to teach him such a religion, as will restore a sinner to the favour of God, secure to him everlasting felicity, and render his immortal soul happy in the love of his Creator.

LOG. Pray Pithander, let us hear no more of this old dull story of the *degenerate and corrupt state of man*. It is a notion, indeed, that has prevailed for almost seventeen hundred years among christians, and even among the Jews long before them; yet I can see little foundation for it. I think man is a very excellent being as he was at first, and his reason, and his other faculties of soul, are noble powers, and have always been, and always will be, sufficient to direct and bring him to happiness for which his nature was made, notwithstanding all your pretences of a *bruise* gotten by some ancient fall, which, as you say, reached all mankind in their powers, and weakened them even to this day.

SOPH. Forgive me, Logisto, if I presume to interpose a word here, when I find you speaking with such spirit and warmth against an opinion which is not *peculiar* to the Jews and christians; for several of the *heathen philosophers* acknowledged and maintained it by the mere influence of the light of nature and reason. Antoninus, the philosophic emperor, confesses, that *we are born mere slaves*, that is, in the sense of the Stoics, slaves to our vicious inclinations and passions, destitute of all true knowledge and true reason. Book XI. Sect. 27. The platonists were well known to believe a *pre-existent state wherein all souls resided*, and they lost their wings whereby they were once capable of ascending upward, and so they sunk into these bodies, partly as a punishment for former follies. This was called in their form of speech *τεροπυρρις*, or a moulting of their wings. Their daily experience in themselves, and their wise observation of the world, convinced them, that *all mankind come into the world with propensity to vice rather than virtue*, and that man is not such a creature now as he came from his Maker's hand, but some way or other degenerated from his primitive rectitude and glory, though they indulged strange guesses at the cause of it, and indeed they were utterly at a loss to find how it came to pass. This is only revealed in the bible.

LOG. I thank you, Sophronious, for your gentle reproof. It is not at all improper for you to interpose, when you find any thing too keen and pungent escape from either of our lips in the use of disputation. This is one part of a moderator's office,

and I beg Pithander's pardon. But without more compliments, we will pursue the point in hand. Let the heathens, Jews, and christians of elder times say what they please of this degeneracy, some of your own writers now-a-days, who are in greatest credit amongst you, if they do not suspect the reality of the story of Adam and Eve, and the serpent, yet at least they deny such fatal effects of it as you have generally ascribed to the fall of man. To say the truth, they are almost grown weary of maintaining so harsh and so unreasonable a doctrine. Your learned Dr. Clarke tells us, that in Solomon's days, as well as in ours, *God made man upright*; and notwithstanding all that can be said of the meanness and frailness of our nature, notwithstanding all the disadvantages we can alledge ourselves to lie under in consequence of sin having been brought into the world, yet *God hath made man upright*; man, that is, the species or whole race of men. The uprightness therefore that Solomon speaks of in Eccles. vii. 29. cannot be the *original uprightness* which was forfeited by the sin of our first parents, but that *continued uprightness* which every man comes into the world notwithstanding the fall. See Dr. Clarke's Sermon XIV. printed in his life-time.

PITH. I am sorry to find a christian writer talk at the rate this learned author does in that sermon. And indeed if the corruption of human nature be so small, and its present powers sufficient for the purposes of religion and virtue, as he represents them in that discourse, I wonder how he could speak of so universal a depravation amongst mankind, as he does in his excellent book of Revealed Religion, Prop. v. vi. vii. which made revelation so necessary. But I wave this point at present, lest it should draw us aside too soon from our intended subject into another debate, viz. about original sin. I would therefore only take notice to you, Logisto, and I suppose you will easily grant that man in his present condition, is liable to many mistakes in his search of truth and duty; and that he often fails in *practice of the rules of duty* when they are known; and there is something more that is necessary to be known and practised, that a sinful creature may recover the love and favour of his Maker when he is offended, than there was for an innocent creature in order to keep himself in the love of God; and that is, as our friend Sophronius has expressed it, the duty of repentance on our part and the grace of forgiveness on the part of God.

LOG. This is not to be denied, Sir, and therefore I really allow it. But what then? Is it not the reason of man sufficient to find out these things,

PITH. Give me leave, Sir, to say again, that we are not inquiring, whether human reason, in its *best estate*, could find out the religion of an innocent creature, whereby he might continue in his Maker's love; but whether, under all present disadvan-

tages, prejudices, mistakes, passions, &c. his reason be sufficient to find out all things necessary for a guilty creature to obtain forgiveness of his offended Creator, and to procure to himself immortal happiness in a future state, notwithstanding his past offences.

LOG. I approve of your accuracy, my friend, in this point, and I affirm, that the reason of man, in his present state, though he often errs, and often offends God, is yet sufficient to instruct and lead him into all that is needful to obtain pardon and happiness. Well, what is the next thing you would except out of our dispute?

PITH. In the second place then I would observe, that we are not to debate, whether we, who have been educated in a christian nation, and have been trained up from our infancy to hear and learn a thousand things which the ignorant heathens never hear of; I say, whether we, by our force of reason, can draw out a connected scheme of religion in the several truths and duties of it; which might lead a sinner to obtain the favour of God: but whether one who was born and brought up in the dark regions of heathenism, and never any happy hints given him by tradition or by conversation, could find out by his own reasoning powers such a scheme of virtue and godliness, as would be sufficient to bring him to the divine favour, and the felicity of another world? We are greatly mistaken in supposing that the understanding of a heathen would lead him into all those well-connected sentiments concerning God and man, virtue and piety, which are found even among common persons educated under the bright influence of christianity. Mr. Locke, in his Reasonableness of Christianity, page 269, says, *That if christian philosophers have much outdone the heathens in their systems of morality; he ascribes it to their knowledge of revelation. Every one, says he, may observe a great many truths which he receives at first from others, and readily assents to, as consonant to reason, which he would have found it hard, or perhaps beyond his strength, to have discovered of himself. Native and original truth is not so easily wrought out of the mine, as we who have it delivered ready dug and fashioned to our hauls, are apt to imagine.* Permit me to add, Sir, with all just deference and respect to your bright genius and your happy reasoning powers, I can hardly imagine that you yourself would have been able, with utmost study, to draw up such an accurate and comprehensive scheme of natural religion, as Sophronius has now given extempore, if you had been so unhappy as to be born and bred among none but heathens. I believe it will be granted by all, that neither Plato, nor Aristotle, nor Seneca, nor Epictetus, nor Cicero, nor the greatest names and wits of antiquity, have left us so clear, and rational and compendious a system of religion and virtue, as our friend Sophronius has set before us in the present conversation.



LOG. I allow this further limitation of the question, Pithander, though I can hardly admit your reason for it. I am therefore free to assert, that even in heathen countries, where not the least ray of christianity has shined, their own reason of itself has light enough to guide men in their way through this world to a better.

PITH. I proceed then Sir, in the third place, to say, we are not enquiring at present, what degree of knowledge here and there a heathen philosopher may possibly arrive at, who gave himself up to retirement and study, under the advantages of a learned education; but what acquaintance with religion *the bulk of mankind* in the heathen countries could acquire by their own reason, many of whom have but a low genius, poor natural parts, and those uncultivated, and whose views are very narrow, and their powers of reasoning exceeding feeble? What could they do to find out the rules of religion and virtue for themselves, who are continually busied in the affairs of life, to provide meat, drink, and cloathing for themselves and their household, or pursuing the grandeurs, honours, or pleasures of life with impetuous appetite and constant application? Could human reason, Sir, as it is found in these busy people, especially in the low ranks of life, or in persons of low parts, frame such a religion for themselves, and such rules of virtue, as to entitle them to their Maker's favour. Mistake me not Logisto, as if I here granted, that the philosophers, even in Rome or Athens, the brightest and the best of them, did ever find out such a scheme of religion as would lead mankind to heaven and eternal happiness, or such a system as could be effectual to reform the world, or were ever like to do it. Dr. Clarke himself has sufficiently shewn to the contrary in his treatise of Revealed Religion. See his fifth and sixth propositions, which he hath abundantly proved at large. The learned Mr. Millar in that excellent work, his History of the Propagation of Christianity, has made it plain beyond all just exception, vol. I. page 36—50. Edit. 3. This book is cited with honour by the bishop of London, in his Second Pastoral Letter, which hath set this matter also in a strong light, from page 7. to page 38. Mr. Locke himself, whom all the world admires as a master of reason, and who allowed as much power to human reason as one could well desire, asserts in his Reasonableness of Christianity, page 268. *Natural religion in its full extent, was no where that I know of, taken care of by the force of natural reason. It should seem by the little that hath hitherto been done in it, that it is too hard a thing for unassisted reason to establish morality in all its parts upon its true foundations with a clear and convincing light.* You see Logisto, what great names I produce to you, even among modern and rational writers, who will not allow the heathen philosophers to

be able to furnish the world with a good scheme of religion and virtue. But suppose these virtuosos had done it with much labour and fatigue of thought, yet can you imagine the unlearned and vulgar part of the world, the labourers for daily bread, could ever frame such a scheme for themselves? Could human reason in the poor and busy part of cities, towns, and villages, find out such a religion as would lead them into the favour of God? The grand enquiry is not, whether reason could possibly conduct a few bright and studious men to religion and happiness; but whether it is sufficient, as the case of human nature and the circumstances of human life now stand under so many weaknesses and prejudices, so many businesses and cares of life, to reform the bulk of the world, or to guide them into such a reformation as might bring them to heaven.

**LOG.** Well, I grant this point also and affirm the sufficiency of reason in heathen blacksmiths, in cobblers and milk maids, in the followers of the plough, and the drudges of the mill, to find it and practise religion sufficient to save them.

**PITH.** Then, dear Sir, I will try your patience but with one exception more, and that is, that though human reason in the many tribes of the world, as well as philosophers, should have been capable of learning religion and virtue in such a city as Rome or Athens, in Europe; as Pekin in China; as Smyrna or Ephesus, in the lesser Asia, and other polite countries, where they are aided by their converse with learned men and philosophers\*, yet are the reasoning powers of the savage nations in Africa and America sufficient for this purpose? For I conceive this is the present point of our debate, whether all mankind, even the meanest figures of it, in the darkest, the most barbarous and uncultivated nations of the earth, have in themselves each a principle of reason as is a sufficient light to guide them to happiness.

**LOG.** Well then, I hope we have now settled the point with great exactness; and I declare I am of this mind, that every rational being, in all the regions and quarters of the world, has each principles of understanding and will within him, if he will

\* Yet let it be observed here, that the common people and the gentlemen, even in polite countries, received their religion rather from their priests and ministers, than from the lectures and reasoning of their philosophers: They learned more easily, willingly, and universally learned and practised all the impostures and shameful idolatries and superstitions of their country, than ever they would hearken to the lectures of their philosophers, whose moral dictates of duty and mortification, and whose abstracted reasonings on the chief good were neither suited to their taste nor to their understanding: and especially as many of these philosophers neglected to practise their own rules of duty, and all of them complied with the religions of their country, vile and odious religious and superstitious rites which tended to corrupt all their natural principles, and to destroy their virtue, if ever the seeds of it began to appear, as I shall shew afterward.

but use them aright, as are sufficient to lead him into the knowledge and practice of religion and virtue, so far as to procure for him a happy immortality: That his reason is able to lead him into such an acquaintance with his Maker's will, and obedience to it, as to engage the favour of his benevolent Maker towards him, or to recover his favour when at any time he has sinned, and exposed himself to his anger. And indeed, if man has not sufficient powers for this purpose, I should think God had dealt worse with mankind, who, as you all say, *was made after his Maker's image*, than he has with any of the lower ranks of creation, even the insects and the poor creeping things of the earth.

PITH. The equity of the great God in dealing with his creatures may perhaps be debated another time; but I think we have now fully selected and distinguished the plain argument that lies directly before us; and that which you so often assert is this, that the light of reason in every man is sufficient to find out his way to the favour of God, and happiness by religion and virtue: And what these articles of virtue and religion are, what these doctrines and duties which are so necessary for this purpose, Sophronius has just now informed us, I entreat you Sir, proceed now to the proof of your assertion according to the particular articles Sophronius has proposed. And to save time, I will not insist upon your proof of all of them, but only those that seem most difficult: And first, be pleased Sir, to tell us how a wild heathen would find out that there is but one God?

Loc. As reason very easily discovers to us that there is a God who has made all things by the evident tokens of wisdom and power which appear in the works of his hands, so the ingenious Dr. Clarke informs us in his sermon of the Unity of God, that "The doctrine of the whole world being under the government of one God, is the natural notion which the light of reason itself has universally implanted in the minds of men: For the plain connexion and dependence of one thing upon another, through the whole material universe, through all the parts of the earth, and in the visible heavens, the disposition of the air, and sea, and winds, the motion of the sun, and moon, and stars, and the useful vicissitudes of seasons for the regular production of the various fruits of the earth, has always been sufficient to make it evidently appear, even to mean capacities, had they not been perpetually prejudiced by wrong instruction, that all things are under the direction of one power, under the dominion of one God, to whom the whole universe is uniformly subject." Thus far Dr. Clarke. And do you not think this argument would lead mankind to the unanimous belief that there is but one true God?

PITH. No, Sir, by no means : I can never think it could convince ignorant heathens, of the unity of God, if it should ever appen to come into their minds : for I think it hath hardly evidence enough to give conviction to a common reasoner in the christian world. The force of it does not appear so very plain and clear to demand a ready assent and submission : I do not think the union of all beings in the universe under one Lord, is so very manifest and so obvious a thing. And indeed, I should have expected to find a much stronger argument for the unity of God, from a writer of such fame and reputation, and especially a sermon that was written expressly on that subject, which he every where maintains with peculiar zeal. But suppose this argument should be thought strong and evident, to a person who is before convinced of the unity of God ; yet an American of the north would tell you, as they have told other enquirers, that the Europeans, &c. who live beyond the great sea, that is, the ocean, dwell in a different world from them, and may have another God, and every thing else, peculiar to themselves : But that the Americans came into being quite another way, and sprung from another man or woman, who came down from heaven in ancient times. For though they have some ideas of beings above them, yet they have not so much as a name for God among them. So that they would as readily conclude from the distance of the European and American worlds, that they had different superior powers, or gods, as the ancient Grecians concluded that three gods divided the universe among them ; that heaven and earth had one god, viz. Jupiter ; the sea another god, viz. Neptune : and hell, or the world of departed souls, had a third god, viz. Pluto.

LOG. This is strange doctrine indeed : Yet since you tell me this is the opinion of the wild creatures in America, I am not so well acquainted with them as to contradict it. But why do you set the several names of the old poetical gods against me, as though the rambling and irrational fancies of the old heathen poets were to be regarded, when we are talking of the powers of reason to find out the one true God ?

PITH. I grant Sir, there were a thousand fables of the poets concerning these heathen gods, which could not be heartily believed, at least by thinking men : But alas ! Sir, it is a very foolish world in which we dwell : And the priests, and the princes, and people had really the same gods whom I have named, with many others, and they actually raised temples to them, and worshipped them with sacrifices and divine honours, and they had no other gods but such as these.

LOG. But the *philosophers* knew there was but one true God.

PITH. Permit me Sir, to say, that few of them knew or understood this : If the *Platonists* had generally this opinion ; yet

the *Stoics* themselves, as well as meaner sects, talk of more gods than one continually. And please to remember, Sir, our present debate is about the bulk of the heathen world, and not about a few philosophers. How can the world find out so easily, that God is but one ?

Loc. Well, what think ye then of another argument ? It is very evident, and reason assures us, that the Creator of all things is a being that hath all power, and wisdom, and goodness necessary to create and govern the universe : And if one God has all this perfection of wisdom, and power, and goodness, then another such a being would be utterly needless and useless ; for one more, or one hundred more such beings, could have no more wisdom, power, or goodness than one. Now we can never suppose that a God is a useless or a needless being ; and therefore there cannot be any more gods than one, because all the rest would be needless beings, and entirely useless ; for they would have nothing for them to do, which one could not do.

PITH. I grant this argument is in itself convincing to a good reasoner : yet if these two are the easiest ways you can think of to prove the unity of God, I doubt there are multitudes of creatures in the wild heathen world, that, with their utmost efforts of reason, would never of themselves arise to these sentiments, nor form these arguments : And if both of them were put together, and proposed to heathens, I question whether they would make their way into every understanding among those wild and uncultivated herds of mankind, and convince them all, that there was but one God : Much less can I suppose, they would ever find out these arguments of themselves. The bulk of the heathen world have generally believed and worshipped many gods, though many of them did confess that *one was supreme* ; and almost every nation hath had *its own God* : And in direct opposition to Dr. Clarke's argument when they saw such a vast variety of parts in the universe, they commonly appropriated particular parts of the creation to particular gods ; supposing them to have only the oversight of the affairs, if I may so speak, of their own province. As gross as this error is, yet it is plain and certain matter of fact, that the heathens in ancient times, and in almost all nations, did argue thus, and do to this day. Besides, since there is such an innumerable and everlasting train of wickedness and distresses, that is, moral and natural evils, among the children of men, the heathens might be ready to suppose as many amongst them have done, *that there was some equally powerful principle of evil, as there is of good* ; for man sustains as many sorrows, miseries, and mischiefs, as he enjoys comforts, and blessings. And since there are such infinite calamities in the world by storms, earthquakes, famines, plagues,

wars, murders, diseases, and the universal dominion and necessity of death, they might be easily confirmed in this false opinion, and refuse the belief of *one supreme God*.

**LOG.** Really, Pithander, you amaze me ; I never met with any man before, who would not allow the unity of God might be found by the reason of men.

**PITH.** Mistake me not, Sir, I do not deny that it may not be found : but I say, it is not very obvious and easy to the rude and uncultivated reason of every heathen : so that I question whether one in ten in the common race of mankind, or one in an hundred in the countries who lie under the prejudices of *polytheism*, would find it out merely of themselves, without any helps or hints from tradition, or their wiser neighbours, and would firmly believe the truth of it. It is only revelation that has so fully confirmed and preserved or restored this fundamental point of all true religion, and set it in a clear and easy light. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord,—and there is no other God but he ; Mark xii. 29, 32.* But proceed, Sir, to the next point, viz. *the goodness of God*, and shew me whether that lies within the compass and reach of reason, so as to be easily proved by an untaught American.

**LOG.** By what you have said, my friend, you think, perhaps, that the goodness of God is an attribute of the divine nature scarce to be found out at all by the poor wild Indians : But do not the variety and sufficiency of provisions that God hath made for the food, and life, and pleasure of every creature in the world, plainly shew his universal goodness, and must not every man, who opens his eyes upon the creation, be ready to confess it ?

**PITH.** But a poor Indian would be as ready to say, that the vast variety of pains and necessities, of diseases and miseries, and deaths, to which all mankind are made liable in common with the rest of creatures to incline him to believe, that though God has goodness in him, yet he is not perfectly good ; otherwise he would prevent these innumerable evils : And if we christians ourselves, with all the advantages of the bible, find some difficulty in maintaining the perfect goodness of God, when he suffers so much both of sinful and penal evil to enter into this world, and abound, while he could easily have prevented it ; I fear the ignorant savage, with all his reasoning powers, would be much more ready to think, that God was not so good a being as he should be : or, as I said before, that there was some almighty evil power, *some mischievous God* which opposed him, so that he could not do all the good he would. But pray, Sir, go on to the next head, and shew me that the justice of God is an attribute so easy to be found.

**LOG.** I own that the wild heathens have argued thus—

against divine goodness : But his justice surely may be found with ease : It is true, in this world *all things come so much alike to all men*, that God does not make so sensible a distinction between the men of virtue, and the men of vice, as to give ground to a rude heathen to infer his justice : But then reason may teach them, that since God is an all-wise and good Being, he will not let good men always be sufferers, nor appoint evil men to be always happy ; for this is contrary to the reason and harmony of things. And therefore they may readily infer, that there must be another world, or a state after this life, in which God will reward the righteous, and punish the wicked ; and this is what I mean by his justice.

PITH. Whatever a deep philosopher might do, or a reasoner in a christian country, I am afraid a poor Indian labourer, a digger, a fisher, or a huntsman, would be, as ready to infer, that whatsoever mighty being it was that made the world at first, yet he now lets it run at random, and doth not much regard the actions of his creatures, whether good or bad : And perhaps he would be more ready to think, that it was as much or more his own business, and his interest, to make the best that he could of this world, and to free himself from the miseries of it by fraud or force, by right or wrong, rather than to bear the injuries and oppressions, as well as the common calamities of life, with patience, and to expect that some almighty and invisible being should reward him in the next world, if he were never so virtuous, since he sees so very few instances of such a righteous rewarding power, among all the events of this life, or when he rather finds that the wicked oppressors are the most prosperous and happy. But, to pass over this head also, tell me, Sir, how you would prove to a wild American, or rather, how a wild American would prove to himself, that there is any such thing as another world, or state of retribution after this life ? Yet I think it is generally acknowledged, that true religion, in the practice of it in this world, as things stand, seems very much to depend upon this point, and is greatly promoted by it.

LOG. Nay, Pithander, if you do not allow this argument for a future state drawn from the wisdom and justice of God, and the want of a just retribution of virtue and vice in the present state, I confess I am at a loss how the poor heathens can prove it : But I must insist upon it, I think this is a good argument.

PITH. And I think it is of weight among persons that are well civilized, and taught to exercise their reason well : But it would be no easy matter for every single savage, both man and woman, to prove, that God is just : Nor would the doctrine of future retributions be readily found out among the wretched inhabitants of the Eastern or Western Indies, who are so unprac-

bed in the art of reasoning, if they were left only to their own rude labours of thought. I will not deny but some of the heathens, and even in some of the islands of America, have had such a sentiment: but these, perhaps, are but few in number: the bulk of them on the north continent, seem to have no such opinion: Nor is it likely their wild reasoning powers should work in this way, or should reach so far.

LOG. Indeed, Sir, you surprize me again with such talk as is; for, in my opinion, nothing can be more repugnant to the wisdom and justice, as well as the goodness of God than to propose this short life was designed as a state of probation for mankind, in order to their existing hereafter in a state of perpetual happiness or misery, and yet that God doth not let them know that there was to be such a state immediately succeeding this life.

PITH. If I were to give a particular answer to this objection, I would say, that however this our short life may be designed by God himself as a state of probation for perpetual happiness or misery in the next, yet it is not absolutely necessary that God should acquaint his creature man with it: For in whatsoever state a creature is placed, it is his duty to exert his most power to seek out the knowledge of his Maker's will, and practise it without intermission, so long as his Creator pleases to continue him in that state. And then he may, if his Maker think proper, be removed into some new state of further trial: or if God may confine one man fifty, sixty, or seventy years to a state of probation in this world, why may he not dismiss another out of it at ten, twenty, or thirty years end, and appoint him to fill up the remnant of his probationary state in another world, in two or three successive worlds, if he please? What is there in the pure nature of things to forbid it? And what can mere reason say to disprove it? But, on the other hand, if a creature in this world has neglected his duty, and behaved amiss, he may justly expect anger and punishment from his Maker, into whatever unknown state he shall remove him. Now this is sufficient to vindicate the justice of God, if he had not put it at all to the power of a creature to find out which is his state of probation, or how long it shall last, or how many probations he shall go through, or when his state of retribution shall begin, or how long that shall endure.

I confess, indeed, that the knowledge and certain expectation of the state of rewards and punishments after this life, is a most desirable thing for mankind, since it has a great and powerful influence on the practice of virtue and religion here; and I know, that it may be so far found, by a careful and wise exercise of reason, upon the survey of things in this world, that a righteous God will not deal with the good man and the wicked just in



the same manner, in all the future states, but will make a sensible difference between vice and virtue: Constant and persevering piety shall be some way or other rewarded at last, and obstinate iniquity and irreligion shall be punished. But all that I maintain at present against you, Sir, is this: That the doctrine of future and certain rewards at the end of this life, is not so necessary to be manifested to creatures in this life, as to cast an accusation of injustice against God, if he does not make them sensible of it: nor is it so evident to our mere reasoning powers, nor so easy and so obvious to every man in the world, as you may imagine: You know, Sir, the whole sect of the sadducees denied it: Nor is it so plain, that the wild tribes of the Negroes, or the Iroquois should readily find out; for in fact, many of them are ignorant of it to this day. Your silence, Logisto, discovers a generous conviction. Then let us proceed to some other points in natural religion, and enquire how easy it would be for the bulk of the heathen world to find them out: Pray tell me, Sir, how an American might easily convince himself, that God governs the world at all, or takes any notice of it, when he sees things run at random, and a thousand events among mankind, so unsuitable to the conduct of a wise governor, so far as our view of things can reach.

LOG. Surely an American has reason enough to find out, and be assured of this, that the Almighty Being who made all things, must certainly have the knowledge of all the creatures that he has made, and of all their actions: And that he cannot but see the virtues of the righteous with approbation, because they reverence their Maker, and practise what is right: And that he beholds the vices of the wicked with disgust and resentment, because they neglect their duty, or disobey the laws of nature which he has written in their hearts: And therefore, though he does not immediately interpose to shew his approbation or resentment by present sensible rewards or punishments, yet he will certainly do it at one time or another.

PITH. I think, Sir, this is little more than a bare repetition of the same thing you urged in other words, and few American savages exercise their reason so far. Give me the liberty therefore, Sir, to amplify what I have said: When these rude creatures see year after year, and age after age, that there is no such equitable distinction made by Providence between the good and the bad, when the wicked flourish in health, in success, and plenty, when the peaceful and sober man falls perhaps under more oppressions and injuries than the men of wrath and violence, and labours under natural wants and diseases in common with other men: When they observe iniquity and oppression fill the seats of power and government among men in this life, and that among christians as well as heathens; and that all die alike,

and go down to their graves without any sensible and remarkable distinction in favour of the men of virtue ; I tell you, friend, the bulk of the wild American world will have much ado to think that a wise God governs the world, or even so much as regards that he knows the actions of his creatures. They will be ready to take up with those atheistical sentiments represented in scripture. "How doth God know? Can he judge through the thick cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not. That which befalleth beasts, befalleth also the sons of men, they have all one breath; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; so that a man has no pre-eminence above a beast, all go unto the same place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again: What profit is it that we should serve God, or pray unto him? we desire not the knowledge of his ways." If it cost Solomon, the wisest of men, some labour of thought and enquiry, and cost David his father, before him, such a painful inward conflict to solve these difficulties, as appears in Ps. lxxiii. and Eccles. iii. how much need may we suppose the tribes of the heathen world have of some brighter teacher than their own rude faculties to find out and determine, that this world, and the inhabitants of it, are at all governed by an all-wise and almighty Being.

LOG. I confess, Pitthander, some of these are difficulties of which I was not so well apprized before-hand, and I am convinced it is not so easy for a wild heathen to find out some of these necessary truths as I imagined. But however, let us go on. What is the next article of natural religion that you suppose would hardly come within the reach of the reasoning of a wild American?

PITH. Why truly, Logisto, I think the worship of an invisible God, with prayer, or praise, or thanksgiving, is not so very various a duty to those rude and ignorant creatures, nor does it appear to them so necessary as we who dwell in Europe are ready to fancy. Pray let us hear then, how their own uninstructed reason would lead them to this general and necessary duty of the worship of the invisible Being who made them, or any particular instances of it?

LOG. One would think this is a very easy matter for the sanest principle of reason, and the lowest capacity to find out: or if they once come so far as to acknowledge that the world is made by a Being of great wisdom and power, surely they may readily infer, that they should admire and reverence this wisdom and power that made them, and all things around them: they may speedily and naturally draw such obvious consequences, that he alone is Lord of all things, that he can supply their wants, and bestow all blessings upon them, and therefore they ought to pray to him under every distress, and to give thanks when they receive any of the comforts of life from his hands.

PITH. Ah ! my friend, this is easily said by a man of your sprightly powers of reasoning, who have been trained up in the knowledge of the best philosophy, and acquainted with religion from your early years : But you know that even in Greece and Rome, the learned parts of the world, and in the learned ages of it, there were many who professed and learned the Epicurean doctrine, that the gods did neither make the world, nor concern themselves about it since it was made : That all things were left to nature and chance, and that there was no manner of superior government or divine inspection of the affairs of mankind, and therefore they paid no worship, no acknowledgments by prayer or praise. And as for an ignorant American, if he should be brought to believe that an invisible Power made this world, yet he is so much addicted to judge of every thing by what strikes his senses, that he will not so easily conceive, that any invisible Power governs any of the affairs or events of it, except where he cannot account for some particular strange events or appearances, and then perhaps he will attribute them to invisible and insensible causes. For in the account that hath been given of the Americans by travellers, we are told, when they see strange effects produced, and know not the cause, they ascribe it to a being that is somewhat above themselves, that is, some particular being, which has dominion over that event, or in that particular place, but scarce ever rise to the idea of one supreme and universal Governor ; much less do they proceed so far in religion as to give *the one true God the glory and honour due to him on account of their comforts.*

But, on the other hand, when their whole business is to provide a little food for themselves, and the skins of beasts for their clothing, and when they see that it is their own bow and arrows, or their little snares and engines, that furnish them with beasts, or birds, or fishes for their provision : when they find the strongest, and the swiftest, and the most cunning men amongst them catch more game than the rest, secure themselves best from their enemies, and preserve their huts and their poor properties safest from invaders, they naturally attribute their possessions of all the necessaries and conveniences of life to their own strength, or skill, or swiftness ; and they do not much think of any superior invisible Being, whose providence gives them success : And thus in their rude way of thinking they can seldom find any reason either for prayer or thankfulness : And when they do, it is paid to idols, not to the true God. Besides, when they observe the natural and constant successions of day and night, of summer and winter, when they see fruits and flowers return in their settled seasons, when they take notice of clouds and sunshine, rain and drought, sudden heat or cold coming at certain or uncertain times, when they find how much the conveniences or inconveniences of

life arise from these vicissitudes of things, they ascribe all that is constant and regular to a course of nature ; and what is accidental or irregular among these common appearances, they ascribe to mere chance, and look no further. They content themselves to mind their proper businesses of hunting, fowling and fishing, to support their lives, and never think of any providence of an all-wise and almighty Being, unless they see some very uncommon and extraordinary event, as hurricanes and earthquakes, some terrible storm, or some spreading desolation, which perhaps they may attribute to some invisible mighty Being that is angry with them.

LOG. But surely they must all know that they did not make themselves, and that some almighty Being made them, and therefore they should be naturally and easily led to address their acknowledgments and praises.

PITH. When you infer, Logisto, that praise and acknowledgments are due to the almighty Being that made them, they will hardly allow of your prime proposition, nor do they suppose, that any other being, besides their parents, had a hand in making them : And this cuts off all their devotion to an invisible Creator. For though they may perhaps be led to think, that a Being of great wisdom and power *made this world at first, and formed the first creatures that were in it*, if they ever look so far backward, yet now they imagine he has left the great engine of the world to work of itself : And that seeds produce trees, fruits, and flowers ; that fishes produce fishes ; birds make birds ; lions and sheep produce new lions and sheep ; and men and women breed children. Nor do they imagine there is any need of any superior power to preserve them, since they find their parents who produced them, have no other hand in their preservation but by taking care of them when they are children ; and when they are grown up, they preserve themselves by providing food and raiment for themselves, and other necessaries. Nor indeed is it so very easy a matter for an untaught American, under his prejudices, rising from the customs and opinions of his ancestors, to find out that any God at all has a present influence on the events of the world, or the affairs of men ; but only as I hinted before, when they see some uncommon appearance in nature or providence, it awakens them to think of some superior power governing that event ; and then perhaps they may ask this fancied power to favour their enterprizes ; but much oftener they endeavour to pacify some God when they suppose he is angry, by some awkward superstitions, or perhaps with murder and human sacrifices.

LOG. Then you will grant, my friend, that there are some seasons wherein they worship God, though it be in a wretched way ?

**PITH.** Truly, I can hardly grant this, Sir; for it is a plain case, that many of these people pay all the religion they have, to some things visible or invisible, which are not God, as the apostle says; 1 Cor. x. 20. *The Gentiles sacrifice to devils, and not to God.*

**LOG.** But the Gentiles of whom Paul there speaks, did not mean to do honour to mischievous beings, though the apostle is pleased to call all their gods by the name of *devils*.

**PITH.** I grant they did not always mean so, though it was so in reality; for devils were really the gods of this world, that is, the heathen world. But it is plain, that the ancient heathens had also their mischievous gods, their *rejoes*—whom they sometimes worshipped for fear of their malice, as well as their good-natured gods, and they did service and sacrifice to both of them. And many, if not most of those savage American and African nations have a more awful and religious apprehension of some unseen great evil power or powers that bring calamities upon them, than they have of any wise and good being which is the Author of their blessings. And they generally pay their devotion and worship to these powerful malicious beings rather than they do to any other God. Self-preservation and fear are more deeply wrought into our nature, at least in the degenerate state, than gratitude and love: And if those poor ignorant creatures had an unequal idea of some good God to what they have of a malicious one, that is, a devil, yet they incline to worship the devil for fear, lest he should hurt them, much more than they are inclined to worship God, and give him thanks and honours for benefits received, or pray to him for what they want: for they generally take it for granted, that the great and good Being, if ever they think of such a one, will do them good from his own kind and beneficent temper: But the evil being will never do them any good, but will afflict and vex them, and will not suffer them to enjoy good things, unless they bribe and pacify him with worship and sacrifices: But they seem to have no notion of that holy reverence and love which is due to the true God.

Some of these rude nations make images for their gods: and the bulk of the people are so stupid as to pay rites of adoration to the very images they have made; though some of the wiser sort suppose these images to be inhabited by spirits, which can do them good or harm. The travels of Europeans through the barbarous regions, which are continually published among us, and their narratives of the affairs, sentiments, and customs of the rude and wild nations, give abundant confirmation to what I have said upon this theme, and effectually shew us how unable are mankind, with all their reason, in the stupid, rude and unpolished tribes of Africa, or America, to find out a religion for themselves. *to search out the nature and attributes of the true God,*

or to determine what honours are due to the almighty power that made and governs all things. The Jewish prophet says much the same things concerning the stupor of the heathen idolaters in his age about affairs of religion. Is. xlv. 15—20. *He maketh a graven image out of a tree, he falls down and saith to it, deliver me, for thou art my god. None considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge or understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire, and shall I make the residue of it an idol, a god? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, and say, Is there not a lie in my right-hand?*

LOG. Though I am not so much moved by what Isaiah saith, considered as a Jewish prophet, yet it must be granted indeed, that the accounts with some of the ancient writers, as well as some modern travellers, give us of barbarous nations, afford us too much ground to suspect, that the reason of man is so darkened and stupified among these wild tribes of the heathen world, that it will go but a little way to search out true religion and the doctrines or the duties of it. But, it may be, the great God, who knows the weaknesses and the prejudices of all his creatures, will not require much practice of that religion or piety, which are due to God, at the hands of such poor sorry wretches as these are; and if they do but behave tolerably well with regard to the duties they owe to themselves and their fellow creatures, he may have compassion upon their ignorance, and receive them to his favour.

PITH. I cannot allow this by any means, my friend, that a wise and holy God will provide a heaven and eternal happiness, in his favour and presence, for creatures that never enquire after him, that scarce know any thing at all of him, and never pay him any manner of honour on earth, which is the place of their production. But however, let us proceed to enquire, How much the divine reason of such savages would find out of their own duty to their fellow-creatures.

LOG. Well, here I think I shall prove my point effectually, how much soever I may have failed in the former case of duty to the true God. Will not their own native reason teach them *that they must speak truth to one another; that they must be faithful to their promises and contracts: that they must pay what they owe; that they must neither rob, nor plunder, nor steal, nor take away the life nor property of another, who has not first deserved in a punishment by some robbery, or murder, or theft committed against his neighbour? Will not their reason powerfully and evidently shew them, that there is a natural rectitude and fitness in these practices of veracity, honesty, and justice between man and man? That it is a fit, a reasonable, and proper thing, that a man should do no injury to those who do not hurt*

*him? That he should be honest in all his dealings, and that he should help his neighbour in distress, and be kind to the miserable, who cannot help themselves?*

PITH. I grant that the reason and conscience that is in man, will generally shew him, that there is a reasonableness and fitness in these practices, which we call virtues, if he will but set himself seriously and honestly to think of them. But yet if one of these Americans, or his wife, or children, stand in great need of some of the wild fowl, the venison, the parched corn, or the deer-skin, which are the property of his neighbour, he would be ready to think it perhaps a much more fit and reasonable thing that he should steal, or plunder, or even kill his neighbour to gain these provisions, than that he and his family should be exposed to any hardships for the want of them. The principle of self-love, and of seeking the ease and happiness of ourselves, or those that are dear to us might dictate to such an unphilosophical tribe, that it is more reasonable and more fit to plunder and steal, or do any injury to their neighbour, if they could do it with safety to themselves.

LOG. But the reason, even of Americans, if it be exercised a little, will further inform them, that without the observance of truth, faithfulness, honesty, justice, and innocence, there can be no safety to man, woman, or child; they cannot preserve their own property, life, or peace; that the strong, the swift, and the cunning, will deprive the rest of all their comforts and possessions; and therefore, in order to secure their own life and property, they must not invade the life and property of another. And will not their own reason tell them also, that they must be compassionate to the miserable; that they must help their neighbours in distress; that they must be kind and bountiful to those with whom they dwell; or else they can never expect that others should be kind and bountiful to them, should relieve any of their wants, or help them under their greatest distresses? Thus the very law of self-preservation, which is written so strongly in the very nature of men, leads them to practise the duties of justice and goodness towards their neighbours.

PITH. I may venture to grant what you have now said upon this subject: And these are the reasons, and the only reasons, upon which even the barbarous nations generally practise some degrees of justice and goodness towards one another. But is this proper virtue? Has this any merit in the sight of God, or any pretence to his favour? Can this be religion, when men are restrained from doing injury to their neighbours, or excited to do them good merely upon civil principles, without any idea or apprehension of the will of God, who requires it; or when they do it merely for fear, lest they should be exposed to the same injuries among men by way of retaliation, or in hopes to obtain the like

good return from them? Can this sort of virtue intitle any man to the love of God, and rewards in a future world, which has no regard to God at all? Will this sort of reasoning conduct men to heaven, if their practises were never so agreeable to these principles? True virtue and religion arise chiefly from a sense of the reasonableness and fitness of things, and from a desire to obey the will of God. If I would be truly virtuous, I must consider that it is unrighteous and unreasonable to take away my neighbour's life or property, though I myself should never endanger my own property, nor be taken and punished for doing it. And such virtue as is pleasing to God, and can make any pretences to obtain his favour, and a future reward, must arise from a sense of these duties to our fellow-creatures, as being agreeable to the will of that almighty power that made us, and has placed us in such particular relations to other men. And without some notions or principles of this kind, I fear the outward abstinence from falsehood and injury, or the mere practice of external beneficence to a neighbour, will go a very little way to obtain the love of God, and future happiness.

Let it be granted then, that honesty and kindness may be much practised by some heathen nations, on the principle of self-preservation, and perhaps it is conveyed from generation to generation, till it has become as much a custom and habit among them as any of their national civilities, their oddities and fooleries, and then they may go on to practise it in the main, because their fathers did it: Let it be granted yet further, that *mere natural temper*, and the animal constitution of flesh and blood may sometimes incline some particular heathens to practise goodness, compassion, hospitality, forgiveness of injuries, meekness and peace, even as the constitution and temper of a sheep is meek and unresenting, in comparison of a dog or a lion: This may be called *natural virtue*, but it is not proper morality nor religion, if the practiser has no regard to the justice and order, the rightness and fitness of things, and the law or will of his Maker; which principles I believe, can very seldom be found in any of the barbarous nations we speak of.

Suppose it be granted again, Logisto, that some few of these rude tribes of mankind are led, by any principles whatsoever to practise honesty, justice, and goodness, yet permit me to observe, that the very notion and obligation of these social virtues is contradicted and destroyed by the professed principle of multitudes of the heathen world. Though plunder in private persons has been generally counted a crime, yet lying, cheating, and stealing, when it has been practised with great dexterity and cunning, has been allowed and commended by the common voice of a nation. The Egyptians were early a civilized nation, yet Aulus Gellius tells us, Book XI. chapter 18. that the old Egyptians held all



But I would not interrupt the course of our dialogue with too many objections, nor divert the current and tendency of it from its main end and design; and therefore I let this pass for the present. Tell me then, Sir, with a sincere heart, can you imagine that ever a single creature in the wilds of Africa, and the American forests, could arise to this degree of reason, and to these fine inferences and deductions of the rules of morality, by the dint of his own understanding? The poor wretch that has been trained up from his infancy merely to fish and hunt, to plant a little Indian corn, and to parch it by the fire or the sun, to tie a skin round his body to keep him from the cold, or to dig the trunk of a tree into a hollow canoe for sailing, and who has been employed all his life in some of these low labours and cares; can you ever imagine, that the native reason of such animals as these, can spin out of their own bowels such philosophical discourses, such moral arguments and inferences? And especially when the design of them is to lay a restraint upon those restless and violent powers of natural appetite and passion. Mistake me not, Sir, I do not pronounce it utterly impossible in the nature of things, that reason should exercise itself in this manner; but it appears next to an impossibility, that such sort of moral reasoning should be found in any one hut or wigwam among twenty nations of these American savages.

LOG. Surely, my friend, you depreciate human nature to very great degree, and represent it in such colours, as though the glorious light of reason, which shines in every son and daughter of man, had raised them but little above the beasts of the earth, and the birds of the air.

PITH. If you please, Sir, to read the accounts that travellers give us of these rude and unpolished countries, you will find the constant customs and practices of whole nations perfectly agreeable to the colours in which I represent them. History and matter of fact sufficiently declare human nature in its present state, to be thus far debased and brutified, and that the glorious faculty of reason is so far overwhelmed and benighted by stupid ignorance, that it seeks not after the God who made them, and it is so wretchedly led captive by passion, appetite, and a thousand objects of sense, as scarce ever to exert itself in any enquiries about the themes of self-denial and mortification, much less to find out all these instances of virtue, or duty toward God or themselves. Besides, Sir, please to consider, that passion and appetite are such powerful and ruling springs of judgment, as well as of action in degenerate mankind, that they disguise and colour the truth as they please, and turn vice into virtue, or evil into good, by the vivacity and force of their representation. The faculty of fancy is almost always engaged on their side, and that helps to throw false colours on things, and leads the untaught

nwary reasoner into a thousand errors. The violence of and fear, of desire and aversion, of love and wrath, per- and almost compel the reason of an Iroquois, or a Negro, tentot, or a Laplander, to determine every thing to be or wrong according as these passions represent it. And it is so hard for European philosophers, and even for ians, to judge aright by their own reason in particular cases, in appetite and passion are concerned, much harder is it, almost impossible, for these savages of America or Africa, o frame to themselves a scheme of virtue in these self- ing instances. You yourself, Sir, have granted the truth hat our friend Sophronius expressed in the end of his dis- e, viz. that all men every where will frequently find them- s betrayed into sin by the strength of appetites and pas- : And how perpetually will these wild creatures be thus sed to sin against God, when their reason has yielded itself a captive to sense, as not to enquire and settle the rules of ? Let us proceed then, Sir, to the last article, which I shall e you to prove, or rather to shew me how an untaught hea- shall be convinced that he is a sinner against God; and convinced, what he should do to appease God's anger; if he should repent of sin, how shall he know that God forgive him upon his repentance, and receive him into his ir ?

LOG. First, I cannot think it such a difficulty to convince in creatures that they have some way or other *done what should not do, or neglected what they ought to do* with re- to God, or to their neighbours, or themselves: And reason is sufficient for conviction of sin; for it is suffi- to enable them to compare their actions with the rectitude e nature of God, and with the general rules of their duty b they know, and to observe how much they have wandered them.

PITH. I grant it no hard matter, Sir, when they are once nto an acquaintance with the rectitude of God's nature, and brought to the knowledge of their own various duties, to e them sensible that they come very short in the performance em: And I cannot but think, that reason and conscience do times convince Negroes and Hottentots of some crimes. reason, as it operates in those wild creatures, shews them ery little of the holy nature of God, of their relations to him, of their duty toward God or man, as you have found in this ute, that it plainly follows, that this same reason of theirs go but a very little way in making them sensible of any res in their duty. How shall they be convinced they sin nat God, *in forgetting him from day to day, and from year ear, in neglecting to reverence him for his greatness, to praise*

*him* for his goodness, or to pray to *him* and depend on *him* for his further blessing, when their whole nation has continued in this constant course of impiety from age to age, without remorse? when none of them have been ever led so far by their own reason, as to know these duties, and bind them upon their own consciences? And suppose they should be made sensible, that they have now and then cheated their neighbours by lying and falsehood, that they have plundered or stole their goods from them, or that they have been sometimes shamefully drunk, or guilty of fornication; yet their consciences will bring but a very feeble charge against them for these things as criminal, if they have not been evidently convinced, that *truth and justice, chastity and temperance* were necessary duties.

And yet further Logisto, be pleased to consider, that if they should be never so much convinced that they have done amiss in drinking to excess, because it injures themselves, or in doing any kind of injury to their neighbour; yet they would not readily conclude that they did any injury to God hereby; since their reason has not yet led them to the thought, that God is the great Inspector and Governor of the world, and that he has in any way and manner forbid these sins, or required the contrary duties. Nor is it any wonder that a rude American should justify himself and his conduct from any dishonours done to God, though he has forgot and neglected him all his life, and has wallowed in lewd and drunken debaucheries, unless he has also been guilty of some most flagrant acts of impiety, injustice, and villainy. Such very flagrant and notorious crimes, perhaps might recoil upon his conscience, and smite him with conviction. But as for the multitudes of common sins, a wild savage in the African or American regions would take no notice of them, but think himself and his neighbours good and innocent enough. Nor is this at all strange, since the rude herd of mankind, even amongst christians, are ready to say when a neighbour dies; "Alas, poor man! he is gone: but surely he is gone to heaven; for though he did not mind much of religion indeed, yet he was an honest creature, he would not wrong a man of a farthing, and he was ever ready to do his neighbour a kindness: It is true, he would drink now and then a little too much, nor was he always so careful to speak truth, and perhaps he would swear when he was in a passion, but never when he was sober; he was no man's enemy but his own, and did no injury but to himself." Now if this gross ignorance, and senselessness of sin, be found even in the lands of christian knowledge, we may easily suppose the poor savages will hardly think themselves sinners against God at all.

LOG. I own what you say Pithander, has some weight in it; though you must acknowledge too, that there are certainly some secret workings of conscience in all men, which give them some

ward notices, when they violate the rule of their duty, especially in grosser instances, and smite them with an inward reproach, though it may not be so frequent, nor in so explicit a manner, as I was ready to imagine, before we had talked over this matter so particularly.

PITH. I have granted it, Sir; and it is very likely, at some seasons of grosser transgression, or when their natural spirits are low, they may feel such inward reproaches of conscience more plain and pungent: But having no fixed and settled rules of duty, these little uneasinesses quickly vanish, like a qualm of sickness that passes over the stomach; they forget their own iniquities, and they are prone to fancy, that God forgets them too: And thus they go on again to their old barbarity and injustice, their gluttony and drunkenness. I grant this conduct is greatly criminal, yet it is the common case, till by degrees, conscience grows callous and insensible, and they sin without remorse.

LOG. I confess when we observe so little of the workings of conscience in men, to convince them of sin, in such a knowing and rational land and age as ours, when we observe how much the voice of conscience is neglected, and how easily it is silenced, when we find it grows hard and stupid by degrees, and at last permits men without any remorse, to commit all villainies, in spite of all the remonstrances of God and man, it is no wonder that conscience has a very feeble influence in such wild, and untaught, and unpolished countries, where irreligion and intemperance are the custom and fashion from generation to generation.

PITH. Well then, Sir, since you allow me this, please to proceed, and inform me, how they shall come to know, if they shall be once convinced of sin, *that they must repent of it; that is, be sorry for it, and abstain from it?*

LOG. This repentance is the most natural and obvious practice that the reason of man can dictate to him, to appease an offended God: It is going as far as he can, to undo that evil he hath done; and therefore the reason of every man would conduct him to penitence under a sense of past sin.

PITH. But we do not find this duty towards God has been so constantly taught, or practised so very much by human reason, even among the philosophers and the inhabitants of Rome or Athens, as to imagine that the Indian savages should describe this duty to themselves. Though here and there a wise man might mention repentance as a duty, yet it is evident the polite nations of heathenism were generally *for offering sacrifices of one kind or other, to make compensation for their crimes,* without much solicitude or care about repentance as a duty to God, and a watchful care of a better obedience. And in those parts of America where they make pretences to any sense

of religion, it was a frequent thing, as the Spanish writers of the country of Mexico inform us, to seek out some beautiful girl, and offer her a sacrifice to their offended idols, when they thought their gods were angry with them: penitence and reformation, virtue, and piety of heart and life, are little thought of among wild heathens as the means of obtaining divine pardon, or as necessary for that end.

LOG. I confess, my friend, you put me in mind of many histories which I have read, not only of heathen but of popish countries, where the doctrine and practice of *penances and sacrifices*, and *rich offerings* to saints and idols, gods and goddesses, are the immediate remedy to which men apply themselves after sin, and which papists and heathens make their ready refuge, after a sense of guilt, rather than to practise the inward and spiritual duties of repentance and mortification, and maintain a future course of watchful holiness.

PITH. Let us drop this point then, Sir; and now I entreat you to prove, that if a heathen should truly repent, and be sorry for his sin, even as it is committed against God, and should endeavour to perform his duty better for time to come, will his reason assure him, that God will forgive his sin, receive him to his favour, and make him happy?

LOG. Yes, certainly Pithander, he need not doubt it; for if doing evil be the only foundation of God's displeasure, *ceasing to do evil*, or *returning to do well*, must take away that displeasure. God is too good a being, not to approve and forgive such a penitent. And not only the goodness, but even the wisdom of God would oblige him to forgive those who repent, since the sinner then becomes what God in his wisdom requires him to be: Whereas if God punished him, it could only be with a design to correct him, and make him pious and virtuous for time to come: But when this happy end is attained without punishment, there is then no need of it: And God has no cruckty in his nature, to incline him to punish a creature without necessity.

PITH. To this I answer, That the correction or amendment of the particular offender, is not the only end of punishment, but *the vindication of the wisdom and justice of the law-giver, and his law*, which are like to be insulted, and the laws continually broken afresh, if offences were always passed by with impunity, and if the criminal were always pardoned upon repentance. It is necessary for a governor sometimes to teach his subjects what an evil thing it is to transgress his law, by the proper punishment of those who offend. The honour and authority of government must be sometimes supported and vindicated by such severities: And though it may please a sovereign sometimes to pardon an offender out of his great goodness, when he is truly penitent for

a crime, yet no degrees of penitence can assure the offender that he shall certainly and entirely be forgiven, or can claim forgiveness at the hand of the sovereign; because repentance makes no recompence at all for the dishonour done to the authority of the law, and of him that made it. His future obedience is ill due, if he had never sinned; and therefore it cannot compensate for past neglects and transgressions.

LOG. But when sinful man is truly penitent for his faults, it is the best thing that a creature can do in sinful circumstances, and the best recompence that he can make to an offended God, who is a righteous and merciful Governor, and will require no more than a sinner can give.

PITH. But a sinner can *dare pœnas*, suffer punishment, to make a sort of compensation, by forfeiting and losing his peace, and thus doing honour to the law in a passive manner, when he would not do it by active obedience. Suppose, Sir, if I dare propose a thing almost impossible, that so worthy a gentleman, and so loyal a subject as Logisto, should rebel against his present Majesty King George the Second, should murder a fellow-subject, or violate any of the laws of the land by a capital crime, and after he had continued some time in a vicious course, he would repent, and assure his majesty, that for time to come he would be a very faithful subject, has he sufficient ground to claim or to expect a pardon, merely because he is sorry for what he has done, and resolved sincerely to do so no more? King George is indeed a man of mercy, but would that repentance of ours be any reparation for the injury you have done to the authority of the king or the welfare of the state? Do you not know, Sir, that the government takes no cognizance of such repentances? Even the most sincere penitent cannot claim a right to have his reason pardoned. Government requires that criminals *be punished* to maintain the authority of the law and the law-givers: the life of the criminal is forfeited and due to the state: Criminals must be made examples of justice, that the honour of government may be maintained, and that other subjects, who see and hear of this punishment, may be secured in their obedience and duty, by such public examples of punishment and terror.

Now to apply this to the case in hand: The great God sufficiently makes it appear, in the conduct of his providence, and in his government of the world, that he does not punish offending creatures merely to promote their own correction, repentance and reformation. How many thousands of sinful men are cut off by earthquakes, famine, pestilence, inundations, &c. and cast down to the grave, where there is no reformation or repentance? How many sinners, who have been already truly penitent and reformed, have borne these desolating testimonies of the displeasure of God against sin, and felt a heavy share of these

public calamities? Nay, have there not been some of the most virtuous and holy creatures upon earth now and then given up by the providence of God, not only to common calamities, but to peculiar miseries and smarting sorrows, as just tokens of divine resentment for some past sins? And their own consciences have acknowledged the justice of it. *God will magnify his law and make it honourable*, and will make even penitent sinners know *what an evil and bitter thing it is to offend his majesty, and break his laws*. And as it has pleased the righteous Governor of the universe to make even penitent offenders sometimes instances of his just displeasure against sin in this world, that other inhabitants of the earth may see, and fear, and obey, so how do we know, how far the several orders of angels or inhabitants of other worlds, shall be witnesses of the punishment of guilty mortals in the invisible or future state, and be thereby deterred from sin? The repentance of a criminal is no recompence to God, considered as the universal Governor of his intellectual creatures: His supreme authority must be maintained, and his honour be vindicated through his universal empire: And how can heathens assure themselves by the mere light of reason, that the wisdom of his government doth not find it necessary to make all the criminals of the human race become some way or other examples of his just resentment? It is only divine revelation that informs us with any certainty, that man shall find *forgiveness with God*, and that pardon shall follow repentance.

LOG. Do you not allow then, my friend, that the light of nature can go so far as to say, it is at least *probable*, that God will forgive a repenting sinner, though reason may not make it certain?

PITH. I confess some things which Sophronius delivered concerning the hope of pardon for repenting sinners, in confirmation at his scheme of natural religion, at the beginning of this conference, have great weight with me. Though I am sure repentance cannot *claim* pardon on the sinner's part at the hand of God, yet I know not how strong a claim the wisdom and mercy of God may bring against the full execution of justice in such a case. God may forgive a sinner in part, and release him, in some degree from the complete demerit and punishment of his sin, though he does not forgive him entirely. The learned Dr. Clarke, though he makes but little of original sin, yet in vol. II. serm. ix. page 198. he says, *We are the posterity of a sinful parent, and ourselves also are actual sinners; and at best we are but very imperfect and undeserving penitents, and our utmost endeavours of repentance can at most but afford ground of hope for the abatement of punishment, and not any expectation of reward.*

But let us suppose and allow, that it is probable God will it

at forgive an humble penitent creature that has offended against him in time past if he earnestly implore divine forgiveness, if he grow up to a settled hatred of his iniquity, and behave himself with all watchfulness in the practice of his duty for time to come, both toward God, toward his neighbour, and himself. I think must believe that God loves holiness so well, that he will not ever punish a creature that repents sincerely, and that he cannot but love a creature which sincerely loves God; and therefore if among sinful rebels he should find any such remarkable merit in the savage regions of the earth, I grant he shall not finally and eternally be banished from the presence of his Maker to misery, nor at least he may have very encouraging hopes of some favour and acceptance at last, if he can and will exercise his reason so far upon these subjects and enquiries.

LOG. I am glad Sophronius is here in this dispute, and I am well pleased to see Pithander not only ready to yield to conviction at first, upon the appearance of the light of reason, but to retain it through all our conference.

PITH. But there are still some considerable difficulties remaining, Sir, upon this point; there is some darkness hangs about this gleam of light. Suppose a heathen should be brought to believe and hope that God may forgive his *past sins* upon sincere repentance, his renewed obedience, and his humble addresses to him for that purpose, yet can his reason teach him that God will forgive *daily and repeated sins*, after knowledge and vows of obedience? That he will forgive the same sinner relapsing a hundred times over? That he will forgive his sins even to the end of his life? Or that he will forgive him entirely and perfectly, as to make him undergo no penalty at all, and pass through no purgatory in the other world, to make some degree of expiation for past offences? This doctrine of a painful purification in another state, was supposed by some of the ancient heathens, and is still believed by one party of christians, whereby souls of imperfect virtue do penance for the crimes committed in this life? Can his reason tell him how long this state of penance and purification will endure? Can it assure him that God will take the sinner into his favour, so far as to give him a lasting state of happiness hereafter, who has been such a vile criminal here? And I am going to say, Can his reason assure him, since his best repentance is so very imperfect, that he shall not be put upon another state of trial in a future world, and that his soul shall not be sent to animate any other body, partly to punish him for his crimes in this, and partly to go through a new probation with regard to some further state of happiness or misery? And not only one, but all these doubts will grow much stronger, if the repentance itself be doubtful and feeble, or much interrupted by returning sins.



I am sure, Logisto, you are a gentleman of greater reading than to imagine these are mere fancies of my own: Your acquaintance with the heathen writers informs you of their *purgatory*: Plato expressly declares that those "who seem to have lived a middle sort of life, that is, with some virtues and some vices, go into the lake of Acheron, and being cleansed and punished are then dismissed, and receive the recompence of their well doings." See his *Phædo*. And you know, Sir, their doctrine of transmigration of souls, which is said to be derived originally from Pythagoras the philosopher, and has spread widely among the nations. The poets borrowed their representations from the philosophers, though they have dressed them with ornaments peculiar to their own genius. Virgil sends Æneas into the other world, and there he finds in or near the Elysian fields, several souls who were ordained to return to other bodies:

"Inclusas animas, superump; ad lumen ituras,  
And—Animæ quibus altera fato  
Corpora debentur——"

And the souls even of the best men, before they are admitted to Elysium, or the state of the blessed, must go through fire and water, and various pains and purifications.

LOG. I keep a few of the classics here in this summer-house and some polite writings for my diversion. Here is a good edition of Virgil; come, turn to the place, and let us see the lines.

PITH. With all my heart, Sir; it is in Book VI. toward the end, verse 735.

"Quin & supremo cum lumine vita reliquit,  
Non tamen omne malum miseris, nec funditus omnes  
Corporeæ excedunt pestes.——  
Ergo exercentur pœnis, veterumq; malorum  
Supplicia expendunt: aliæ panduntur inanes  
Suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto  
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni,  
Quisque suos patitur manes. Exinde per amplum  
Mittimur Elysium, & pauci læta arva tenemus."

LOG. I find after their purgatory, Virgil allows but a few of them to be happy, so great and universal does he suppose their defilement in this mortal state. But as for the bulk and multitude of these departed souls, pray what becomes of them?

PITH. Surely, Sir, you have read the following lines, where he teaches us, that they return to bodies again after a thousand years penance:

"Donec longa dies perfecto temporis orbe  
Concretam exemit labem, purumque reliquit  
Æthereum sensum, atque aurai simplicis ignem,  
Has omnes, ubi mille rotam volvere per annos,"

*Lethæum ad fluvium deus avocet agmine magno:  
Scilicet immemores, supera ut convexa revisant  
Rursus, & incipiant in corpora velle reverti."*

Loe. Since we are got into the company of the muses, Pithander, let us see what our English Virgil, Mr. Dryden says, in his translation of this period. I will read them to you :

Not death itself can wholly wash their stains,  
But long contracted filth, ev'n in the soul remains.  
The reliques of inveterate vice they wear ;  
And spots of sin obscene in every face appear.  
For this are various penances enjoined ;  
And some are hung to bleach upon the wind ;  
Some plung'd in waters, others purg'd in fires,  
Till all the dregs are drain'd, and all the rust expires :  
All have their manes, and those manes bear :  
The few so cleans'd, to these abodes repair,  
And breathe in ample fields the soft elysian air. }  
Then are they happy, when by length of time  
The scurf is worn away of each committed crime.  
No speck is left of their habitual stains ;  
But the pure æther of the soul remains.  
But when a thousand rolling years are past  
(So long their punishments and penance last ;) }  
Whole droves of minds are by the driving god,  
Compell'd to drink the deep Lethæan flood :  
In large forgetful draughts to steep the cares  
Of their past labours, and their irksome years ;  
That unrememb'ring of its former pain,  
The soul may suffer mortal flesh again.

PITH. And it is the doctrine of Pythagoras, as represented to us by another of the poets, that human souls return into the bodies of beasts as well as men. Ovid informs us so in the XV. book of his "Metamorphoses." Have you got it here ?

Loe. Yes, Sir, Ovid is at hand, and as vain and fabulous a writer as he was in ancient times, yet if his soul was transmigrated into any human form in this age, I am persuaded he would be wonderfully pleased to be found in such company as yours gentlemen, and to hear himself called upon to give his sense of the doctrine of Pythagoras, since it puts a sort of philosophical air and dress on his wild stories of the transformation of gods and men.

PITH. See here then, Sir, the opinion of that ancient philosopher in the language of poesy :

*" Morte carent animæ, semperque priore relicta  
Sede, novis domibus vivunt, habitantque receptis ;  
Omnia mutantur : nihil interit : errat & illinc  
Hinc venit : hinc illuc ; quoslibet occupat artus  
Spiritus ; eque feris humana in corpora transit,  
Inque feras noster."*

Which Mr. Dryden thus translates :

Then death so call'd, is but old matter dress'd  
In some new figure, and a vary'd vest ;

Thus all things are but alter'd, nothing dies :  
 And here, and there th'unbody'd spirit flies.  
 By time, or force, or sickness dispossess'd,  
 And lodges where it lights, in man or beast,  
 Or hunts without till ready limbs it find,  
 And actuates those according to their kind ;  
 From tenement to tenement is toss'd,  
 The soul is still the same, the figure only lost."

And Lucan says of the northern countries, lib. I. Phars. that they had the opinion of transmigration of souls, and therefore they feared not death :

"——Populi quos despicit arctos  
 Felices errore suo, quos ille timorum  
 Maximus, haud urget lethi metus."

And on this account they esteemed it a very cowardly thing in war,

"——Redituræ parcere vitæ,"

that is, to be fond of this life, or solicitous to save it, when it would be so-soon restored again. Cæsar tells us this was the doctrine of the Druids, our ancestors, in Britain, *Disciplina Druidum in Britannia reperta*—*imprimis hoc volunt persuadere, non interire animas; sed ab aliis post mortem transire ad alios, &c. Lib. VI. De Bello Gall.* "The doctrine of the Druids was found in Britain. This is one of the prime articles of it, that souls do not die; but after the death of the body they pass from one to another." The ancient Brachmans were known to be professors and teachers of this opinion; and in the country of Malabar, in the East-Indies, their successors, the Bramins, teach the people the same notion still; and especially, that the souls of men, who have behaved ill in this world, are sent at their death into brute animals, partly to make atonement for sins past, and partly for a new trial. Now, Sir, if those among the ancient heathens, in various nations of Europe and Asia, who professed to be wise above their neighbours, and who endeavoured to use their reason in matters of religion and a future state, were led into such wild errors, and had so little certainty about pardon of sin, and future rewards or punishments, what hope can you have, that untaught reason, in the wilds of America, and in African deserts, should have better success in their roving and loose enquiries about religious affairs, and the future state of men?

LOG. I know not well what to reply to some of these doubts and queries of yours. Upon the whole, I do not see how the mere reason of man without any assistance, can get through all these difficulties, so as to assure a sinner of certain restoration to divine favour and the enjoyment of immortal blessedness at death, upon such poor, sorry, and interrupted repentances as will be found among these heathens: And I am now ready to

think, that some of my infidel acquaintance talk with too much assurance and triumph upon these subjects, because they never entered far enough into enquiries about them, to learn the difficulties with which their opinions are surrounded. We are too ready to think the great God a mere weak good-natured thing, such as some magistrates have been in wicked nations, and that he utterly neglects to lay due restraints upon the vices of his subjects, that he disregards the demands of justice, and the rights of government. If I mistake not, your Hebrew poet introduces God himself making this reflection upon some of the loose and profligate fellows of that age, who were not willing to have vice too severely punished; *Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes; Ps. l. 21.*

PITH. Dear Sir, since you have done David the honour to cite him in our debates, I beg leave to repeat the awful address he makes to those vicious creatures in the very next words: *Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* Punishment belongs to guilt, and God the Governor of the world, has a right to inflict it if he please. I grant, these persons of whom the Psalmist here speaks, were impenitent sinners: But there are many passages in scripture that concur with our natural reason, and inform us, that God may, and sometimes doth punish in some degree those favourites whom he finally pardons. In Ps. xcix. 8. David says, *Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.* Nor can all the light of reason assure us, that God will entirely forgive a penitent in this world or in the other, without some punishment.

LOG. I would readily yield, Pithander, as far as your argument carries evidence with it. But though we cannot be fully assured, that repenting criminals shall be completely pardoned, yet you have granted, there is very probable ground for a penitent to hope, that God will forgive him at last: and if reason can lead him but to a probability of this final forgiveness, it gives sufficient ground for the practice of repentance and future obedience, though there may be some sore punishments in his way to final happiness.

PITH. Please to consider, dear Sir, that though I have allowed that the force of reason, under happy advantages and improvements, and in its best exercises, may reach thus far, yet when the reason or conscience of a poor untaught African savage has been by any providence so far awakened, as to think himself a criminal before God, and has his soul made deeply sensible of sin, I hardly see how he can, upon just and solid grounds, get through all the difficulties which I have mentioned. Will his own rude and uninstructed reason tell him, that God will pro-

bably forgive him a hundred times over? That God will call him to no pains and sufferings in a future state, on account of his sins in this life? Or if he endure some pain, can his reason teach him, that God will probably take him afterward into his favour, so far as to give an immortal reward to any of his poor pretences to virtue, which are so often interrupted and defiled by sin? And whatever inferences you and I may be able to make in Great-Britain, I doubt the skill of a negro on this theme.

LOG. I am sensible I have been too confident upon these matters; and I begin to think there is some need of a *revelation* to give men more clear discoveries of true religion, and more evident, substantial, and encouraging hopes of the pardon of sin and eternal happiness. But however, my friend, you seem at present to have got the better of me, by running over all the particular articles which Sophronius has mentioned, as belonging to natural religion, and I confess I cannot see how a wild negro, or an American, can so well find them out as I imagined: yet I cannot but think still, that human reason must or should have sufficient ability to guide and to conduct mankind to the favour of God, and happiness in a way of religion; and I have something further to offer upon this head: And when I lead the argument, and cast it into another form, we shall try whether your skill can refute it.

PITH. Let your arguments be proposed, Sir, in what new form you please, I think I shall be able to shew you their weakness, or if they are convincing, I desire to be so honest as to yield to their force. But the hours are passed away, Sir, with uncommon speed in such an agreeable conversation: The sun hath been set almost this half hour: I think it was full moon yesterday, and we shall have the light of that planet to guide us home in a little time, which is far more than the American savages have to guide them to heaven, or the African tribe of negroes to relieve their midnight darkness. If you please, Logisto, we will agree and meet here to-morrow evening, and carry on the discourse. But let us have Sophronius's impartial sentiments on our debate thus far, before we break up.

LOG. With all my heart, gentlemen, and I shall be very glad to see you both here to-morrow on so agreeable an occasion: And now I entreat you, Sophronius, to make use of no compliments, but fulfil the office of an impartial moderator, for which we both chuse you; for our business is the search of truth.

SOPH. Gentlemen, I have been a careful hearer of your free and learned debate, and I cannot but observe with pleasure, that you have avoided all the little paltry methods of cavilling, into which disputants are too often betrayed when *they aim at*

factory more than truth, and when each person is resolved to maintain his own opinion at all adventures. By this happy temper and conduct which has appeared in this conference, I am in no pain about giving you my freest thoughts on the subject, since I am in no danger of displeasing persons of your generous sentiments. Give me leave then, in the first place, to take notice, that you have confined the greatest part of your discourse to the sufficiency of human reason, in the rude and uncultivated nations of Africa and North-America, to lead them to the favour of God and happiness, by the knowledge and practice of religion: And indeed, I cannot but think you wisely fixed this scene for your controversy, and limited your discourse to this sort of people, which are some of the most barbarous and brutish on the earth, and where reason has no supposed assistances from revelation. Logisto has taken great pains to prove, that human reason, even in such savage nations as these, is sufficient to guide and conduct them in the way of religion, to the favour of God, and future happiness; or else indeed, the proposition is not universally true, *That the reason of all men is sufficient for this purpose*; and, in my opinion, he has gone a great way toward proving the natural sufficiency of human reason for this purpose, by shewing how rational every article of natural religion appears, and by what natural and just steps of inference, it may be derived from such principles as lie within the reach of mankind, and his reasoning powers. On the other hand, Pithander has shewn plainly in fact, how unassisted reason is turned aside perpetually from the truth, and that these several nations, in many successive ages, have been born, and lived, and died, by thousands and ten thousands, and have never sought nor found out any tolerable scheme of natural religion, and hardly done any thing toward it; not that he supposes them to be innocent and blameless in these shameful neglects of God, and aversions to true religion; but it is so in fact, from age to age, and there are many evident causes or occasions of it.

Give me leave, Logisto, to sum up in one view the various considerations that Pithander has intimated in several parts of his debate, why he thinks human reason, in these savages, to be insufficient to lead them to true religion.—1. He considers the early and inveterate prejudices of whole nations against the principles and rules of true religion, the obstinate and deep rooted *repossessions* which they labour under, and the gross and shameful errors which they are led into from their youngest infancy by him who are about them: And their crime is, that there is scarce a soul of them, that ever bethinks himself so far, as to question the truth of what his parents and neighbours have taught him in his childhood, let it be never so much contrary to reason and virtue.—2. He considers their irreligious customs and the vicious

practices, which run through the whole nation ; which customs are held so sacred in their esteem, that it is a sufficient proof of truth or duty to them to say, *It is the constant opinion and custom of their country.* Every thing that their ancestors believed or done is reasonable in their account, without any examination.—3. He considers the natural thoughtlessness of creatures, about any thing that is spiritual and divine, without some hint given them, that should set their reason at work. They eat and drink, and lie down and rise whole years together and never think of the true God, and the honours due to him. Some peculiar providence, occurrence, or conversation doth turn their thoughts this way. And to this we might add, a general astonishing stupidity in matters of God and godliness, if ever they hear any discourse of them ; their aversion to spiritual parts of religion, and utter disregard of every thing that belongs to it.—4. He considers the weakness of their untaught reason, to distinguish truth from error, if it were not working on spiritual things. Reason, as well as our other powers, learns to exercise itself by practice and instruction ; and without instruction it is very rude and giddy, and ever wanders into folly and madness. These rude and barbarous creatures therefore, must not only be put into a right track of thought first, but be kept in it too ; or otherwise they presently run into gross mistakes, even in the plainest and commonest principles of religion, such as *the existence and unity of God, and the worship that ought to be paid to him,* and the common virtues of *justice and sobriety.* Such poor savages as these, if their faces were once set towards religion and truth, would be readily led away into a variety of errors which stand thick on every side, unless they had some other guide, some better clue and direction, than their own reasoning powers.—5. He considers the incessant and everlasting influence of sensible things upon their minds, which continually, though unreasonably, divert them from a right exertion of their reason about matters of religion and virtue. The urgent necessities of nature, the constant return of their appetites, the solicitude and care to supply them, and the frequent rise and effect of their unruly passions all join together, not only to hinder the better powers of their nature from engaging closely in the pursuit of religion, but also tend to blind their minds, and lead them astray from the truth. They are criminal indeed, in indulging these inferior powers to the neglect of their souls, and their best interest ; but still they do universally indulge them. And we might add, in the last place, he has intimated, that they feel any efforts of their own reason toward the searching out of the true God and his worship, if they are awakened by the inward dictates and reproofs of conscience now and then to make some resistance to their brutal customs, and ungodly practices ; yet these inward efforts of conscience and reason

able, that they suffer them to be quickly overpowered and extinguished, by the temptations that stand around them within and without.

PITH. I own my great obligations to you, Sophronius, for happy a recollection of my scattered thoughts, and so beautiful a disposition of them, as gives force, perspicuity, and elegance to my argument.

SOPH. Sir, I have done nothing but my duty in summing the evidence, before I pronounce the sentence. Had there been any thing in Logisto's part of the conference which had needed such a rehearsal and new disposition, he might be assured, I could not have failed either in my diligence or readiness to assist and set forth his argument to as good advantage. But, compliments apart: Thus, gentlemen, having briefly recapitulated the debate between you, all that I shall say, by way of an arbitrator between the present dispute, shall be contained in a few following propositions: Perhaps I shall not be able to place them in so just and regular a form: But I can trust your candour: Conversation does not require such exactness. And I would particularly speak Logisto's pardon, before I mention the two first of them, because they suppose the truth of christianity, and the bible, which he seems to doubt of at present. But he shall find that I mean them only to introduce the rest, and that I shall make no inner of use of these two propositions against his present argument, or in favour of Pithander. I proceed therefore:

I. I am persuaded, that God never did or will forgive the sins of any man upon earth, whether Jew, heathen or christian, nor receive any of our sinful race into his favour, *but upon the count of what Jesus Christ his Son, the Mediator, has done and suffered, for the atonement or expiation of sin, and the recovery of man to the favour of God*: So that if heathens are saved, I think it is owing to the merit of Christ, and his death. *There is no salvation in no other, nor is there any other name whereby men may be saved.* If any of those who never heard of Christ might be saved without the influence of his atonement and mediation, why might not they that have heard of him be saved without also? Thus there would be no need of him to become a Mediator, or to make atonement for the sins of the one or the other; and thus Christ would have lived and died to very little purpose.

II. With most sincere esteem and love, and shall I add, with tender compassion to Logisto, I ask leave to declare my belief of the constitution of the gospel, with all the solemn threatenings that are annexed to it, which I would call my second proposition; viz. *He that lives where the gospel of Christ is published, with its proper and necessary evidences, and yet refuses all his life-time to believe and receive it, cannot be saved; but lies under that sentence of condemnation which is frequently denounced*



*in the New Testament, He that believeth not shall be damned: If ye believe not that I am he, that is the Messiah, ye shall die in your sins.* Nor would the blessed God ever denounce such terrible sentences as these, for mere errors of the mind, without any vice of the will. God well knows where he has given sufficient light and evidence; and he also knows, that however an honest and sincere mind may happen to be led astray for a season, yet nothing but criminal negligence, or culpable prejudices, or some sinful aversion to the gospel, can influence men, under such evidences, constantly and finally to reject it: It is plain to me, even from these scriptures, that no man who truly fears and loves God, and seeks to know or to do his will, can or will be guilty of constant and final opposition to the gospel, where it is surrounded with its proper attestations. And upon this account, dear Logisto, I am persuaded, your sincere enquiries to find out the true religion, will issue in a hearty belief and profession of christianity, though your thoughts may be at present fluttering abroad with some uncertainty where to fix.

LOG. I cannot withhold myself, gentlemen, from interrupting our moderator in his discourse, that I may make my acknowledgments for his tender concern about my best interests, which he has expressed in so affectionate and respectful a manner. I must confess, I have no obstinate and rooted aversion to the christian religion, if I can find that there is any real need of it, and that it stands upon solid foundations, and if I could answer some few difficulties that belong to the bible. But lest I make too long an interruption of your discourse, I entreat you, Sophronius, proceed to your third proposition.

SOPH. III. Though I suppose no man shall be saved but by virtue of the mediation and death of Christ, nor doth the gospel permit me to allow salvation to those who wilfully and finally reject it, under clear light and evidence; yet there is good reason to believe, that there have been many sinners actually saved, who never believed in Jesus Christ the Son of Mary, nor ever heard of his name, nor had any notion of his atoning death and sacrifice. Such were some of the early descendants of Noah, who lived long before this name was known in the world, among whom we may reckon Abimelech king of the Philistines, Melchisedec king of Salem, Job in the land of Uz\*, with his four

\* Some will object here, did not Job believe in Jesus Christ, his Redeemer, who shall stand at last on the earth; Job xix. 24, &c. Answer. It is granted that in some bright hours, and particularly in the text cited, he was carried by inspiration above the level of the dispensation under which he lived, so far as, plainly to rejoice in this glorious Saviour of mankind, even the same person who was afterward manifested in the world under the name of Jesus Christ: And so might several other pious men under the ancient dispensations and perhaps many or most of them might hope for some such Saviour: but it can scarce be proved, that all of them had an explicit notion of such a glorious Messiah, and that they actually trusted in him as a Mediator; much less does it appear, that they all trusted in him as an atoning sacrifice, though they might wait and hope for him, as some future deliverer.

ends, and many others, who *feared God and wrought righteousness*: And such were many good men among the Jews, who might be made partakers of the benefits of the death of Christ, and his sacrifice, though they had generally no notion of such a sort of Messiah, or Saviour, as was to be made a sacrifice for the sins of men: Nor is this at all incredible, since St. Peter himself, who had been a disciple of Christ so long, did not believe this doctrine even a little before his Master's death, when he complimented his Master concerning his crucifixion; Mat xvi. 2. and said, *Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.*

Nor is it unreasonable to have the same charitable thoughts concerning several other persons of the heathen world, during the continuance of the Jewish church and state, who had either maintained the knowledge of the true God, by tradition from Noah, or recovered it by converse with the Jews, and worshipped him as a God of justice and mercy, with fear and hope: Such was Cornelius the centurion, and Lydia, and several others, who were called *devout persons, and such as feared or worshipped God*, in the history of the Acts, chap. x. 2, 7. and xvi. 14. and xvii. 4. And it is possible, that since the first age of christianity there may have been some such religious persons, of this same character, who were saved, though they never heard the doctrine of Jesus Christ; for if they had so much religion as would have saved them before that time, surely they shall never be excluded from salvation for want of hearing of the doctrine of Christ, if they did not lie within the reach of it.

IV. If any persons in the heathen nations are saved without the actual knowledge of Christ, or any divine revelation, I think I may venture to say, that they can obtain it no other way but by the knowledge, and sincere belief, and practice of that religion whose articles I enumerated, at your request, in the beginning of your dispute: And I then gave you my reasons, why I think these articles are sufficient, and why they are necessary: I told you then, why I conceive that a good and gracious God will finally accept of the soul who sincerely believes and practises them; and why I can hardly suppose a holy and righteous God will accept of any thing that comes very much short of these articles.

V. Since all these articles of natural religion, which I before mentioned, arise from the mere consideration of the nature of God, and man in his present state, and the relations in which man stands to God, and to his fellow-creatures, and since they stand so connected together, that they may be, and have been actually drawn out and framed by the exercise of our reasoning powers, by persons who dwell under the light of christianity, then it is not utterly impossible in the nature of things, that the same articles should be drawn out and framed, by the exercise of

reason, among those who never enjoyed the preaching of the gospel of Christ ; though it must be confessed, it is almost infinitely easier for a christian to do it, than for a heathen. Yet still it is possible, in the nature of things, that mere human reason may be so cultivated and improved, without revelation, as to produce such fruits of knowledge as these are. This appears, in some measure, by the fine schemes and thoughts of some of the Greek and Roman philosophers, on the themes of rational, mathematical, physical, and moral knowledge, as well as in some parts of religion, and by the great progress a few of them have made in knowledge and truth, on some of the subjects which you have been debating. I confess indeed, I hardly think those polite writers and philosophers would have gone so far in virtue and religion, if they had borrowed no help from divine tradition, and converse with the Jews, or their neighbours. But after all, I cannot say that such a scheme of religion as I have here proposed, lies utterly out of the reach of human reason, in the nature of things, since the several steps of it may be all connected by strong inferences.

VI. Though there be several whole nations of the earth sunk into such a brutal stupidity as the savages in the desarts of Africa, and the wilds of America, that they know nothing of religion ; and though scarce any of the heathen philosophers, much less any whole nations, ever arrived at any clear and explicit knowledge of such a short and plain system of natural religion as I have proposed ; yet it does not follow, that human reason is not sufficient to lead them into it. A man who is asleep is a reasonable creature still, and the reason that is in him is sufficient to enable him to discourse and act like a man ; but he must be first awakened by some happy accident, and his reason set a working in a proper track. A man that is intoxicated with liquor, and thereby led astray into a thousand fooleries, and is preparing mischief and misery for himself, yet has the principle of reason in him still, and if he does not go on to drink, he may recover the exercise of his rational powers, and thereby find out a way to extricate himself from the dangers which surround him. Now I look upon the bulk of the heathen world in such kind of circumstances as these. Reason, so far as it relates to God, and religion, and eternal happiness, seems to be asleep in them ; some happy hints may possibly awaken it, and set it a moving in a right channel, though without revelation it will be ever ready to wander, and go astray. Reason, in far the greatest part of them, seems to be intoxicated and drawn away into endless fooleries, instead of religion, led astray by wild appetite and passion, perverted by a thousand prejudices, and by the universal customs of the country, and seduced far from all the paths of truth and duty. Now if any occurrence arise which may bring them to a stand,

see them from the intoxicating influences of prejudice, custom, passions, &c. It is possible, in the nature of things, that the powers of reason may then trace out such a religion, which, if incereely practised, may lead them to final happiness.

VII. But since we find by wretched and deplorable experience, that there have been very few among the best of the heathen nations, whose reason being left to itself, without any traditions of divine revelation, have worked well this way, and traced out all the most important and necessary principles of religion; and since also we have seen what shameful ignorance, even of the chief of these principles, is found universally reigning among the ruder and more unpolished nations, so that scarce a man of them knows *the true God*, or believes or practises the necessary duties towards God, and but very imperfectly toward his neighbour or himself; we may plainly infer this sufficiency of human reason to guide all men in matters of religion, is but little more than a speculative and abstract idea of sufficiency; it is a sufficiency, at best, that has very little or no influence: It is such a natural capacity, or remote power, or sufficiency, as is scarce likely to become effectual, in practice, in one soul among ten thousand of these rude and brutal creatures which we have been speaking of. And whatsoever speculative, natural, or remote sufficiency in matters of religion and happiness, may be ascribed to human reason among the rude and barbarous nations of the earth; yet it can hardly be called a proximate and practical sufficiency for this purpose: So that there seems to be a plain necessity of some higher means and advantages than they are possessed of, in order to introduce any thing of real religion actually amongst them. This appears evident to me, since I have scarce grounds enough to suppose there is one single person in several of these savage nations, that has arrived at so much religion and holiness, as to be fit, according to the representations of scripture, to enter into the presence of God, and heavenly blessedness, under all the guidance and conduct of their own reason; so ineffectual is it to combat with their natural stupidity, their innumerable prejudices, the incessant influence of their brutal education and customs, and their strong propensities to vice.

Log. Permit me, gentlemen, after the moderator has spoken, to put in one word, which perhaps has been too much neglected in our present debate, though it has been at first agreed to belong to the question; and that is this: If all mankind used and exercised their reason well, and as they ought to do, I query whether it would not only have a remote, but also a proximate and practical sufficiency, to find out the articles of natural religion, so far as is necessary for future happiness: For *it is evident enough, that neither the savage nor the polite nations which we have had occasion to speak of, have used their reason as they might and ought to have done on religious subjects.*

**SOPH.** What you propose, Sir, I think may be safely granted by Pithander, even if he admit my distinction of this remote and proximate sufficiency. But the surrounding darkness and ignorance in which most of these heathens were born, the prejudices and customs of their nations, which they imbibe almost from their birth, their perpetual avocations by present sensible objects, the everlasting urgency of their appetites and passions, their native propensities to vice, and the constant temptations that attend them, are such a powerful hindrance to this right and due exercise of their reason on things moral, divine, and spiritual, and on things future and eternal, that though there be a natural sufficiency in human reason to find out such a religion as might save them, yet it is ten thousand to one, if ever they duly and rightly exercise it. It is highly improbable, that ever their thoughts should be directed into such a track, and guarded and led onward in it so far, till they have found out such articles of faith and practice in religion, as you yourself have granted to be necessary.

And it is upon this account, Logisto, I say, that reason which is *remotely sufficient* in the nature of things, may be called *practically insufficient* for the purposes of religion and happiness; since so very few, or none, will actually exercise their reason well; this is the chief thing which I mean by the practical insufficiency of it, that not one in a thousand, or perhaps in many thousands, will so employ their reason as to guide them to religion and happiness under the present circumstances of the heathen world, and especially in the brutal and savage nations.

**PITH.** Methinks, Sophronius, I feel myself inclined to accept of your distinction, and to agree to your reasoning on this subject.

**LOG.** For my part, I thank you heartily Soporonius, for your good company, and for your concluding discourse. I must confess, I cannot see how to get over the difficulties which Pithander has before proposed, and which you seem to confirm. Nor do I find any just ground to oppose your distinction of this speculative and practical sufficiency of reason in matters of religion, and your present application of it: For according to the light in which Pithander and you have set these affairs, I think I must yield that our experience and observation seem to make it evident, that it is but a poor sufficiency that human reason, in these rude nations, has, to guide them into the knowledge of acceptable religion. Yet I have still some difficulties upon my mind, for there are several solid arguments drawn from various topics, relating to God and man, to prove that it is necessary God should furnish all mankind with sufficient powers for their own happiness: And these shall be the subject of our discourse to-morrow, when you please to favour me with your company.

PITH. My sincere thanks are due also to Sophronius, for the office he has sustained, and so happily executed in this our conference.

LOG. Though the moon be risen so high, and the sky so free from clouds, that your walk homewards will be pleasant, yet my servant shall wait on each of you to your dwellings. Here, Davus, attend these gentlemen. Good night, dear Sirs, and remember the appointed hour to-morrow.

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### THE SECOND CONFERENCE.

Sophronius and Pithander being met in Logisto's summer-house at the appointed hour, after mutual salutations, the conference began thus :

LOG. Was it not agreed, gentlemen, that I should now reduce my other arguments, drawn from various topics, relating to God and man, to shew that reason is, and must be sufficient to guide, conduct, or bring man to happiness in the way of religion ?

SOPH. I think, Sir, you have already gone through but one part of your intended enquiry concerning the sufficiency of reason, and that is, "Whether the light of reason be a sufficient guide to teach all men the necessary doctrines and duties of religion." When it remains to be disputed, "Whether the powers of reason be able to shew such obligations and motives, and to set them before every person in such a view as shall be sufficient to enforce the practice of the duties required, and thus bring a man to the favour of God, and happiness?" If I remember aright, Sir, you proposed this method of debate yourself at first, and this is what I suppose you mean to include, when you say, *Reason is sufficient, not only to guide, but to conduct and bring men effectually to happiness in a way of religion.* As for those general arguments which you speak of, which may be drawn from the nature of God, and the nature of man, they will better be introduced at this time, because they tend to prove both parts of your present question at once, viz. that reason is sufficient, both in its instructions to teach men religion, and with motives to bring them to the practice of it; or that it has both light and power enough for this purpose.

LOG. You are in the right, Sophronius, this was my meaning in the expression I used of conducting men to happiness, and this was the method which I myself proposed last night : But I must confess, I am something discouraged to pursue the second enquiry, by the success Pithander has had in the former part of our debate. And yet, methinks, human reason should be sufficient to

conduct man safe to the happiness that is suited to his intellectual and immortal nature, and to bring motives sufficient to enforce the practice of necessary duties. I will begin my argument therefore on this subject, and try what can be said.

PITH. I think Sophronius has set the matter right, and I entreat Logisto to proceed to his proof.

LOG. Then I begin thus. When two things are set before us whereof our reason tells us, with great assurance, that one is vastly more excellent and desirable than the other, reason does what is sufficient to engage us to chuse that which is most excellent. Now to apply this to the business in hand : Reason, working in a heathen, may assure him, that virtue hath much beauty and loveliness in it, because it is acting what is fit and right, and according to the nature of things : But vice is a hateful thing, contrary to what is right and fit : Reason can shew him, that the everlasting favour of such an almighty and all-sufficient being as God, and the happiness and joys of a future state, which are the rewards of virtue and religion, are vastly preferable to all the delights of sense, which are but short and vanishing, and to all the forbidden indulgences of appetite and passion, which often leave a sting behind them : I think then, that reason does its office, and performs what is sufficient to incline the man to chuse virtue, the favour of God, and future happiness, above all present and tempting sensualities, and to enforce the practice of religion and goodness. Again ; When two things are set before us, whereof our reason assures us, that one will bring a hundred times more pain and sorrow upon us than the other, reason does what is sufficient to engage us most carefully to avoid that which brings the greatest misery, and to endure the less evil for the sake of avoiding the greater : And therefore when reason, working in a heathen, assures him, that anguish of conscience, and the displeasure and wrath of an almighty God, through all our state of immortality, which will be the consequent of a vicious life, will be inexpressibly harder to bear than a little troublesome self-denial, which he finds in the present life, in the restraints of his passions and appetites, and in the practices of virtue, reason then does what is sufficient to incline the man to avoid vice and to practise virtue ; because it teaches him, that it is far better to venture the lesser pains of self-denial here in this life, in order to avoid the more terrible pains and sorrows which the displeasure of God may bring both upon his body here, and his immortal soul hereafter. How can any thing be sufficient, Pithander, to bring men to religion and heaven, if such motives as these are not sufficient ? And these are the motives that reason finds out and produces.

PITH. Though your argument seems to run on, Sir, in so smooth a current, and to carry such perspicuity and force with it,

yet it is not very difficult to give several solid answers, which will shew its weakness. First then, Sir, you will please to observe, that your argument supposes these distinct characters of virtue and vice, of lovely and hateful, to be set before heathens, even of the savage kind, in their proper colours, and the immortal rewards and punishments, that attend them, to be found out and ascertained by their reasoning powers. But I entreat the favour of you, Sir, to bethink yourself, how very short you came yesterday of your intended proof, that all heathens can find out those truths or duties which belong to religion, or can set forth the distinct characters of virtue and vice, in their lovely or unlovely appearances. Think again, Sir, how much you have failed of any plain proof of the doctrine of a future and eternal state knowable by these heathens, how unable the stupid Americans are to find out, that God will certainly receive penitent sinners to his favour, at least into such a degree of favour as to free them from all punishment, and to make them happy for ever in another world ; nor have you proved that their reason will shew them, that God will make the men of vice for ever miserable. Now if these things are not effectually proved, nor so much as the probability of them made evident and easy to the stupid Africans, where are your strong motives to virtue ? What is become of your sufficient obligations to practise religion ? They vanish and disappear at once : And therefore in the ruder nations of the earth, these motives can have no power to enforce religion or virtue, for they have no existence there in the minds of men, nor are likely to have any existence by the mere workings of their rude reason. Forgive me, good Logisto, if I take the freedom here to suppose, that this argument of yours, for the power of reason to enforce the practice of virtue and religion, was framed in your thoughts, and glowed there with superior fervour and force, while you imagined these distinct characters of moral good and evil, these lovely features and excellencies of virtue, these hateful ideas of vice, and the motives of everlasting rewards and punishments, to be all easily found by the light of reason, in every heathen : but since you are disappointed in the proof of their reason as a sufficient guide or light to teach them their duty, you must accept the disappointment too of your expectations of the sufficient force or power of reason to influence the practice of it.

Loc. I must confess, Pithander, I came to this conference yesterday big with expectation of proving reason in all men, even in the rudest heathens, to be a very sufficient guide ; and though I do not yet yield up all that point entirely, yet I am constrained to acknowledge your replies have greatly weakened my arguments in that first part of our debate, and thence follows a degree of debility of my arguments in the second. You saw in the beginning of the present discourse, I was something conscious of it,



PITH. I acknowledge, Sir, your sincerity and goodness ; but please to permit me to proceed in the next place, and shew, that wheresoever unassisted reason has pretended to find out the future and immortal recompences of virtue and vice, it is with so much doubt and uncertainty as renders the force of the motive very feeble. Reason, in its best exercises, even in the most polite nations, can hardly arise higher than to give them *a grand probability*, that there is an immortal or everlasting state of happiness in the other world, provided for the rewards of the brightest virtue on earth. Sophronius has carefully avoided the making the certain knowledge of it a fundamental article : For since all mankind are sinners, and *there is none* perfectly righteous, *no not one*, how can reason assure them, that such imperfect virtue shall have an immortal reward ? Much less could their reason ensure such happiness to those who have been great and long sinners, even though they should repent : For can mere reason ever assure the heathens, that they shall exist for ever ? Why may not God annihilate such imperfect and sinful creatures as they are, and do it even as a favour granted to the penitent, since for their sin they have deserved to have been made miserable in their natural state of immortality, that is, to have been for ever miserable. And he might still reserve the more profligate and impenitent criminals to some future punishment, to shew the distinction his justice makes between the good and the bad, or rather, between criminals of less and greater guilt : And yet even this punishment, perhaps, so far as reason could certainly teach us, need not be immortal or everlasting. Such mere doubtful hopes and fears therefore as can be raised by such feeble, probable, and uncertain proofs of everlasting pain or pleasure, are but weak things, Logisto, to oppose the strength and violence of vicious appetite, and unruly passion in mankind. Things present and sensible, whether they be pleasing or painful, they are still certain, and therefore they will generally have much more powerful influence than these distant and invisible futurities which are set before men in a doubtful and uncertain light. It is the light of revelation only that ascertains these important points of religion, and discovers an everlasting heaven and a hell, with full evidence and assurance, and this adds a far superior strength to the motives and obligations of religion. And in the second place, with your permission, Logisto, I would proceed farther, and shew, that human reason is very insufficient for these purposes, in comparison of the blessed gospel of Christ, for many new and different motives and obligations to virtue and piety are presented in the religion of Christ, and the gospel, far beyond what the reason of man, untaught and unassisted by revelation, could ever furnish us with.

It is the holy scripture, it is Moses and the prophets, it is

Christ and his apostles, who set before us the dreadful evil of sin, both in its nature, as it is contrary to the eternal rectitude and the will of God; and in its demerit and consequences, as it deserves the indignation of God, and is threatened with death and everlasting punishments in another world. It is the scripture that represents to us the excellency and the necessity of religion and moral goodness, in a much brighter and more easy light than ever all the reasonings of the philosophers have done, and makes the plough-boy and the shepherd to understand and receive more truth and duty in a few lines and in half an hour, than the philosopher, with all his boasted reason, had been labouring and digging for half his life, and at last had brought it forth into light mingled with darkness and much uncertainty.

It is the scripture that makes the duties of religion practicable, by bringing into a near view all those admirable and lovely examples of virtue and piety practised among men, in the glorious characters of Moses, Joshua, Abraham, and David, Samuel, Job, Daniel, &c. and above all by Jesus, the author of our religion? What strong assurances of the love, compassion, and tenderness of God toward good men in this world, are given us in scripture, as well as the bright discoveries of the glorious world to come: It is the gospel reveals to men the astonishing love of God, in sending his own Son down to earth to become a sacrifice, and to make atonement for the sins of rebellious creatures, and the amazing condescension and compassion of Christ to undergo such sufferings for our sake. These are illustrious incentives to virtue and goodness, which reason knows nothing of: *And time would fail me to talk over half the glorious and divine encouragements that we find in the book of scripture to make us active and constant in the practice of religion, and to incline us to disdain and surmount all the difficulties, and hardships, and errors which lie in our way to heaven.* And what can the poor untutored reason of an Indian furnish him with, to combat all his vicious inclinations, the sinful customs of his country, and the profligate and savage course of life in which he is educated and engaged, that can appear comparable to the divine weapons and armour with which the gospel has furnished us for this sacred warfare? And yet we see all these glorious motives and obligations of christianity do not prove effectual to restrain multitudes of the christian world from vice and irreligion, nor incline them to virtue and holiness, in opposition to the temptations of the flesh and the world: How weak and insufficient then must reason be, poor African or American reason, to attain such divine effects?

LOG. Then surely, Pithander, you will not say any more, that reason does not offer sufficient obligations to virtue, because the bulk of a nation are not reclaimed by it from their vices; for by the same rule, *out of your own mouth*, I might condemn

the gospel of insufficiency too. I might argue concerning the scripture and the religion of Christ, that it does not provide sufficient motives to virtue and goodness, because the bulk and multitude, even in christian nations, are not influenced by it, either to learn or to practise their duty, but are carried away perpetually into vicious courses by appetite and passion, by sinful custom and evil companions, and utter forgetfulness of God, and all that is good.

PITH. But you must still allow, Sir, that the christian revelation has a vast preference above the mere principle of human reason, in that its motives are more numerous and more powerful beyond all comparison. And if the motives to religion, which our reasoning powers can propose, may be called sufficient to equal, or rather to exceed all temptations to vice and impiety, because in the balance of reason they appear more weighty, then the principles and motives of christianity must be more abundantly sufficient, because with an infinite superabundance, they outweigh all the temptations of flesh and sin, when put into the same balance of reason. And, on the other hand, if the motives of the gospel, numerous and powerful as they are, prove ineffectual to many thousands that hear them, surely the motives of mere reason, which are much fewer and feebler, are very insufficient in comparison with those of revelation. In the third place, let it be observed, that there are large and considerable numbers of mankind, in all ages, who have been effectually influenced by the gospel to renounce every vice, and to practise piety toward God, and virtue toward men, and especially where the christian religion has appeared in its full liberty and lustre. But any numbers of truly pious and religious men are not to be heard of among the most polite nations of heathenism. How shamefully vicious in practice were many of the philosophers of greatest fame, if the report of Diogenes Laertius, and others, may be credited? How very few of them lived according to the light of nature, and the eternal rules of piety and virtue? But what if here and there a good man or two has been found in heathen countries, where knowledge flourished, such as Italy or Greece, or the lesser Asia, in ancient times? Perhaps in our age, in Great Britain there are fifty to one, and it may be more than a hundred; and if we should compare the numbers of religious persons in the British isles, with those of Africa or North-America, I have some reason to think the proportion would exceed several thousands to one.

LOG. Then, my friend, according to your own argument, if the motives and obligations of christianity are proved to be sufficient to enforce the practice of religion, and to conduct a man to heaven, because they have been found effectual and successful in the hearts of some hundreds or thousands, I think I may make

inference, and you must grant it, that the motives of reason not utterly insufficient for this purpose, if they have been actual to bring but here and there one to practise religion, and thereby lead them to the divine favour. And if it be sufficient for you, why not for all who have the same natural faculties?

PITH. Will you please, Sir, to resume your own inference, and apply it thus? Reason has been sufficient in an Euclid to trace out a noble scheme of geometrical theorems; in a Locke to write an excellent Essay on Human Understanding; and in a Virgil to compose an admirable Heroic Poem: will you infer therefore that reason in all men is sufficient to frame geometrical theorems, write fine essays and heroic poems? Will this conclusion hold, Sir? Can all mankind become Lockes, and Euclids, and Virgils? Remember, good Sir, we are debating about such a deficiency as may render all mankind holy and happy. Not that I suppose it is as hard to trace out religion as it is to be a Locke or Euclid; but this application of your argument shews how weak the inference is: and though here and there one may happen to do it, it will not follow, that all mankind can do the same. Besides, Sir, this small number, this here and there one, that you speak of, who had been led by reason to religion, are found only in Europe and in western Asia, where they had had correspondence with Jews or christians, or have received some traditional notices, or hints of divine revelation, without which, I much question, whether there would have been, in any part, one truly religious man in the world: So that it is to the oracles and fragments of revelation, conveyed to men from Noah, Job, or Abraham, or the Jews, or from some other inspired person, that I ascribe the real godliness of any person among Gentile nations, rather than to the mere force of human reason in its present degenerate state: For I much question, whether you can inform me of one person, one single person, of piety and virtue in the wilds of Africa or America, in all these nations, and in many past ages, unless they have had some communications from persons of other nations who had acquaintance with a revelation.

LOG. What! will not you allow one good man to have been found, for several ages, among all these heathen nations, without revelation? That is hard indeed: Doth not such a degree of charity border upon cruelty? Can you think the God of heaven is so cruel, as your present sentiments represent him?

PITH. Sir, if it were a proper place here, I could shew you, that this representation of things is very agreeable to the language of God in his sacred writings, and yet he is a God of equity still. But we shall have occasion to enter into this argument, when you come to talk upon the equity and goodness of God himself. At present I content myself to say, that since very few in

any heathen countries, after the division of the world into Jews and Gentiles, in the days of Moses, have been truly religious persons, in comparison with the multitudes under the light of divine revelation, it is evident, that reason has not this sufficiency to enforce the practice of religion, in any tolerable proportion, to what revelation or scripture has; and therefore, in a comparative sense, it may well be called insufficient, while revelation is justly called sufficient in this sense.

LOC. Well then, Sir, you seem to acknowledge a degree of insufficiency in revelation itself, since it is but comparatively sufficient.

PITH. I am not in pain to grant this, Sir, that scripture itself, or the gospel of Christ, considered merely as a written book, or as a mere system of doctrines, rules, and motives, doth not pretend to such a complete and powerful sufficiency of itself: That is, though in itself it has a vast superiority to all other rules and motives, yet it pretends not to such an effectual influence over the hearts of men, in opposition to all present temptations, and the powers of flesh and sense, by the mere outward proposal of its motives without the promised aids of the Holy Spirit. It is this heavenly influence that renders even the gospel-motives so efficacious. It is to the aids of this superior grace of God, concurring with the revelation of the gospel, that the primitive preachers and defenders of christianity direct their disciples in order to obtain victory over their sensual and vicious inclinations; Rom. viii. 13. *If by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* It is to the operations of the Holy Spirit of God; or the agency of God by his Spirit, that they ascribe the mighty change of their natures from vice to virtue, from sin to holiness, and purity of heart and life, which is called *regeneration, or being born of God.* 1 Pet. i. 22. *Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth by the Spirit.* 1 John ii. 29. *Every one that doth righteousness is born of God.* And iii. 9. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, that is, freely, and readily, and frequently as before. It is he that is born of God that overcometh the world* in all the allurements of flesh and sense; 1 John v. 4. And this, in the language of our Saviour, *is being born of the Spirit; John iii. 5, 6.* If the Corinthians were sanctified from their vices of heart and life, it is *by the Spirit of our God; 1 Cor. vi. 11.* If the Thessalonians are brought to salvation, it is *through sanctification of the Spirit, as well as belief of the truth; 2 Thess. ii. 13.* Even all the important discoveries of divine motives contained in the gospel, which St. Paul calls *the weapons of his warfare; 2 Cor. x. 4.* and *which are mighty to the pulling down of strong holds of sin in the heart, it is only through God; that is, through the present power of God.* And St. Paul tells us, in Rom. viii. 26. *it*

*he Spirit of God that helpeth our infirmities, and teaches us to  
y; and the aids of this Spirit are promised to them who seek  
Luke xi. 13. Your heavenly Father will give the Holy  
irit to them that ask him.*

LOG. But why this long bead-roll of your scriptures cited  
me, who doubt of the truth of them, and cannot yet believe  
y thing so sacred and divine in them as you imagine?

PITH. I hope, Sir, you will permit the first preachers and  
chers of our religion to know what their own doctrine is, with-  
t determining whether it be divine or not: and I cite them for  
other purpose but to shew you, that they themselves acknow-  
lge that the glorious sufficiency, which even the blessed gospel  
Christ has to conduct and bring souls to heaven, in a way of  
ligion, does not arise only from the strength that its motives  
ve, as powerful as they are, to persuade the heart of man to  
ctise true religion, in opposition to all manner of temptations,  
t it arises also from the promised aids of grace, or supernatural  
fluences of the blessed Spirit, concurring with the moral influ-  
ce of these motives.

LOG. I see we are now running into enthusiasm apace. I  
oped we should have none of this kind of discourse here. Pray  
ll us, Pithander, what does this divine Spirit do to make men  
ligious, more than give them this gospel, or confirm the truth  
it, as you suppose, by gifts and wonders?

PITH. If it would not lead us too far from our present sub-  
ct, perhaps I could set this matter in a very rational light. At  
esent, I shall only say, that in some unknown way and man-  
er, it may either give further light to the understanding, or a  
cret bias and propensity to the will, or, at least, it may set  
ese motives, both of reason and revelation before the soul in a  
rouger and more persuasive view, and by this means effectually  
evail with the man to become thoroughly religious.

LOG. But may not the poor heathens in the dark regions of  
e earth, who are left to the mere instructions of nature and  
ason, and have fewer advantages than the christians pretend  
; I say, may not these poor wretches be favoured by a merci-  
l God with some such assistances from heaven, to help them  
their enquiries after religion and happiness, and to assist them  
their endeavours to practise the one, and obtain the other?  
Will a merciful God bestow such inward assistances on those  
ho have so much outward light, and yet give none at all of it  
to those who sit in darkness.

PITH. I thank you, Logisto, that you feel yourself reduced  
o far as to make this enquiry; to which I shall offer these two  
lar replies. First, I will by no means deny, that ever God  
vours the heathens with this blessing. And, doubtless, such  
the beneficent and compassionate nature of the blessed God.

favour or displeasure of God, and from everlasting happiness and misery in a future state, are traced out by reason in the heathen world, though they are not all set in their full light and strength, but arise only to a degree of doubtful probability, yet they may be called, in some sense, naturally sufficient to enforce the practice of religion; and the reason is plain, because even the *mere probability* of the love or anger of an almighty Being, and of an eternal state of misery or happiness, ought to over-balance all our present views of certain pleasure or certain uneasiness, which belong to this short and perishing life; and so they ought to incline a reasonable man to chuse the hardships of virtue, with the love of God, and the probable or doubtful hopes of eternal peace, and to refuse the pleasures of vice, with the anger of God, and the probable danger or fear of eternal pain.

III. Though I allow the sufficiency of reason to enforce the practice of virtue and piety in this sense, yet when we consider how very little influence it has ever had, even in polite nations, to reform the world, or to render men truly religious, and no influence at all, so far as we can find, in the darker corners of the earth, those habitations of atheism, idolatry, and cruelty, I think we can account it little more than a mere speculative and notional sufficiency, arising from the nature of things; but since it is confirmed by experience of success in so very few, if any evident instances, it can scarce be called a practical sufficiency to bring men to heaven in a way of religion, where it acts, or rather sleeps, in such a manner as to let whole nations of miserable mankind run on in the practice of shameful vices, from one generation to another, thoughtless of the true God, virtue, and religion, and careless about his love or his anger in a future state.

Upon the whole, I think, we must conclude, that since human reason in a remote and speculative sense, may be sufficient to guide and conduct all mankind to religion and future happiness, Logisto is so far in the right, and may be allowed to say, reason is sufficient. But since, in a practical or experimental sense, we find reason has scarce any, or rather no sufficiency to attain these ends, Pithander may continue to maintain his opinion also, that reason is insufficient; yet it ought to be remembered, that it is in this sense only, and with this limitation. Whensoever therefore I read any christian writers, who are men of good understanding and of moderate principles, asserting that human reason in heathen nations, is not sufficient to guide and conduct men to happiness in a way of religion, I take them to mean, such a practical insufficiency as I have distinguished and described here: And in this sense I would understand the bishop of London in his Second Pastoral Letter, when he declares reason to

be insufficient, as well as Dr. Clarke in his Discourse of revealed religion : And when I hear of other christian authors, or preachers, maintaining the sufficiency of reason for this purpose, I would suppose, they mean no more than such a natural and remote sufficiency, which will scarce ever become really effectual without revelation, and especially in the rude and barbarous nations of the earth.

Though I must confess, it would better guard their expressions on both sides, from mistake, since the controversy is on foot, if they pleased to use some such distinction or limitation, when they pronounced either upon the strength or weakness of human reason, and neither called it absolutely sufficient or absolutely insufficient for the purposes of religion and happiness. And I am ready to persuade myself, Logisto by this time is almost inclined to believe, that natural reason unassisted in all mankind, is not proximately and practically sufficient, to make them holy and happy here and hereafter. Thus it happens sometimes, that huge controversies may be allayed and silenced, and contending parties reconciled, by a plain and easy distinction.

“ Hi Motus animorum, atque hæc certamina tanta  
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescunt.” VIRG.

And if things do really stand in the light in which I have endeavoured to set them, if reason has only such a remote and speculative sufficiency, to guide and conduct sinful mankind to happiness in a way of religion, if there are so very few, if any, who were ever guided and conducted by it alone to happiness, then there is a most evident necessity of brighter light, clearer discoveries of duty, stronger motives and assistances, superior to what reason can furnish us with, to make mankind truly wise and blessed ; and this light and these motives and assistances are eminently to be found in the religion of Christ.

LOG. How much soever I may be inclined to receive your opinion, Sophronius, and to abide by your determination in this controversy, yet I cannot think fit to declare myself roundly and positively upon this subject, till I have tried the force of all the arguments which I have in reserve : But perhaps you will think it too much to enter upon any new topics at present.

SOPH. Well then, gentlemen, I would propose at present to relieve the fatigue of intense thinking, and close debate : And at the same time, in order to confirm what I have offered about the practical insufficiency of reason in matters of religion, permit me to read two short manuscripts, which I brought hither to entertain you this evening, since I found your debate yesterday ran very much upon the sufficiency of reason, even in the most ignorant nations, to lead them to religion and happiness. The manuscripts are nothing but a short abstract of all the sense of religion that I could find in history among the northern Americans,



and the southern Africans. The first relates to the rude nations of the North America, collected many years ago, for my own use, out of a large volume, written by father Hennepin, a missionary of Flanders, who travelled over all that country, and made a considerable stay in some parts of it. All the notion of a God or religion which they generally have, is this: They see some bodies produce strange effects, which they cannot comprehend, they see some appearances of nature or art which are very unusual, and then they ascribe the causes of these effects or appearances to some being that is above themselves, and call it in their language Otkon, or Manitoo, or Atahouta, which means a sort of spirit, either good or evil. So when they see a gun make a flash and a noise, and immediately either a wild bull, or two or three wild fowl fall down dead, they cry, it is iron with an Otkon in it; for they are not able to comprehend the meaning of it. So when they find a great cascade or water-fall, which seems a little frightful, and dangerous to approach, they say, a spirit dwells there. And for such reasons they call all that dwell beyond the great lake, that is, the ocean, spirits; for the Europeans perform several things which they understand not. When the author was among the Isati, he began to make a vocabulary in their own language, and when they found he could not understand their words sometimes till he had consulted his vocabulary, they thought his book was a spirit, which told him what they said.

And this seems to be the spring of the notion which they have of their own souls, and according to their own way of reasoning, they think that guns, and bows, and arrows, and wild bulls, have souls also. When they die, they have a notion of their spirits going into the country of souls, where they fancy that the souls of every animate and inanimate thing on earth are to be found. They bury their bows, arrows, shoes, pipes, earthen-pots, rackets, that is, their broad net-work sandals, made of thongs of leather, &c. that so the souls of their bows and arrows may assist them in hunting the souls of elks and beavers in the country of souls: and that the souls of rackets may be useful to them in travelling over the snow in that country. There are some particular bones of the bulls and beavers which they kill, that are kept choicely by them, and are counted a sort of present mansions for their souls, and they use them well, lest, say they, the soul of the bulls which we have killed, should go and tell the other bulls, that we have cut them to pieces, and eat them; and then they imagine that the rest of the bulls would never come within their reach, or be caught by them, either in this world or the other.

They think that the souls of the Europeans go to a different country from that of the Americans, and some of them are

afraid to be baptized, lest we should make them slaves in the country of souls. When one of them asked the author, whether there be good game for hunting in our country of souls, as there is in theirs, he answered, there is no need of it : Immediately they clapped their hands to their mouths, and said, thou art a liar : can any thing live without eating ? Scarce any of these savages have any notion of a God ; they do not seem to comprehend a plain argument on that subject. The author had much ado to make them understand what he meant, when he would give them the idea of a God ; for they have no word for a God in their language, and yet it is very expressive in other things. He called him therefore, the great master of life, and the great captain of heaven and earth, and when he preached a God to them they enquired whether he could send them some elks and beavers. It is true, among some of these nations a sudden glimmering of a deity sometimes comes on their minds. Some think the sun to be such a great superior power, but not without much confusion. Some fancy him a spirit that commands the air. And some of the more southern inhabitants of that country, imagine an universal soul belongs to the whole world, just as every particular being has a particular soul.

Father Marquette, who is cited by this author, says, every one of the Illinois has his peculiar god, whom they call Manitoo. It is sometimes a stone, a bird, a serpent, or any thing they dream of ; and they think this Manitoo will prosper their hunting, their fishing, their wars : They blow the smoke of their tobacco on their Manitoo, which they count a salutation of their god. For the most part, says our author, those who own a God, have scarce any sense of religion, and but few of them have any outward gestures to convince men of their esteem for a deity ; they have no temple, no priests, no sacrifices, nor scarce any forms of worship, unless it be to evil or malicious spirits, from whom they fear they shall receive some hurt : And to these some of them have made some kind of offerings. They throw in tobacco, or beavers' skins to a cascade or fall of water which is difficult to pass, and cannot easily be avoided, to engage the deity that presides there, in their favour : And if, after the practice of any of their superstitions, they find any degree of success, they are then established in it, though they should mistake ten times for one that hits.

As the generality of these nations have little sense of religion, dreams among them supply all other defects, and serve instead of prophecy, laws, rules of action, and undertakings in war or hunting. If in their dreams they were persuaded to kill a man, they would hardly fail to do it. Parents' dreams serve for their own and their children's actions, and the dreams of the captain for all the people of the village. Some of them suppose, that

Okton, or Atahouta, made the world, and one Messoo, or Otkon, going a hunting, with his dogs, were lost in a great lake, which overflowed the whole earth in a little time; but afterwards, this Otkon gathered a little earth, by the help of some animals, and repaired the world. Others say, the woman that made the world came down from heaven, and fluttering in the air awhile, but finding no ground, when the earth was thus overflowed, the tortoise offered her back to her, on which she lighted, and by little and little such a quantity of mud and dirt gathered about the tortoise's back, that it increased so as to make America.

In the southern parts of this vast northern country, the people are something more sensible, and are attentive to the things of their religion. But in the north there is scarce any thing to be met with but an inconceivable blindness, blockish insensibility, and prodigious remoteness from their Maker, so that whole ages would scarce be sufficient to reduce them to piety and virtue. These are the sentiments of the traveller. And they have, withal, such vices amongst them as are directly contrary to the spirit of christianity. Their cruel and barbarous revenges are practices which they cannot part with. They will wait three or four days behind a tree, to kill a man whom they hate. Gluttony and drunkenness in a high degree prevail amongst them, and mere brutish addictedness, to eating and drinking; their intemperance of every kind, their inconstancy to the partners of their bed, immoderate lechery, polygamy, changing and forsaking their wives, are great hindrances to their conversion, because christianity forbids them.

They have such a universal indifference to every thing of religion in which they are instructed, that it is very amazing. They would suffer themselves to be baptized six times a day, for a glass of aqua vitæ, or a pipe of tobacco. They will sometimes offer infants to the font, but without any motive of religion. They look upon all our mysteries as tales and dreams, as some of them do upon their own accounts of any thing sacred. If you bid them pray, and teach them prayers, they readily comply: Bid them fall on their knees, not smoke, be uncovered, hearken to me, &c. they do all. Say to-morrow is Sunday, or a day of prayer; they say, I am glad of it: Tell them you must make a vow to the Master of life, that you will never be drunk again; they say, I will do it; and are drunk again to-morrow, if they can get brandy. They do every thing with such a careless air, such a negligent thoughtlessness, and universal indifference, that it is to little purpose to have them to do any thing. If images or beads are given them, they use them for ornaments. In a word if they hope to get any favour or present for themselves, or their nation, some of them will do any thing in these respects, that you enjoin them. They never contradict any man's speech

er opinion, and think it is civility to leave every man to his own sentiment; therefore they will believe, or pretend to believe, all you say. So that a man must not go to America to become a martyr for his faith. They never kill any body for a different opinion: And when they tell you their tales of the woman and the tortoise, they reprove you of incivility if you contradict them, and say they believed all you said, and therefore you ought to believe all they say. If any manner of impressions of religion have been made upon themselves or their children, yet when the seasons of hunting come, away they go with their tribe, for many months together, and lose all that they had learned, and make the labours of a missionary endless and vain.

At last this missionary, the author, laments and declares that this people are still so savage, that in all the many years he labours that I spent among the Iroquois, besides my great expedition among several others of the nations, I did very little good besides one or two infants that I baptized. One among the Assati, and for want of accommodation, I did it without any ceremony, taking one christian for the witness of the baptism, only dipping the water on the head of the little savage, saying, *Creature of God, I baptise thee in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, then I took half my altar-cloth and spread over the body of the infant: A little after it died; and I was glad, says his poor friar, it pleased God to take this little christian out of the world; for it is to be feared, if it had lived, it would have trod in its father's steps. I have often attributed my preservation, amidst the greatest dangers, to the care I took for its baptism. The greatest things, he says, that missionaries can yet do, is to baptise a few infants, and dying adult persons, who desire it. But after all the cares and entire sacrifice of a missionary's life, it would be a happy recompence, if they had the glory to convert one single soul. But they must cry out, it is beyond their force, and only the Spirit of God can do it. Thus far my epitome of the religion of these North Americans.

The other manuscript is an abstract of the religious affairs of the several nations of the Hottentots, at the Cape of Good-Hope, which I took out of a very entertaining book, written originally in high German, by Peter Kolben, translated into English, and published in the year 1731. The author was particularly employed to collect the materials of his history, and had a long residence there, in a Dutch settlement, for that purpose, and often made excursions for full information of all their affairs. The account he gives of their religion is this: They believe a supreme Being, Creator of the heaven and earth, and of every thing in them. They call him *Gounja-Gounja, or the God of gods, and say he is a good man; that he does nobody any hurt, and from whom none need be apprehensive of any; and that he dwells*

*far above the moon.* But it does not appear, that they have any institution of worship directly regarding the supreme God. I never saw, or could hear, that any one of them paid any act of devotion immediately to him. I have talked to them roundly on this head, and endeavoured to make them sensible of the folly and absurdity of neglecting his worship, while they worship what they call gods that are inferior and dependent on him: but they will rarely reason upon the matter, or attend to any thing that is said upon it. The most sensible of them, when they are in humour to answer on this head, will tell you the following very remarkable matter: *That their first parents so grievously sinned and offended against the supreme God, that he cursed them and all their posterity with hardness of heart; so that they know little of him, and have still less inclination to serve him.* The reader without doubt, will be astonished to hear such a tradition as this at the Cape of Good-Hope, which seems to relate to the curse of Adam, or Ham: I assure him, the Hottentots have such a tradition.

Forsaking the worship of the true God, though they acknowledge his being, and some of his attributes; the Hottentots adore the moon as an inferior and visible god. They suppose the moon has the disposal of the weather, and invoke her for such weather as they want. They assemble for the celebration of her worship at the full and new moon constantly; no inclemency of the weather prevents them. In shouting, screaming, singing, jumping, stamping, dancing, prostration on the ground, clapping of hands, and an unintelligible jargon, lie all their formalities of the worship of the moon; and in such expressions as these, I salute you; you are welcome; grant us fodder for our cattle, and milk in abundance. In rounds of these words and actions they continue the whole night, till pretty far of the next day.

The Hottentots likewise adore, as a benign deity, a certain insect peculiar it is said, to the Hottentot countries. This animal is of the dimensions of a child's little finger; the back green, the belly specked with white and red. It is provided with two wings, and on its head two horns. To this little winged deity, whenever they set sight upon it, they render the highest tokens of veneration. And if it honours, forsooth, a village with a visit, the inhabitants assemble about it in transports of devotion, as if the Lord of the universe was among them. They sing and dance round it troop after troop, while it stays in the highest ecstasy; throwing to it the powder of an herb they call Buchu, our botanists call it Spiræa. They cover at the same time, the whole area of the village, the tops of the cots, and every thing without doors, with the same powder. They likewise kill two fat sheep as a thank-offering for this high honour. And it is impossible to

live out of a Hottentot's head, but that *the arrival of this insect in a village, brings happiness and prosperity to all the inhabitants. They believe that all their offences, to that moment, are buried in oblivion, and all their iniquities done away* If this insect happens to light upon a Hottentot, he is looked upon as a man *without guilt, and distinguished and revered as a saint, and the delight of the deity ever after.* His neighbours glory that they have so *only a man* among them, and publish the matter far and near. The fattest ox belonging to the village is immediately killed for thank-offering; and the time is turned into a festivity in honour of the deity and the saint. This insect I have often seen, and held the Hottentots more than once at the solemnities.

The Hottentots likewise pay a religious veneration to their *ancestors*, and men of renown departed: They honour them not with tombs, statues, or inscriptions, but consecrate woods, mountains, fields, and rivers, to their memory. When they pass by these places, *they implore the protection of the dead, for themselves and their cattle,* they muffle their heads in their mantles, and sometimes they dance round those places, singing and clapping their hands. They worship also an evil deity, whom they look upon as *the father of mischief, and the source of all their plagues.* They call him Touquoa: and say *he is a little crabbed inferior spirit, whose malice against the Hottentots will seldom let him rest, and who never did, nor had in his nature to do any good to any body.* They worship him therefore, say they, in order to sweeten him and avert his malice. It is this Touquoa, say they, who stirs up enemies against them. It is he who frustrates all their good designs. It is he who sends all pain and vexation. It is he who afflicts them and their cattle with diseases, and sets on the wild beasts to devour them. It is he who is the author of all ill luck. And it is he, say they, who teaches the wicked Hottentots the cursed art of witchcraft: which they believe innumerable mischiefs are done to the persons and cattle of the good. They therefore coax him upon any apprehension of danger or misfortune, with the offering of an ox or a sheep; and at other times, perform divers ceremonies of worship, to wheedle and keep him quiet.

Father Tachart hath delivered their worship of this deity very well in the following words: *We honour Touquoa at times, the Hottentots, by killing a fat ox or a sheep, according to our apprehensions of his designs to plague us. With the fat we anoint our bodies, and with the flesh we regale one another; this being the way to please or reconcile him to us, if we have offended, though we know not how we have offended. He reckons what he uses an offence, and plagues us when he pleases, and it has been always a custom amongst us thus to appease him. I have now seen, saith my author, the whole system of the Hottentot reli-*

there, either of age or hunger, or to be devoured by some wild beast. When the women are superannuated, they practise the same in every respect, and leave them to perish.

The third inhuman and national iniquity is, their *exposing children, especially girls, or burying them alive*, if the parents think they are not able to maintain them: and especially if there happen to be twins, and one of them be a girl, she is certainly condemned, if either the scarcity of the mother's milk, or the poverty of the parents, be alledged against breeding of them both. When they resolve to rid themselves of one, they carry the babe to a considerable distance from the village, and look for a hole in the earth made by a hedge-wolf, tyger, or other wild creature: In such a hole, if they find one, they lay the babe alive; then stopping up the mouth of the hole with earth and stones, forsake it for ever. If they find not such a sepulchre presently, they tie the babe, stretched on its back, to some lower bough of the next tree, and leave it to starve or be devoured by birds or beasts of prey. Sometimes they leave the poor cast-away among bushes.

Though the immortality of their own souls is an article that enters not into the religion of the Hottentots, and which, for that reason, I mentioned not in my account of their religion, and though they say nothing at any time concerning it in a religious way, and perhaps never think of it with regard to their own souls, yet does it appear very plainly, that they believe the soul outlives the body, and that from the following particulars:—1. They offer prayers and praises to the good Hottentots departed, and attribute or dedicate to them some hills, or woods, or rivers.—2. They are apprehensive lest the dead should return and molest them. They therefore upon the death of any man, woman, or child of them, remove with their bag and baggage to a new settlement, believing that the dead never haunt any places but those they died in, whether they be good or bad. But to what end they conceive souls to exist out of the body, or whether they trouble their heads about it, I know not. They suppose, according to all the intelligence I got upon the matter, that the malice of Touquoa is confined to this world, and cannot act beyond it. Nor could I ever catch the least hint among them to think, that any of them believe that either the good at death go to any certain place of bliss, or the bad to any place of torment. Thus far the author of this narrative.

And thus, gentlemen, I have given you, in short, all the account that I could find of any sense of religion, either in the Hottentot nations, who possess a large tract of land on the east, south, and west of the Cape of Good Hope, and in the several nations of various names who inhabit a great part of the inland country of North America. The only remark I make here shall

be this, viz. that though both these travellers spent much time in these countries, and took a great deal of pains with the natives to instruct them in religion, and the knowledge and worship of the true God, yet they could never find one soul among them all, that learned to know and worship *the one true God*, and to practise sincere and serious religion: So far were their own reasoning powers from a practical sufficiency to guide and conduct them in religious affairs, that their reason would not hearken to instruction, it would neither teach them, nor let them learn the way to heaven.

**PITH.** You stand entitled, Sophronius, to our best acknowledgments, for the pains you have taken in entertaining us with these two accounts of African and American religion. And can you now, dear Logisto, deny the justice of the remark that Sophronius has made? Can you ever suppose, Sir, that such sort of people as these have any reasoning powers in them, sufficient to frame and furnish out a religion for themselves, such as is suited to the majesty of God, and to the dignity of human nature, such as can restore sinful mankind to a temper fit for the blessedness of heaven, or such as can recommend guilty and sinful creatures to the favour of a wise, a holy and a righteous God? I mean, is the reason that is in them sufficient to do it in a practical and experimental sense, according to the distinction with which Sophronius has endeavoured to reconcile our present controversy?

**LOG.** I acknowledge we are greatly obliged to Sophronius for the abstracts he hath given us of the religion of these nations: And it must be granted, that these narratives are more worthy of credit, since the authors from whom he borrowed them were not mere sailors, who touched upon the coast and left it again in a few days, but resided there a considerable time, and spent some years in the countries, as well as conversed with great numbers of the inhabitants. I know not what to answer, Pithander, with regard to these particular nations; but surely our learned friend has chosen the most stupid, the most ignorant, the most brutal and obstinate tribes of mankind, to set before us as a proof of the weakness and insufficiency of reason to conduct men to the divine favour and happiness in a way of religion. And by this account of them, they seem to be so far degenerated from the rank of rational beings, and sunk into brutal life, that revelation itself could hardly recover them, if the christian religion were preached amongst them: For Sophronius has declared, that where some single attempts have been made of this kind, they have been without success.

**PITH.** Though observation, experience, and matter of fact assure us, that the solid clouds of darkness and irreligion which hang upon heathen nations, have been impenetrable to all the in-



ward light of their own reason for many ages, yet the reformation of some of these nations by the light of the gospel is also supported by matter of fact and experience; for true religion and morality have been actually introduced this way among some of these very stupid people. The savages of North America, that lie westward of some of the British plantations, and near New-England, have several christian congregations; and the Danish missionaries of Tranquebar, in the East Indies, have done great things this way, toward the conversion of the heathens, in the Malabaric nations; though it must be confessed, these East Indians are not so utterly uncultivated and rude as the African Hottentots. But if those rude and uncultivated creatures are first addressed by men who are soft and obliging, and appear to seek only their good, and that by any number of them sent for this purpose; if they are treated in a rational way, and taught to exercise their reason upon the obvious things of the world, and led up to the Maker of all things, by the wisdom and power appearing in his works; if these savages are taught to read, and the scripture, which teaches morality and natural religion, as well as revealed, be made familiar to them, if it be frequently preached to them in conversation, as well as in public assemblies, if they have the New Testament always at hand, and they are taught how to use and understand it, this will lead their minds into a track of thinking and good reasoning about God and religion, about virtue and vice and the rules of moral life: It will constantly furnish them not only with ideas, but with right ideas of these things, and suggest proper and just thoughts to their minds, vastly beyond what the uncertain reasonings of philosophers would do: and as soon as they begin to be convinced, that this is a revelation from God, by introducing the traditional proofs of miracles and prophecies among them, their belief of it will be abundantly confirmed, and all their lessons before learned will have weight and authority upon their consciences, and will have a much superior influence upon them towards the reforming of their manners, and rectifying their hearts and lives, than if they were left to draw out the notions of God and a future state, and to trace out the rules of morality and religion, merely by themselves; since it is evident, their fathers have never done it in many ages past, nor is it probable the children would ever do it in ages to come.

LOG. Really, Sir, according to your own representation of this matter, there must be many scores of teachers employed in this work, and yet the operation would be but slow.

PITH. I grant it, Sir, and it might take up many years to reduce such barbarous nations to the virtues of a moral and religious life, by any human methods we could use, even with the gospel of Christ in our hands: But yet the work would certainly

e done with far greater speed, and much better success, and mankind would be led into a much more just, uniform, and perfect scheme of piety and virtue hereby, than if some philosophers were sent amongst them, just to set their thoughts into a track of reasoning upon these subjects, and leave them to find out the truths and duties of natural religion by their own natural powers, and by long trains of consequences: For I am very prone to think, that no wild nation, having different capacities, different humours and inclinations, strong prejudices, appetites, and passions, besides all the concurrent avocations of nature, custom, folly, &c. would never be led by their own reasonings into any right notions of true religion and virtue, though their own intellectual faculties should be awakened and roused into exercise. But to facilitate this great and blessed work, some have supposed, that whensoever the appointed time is come, for calling in the remainder of the heathen world to virtue and piety, and the faith of Christ, there will be a new and extraordinary effusion of the Spirit of God upon men for that purpose, and that the power of miracles and tongues shall attend the mission of the gospel through the barbarous nations, as in the ancient *days of pentecost*, when the apostles were sent to convert the world: For as you find in the narrative of these rude nations, that when they see any strange effect superior to all their notions of the power of nature, they are very ready to attribute it to some invisible power, to some unknown spirit; so when miracles shall be wrought amongst them, such as Christ and his apostles performed, at the same time that the doctrines of religion, and the rules of virtue are taught them, in a clear and easy manner, they will naturally be disposed to attend and receive these things with a sense of divine authority; and by the concurring influences of the grace of God, there will be a wondrous reformation wrought amongst them. But I forbid myself to proceed in such a digression as this: All that I insist upon at present is, that some wise and skilful preachers of the gospel, being sent among these savage nations, with the New Testament, and the art of reading, will be a thousand times more likely to convert any of the rude and uncultivated tribes of mankind, than their own reasoning could ever be.

LOG. But how hard soever it may be for reason to reform such savage countries as Sophronius has described in these his narratives, yet the rest of the heathen world are not to be concluded under the same characters of atheism, vice, and brutality, nor are they so hard to be reformed by reason.

PITH. But I entreat you, Sir, be pleased to remember, that you at first agreed, and undertook to maintain, that the reason of all mankind, and all nations of the earth, was sufficient for this purpose: And if it were not, then there is a necessity of revela-

tion, at least for those nations where reason is not sufficient. Besides, if the reason of man be only sufficient, in some of the best of the heathen nations, to find out and practise such an acceptable religion, then your proposition concerning the sufficiency of human nature, is not universally true, since there are other nations in whom it is not sufficient.

LOG. I am forced to confess, that the narratives which Sophronius has given of the state of these wretched countries, goes very far to destroy the good opinion that I had of the universal power of reason, and to incline me to give up the point in dispute very much in your favour. But pray, Sophronius, tell us a little what you think of the rest of the nations of the world, excepting such savage creatures as those, whose religion, or atheism, you have described, and in whom human nature is sunk into such a degenerate and senseless state?

SOPH. Though there are not, perhaps, very many nations of the earth that are so far brutified as these are, whose customs I have been now relating, yet there are several other large countries in Africa and America, who come not very far behind them in gross ignorance of their Creator, in abominable superstitions and idolatries, in barbarity and shameful vices. The little sketches of account which we have of the inhabitants of Nova Zembla, in the north of Asia, and of New Holland, which lies south of Java in the East-Indies, give us reason to expect, that we should find them every whit as destitute of the knowledge or practice of religion or virtue, as any of the savages of which I have already spoken, or perhaps more brutish than they. Europe, the best quarter of the world, has some countries shamefully ignorant: The tribes of men in Lapland, and even in the northern parts of Russia itself, are blind and brutish enough: They have some superstitions among them, but no true religion. I have read in the writings of travellers, and I have been informed, by those who have lived in those countries, that the Russes are devout idolaters, but immoral men: They are very zealous to have images in their houses, even in their best rooms or parlours, and particularly that of St. Nicholas, who as they suppose, governs the world, and besides him many of them seem to know no other God. They atone for great crimes by making many images of St. Nicholas, and dressing them up very fine. St. Nicholas always stands in some corner of their rooms, and to him they pay their devotions themselves, and expect their neighbours and visitants should pay it at first when they enter into the room: They profess christianity indeed, but mix it with such heathen superstitions, that it is not like the religion of the New Testament. They esteem it a very ungodly thing for any inhabitant to have no image or god in some part of the room, where they receive their friends: and yet they have scarce any notion of the obliga-

sions of truth and honesty. They make no scruple to break the most solemn engagements and alliances, when it is for their interest. Falsehood, and deceit, and cheating is almost an universal custom and principle among them, where they can do it safely. And Scheffer's history of Lapland informs us, that if the tribes of the Laplanders, who are more uncultivated, are yet more honest, it is because they have no such store-houses and safe custody for their goods or properties, and that if they were false or thievish, there could be no safety or security to any of them in their possessions. It is mere self-preservation, and not a sense of duty, that makes honesty the custom of their country.

But whatsoever degrees of honesty they have, yet as for the religion of the Lapps, it is half or more than half heathen; for though they have received some notions of the true God, and of Jesus Christ, and his apostles, yet they worship their old gods, Thor and Stor-junkar still: Thor is the god of thunder and lightning, who has power over life and death, and mankind, and is their chief deity; and Stor-junkar is god of the cattle, fish and birds, and gives them success in hunting and fishing: And these are worshipped under wretched images and rude figures, and anointed with the blood and fat of their sacrifices; their figures are drawn on their magical drums, and Christ and his apostles among them; and their superstitions are many, and extremely ridiculous. The custom of their ancestors is their highest, their most sacred and unalterable reason for all their follies, and even for their virtues too. What shall we say now of these worshippers of St. Nicholas and his images, or of Thor and Stor-junkar, these idolatrous Lapps, these national cheats of North Russia? Can we suppose, that any of these gross idolaters, or these devout and knavish, Nicholaites, who neither pay what is due to the true God, or to man on earth, are fit for the presence of God and the blessedness of heaven? Their own reason lets them go on obstinately in these idolatries and knaveries from age to age, and from one end of a nation to the other, without remorse, repentance, or reformation. If their reason be sufficient to guide them, why are there no instances of recovery from these national vices and madnesses? It is true, some of them pretend to pieces and scraps of christianity; but even with these hints of twilight and glimmering assistances from the gospel, what has their reason done to recover them to virtue or real piety?

Let us travel from Northern Europe to the southern part of America. What has this self-sufficient reason done for the natives of Peru? And what for the inhabitants of Mexico, which though it lies north of Peru, yet is much more to the south than the wild nations I have been before describing? They maintained such horrid customs and practices amongst them, which passed for religion, when the Spaniards came first to make a prey of them,

that must be infinitely offensive to the blessed God, rather than any way capable of obtaining his approbation or favour. It would be endless to repeat their various superstitions. I shall mention only the cruel and bloody rites, which were practised by the Mexicans in their human sacrifices, as Antonio de Herrera gives us an account, in the third volume of his *General History of America*. Many of these wretched victims, which were taken in war, were successively carried up to an elevated place, where the high-priest stood, and were held fast by five men, one to each arm, one to each leg, and one to hold the head : Then this inhuman sacred butcher, who was trained up to the office, with a broad and sharp flint, instead of a knife, ripped up the breast of a man, tore out the heart reeking with his hands, and shewed it to the sun, offering him the heat and steam of it : Then he turned to the idol or image, which was set near him, and threw the bloody heart in his face : And the bodies of these sacrifices, thus murdered in a long and dismal succession, were tumbled down from that elevated place of slaughter, and were eaten in a festival, by those who had taken them prisoners. Sometimes, says he, these sacrifices, after a victory, have arisen to many thousands in all the country ; for this was practised by all the nations near Mexico. Why does their self-sufficient reason permit them to practise these mischievous impieties, and call it all religion ?

If we survey those countries of Asia, where the gospel was never preached, or never received, how little of true religion is found among the people of the continent, or the numerous islands ; I mean, religion that can please the true God ?

China itself is really a polite and ingenious nation, and their natural reason teaches them a thousand fine contrivances and manufactures, which relate to their present life ; yet how little has it taught them that relates to the true God, or the life to come ? They are so vain and conceited of their wit and ingenuity, that they say, *the Europeans have one eye, the Chinese have two, and all the rest of the world are blind.* They boast themselves to be the brightest and most rational people under the heavens ; yet have they wandered into gross darkness, and wild superstitions, as father Le Comte at large informs us. This country is supposed to be peopled very early, by the children or posterity of Noah, and they retained the knowledge of the sovereign Lord of heaven, or the supreme Spirit of heaven and earth, and offered sacrifice to him anciently, even seven sorts of animals. Their learned men tell us, that for two thousand years there were no idols nor statues seen among them ; and great morality and virtue were practised through the whole nation. But now they generally adore an idol, or fancied god, whom they call Fo, as the only god of the world. This was brought from the Indies,

putation of times, thirty two years after the death of . This poison began at court, and corrupted every town : ation is now infected with idolatry, and become a monstrous acle for all sort of errors.

It is hard to recount what strange fables, superstitions, opi- about the transmigration of souls, idolatry, and down- atheism, divide the inhabitants of the land, and at this pre- ave a strong mastery over them. The ape, the elephant, the dragon, have been worshipped in several places, under ce that the god Fo had been successively transmigrated into animals. China is now the most superstitious of all nations ll her boasted superiority of sense and reason : She has e true God, and gone on continually to increase the num- her idols, till one may see all sorts of them in their tem-

Yet if they worship an idol a great while, and they do stain what they desire, they load him with reproaches, and stripes, they tie him with cords, pluck him down from his drag him along the streets through mud and dunghills, to h him. Lately there was one of these idols called to ac- before a Judge, and was punished by perpetual banish- and had his temple destroyed, as being useless to the om : And the reason of his punishment was, his not saving e of a person, whose recovery their bonzes, or priests, had sed in his name : Yet instead of coming to more true know- of the weakness of their gods, the people grow more blind day, notwithstanding all their sufficiency of reason to lead into truth, and all the boasted writings of their wise philo- r Confucious among them. These bonzes indeed give the e many good instructions in *rules of virtue* ; but they take o recommend themselves to their liberality : " Entertain and sh up, say they, the bonzes ; build them monasteries and es, that their prayers and voluntary penances may obtain u exemption from that punishment which your sins have ved. Burn paper gilt and washed with silver, and habits of stuff and silk : All these in the other world shall be turn- to real gold and silver, and into true and substantial gar- t, which shall be given to your deceased fathers faithfully, will make use of them as they have occasion. If you do regard these commands, you shall, after your death, be cru- ormented, and exposed to several metempsychoses, or migrations ; that is to say, you shall be born in the shape s, horses, mules, and all other creatures." This last point s a great impression upon their minds.

I remember, says father Le Comte, that being in the pro- of Xansi, I was sent for to christen a sick person : It was d man of threescore and ten, who lived upon a small pen- which the emperor had given him. When I came into the

chamber, O my good father, says he, how much am I obliged to you, who are going to deliver me from a great deal of torment! *Baptism, answered I, does not only deliver from the torment of hell, but intitles us to the enjoyment of a place in paradise: O how happy will it be for you to go to heaven, eternally to live in the presence of God!* I do not, said the sick man, understand what you mean, nor, perhaps, have I explained my meaning clearly to you: You know I have lived a long time upon the emperor's bounty: The bouzes, who are perfectly well acquainted with all the transactions of the other world, assure me, that I shall be obliged after my death, by way of recompence for my pension, to serve him, and that my soul will infallibly go into one of his his post-horses, to carry dispatches from court, through all the province. They have therefore been advising me to mind my duty in that new state; not to stumble, nor kick, nor bite, nor hurt any one: Run well, and eat little, and be patient, say they, and you may move the gods to compassion, who often of a good beast make at length a person of quality, or a considerable mandarin. I protest, father, the very thoughts of it make me quake: it never comes into my mind but I tremble; yet I dream of it every night, and sometimes, methinks, in my sleep I am already in the harness, ready to run at the first jerk of the postillion. Then I awake in a great sweat, and half-mad, scarcely knowing whether I am a man or a horse. But alas! what will be my sorrow, when this will be no more a dream, but a reality. This, therefore, father, is the course I took. They tell me, that those of your religion are not subject to those changes; that men are always men, and are in the other world of the same kind as they are here. I beg of you therefore to receive me among you. I know your religion is hard to observe; yet if it had ten times more difficulties, I am ready to embrace it; and whatsoever troubles it put me to, I had rather be a christian than be turned into a beast." The father Le Comte, however gave him a little better instruction, and, as he tells us, had the comfort to see him die a good christian. But in the main he assures us, the superstitions of the people are so numberless, that he does not believe any nation under the sun is so full of whimsies as China.

And pray, Logisto, how much wiser or happier should we have been in this island of Great Britain, notwithstanding this self-sufficiency of our reason, if christianity had never come amongst us? It is true, we have not many memoirs left of the religion of our ancestors in the days of heathenism. Strabo tells us, that the Britons worshipped Ceres, and her daughter Proserpina above any other gods: The daughter is known to be the queen of hell, and the mother a sort of earthly or infernal goddess. Whether these were originally British deities, or

tier they were introduced, together with these names of  
 n, by the Romans, is hard to say. The druids were our an-  
 t priests and philosophers, and, in many things, they were  
 ges also in civil affairs. The doctrine of *transmigration of*  
*s*, was one of their tenets, and that gave the people courage  
 ar, as Lucan tells us; for the "*populi quos despicit arctos,*"  
 cited yesterday by Pithander; those northern people, are  
 posed to be the Britons. Their religion was much the same  
 that of the Gauls; for Cæsar tells us, that the doctrine of  
 r Druids came from Britain; and we are informed, that *they*  
*ed human sacrifices* as well as others, and consulted the  
 els of men upon the altar, to learn the fortune of war, and  
 success of their enterprizes. Had you and I, Sir, been sent  
 the world by providence in that age, would our reason ever  
 worked its way through all these loads of superstition?  
 ould our native powers have found out the true God, and his  
 ship, amidst these national follies and crimes, and traced out  
 way to his favour in a future state? Perhaps I might have  
 the victim to-day upon some impious and bloody altar, and  
 ander, or even Logisto, might have been the priestly Druid  
 ing open my breast, and searching out futurities by the beat-  
 of my heart, or the colour of my liver. Or perhaps we  
 ht have been now all three worshipping the north German  
 Saxon idols: Thor, the god of thunder, whence our Thurs-  
 comes, or Tuisco, the god of war, who gave Tuesday its  
 e, and been prostrating our bodies in the dust before their  
 ges with vain and senseless ceremony. Our great-grand-  
 rs had reasoning powers as well as we, and yet they were  
 idolaters: And notwithstanding all our present politeness,  
 pretensions to reason and refinement, we might have still,  
 very age, departed further from the true God, as the polite  
 nese have done, and given up our souls, and our lives, and  
 future hopes, to as many wild and wretched varieties of  
 nsey and madness. Blessed be the day, when *the light of*  
*ospel* broke in upon us, when *the name of Christ*, and his re-  
 n, was published in our island, and the way of salvation was  
 e known to our fathers!

But let us come to the civilized countries of ancient Rome  
 Greece, and the lesser Asia, where learning had its seat and  
 ire for some ages, where the reason of mankind seems to  
 exerted itself in its best effects, and made the most evident  
 veries: And what can we suppose concerning the common  
 bitants of the towns and villages in Asia, Greece, and Italy,  
 all their pretences to religion? Has their reason led them  
 y safe road to heaven? Can you yourself imagine them to  
 ch as paid due honour to God, the true God, the Creator  
*Governor of the world*, in any tolerable degree? Can you



suppose, that their religious notions, their devout practices, their idolatries, ceremonies, and superstitions, are fitted to refine the souls of men, and prepare them for such a heaven, as consists in the contemplation and love of the blessed God, and his eternal worship and service? Were their religious affairs ever conducted and practised in such a manner as to procure the favour of God for sinful creatures, and to bring them into a state of reconciliation and friendship with their Maker? Were the devotions, and sacrifices, and ridiculous rites of their national religions, the right way to heavenly blessedness?

Suppose a few philosophers amongst them owned and acknowledged *the one true God*, yet many even of the reputed masters of wisdom and philosophy disbelieved the being of a God, or made him one and the same being or substance with the world, that is, the universe of things. They were engaged in endless quarrels what God was, and whether he was matter or mind. Some of them declared roundly, that they knew him not: And those of them who believed there was one almighty Maker of all things, an all-wise, and powerful, and beneficent Being, who made and ruled the world, yet kept it too much confined to their schools, and concealed it from the bulk of mankind. *They held this first truth in unrighteousness.* There are scarce any of all the sects of philosophers, who do not often talk of gods in the plural number: It is plain, that some of them did it, because they did not know how many gods there were: And those who believed there was but one true God, yet used the common language of polytheists, because they would not, or they durst not, publish this unity of God amongst the common people. Socrates has been said to lose his life for being too free in the defence of it, in opposition to their public polytheism and idolatry, though some say he complied with them too. Cicero says, that *it was hard to find out the true God, the Parent or Creator of the world, and if you should find him, it would be very unlawful to make him known to the common people.* His words are these: *Illum quasi parentem hujus universitatis invenire difficile: & cum invenieris, indicare in vulgus nefas.* *Lib. de universis. page 2.* and to the same purpose in *Lib. ii. de natura deorum.* And by the way we may take notice, that the same great and learned writer complains of the weakness of human nature to guide itself without the cultivation of reason by learning and philosophy. *Tusc. Quæst. lib. iii.* And thus he leaves the bulk of the world in a state of unguided wandering.

As for these philosophers themselves, as much as some of them knew of the true God, and the way of worshipping him with a pure heart, and pure hands, rather than by their national superstitions, yet how honourably do they talk of the mysteries and ceremonies of their gods, and of the piety of those who

observed these superstitious rites, and who worshipped the numerous idols of their country? Marcus Antonius, one of the very best of them, who was a philosopher and an emperor, so far prides himself in this respect to his idol-gods, that he thence expected safety to attend him, and success against the rebellion of Cassius: *We have not been such negligent worshippers of the gods, said he, as to fear that Cassius should get the victory*: And indeed he followed the superstitions of Rome, and of other countries with diligence. There were scarce any of them all but complied with the national worship of many gods, Mars, Bacchus, Apollo, Neptune, Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Diana, Venus, and the rest of that ridiculous rabble of gods and goddesses. The bulk of the nations worshipped them in their houses, and at their temples, thoughtless of *the one true God*; for they knew little or nothing of him. Epictetus himself, who perhaps paid the greatest regard to virtue among all the philosophers before Antoninus, and whose life, in other respects, was more blameless than any of them, and who says some very good things concerning our respect to the gods, chapter xxxviii. yet he advises men *to worship the gods as the country does where they dwell\**. Let the heathens boast then of their Epictetus and Antonine, the two brightest names among them: Their ignorance of the true God, and their abominable idolatries and superstitions, cast a dismal blemish on their virtues, and almost destroy all their pretences to true piety. Can you ever suppose, Sir, that the blessed and holy God, the supreme Maker and Governor of heaven and earth, can accept of such sort of devotions; of drink-offerings and sacrifices, and various rites of ridiculous invention, and such as are paid to false gods, to idols, and not to himself? Are these the people that he will bless with his own favour and love, in a better world, who lavish out their superstitions, according to the wild customs of every country, and adore things that are not God, and never take any care to learn his true nature, or to glorify the one true God amongst men?

The best of them, *when they knew the true God, they did not glorify him as God*, as St. Paul assures us, *nor were thankful for the common blessings they received from him; but they turned his glory into shame*, and in his room worshipped sometimes *birds, beasts, and creeping things*, images of wood or stone, or their own fancied heroes, some of whom, according to their own account, were murderers and adulterers, translated into heaven after their death. And no wonder if the lives and the manners of their common worshippers were scandalous and impure, while

\* Σπουδιῶν δὲ καὶ θύων κατὰ τὰ πατρία ἑαυτοῦ, ὅτ, ἑαυτοῦ, κροσσῶν, Epictet. chap. xxxvii. It is proper for us to offer drink-offerings and sacrifices, to the gods whom he had been speaking of, every where according to the custom of the country.

these were the characters they gave to their gods. Here and there, indeed, among the philosophers, and especially the platonists, or pythagoreans, and a stoic or two, you find a handsome speech, or perhaps a discourse concerning the nature of God, and the imitation of him in his amiable perfections; but most of them, as I hinted, *held this truth*, even in their own hearts, in *unrighteousness*, and very few ever carefully practised in religion, according to their own best sentiments. Nor had they generally any established notion of a future state of rewards and punishments, according to the behaviour of men in this life. It is granted, that a few of them, particularly Plato and his followers, have mentioned such a thing: but Aristotle and his disciples declared a future state to be obscure and uncertain, *το μύλον ἀφανές*. And several of the philosophers ridiculed not only the doctrine of the poets concerning the Elysian fields and Tartarus, but roundly denied any life after this. Some of them indeed, viz. the epicureans and the stoics, spoke of the change of the same atoms of matter into new forms of men and beasts in following ages: But this was a sorry sort of reviviscence without the same consciousness. Many believed the doctrine of transmigration of souls, as Pithander has shewn; and others among them could not allow the real punishments of the wicked hereafter, since they imagined, *that God was never angry, nor would do hurt to men*. This Cicero tells us, was the common opinion of the philosophers: “Hoc commune est omnium philosophorum nunquam nec irasci Deum nec nocere. *De Officiis Lib. iii. Sect. 27.*” How then can he punish the vilest of sinners?

The stoics did not think that the platonic argument for future rewards and punishments, drawn from the unequal distributions of good and evil things in this life, was just or strong, because they did not allow riches, health, ease of body, &c. to be real goods; nor pain, sickness, poverty, loss, oppression, &c. to be real evils: And therefore they thought the justice and wisdom of the gods might be sufficiently vindicated in the distributions of providence, without running to the doctrine of a future state after this life: And on this account, Antonius himself, as well as other stoics, talks so doubtfully about it, in several places of his writings. *Think of Socrates, Cicero, Severus, the Cæsars, where are they now all? Any where, or no where? All worldly things are but as smoke, or indeed mere nothing; Book x. Sect. 31.* He has many such sort of speeches. That great philosopher did not know whether the soul goes from the body by way of extinction, or dispersion of its parts, or continuation of life in some other state or place, though he pronounces it *blessed to be always ready for it, without reluctance; Book xi. Sect. 3.* And indeed since they made virtue its own sufficient reward, and made vice its own sufficient punishment, and called it the slavery of the soul,

their philosophy did not so plainly lead them to make any future rewards or punishments necessary. Cicero, who was one of the greatest geniuses of antiquity, and did not confine himself to any sect, but took out of all what pleased him best, was so little satisfied with all the proofs of the immortality of the soul and its future existence, that his vast reading and his own invention could furnish him with, that he frequently professes his uncertainty and doubts about it. When he had reckoned up several opinions, he adds, "*Harum sententiarum quæ vera sit, deus aliquis videret. Some god may see which of all these opinions is true.*" In which short sentence, he shews at once his own doubts both about the future existence of the soul and about the unity of God, or rather supposes more gods than one.

Where now are these agreed principles of natural religion of the knowledge and worship of the true God, and of certain rewards and punishments in another world, for virtue and vice? Were they taught with constancy and certainty any where but in Plato's school, much less in any numbers of schools of the philosophers? How little agreement was there among them about these principles. If their reason was so far sufficient to find out and practise such a religion as would lead them into the favour of God, and happiness, how came it to pass, that there should be never found any fixed systems amongst them of better rules of piety and religion than they have generally proposed to the world, and a more rational and uniform account of their principles and practices of what relates to God, and another world?

LOG. I do not pretend to have read over all the heathen philosophers: but I have been informed, that there is no precept of true religion or morality which is not to be found in their writings.

SOPH. I grant many such precepts are to be found: but it will be very hard to find them all there. Give me leave to enquire a few things here:—1. Is it not a precept of morality or true religion, that all our actions should be done to the honour of our Maker? Where is this to be found in precept or practice among the heathen philosophers? Rom. i. 21. *When they knew God, they glorified him not as God.*—2. Is it not an excellent precept or rule of true religion, that sinners should draw near to God in humble worship, acknowledging their offences, condemning themselves, mourning for their folly, asking pardon of God, and desiring assistance from him against any future temptations, or a deliverance from them? Now is there any of the philosophers among the heathens that has prescribed to us this practice?—3. If with much labour and pains of reading we could find out and collect the several rules of a system of natural religion and virtue, here and there scattered and hinted among all the philosophers, yet what one philosopher has delivered them all?

Much less can we suppose the reason of any one single man alone could trace them all out : Nor is there any book left us by all the heathens in the least degree comparable to that of the New Testament, even to teach us the truths and duties of natural religion. —4. Among these principles and rules of religion and virtue which lie scattered in the writings of the philosophers, are there not some which are doubted, and some directly opposed by others of these heathen sages ? What endless disputes were found in their schools about *the chief good* itself, and the way to attain it, about *God himself*, about *good and evil*, *sin and virtue*, *present and future happiness* ? Thus the light of reason, in these great masters of it, has left matters of such supreme importance as topics of dispute for their readers, rather than as authentic rules of practice : And of how little use could this be to all the illiterate world ? So that mankind is still left at a vast uncertainty, since not one philosopher had any just authority to impose his principles and rules upon the rest of mankind. I add yet—5. That if they had been never so perfect in the discovery of the rules of duty, yet they have never given motives actually and practically sufficient to enforce the practice of them, as Pithander has shewn already.

Very poor and feeble must their motives be for the practice of sincere piety, and the pure worship of the only true God, when it was opposed, rather than encouraged, by some of the greatest of their wise men, who had any power or influence in the state. That ingenious writer Mr. Jackson, in his late Answer to Christianity as Old as the Creation, page 14. tells us, that *All the very best systems of human laws among the Gentiles established superstition and idolatry*, as may be seen from Plato's iv. and viii. Book of Laws, and also from Cicero's ii. Book of Laws throughout. A foul blemish upon the reason and religion of two of the greatest men of heathenism. The utmost therefore, that I can say for them, is this, that the reasoning powers of these polite parts of the heathen world had very little, if any thing more than a sort of speculative or national sufficiency, for true religion and future happiness ; for its best rules were very imperfect, its motives very feeble, and scarce ever effectual in fact and practice, and wheresoever they were effectual in here-and-there a particular person or his family, it was rather owing to the traditions they had of some divine revelation, or to an acquaintance with some doctrines of the Jews, in their various dispersions. And these dispersions of the Jews did providence ordain for the preservation, or rather for the recovery of the knowledge of the one God and his worship and religion among the countries of heathenism, who had no remarkable revelation made to themselves, or had lost it perhaps for several generations.

Log. But if I mistake not, Sir, some ingenious modern

writers have informed us, that human reason has determined, with the greatest ease, what opinions are true and false, in all the main articles and duties of religion: They assure us, that heathen\* deists generally agreed in the belief of *one supreme self-existent agent or God*, and of *his providence in the government of mankind*; that they agreed in *the unalterable obligations of virtue*, and *the displeasure of God against all vice and impiety*; that there were *rewards for good men*, and *punishments for the wicked in a future state*: That *God was to be worshipped with a pious heart*, and with a conscience free from sin; that *justice and goodness* were to be practised for their own excellency and delight, as well as in imitation of *the blessed God*: And they teach us, that all but atheists agreed in these great and necessary points of religion.

SOPH. Then I may justly infer, that nine-tenths of the heathen world were atheists, with all their boasted sufficiency of reason; for it is pretty evident, that there was not one tenth part of the heathen world, in the days of the Grecian philosophers, who agreed to hold and profess all these principles, Logisto, which you have now reckoned up. I would yet farther observe, that though any of our ingenious writers should give a loose to their encomiums upon human reason, and tell us how far some of the heathen philosophers were led by it in their discoveries of the true God, and his worship, though they should make a sort of saints of them, yet we have no reason to infer, in large and general terms, concerning the heathen nations, this was the scheme of their religion; nor should they tempt us to suppose these were the general sentiments of all the ancient Gentiles, and that this was the sense of mankind, without a revelation. How wide this encomium even of the heathen philosophers is from strict truth, we have observed already. And yet if these things concerning the philosophers had been strictly true, we should neither make nor believe any universal and unreasonable inductions from a few single instances of philosophers, in opposition to the common multitude and bulk of mankind, in towns, cities, and villages? Let us remember that the common people, even in those polite nations, received their religion rather from their priests and their rulers than from their philosophers: they much more willingly and readily learned, and more universally practised the impious and ridiculous idolatries and superstitions of their country, than ever they would hearken to the moral or self-denying dictates and abstract reasonings of their philosophers: for princes and priests had much more authority. Now many of these superstitions and doctrines of their gods tended to corrupt their moral principles, and destroy and kill the very seeds of

\* But how few were these heathen deists, if you except the platonists? The rest were generally atheists, or polytheists, or doubters about the one true God.

virtue within them. How very few among them had any true notions of piety ?

Alas ! Sir, to make such general conclusions of the goodness of heathen religion, and sufficiency of human reasoning in all mankind to find it out, there ought to be many more instances of the knowledge and belief of the true God, and his spiritual worship, &c. and that among the heathens of Africa, and America, as well as Europe ; and among the bulk of the inhabitants of Greece and Asia Minor, as well as the few philosophers : Whereas it is evident, that the gross of the heathen world, even in the cultivated and polite parts of it, were abominably over-run with shameful ignorance, idolatry, and immorality, profaneness and superstition : And in some of the rude and unpolished nations, there is scarce any thing but stupidity and error, darkness and madness, instead of truth, sobriety, and goodness.

While in the learned part of the world the poets and the priests taught these wild superstitions as things sacred and divine, while the rulers commanded the observance of them, and the philosophers themselves complied with them, what can we suppose the people would do but believe in the same deities, worship them with the same ceremonies, and imitate their superiors in their religion, though it were never so ridiculous and immoral ? And as for the rude and unlearned nations and tribes of mankind, while their ancestors before them, and their companions all around them, gave themselves up to impious, and immoral, and shameful customs, and they were never taught to think for themselves, or to reason upon the subject, what can be expected, but that they should universally *corrupt themselves*, and live from age to age *without God or goodness* ? The narratives which St. Paul gives us in his epistles of the Gentile nations through which he travelled, and the accounts of our later travellers, conspire to assure us of the most wretched and deplorable state of mankind there, in respect of religion and virtue. This is so copious a theme, Logisto, that one might talk upon it whole hours with pertinence and justice, and, one would think, to the conviction of those who are willing to hearken to truth. But I know in whose presence I speak : I am well apprized that the person to whom I address myself needs no more than short hints of these matters to refresh his own memory, and give him a compendious view of the things which he himself has been well acquainted with, in his own converse with the ancient writers of Rome and Greece, as well as the accounts which are given us of the more barbarous nations.

LOG. I confess, dear Sir, I am almost overpowered with conviction by the short account you have given us of these affairs, and the glaring light in which you have set them :

It yet still there remains some great difficulties upon my mind, which arise from other arguments which I have heard and read on this subject. Shall I propose them now, my friends? Or shall we appoint to meet again more early next Wednesday in the afternoon, and finish our conferences on this subject?

PITH. Indeed, Sir, I fear we have too much work upon our hands to be all finished this evening. And since you are so obliging, Logisto, to invite us to such a peaceful and pleasant retreat, and since I persuade myself Sophronius will be so good as to afford us a few hours more of his company, for my part, I know not how I can better employ my time than in endeavouring, in such society, to search after and communicate truth. It is indeed the appointed business and station of my life to be a teacher to others, yet I take pleasure gentlemen, to come hither and learn.

SOPH. But why will ye not please, my friends, to favour me with a visit, and let your last conference do my parlour the honour of finishing this friendly controversy? I will not pretend to such an elegant and spacious garden as Logisto has, nor to so neat and private a retreat for conversation, as this wherein we are now entertained: But you shall be attended with the best accommodations which my dwelling will afford; and if you will give yourselves the trouble to ascend to my study, we shall there be sufficiently retired from all other company.

LOG. I doubt not, Sophronius, of the sincerity of your request, nor the conveniency of your library, for such a friendly conference: but since you have favoured us thus far with your happy assistance in a debate which Pithander and myself had pointed here in this garden, I cannot with any satisfaction permit the scene to be altered. Perhaps it may seem a degree of civility to desire a visit from you so often without a return; yet promise you, Sir, I will write myself down indebted to you for every such favour, and when we begin any new subject of debate, Sophronius shall appoint the place.

SOPH. Then since it is the pleasure of Logisto to have it so, without any more ceremony, we will attend him here next Wednesday.

PITH. I agree, Sir, to your proposal. I can never be in an situation at either of your houses, amidst the honour of such company.

LOG. Gentlemen, I own the obligation, and am your very humble servant,



## THE THIRD CONFERENCE.

IN the days that passed after the last meeting, Logisto had been reviewing several books which have been written in vindication of the sufficiency of human reason to conduct men to happiness in a way of religion; and as he had renewed his own difficulties, so he had furnished his memory with some of their strongest arguments: but he found none so hard to answer, as that great and important one, which is derived from the wisdom, the equity, and the goodness of God; upon which account he resolved to reserve this to the last. When his company were come, he led them down to the usual place of learned conversation, and began the conference thus:

LOG. The only thing that remains before us, gentlemen, is, that I should propose some arguments, drawn from the reason of things, and from the nature of God, and man, why it appears necessary that the principle of human reason should be sufficient, in all mankind, to guide and conduct them to the belief and practice of such a religion, wherein they may obtain the favour of God, and happiness in a future state.

PITH. I wait with some impatience, Sir, to hear these arguments of yours, which you have so often intimated: And yet it may not be improper, before you produce them, to consider, what is the particular proposition your arguments can possibly prove, or what it is you can expect from them. Will you please to remember, Sir, it has been plainly proved and determined already, and agreed in our past debate, as a certain matter of fact, that there are several large countries of heathenism wherein the inhabitants have not reason sufficient to guide them into true religion, considering their vast prejudices and aversions to God and goodness; much less is it sufficient to enable them to practise it; that is, according to the distinction of our worthy friend Sophronius, that though there may be in them a remote, natural, and speculative sufficiency for this purpose, yet their reasoning powers are so poor and low, so unpractised, and so much perverted by a thousand errors, evil customs, vicious propensities, and wilful ignorance, that they are not practically and experimentally sufficient for this great design. This has been abundantly confirmed by the melancholy, and yet entertaining accounts Sophronius hath given us of African and American heathens. Now I humbly hope, Sir, you will not suppose that any of your arguments can destroy plain matter of fact, nor prove that to be sufficient, which has before been plainly declared and proved, and agreed to be insufficient.

LOG. I must acknowledge, Pithander, I know not how to oppose what you say. It seems to be plainly proved, that reason

in these savages is not a sufficient guide. All that I can pretend therefore, is, only to shew, that if human reason is not in fact sufficient, even practically sufficient for this purpose: yet, at least, it ought to be practically sufficient; and perhaps my arguments will prove it.

PITH. Pray, Sir, be so good as to inform me, what you mean by saying, it ought to be sufficient? Will any of your arguments teach the all-wise God what he ought to have done, and in what other and better condition he ought to have placed mankind, than he has seen fit to place them in? Will your arguments give wisdom to your Maker, or instruct him in rules of justice? Or can any of your reasonings inform him, what superior talents, and happier circumstances, he ought to have bestowed upon his creatures? Have you courage enough to reprove or arraign the conduct of the supreme Governor of the world towards his African or American subjects! Is it right, Logisto, to talk at this rate? Or is it safe to venture on such an unequal contest? What else can you mean, Sir, by affirming, that reason ought to be sufficient, but this, viz. that God ought to have given men better faculties, or he ought to have bestowed upon them clearer light, and better helps, or ought to have brought them into the world with greater advantages than his wisdom has thought fit to do: And what is this, but telling the all-wise God, he has acted weakly, or charging the God of justice that he has dealt unjustly, or accusing *the Father of Mercies* that he has acted cruelly toward his creatures?

LOG. I confess, good Sir, that you confound me a little with these enquiries. I have no such hardness of soul, as to dare to reprove my Maker, whom I adore with the most profound veneration; and I do acknowledge, that whatsoever he does, must be right and just. And yet there are arguments which seem to prove, that man, who as you agree, is to be tried and judged in the other world, for his behaviour in this, should, some way or other, have sufficient powers given him to know and fulfil his duty: Otherwise, men would be excusable in their greatest superstitions and immoralities, as being destitute, by the necessity of their circumstances, of a sufficient guide in matters of religion and virtue: And this is the first argument which I desire leave to offer upon this head, as a difficulty which I cannot solve.

PITH. Perhaps, Sir, it is an effectual relief to this difficulty, if we suppose mankind to be furnished with such reasoning powers as are, in the nature of things, and in a remote sense, sufficient to guide and conduct men in their religious affairs: For the neglect of using and improving these rational powers, is greatly criminal: And it is this universal neglect of using them well, that renders them practically insufficient. If they employ

not their reason in their most important concerns, you will grant it is their own fault; and this renders them condemnable for the neglect or abuse of it, and for the errors and vices proceeding from such an unreasonable conduct of life. This is confessed by the writers of your own side of the question. Besides, the reasoning faculty, and the remains of conscience, which are found even in the most savage tribes of mankind, may be called practically sufficient, though not to conduct to happiness completely, yet, to have taught them much more of the first principles of virtue and religion, than most of them either know or practise; and thus to have withheld them from their grossest immoralities and superstitions.

Yet further, reason may teach them the duties of an innocent man, but not to recover a sinner to God's favour. The obligations which their reason and conscience might lay on them to practise duty may be clear and strong as far as they go; and yet these may not be sufficient to bring sinners to the favour of God and eternal happiness. Devils are under clear and strong obligation to love God, and to repent, and obey him, through the dictates of a rational nature; but this rational nature is not sufficient to bring them to happiness and the favour of God. It is granted, the heathens have great hindrances; but great as they are, they are not so insurmountable, but that most or all of them might have arrived at much superior degrees of knowledge and practice in religion, than what any of them have actually arrived at, if they had not been so shamefully and criminally negligent, so exceeding fond of error and sin, and so lazy in their search after truth and duty. Therefore they are by no means excusable, as you express it, in their greatest immoralities.

Give me leave, Sir, to represent this matter by a plain similitude. Suppose Anergus a slave, to have a remote natural capacity sufficient to trace out all the demonstrations in Euclid: Then you consequently must suppose him also to have a proximate and practical sufficiency to trace out some of the first and plainest of them: Criton, his master commands him to demonstrate all the propositions there, or to practise all the problems: but he will not so much as set about the first and plainest of them: Is not Anergus greatly criminal? If he would have traced out the first, he might perhaps find a growing capacity, and a proximate and practical sufficiency to demonstrate the next and the next in succession, till he came to the last. Is he not chargeable then with the guilt of not demonstrating and practising the whole series, even though he never actually had a practical and proximate sufficiency of reason or ability to grasp the deepest and most complicated theorems, or to perform the hardest problems, because he was lazy and thoughtless, and

would not apply himself to the easiest? You know, Sir, how to apply this to the case in hand.

**Loe.** Then you do not assert, that their reason is practically insufficient to have taught them the chief part of their duty, or to have enabled them to perform it, if they had been well inclined to it, and sincerely diligent in their attempts to their utmost?

**PITH.** No, Sir, I assert no such thing: For it is their great and universal sloth and negligence, and disinclination both to learn and perform their duty, that is one of the chief things that renders their reasoning powers thus insufficient in a practical sense: It is owing to their powerful prejudices, their evil moral habits, and their strong aversion to God and virtue, that they do not exercise their reasoning powers to the utmost of their capacity: And it is by this means they continue in darkness, guilt, and death: Whereas if they had a real inclination, and sincere desire, to search out and perform their duty to God and man, if they obeyed every secret dictate of conscience, every hint of truth that arose within them, and used their natural light, both as to belief and practice, to the utmost of their power, God would never be wanting to any of his creatures; I am persuaded, he would have graciously accepted the utmost that their reasoning powers could perform: or, if it were necessary, he would have given such well-disposed persons, greater light and greater strength, to learn and fulfil the necessary parts of religion; *for to him that hath, shall be given*; that is, greater helps shall be given to him that improves what lesser talents God has entrusted him with. But the case of these brutal creatures seems to be represented in the latter end of that text; Luke viii. 18. *From him that hath not, shall be taken away that which he hath*, or seemeth to have; that is, those who improve not the feeble light that is given them, even those feeble glimmerings of light shall be taken from them, and by the righteous judgment of God they shall be left in deep and utter darkness: And thus they are greatly culpable, though their reasoning powers are practically insufficient.

**Loe.** Very well, my friend; I can hear this with more patience, since you impute the crime to men's own abuse of their rational powers, and not to God their Creator. I proceed therefore to a second argument, and forgive me if I express it in pretty strong terms: Does not the great and blessed God equally behold all the dwellers on the earth, free from partiality and prejudice? And can he be supposed to make some people his favourites, without any consideration of their merits, and merely because they believe certain propositions, and practise certain duties, which he has revealed, and which are taught and known generally in that country where they happen to be born;

while others, and that a far greater number, shall from age to age want this favour of God, because they are destined to be born and live in places where such propositions and duties were never revealed, where they are not known, and are very hard or impossible to be found out, and for that reason they are not likely to believe and practise them? What can more represent God as an arbitrary and partial being, than thus to suppose that he scarce vouchsafes to bring the means of happiness within the reach of so great a part of his creatures, while he has given it so plentifully to others?

PITH. This speech of yours, Sir, will require an answer at large; and I am glad you give me occasion to speak my thoughts freely on this subject. When you use the words partiality and prejudice, you seem to consider God as a Governor and a Judge, distributing rewards or punishments to his creatures partially, and not exactly according to their former behaviour; and in this respect, I must affirm, God beholds all men equally, and acts without prejudice or partiality in his retribution of the righteous and the wicked: In this sense, *God is no respecter of persons*; the master and the servant, the prince and the subject, the learned and the ignorant, shall receive a recompence according to their works. But when we speak of God as an original proprietor and possessor of his own blessings, he may freely distribute his favours in a greater or less degree amongst his creatures, as he pleases, without any charge of prejudice or partiality. And this is sufficiently visible in the whole of his providence, and that among the brutal creation as well as the rational. Are there not many of the birds, and the beasts of the earth, and fishes of the sea, that in their several portions of sensitive good or evil, ease or pain, are greatly distinguished from each other, merely by the hand of their Creator? Here is one flock of sheep frightened and worried daily, and some of them miserably torn to death, and destroyed, and the rest of them wounded or maimed by a wolf or a bear, while other flocks grow up, perhaps, for several years, enjoying the plentiful pasture that the earth provides for them. Here is one nest of doves plundered by a hawk, and drenched in blood, while twenty of their neighbours breed up their young in all security. Here is a brood of young wild turkeys, hatched in a later or more unkindly season, crippled with the cold, and languishing out their lives under lingering infirmities, while others that were brought into life a month or two sooner, enjoy all the blessings suited to their nature, and continue in this enjoyment, perhaps for several years. What is this difference to be imputed to, but the will of Providence?

A thousand such sort of accidents happen not only to birds and beasts, to fishes, and every kind of brute animals, but to

men; and that not merely to the individuals of mankind, but sometimes to tribes, and families, and nations. Some are actually born under the power of tyrants, and they commence and finish their lives in tiresome slavery and bondage: Others exult for seventy years, in free, and rich, and plenteous circumstances, while their neighbours are distressed from their infancy with overt and pain, and drag on life to old age under many calamities. Children of the same parents shall be oftentimes widely distinguished in the blessings or the sorrows of nature, by the mere providence of God, when, perhaps, they are equally virtuous, or, perhaps, equally wicked. Some are suffered to become blind, or to be born cripples in their limbs, and in their understanding too, while others of the same village, or the same house, perhaps, rejoice in the pleasures and the vigorous powers of mind and body. How comes it to pass, Sir, that your genius is so bright and sparkling, while your neighbour Hebetunda, with all the expences of his education, could never construe an ode of Horace, and scarce understands his catechism? Whence is it, that some families are so poor in their intellectuals, and propagate sloth and dulness for half a dozen generations? And yet, perhaps, at last a hero, a philosopher, or a great divine shall arise amongst them, and surprize the world! Tell me, Logisto, who makes the differences in all these instances? Will you say, it happens thus according to the course of things, and the succession of natural causes? But pray inform me, who set natural causes at work in this manner, which should produce such very distinguishing circumstances, and that too, perhaps, in persons whose moral character is the same? Or why is their infancy so much distinguished by blessings or sorrows, before their moral character properly commences? Whither shall we go to seek the cause of these varieties, but to the will of the Creator and Disposer of all things?

Can you give me any account, Sir, why the Great God would appoint such particular human souls to be united to animal bodies, which are born among the rigours and stupidity of Lapland, or in the midst of Africa or America, where reason is buried under gross and heavy prejudices, and whole nations labour under so many wants and disadvantages, with relation to this world, and the other? How came your soul or mine, to be joined to bodies who drew their first breath in Great Britain, who have ten thousand blessings, in the animal and the rational life, beyond those poor brown or negro savages, that come into the world under brutal parents, who breed them up with cruelty, and sell them for slaves? What is it, dear Sir, that makes this distinction between us and them, but the sovereign disposal of God and providence, who, whatsoever reasons he may have in his eternal mind, yet gives no account to us of the reasons of his conduct? Can you, or I, Sir, pretend to any

claim of merit, that we should be born in such families where we enjoyed the advantages of a liberal education from our infancy, and the knowledge of things human and divine, while the inhabitants of the cottages of the Peake in Derbyshire, were never taught to know letters, and are so grossly ignorant of the things of God and men? Who made the difference between us and the miners in Cornwall, who spend their days in darkness, and are ever conversant with earth and lead or tin, while we range the sciences with pleasure, and dwell in day-light, and amidst the delights of learning? To whom are our praises due on this account, but to our common Maker and Lord?

If we were only to consider ourselves as men left to find out the way to happiness by our own reasoning powers, are not you and I, Sir, placed in much superior advantages to the heathens in Africa, or even to the poor miners in Cornwall? And why may not the same God make as great a difference between his creatures, in bestowing the superior advantages of revelation on some, rather than on others, according to his own good pleasure? You yourself must grant, that God has not favoured all men with the same powers, means, or opportunities to obtain future happiness in the way of natural religion, why may he not then distinguish his favourites in point of revelation?

It is enough for us, Logisto, if we can but maintain this point, that God does not deal unjustly with any of his creatures: But it is evident, we must allow him to dispense his favours as he pleases; he is not bound to make us all equal in the blessings or the powers of soul or body, with regard to this life, or the life to come, though he has made us all men. And as he has confessedly bestowed on some persons much nobler inward advantages, in the sagacity of their reasoning powers, to find out the way to virtue and happiness, why may he not confer higher outward advantages on some, than he has on others? Why may he not give some of his creatures the light of revelation, to guide them to happiness, while he gives others only the light of reason? *May not the great God, the Possessor of all things in heaven and earth, do what he pleases with his own benefits?* If he has given the blindest and most unhappy nations in the world all that is due to them by nature, in their circumstances, and a natural sufficiency for their happiness, he has done enough to secure his own providence from any just accusations. An African has no right to complain, that he was not born a Briton; nor a porter that he was not born a prince; nor Sophrionius and I, that we were not made prophets or apostles. If God has furnished all men with such natural powers, as, being improved in the best manner, would lead them to virtue, religion, and happiness, surely his creatures may give him leave to make so much

tion between them, as to set some of them in a plainer and easier road to happiness than he has others : And it is shameful ingratitude for us, in christian countries, to complain of our merciful Creator, who has afforded us such peculiar favours, and made our way to heaven plainest of all.

LOG. I observe, Pithander, you keep close to this distinction of Sophronius, and talk of the natural powers of heathens in Africa, and their natural sufficiency to obtain happiness ; but think they ought to have, and therefore I think they have, nothing more than this natural and remote sufficiency, to find out the way to heaven by their own reason. Is not sense and reason allowed by you all to have a proximate and practical sufficiency to guide men in the affairs of this life ? And surely one would think, reason should be a more sure and infallible guide in matters of religion, than sense is, or can be, in the affairs of this world. This shall stand for my third argument ; and I would enforce it thus : The difference of good and evil, and the natural obligations to virtue and piety, are as manifest to the mind as any of the objects of sense can be, and they have that plainness and demonstration, which the others are not capable of. Surely natural religion has been, and should be always counted for much within the reach of natural reason, as any business that man has to do, since it is the most necessary and most important of all.

PITH. Here, Sir, your argument again runs directly counter to the matter of fact, which has been examined, proved, and agreed upon between us. The differences of good and evil, and the obligations to virtue, are not so exceeding obvious to heathens as you imagine ; though they may be proved by certain demonstrations, yet these demonstrations are, some of them at least, more deep and difficult ; and therefore the rules of virtue and piety are far from being so plain and manifest, as the objects of sense, or the common affairs of this present life : Besides, if they were, surely some of these wild savages, at least, would have actually attained to the knowledge of them, since they do actually acquaint themselves with objects of sense sufficiently for their own poor and ordinary manner of life here on earth : but in the affairs of religion, and of a life to come, they are all error and darkness. All their reasoning powers leave them utterly ignorant of true religion, and of that which is never so necessary and important. And such ignorance is proved very much in polite nations too, except among a few philosophers, or men of a studious and thoughtful frame of mind, who could argue upon moral and intellectual subjects, and set out a few demonstrations and certainties about them, which are almost out of the road of Americans, and almost out of the reach of these unthinking creatures.

LOG. But surely, without being philosophers, every one by



employing his natural power of thinking, or his innate reason, in the best manner he was able, might and could not but see the reasonableness and obligation of piety and moral duties, viz. that he ought to worship his Creator, to acknowledge and depend on him, and pray to him for a supply of his wants; that he ought to submit to his providence, and be thankful for the benefits of it; that he ought also to be obedient to governors for the good of society; to be righteous, just, and charitable to man his fellow-creature, be willing to do him all the good he could, and abstain from all injury and violence; that also he ought to use temperately the pleasures and enjoyments of life. There never needed any subtle reasoning to prove these plain duties which nature taught and commanded; and the transgression of any of which is as repugnant to the plain evidence and dictates of natural reason, as it is to the revealed will of God.

**PITH.** It has been already granted, that if every one employed his natural reason in the best manner that he was able, there is a natural sufficiency in his reasoning powers to find out these things, or at least the chief of them: But the insufficiency lies very much in this, that their prejudices and aversions, &c. are so great and numerous, that not one in ten thousand will employ his natural reason in the best manner, and this Sophronius calls a practical insufficiency. If it were so easy a matter to do it as you represent, how came so many millions of people to be ignorant of these things: or to receive notions about them so grossly and shamefully contrary to truth? How came whole nations, without one exception, to be so blind and stupid, so impious and immoral, and to continue so from age to age.

**LOG.** But here starts up a fourth difficulty, and it lies entirely upon you christians to solve it. Remember, my friend, whatsoever argument can be brought from the actual immorality, irreligion, and superstition of men, in any heathen state, to prove the insufficiency of reason in matters of religion, will conclude with equal strength against the sufficiency of the scriptures, because men are as vicious, as irreligious, and as superstitious under the light and profession of christianity, as the worst of heathens. Gross and abominable as the heathen superstitions were, yet they have been equalled and even exceeded by popish idolatry, which has prevailed for many hundred years over the christian world: As great lewdness has been committed among papists, as ever were known among the heathens, and that with impunity, and esteemed so venial as to be bought off with money. The bloody persecutions and massacres executed by the papists are far more cruel and inhuman, than the human sacrifices which the heathens offered to their gods: So that any crimes of the heathens against the light of reason, will not prove the insufficiency of reason to be their guide, unless you allow the same or

greater crimes committed by christians will prove, that the gospel is insufficient.

**PITH.** This objection has been already answered : But to speak yet plainer on this head ; it is granted, Sir, that the vices of professing christians, the venial lewdness of papists, their idolatries, their bloody murders and massacres, are as bad or worse than the crimes of heathens, because they sin against much brighter light, and far greater advantages : But the greatness of the vices of popish or protestant christians cannot infer, that christianity is insufficient to guide, to reform, or save mankind ; for it is not the greatness of the crimes, but the entire number or universality of the criminals, that represents reason to be so practically insufficient to save or reform the heathen world. Now you must grant me, that men are not so utterly and universally irreligious, vile and vicious in christian countries, even in popish nations, where the gospel is so corrupted, and much less in protestant lands, where religion is learned and practised with freedom, as they are in the regions of heathenism. There are multitudes of knowing, and virtuous, and pious persons in christendom, and particularly in the British isles, which shews the practical sufficiency of the gospel to reform mankind ; whereas in the more learned and more polite heathen countries, there have been exceeding few truly religious, and in the rude and barbarous regions, which have been the chief scene of our dispute, it will be hard to find one single virtuous and pious man or woman ; and therefore, I say, that in a practical sense, reason may rather be called insufficient, though revelation cannot be called so.

**LOG.** Let us proceed then to a fifth argument why reason, methinks, should be practically sufficient to direct all mankind to those duties which God requires of them, and to conduct them to happiness ; and that is, because happiness, that is, spiritual moral happiness, is the end for which man was made, and therefore it is certainly to be obtained by those rational moral powers, which are the very principles God gave man for his guide and conduct to this happiness. Otherwise man was made for an end, to the obtaining of which, the means are insufficient.

**PITH.** I answer this two ways : First, it may be said in a sense, that God made mankind in general, in his first formation of them for happiness, but he made them to obtain this happiness in a way of free choice, by the diligent use of their rational faculties in the best manner : Now if far the greatest part of the heathen world will wretchedly and wilfully abuse these faculties, if they will thoughtlessly and rashly *chuse the evil*, and rush into it, if they will neglect to seek, or to enquire, or to learn what is good, as well as to practise it, then though these faculties may be said to be naturally and remotely sufficient for religion and hap-

such a proposition. And to make this plain, Sir, be pleased to observe these three things :

First, that the persons he speaks of, in the first chapter, are chiefly the learned heathens, or at least the inhabitants of the countries where learning flourished, such as Egypt, Greece, Asia, Rome, &c. such as had found out and known for his being and chief attributes of God by his works, such as knew *the true God*, and *professed themselves to be wise*; see verses 19, 20, 21, 22. But the apostle does not say, that their knowledge reached so far as to lead them to salvation, though by not worshipping and honouring God, so far as they knew him, they rendered themselves inexcusable. Verses 20, 21. *They did not glorify him as God when they knew him; they were not thankful for his mercies; they became idolaters, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into the images of corruptible man, and into birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and worshipped the creature more than the Creator.* Verses 23, 25. *They did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and therefore they are without excuse.* Verses 20, 21, 28. *Their foolish heart was darkened, and they were justly abandoned of God, and given up to all manner of iniquity.* They wilfully shut their eyes against the light, and therefore God, in his righteous judgment, sealed up their eyes, and gave them up to a mind void of discernment, as many of our critics render the word *ἀδοξίαν*, and thus their own reason, by their abuse of it, was rendered more insufficient than it was before; their minds had gained a strong bias toward error, as a natural consequence of their sin and folly, and then, as a righteous judgment from heaven, they were abandoned to follow those errors without any restraints of providence or grace.

In the second place let it be considered, that when the apostle says, Rom. ii. 14, 15. that *the work of the law is written in their hearts*; he can never mean, that the knowledge of the laws of God and their duty practically sufficient for their future happiness, is actually found in the hearts of all the heathen world: For this is so contrary to plain fact in the barbarous nations, that the apostle could never intend to assert it. All that it can be supposed to mean therefore is this, that there is a natural and remote sufficiency in their hearts, or their reasoning powers, to find out their duty, which I have already granted; and that there are several of the more obvious and common instances wherein their consciences do actually know their duty, and excuse them when they practise it, or accuse them when they neglect it. And this in some measure, is true concerning the rudest and most ignorant nations of the earth, that there are particular instances of duty, and some particular rules of honesty, justice, and compassion, which their consciences sometimes may actually represent to them; and according to their compliance or non-com-

pliance may approve or condemn them. But this is far from asserting, that every man and woman in the heathen world has the whole law of God actually *written in their hearts*, or an actual knowledge of all the truths and duties necessary to religion and happiness. The most rude and barbarous creatures in America, may sometimes be awakened by nature and conscience to do a few of the social duties of life, which are contained in the law, without supposing them to have found out all the necessaries of true religion: And they may also resist the dictates of their reason and conscience, so far as to condemn them justly, without the least probability of one in a thousand following the leadings of reason and conscience, in the enquiry and practice of the true religion, so far as to save them. And therefore it may be observed, that the apostle does not say, that any shall be saved without the written law; but that *those who have sinned without it, shall perish without it*: And though in some particular instances *their consciences may excuse them as well as accuse them* in others, yet in the whole of their practice he does not affirm their consciences will actually excuse any of them.

In the last place, I desire it to be considered, that the apostle could never suppose the brutish and barbarous part of the heathen world to have any proximate or practical sufficiency for religion and salvation, or such capacities and advantages as were ever likely to attain that end, when the characters which he gives, even of the more polite nations through which he travelled, are so exceeding dismal and desperate, so widely distant from the knowledge, fear, and love of the true God, and so universally abandoned to gross errors, idolatry, and shameful vices, that they were *without God, or atheists, and without hope in the world*; Eph. ii. 12. In the first chapter to the Romans, which has been already cited, the wise men amongst them, *who knew God, did not like to retain God in their knowledge, their foolish heart was darkened, they were given over to a reprobate mind, they were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, &c. Backbiters, haters of God, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful*; 2 Cor. iv. 4. *Their minds are blinded by the God of this world, that is, the devil and his angels, whom many of them worshipped as their gods.* And in Eph. iv. 18. *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*; with many other expressions to the same purpose in his epistles. Let it be observed here, that the people where this apostle preached, and to whom his letters are written, lie in Greece, or round about it, and were within the verge of that learning and politeness which from Greece diffused itself round the neighbour

nations and countries. Now if these things are spoken concerning the more knowing nations, what most dismal characters of deeper darkness, despair and death would the apostle have given to the stupid Laplanders, to the brutal creatures of New-Holland, in human shape, to the savages of the wild regions of Africa and America, had the course of his travels led him through their countries? Surely you can never suppose, that he would have pronounced their reason, under these ten-fold clouds of stupidity, prejudice, and error, ever likely to break through these obstacles, and to lead one in a thousand of them into the ways of truth, holiness, and eternal life? And this is what we call a practical insufficiency.

*Loc.* Really, Sir, I think you have made it out beyond my expectations, that your good friend Paul, your apostle and oracle, was much of your opinion in this matter. I shall not cite him again in haste for a witness on my side. But I will ask leave to cite a great writer, whom you may call my oracle, if you please, so far as I pay deference to the authority of any man; and that is Cicero, whom I take to be a man of honour and virtue, and as bright a genius at least as St. Paul was, and much more improved in the learning of the philosophers; I cannot but fancy him to be one of the greatest men of all antiquity. For this reason I have two very good editions of his works by me, one of which I always keep in this summer-house, and another in my library. Let us therefore turn to some places of his writings, to which a late author has directed me, and see what he says of the universal power and sufficiency of reason to lead all mankind to their duty, to preserve them from sin, and to be, as it were, a divine law within them. See his third book *De Republica*, and that noble fragment there preserved by Lactantius: “*Est quidem vera lex recta ratio naturæ congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna, quæ vocet ad officium jubendo; vetando, a fraude deterreat. Nec vero aut per senatum aut per populum solvi hac lege possumus: Neque est quærendus explanator aut interpret ejus alius: Nec erit alia lex Romæ, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthac: Sed et omnes gentes, et omni tempore una lex et sempiterna et immortalis continebit: Unusque erit communis quasi magister et imperator omnium Deus ille legis hujus inventor lator, &c.*” In his second book *De Legibus*, he says, “*Legem neque hominum ingeniis excogitatam, neque scitum aliquod esse populorum, sed æternum quiddam quod universum mundum regat.*” You see what a high esteem he has every where for this law of nature, written in the hearts of all men: He repeats it often; you find it again lib. iii. *De Officiis*, “*Ipsa naturæ ratio, quæ est lex divina et humana, cui parere qui velit nunquam committet ut alienum appetat, et id quod alteri detraxerit sibi assumat.*” And in the third book of his *Tusculan*

Questions, he says, "Qui vero probari possit ut sibi mederi animus non possit? &c. qui se sanari voluerint, præceptisque sapientum paruerint, sine ulla dubitatione sanentur, &c."

The sense of all these expressions may be summed up in this manner: "Right reason which is conformable to nature, is, that true law which is diffused or spread abroad among all men; it is constant, it is everlasting, it calls us to our duty by its commands, it forbids us to practise iniquity, and deters us from it. Nor can we be freed from our obligations to this law by senate or people. Nor need we seek any other explainer or interpreter of it, it is so clear in itself. It is not one law at Athens and another at Rome, one now and another hereafter; but it is the same immortal and everlasting law that obliges all nations, and at all times. And there is one as it were the common Master and Ruler of all men, even that God who is the inventor and the maker of this law, &c. This natural reason is both a human and a divine law, which is not invented by the wit or fancy of men, is not the statute and decree of any particular nations; but something eternal, that does or should govern the whole world. He that obeys it will never be guilty of coveting his neighbour's goods, nor of assuming to himself that which he takes away from another, whether it be in point of honour, of property, or estate. And if the mind of man has at any time failed in its duty, and suffered itself to be corrupted with vice, there is no doubt but it is able to heal and reform itself, since it is the mind that has found out the very medicines for healing the body: and those souls who are willing to be healed and reformed, and will obey the precepts of the wise men and philosophers, shall without doubt be reformed and healed; for philosophy, that is, the doctrine of reason, is the medicine of the mind." And no doubt this was the sense of most of the great men amongst the ancients, as well as of Cicero, as would evidently appear, if we had time to search out and make citations from their writings.

PITH. Give me leave, Sir, to make these two answers to what you have drawn from this great man of antiquity. First, all that he says of the sufficiency of reason, will reach no farther than the concessions which have been already made, viz. That the power of reason in every man hath a natural and remote sufficiency to lead them to the most general notions and practices of duty both to God and man: "There are indeed," saith he, "in our minds some seeds of virtue, which, if we would let them grow up, would lead us by nature to blessedness;" *Tusculan Questions*, book iii. And it is granted also, that this power has been drawn out into a more regular exercise by some happy geniusses in some nations than it has in others: Where persons of a thoughtful and philosophic spirit have risen

up in the heathen world, they have employed their own reason to much better purposes than the rest of mankind ; they have drawn out several of the laws of nature into view ; they have communicated these to their country ; and the manners of the nation have been hereby more polished, and several more virtues practised.

Yet let it be observed, that Cicero in some parts of his writings, particularly in these Tusculan Questions, book iii. does not make the light of nature practically self-sufficient for the bulk of mankind, even in learned nations. He grants indeed, that " If nature had so framed us that we could behold herself, and take a complete view of her, and that we were able to form our lives by her guidance, there would be no need of our learning philosophy : But now she has given us only very little sparks which we soon extinguish by our evil customs and depraved opinions, that the true light of nature does no where appear." And again—" As soon as we see the light we are immediately in the midst of all perverse sentiments and wickedness ; so that we seem to have sucked in error almost with the milk of our nurse." This he says even of the Romans. But as for the barbarous and unthinking herds of mankind in other countries, alas ! how little do some of them actually know even of this universal and eternal law ? They do not awaken their thoughts at all, to enquire and search it out : It lies culpably and everlastingly dormant in the seeds of it in their hearts, and produces neither knowledge, virtue, nor piety. There is need of some better interpreter or explainer of this eternal law in these brutal and stupid creatures, than the mere working of their own reason ; and there is need of some further powerful hints to be given their reason, in order to awaken and excite them to take any cognizance of it for the purposes of true virtue or religion.

And even these very polite nations of Rome, and Athens, and the schools of the philosophers themselves, have been greatly assisted from some traditions of divine revelation, and, perhaps, had their best hints of religion derived from thence. Some of them have confessed, they wanted such help. Some have acknowledged, they borrowed it from those who lived nearer to the gods : And others stole their notions without confessing it. This has been traced out with great learning by some writers, such as Stillingfleet, Gale, Edwards, &c. And after all, the rules of religion and virtue, which were drawn up by these philosophers, have been very imperfect and defective in many instances, as Sophronius has shewn before : And at Athens and Rome they had very different opinions about the most important subjects, of God, virtue, the chief good, &c. and they had grievous quarrels and contests about many parts of their moral philosophy. Nor hath Cicero, nor Logisto yet proved,

: the gross and ignorant nations, the barbarous and savage people of Africa and America, have any proximate and practical facility to guide themselves into virtue, religion, and happiness, or that ever they would or could arrive at it, if left entirely themselves.

Let it be observed here, that several of these nations have so much as a priest, and there is scarce any such thing as a philosopher amongst them, or any one who pretends to teach their virtue or religion in the extent of a thousand miles; whereas your own Cicero himself acknowledges, "that it is byarken- ing to the precepts of philosophers, that the bulk of mankind must be reformed and healed." For he was not so weak and inaccurate in his observation of men, nor so complaisant to his whole species, as to imagine, that every low genius human nature, and all the meaner ranks of mankind, who are earnestly engaged among the necessities, the labours, or the amusements of this life, should frame a scheme of religion and virtue for themselves, and spin out of their own reasoning powers a whole system of rules for their own conduct toward God and man, in things that relate to this life, and another. Now by Cicero's own account of matters, what shall those nations do to alter or reform themselves, who have not one of those wise men or philosophers among them?

Secondly, consider what sort of man Cicero himself was, and whether you can think him, with all his boasted reason, fitted and prepared for the favour of God in a heavenly state, I will allow him to have as much virtue as most of the philosophers; but he was guilty of one huge and glaring vice, and that is, a most exorbitant ambition, and excess of pride, which is hateful to God, provoking to God, and the very image of the devil: and yet this he indulged in a most shameless manner: His writings and his behaviour are full of self, and discover one of the most audacious and vainest mortals that ever trod upon the earth. At present I will point to no other proof of it than his own letter to Lucceius, who was about to write the history of his own time: here you see him sacrificing even truth and honesty to the mad idol of his pride. "I beg you, says he to Lucceius, and I urge you over and over again, that you would lay out your wit and dress up the year of my consulship; lavish out your ornaments on it: Neglect the laws of history; do not consider so much what say what truth requires, as what will render that period and the name of my life shining and glorious. Is this your virtue, Logisto? Is this the man of honour, that would persuade his friend to convey falsehood and lies down to posterity, merely to flatter his own ambition, and to procure him fame in following ages?"

Loc. Indeed, Pithander, this is such a scandalous and



shameless manner of exposing his own vanity, and building his honour on the ruins of truth, that I could scarce imagine that great and wise man would have suffered such a letter to go out from his hand. I fear, my friend, you have cited this in gross merely by your memory, and exaggerated some expressions to disgrace his character, and blaze abroad his frailty.

PITH. I own, Sir, it is many years since I read his epistle, and I have cited only the general sense of it, according to the impression it made on my mind when I read it: But since you have his works here, let us turn to this famous letter. I think it is in the fifth book, among his letters to Metellus and others. See how he begins: "When I have been in your company, Lucceius, I have felt a sort of rustic bashfulness to say those things which in your absence I will now declare with freedom; for a letter never blushes. I burn with incredible desire of having my name adorned and celebrated by your writings:—Think whether it be not better to divide the history of the civil conspiracy, that is, the conspiracy of Catiline, which was suppressed in Cicero's consulship," and relate it apart from the foreign wars: For when your whole soul is engaged in one argument, and fixed on one person, I plainly see how much more copious and ornamental all your writing will be.

I am not ignorant what an impudent thing I am doing, when I urge you to adorn my actions: But he that hath once passed the limits of modesty, must become thoroughly and completely impudent." Then a little after follow the words I chiefly refer to, which are these: "Itaque te plane etiam atque etiam rogo, ut & ornēs ea vehementius etiam quam fortasse sentis, & in eo leges historiae negligas,——amorque nostro plusculum etiam quam concedit veritas largiari. I ask you plainly again and again, that you would beautify this transaction of mine with more ornament than, perhaps, you think it deserves, and therein neglect the laws of history, and bestow a little more of this your favour on me than truth will allow." You see, gentlemen, Cicero's own pen makes him as vain and shameless as my representation of him: And he spends above a page in folio on the same subject, and frequently urges his friend to write this immediately, "Ut & ceteri viventibus nobis ex libris tuis nos cognoscant, & nosmetipsi vivi gloriola nostra perfruamur: That the world may know me by your writings, and I may enjoy in my life-time the glory that belongs to me." What glaring pride and impudent falsehood sully the character of this heathen saint of yours, Logisto?

Again; let us see what his religion and piety were: He cannot find whether there was one God or many: He talks often of the gods in the language of the stoics: as for the true parent or maker of the universe, as Sophronius has cited him, Cicero acknowledges, "It

l to search him out, and when you have found him, he  
 ou to teach the knowledge of him to the bulk of mankind."'  
 e man that deserves the favour of the true God, who  
 new him himself, and was resolved to conceal him from  
 l? As for his own religion, he complied entirely with  
 heism and idolatry of the nation, and worshipped the  
 e of their gods, that is, the stars, the devils, the de-  
 croes, or the chimeras which the city of Rome had  
 into the number of their deities. In many parts of his  
 he vindicates the national ceremonies and idolatrous  
 orship, superstition and auguration, as necessary to be  
 ; and I think it is in his second book of laws that he  
 pon his countrymen a strict observance of all the religi-  
 established by authority, and declares all those worthy  
 ist punishment, who should attempt to disturb them,  
 of the vindicators of human reason frankly allow con-  
 nim. Pray, Sir, what great influence had reason upon  
 and practice of such a man as this, who, when he could  
 ve the Roman idols to be the true God who made or go-  
 e world, yet uses his utmost influence to make the world  
 them, that is, to make mankind idolaters, to set up  
 the true God, and procure divine honours for them, with-  
 ublic acknowledgement paid to the true God himself, the  
 and Lord of the universe, and with an express prohibi-  
 taking him known?

i. If I would shew myself a fair disputant, and a search-  
 ruth, I know not well what defence to make for my  
 author Cicero, unless you will permit me to say, that  
 e, nor the rest of the ancient sages, could imagine there  
 much hurt in practising the religion of their native coun-  
 in worshipping the gods of it, as the bible has taught  
 vs and christians to conceive: And that this vice of pride  
 ition, of which Pithander brings such a heavy charge  
 Cicero, was so universal amongst all great men, that  
 nted it a piece of virtue and glory, rather than a crime.

ii. But does not human reason, even your darling rea-  
 ch you the same that the bible teaches the Jews and  
 s? Is not polytheism and idolatry contrary to the nature  
 , and to all the principles and rules of reason? Is not  
 d self-sufficiency, and such an ambitious desire of fame,  
 pence of honesty and truth, a very criminal thing in  
 nd a high offence both against God and man? Was Ci-  
 cero reason practically sufficient to be his guide in matters  
 m and virtue, if it indulged him in such corrupt and  
 ble practices as these? Or if it did make any feeble re-  
 nces against them, his practice still shews how weak, and  
 l insignificant these remonstrances were; and this proves

to us, on the other hand. the practical insufficiency of his reason to resist criminal inclinations and enable him to oppose the idolatrous customs of his country. Thus it appears that either his reason was insufficient to guide him right, or if it did whisper truth and duty to him, it was with so low a voice, as was very insufficient to make him obey.

LOG. Pray, Sophronius, let us have your sentiment upon this subject ; for I am at a loss to find a solid reply, and I must be silent, unless I would run into cavilling ?

SOPH. Dear Sir, pardon me if I say, that I am as unable to refute Pithander's manner of arguing as you are ; and I rejoice to see you so steady a friend to truth, as to yield to an argument. But I will take occasion, gentlemen, if you favour me with your permission, to make one remark upon this debate of yours, concerning Cicero's opinion and practice with regard to every man's compliance with the religion of his country. Several of the great men of antiquity, of whom Cicero was one, having lost the divine revelations of Noah, their ancestor, thought it necessary to introduce some doctrines and duties of pretended revelation, and particular ceremonies of worship, among their countrymen, in order to oblige the consciences and practices of men to virtue, and to restrain them from vice, by some guidance and authority superior to each man's own reason ; because they were generally convinced, that reason, as it is at present in the bulk of mankind, is very insufficient to be their guide to virtue, religion and happiness.

Give me leave upon this occasion to read to you a page out of an ingenious writer of the present age, wherein he cites your own favourite author Cicero more than once. It is in the 49th page of his book\*, where he is arguing against the same ill treatise which Doctor Waterland opposes, written by some supposed infidel, and entitled "Christianity as Old as the Creation." "The testimony of all ages, says he, teaches us, that reason, whatever force and strength it might have in particular men, yet never had credit or authority enough in the world to be received as a public and authentic rule, either of religious or civil life : This is allowed by all the great reasoners of the heathen world : And the experience of its insufficiency as a guide of life, is given by many of them as the very cause of the invention and establishment of religion," that is, of some pretended revelation from heaven, and ceremonies of worship," that the authority of religion, as Tully takes notice, might restrain those whom reason had been found too weak to keep in order. The life of man, as Plutarch tells us from Euripides, was once like that of beasts governed by force and violence ; laws were then contrived to repel injustice ; but when these proved still insufficient, religion was at last invented :

\* Remarks on Dr. Waterland, &c.

y whose mysteries, as Tully observes, men from a savage life came formed and cultivated, as it were to humanity.

“Such an universal consent must needs be owing to an universal conviction and experience of the insufficiency of reason, and seems to be the voice of nature disclaiming it as a guide in the case of religion : And thus our author’s scheme, by the concession of all antiquity, and even by his own, must appear foolish and irrational, in attempting to set up that for a perfect rule of life, which from the nature of things never was or could be received as such in any age or country whatsoever. Should he then gain his end, and actually demolish christianity, what would be the consequence, what the fruit of his labours, but confusion and disorder ; till some other traditional religion could be set in its place ; till we had agreed to recall either the gods of the old world, Jupiter, Minerva, Venus, &c. or with the idolaters the new, to worship sun, moon, and stars, or instead of Jesus take Mahomet or Confucius for the author of our faith ? and hence may be demonstrated, the immorality also of his scheme, even upon his own principles.” Now though I cannot think this writer has argued so effectually against Doctor Waterland, in his Remarks upon him, as to leave no just room for a defence of the scripture history of the fall and circumcision, &c. but his sketch or plan of an answer to the author of “Christianity Old as the Creation,” has some valuable thoughts in it, and worthy of the reader’s best notice.

LOG. Well, gentlemen, I will pursue this manner of debate no longer : I see my cause cannot be supported by it. I will immediately therefore betake myself to my last and strongest argument, to prove, that the natural and rational powers of mankind must have a greater sufficiency than this which you allow, to lead mankind to religion and happiness ; for I think the contrary doctrine bears very hard upon the wisdom, the justice, and the goodness of the great and blessed God. I am at a loss to find how it is consistent with his justice and his benevolence to his creatures, to leave such millions of mankind, from age to age, under so poor a capacity to find out or to practise the way of pleasing their Maker in this world, and yet to judge and condemn them in the other world for displeasing him.

PRA. I grant, Logisto, this is a point of argument which has great difficulties attending it, and therefore I propose that we adjourn the debate for one half hour, and if you please to give us your company, and lead us through the several walks and divisions of your beautiful garden we will there relax our thoughts for a season, and I hope we shall each of us resume the debate again with fresh spirits, and to our mutual satisfaction.

LOG. With all my heart, gentlemen, I attend you with the greatest readiness and delight.

### THE FOURTH CONFERENCE.

While Logisto was attending his two friends through the pleasures of his garden, he conveyed them to a very agreeable piece of elevated ground, whence they could survey the neighbouring fields and meadows covered with cattle of divers kinds. Some were grazing upon the natural bounties of providence; some rested at their ease; and others were sporting variously, with life and vigour, and joy, in the provisions that were made for the happiness suited to their natures. The birds sang their cheerful airs upon the bushes, being replenished with their proper food, or they exulted upon the wing with wanton pleasure, transporting themselves from bough to bough; and their little souls took in all the satisfaction of their natures, and their harmless life. Even the very creeping insects, as well as those that were made for flight, appeared joyful in their narrow dimensions: The worm, the emmet, and the butterfly were pleased with their atoms or inches of being, and in their low rank of existence seemed to bear their witness to the beneficent hand that gave them every thing necessary to their support and delight, Logisto took notice of it, while they were taking their rounds, and at their return to the summer-house, he thus renewed the conference.

Log. And can you think, Pithander, that every worthless creature in the universe, not only the beast and the birds, but even the butterflies and the worms, have powers given them by their wise and bountiful Creator sufficient for their happiness, during their little extent of existence; and shall not man the lord of the lower world, man, the favourite of his Maker, shall not man have sufficient powers conferred upon him, to lead and conduct him to his final happiness? Is it not inconsistent with the justice and equity of a God, and much more inconsistent with the goodness of so magnificent and so bountiful a being, to make creatures of an immortal duration, capable of intense happiness, and intense misery, through all that immortal existence, and not provide them with sufficient capacities in themselves to make that long state of existence happy? And yet what multitudes of them, according to your account, are brought into being, almost under a necessity of being miserable? Did these intellectual and wretched creatures ever once desire to exist? Was not their existence the mere effect of their Maker's sovereign pleasure? And would the sovereign pleasure of a wise, a righteous, and merciful God, ever bring creatures into such an immortal existence, without sufficient powers to guide and conduct them to that felicity which is suited to their natures?

Nor is the mere remote, natural, and speculative sufficiency, which Sophronius has taught you, any sufficient answer to this

faculty. Could so wise, so righteous, and merciful a God bring millions of creatures into being with such a provision for their happiness, as not one in ten thousand should be likely to attain it? This is so near a-kin to an absolute insufficiency, that a doctrine of yours seems to bear too hard upon the perfections of God. What! has the blessed God dealt harder with his creature man than with any of the meaner works of his hands?

PITH. No, Sir, by no means: And if you could have known man in his original state of powers and blessings, furnished with clear and sagacious mind, with reason bright and strong, and superior to all his lower appetites and passions, you would, doubtless, have acknowledged the transcendent advantages for elevated happiness, and the rich sufficiencies given to the creature man. You would have confessed, they were such as became magnificent, a wise, and a bountiful Creator to bestow upon his noblest piece of workmanship on this earthly globe. God hath not dealt worse with his creature man than with the rest; and man has dealt worse with his Maker than any of them. He has not followed the laws of his nature, but broke his allegiance to his God, by choosing evil instead of good: He has ruined his original happy state, and according to the constitution of things, his whole nature and race is tainted, so that he is become vile as the brutes that perish: He has forfeited his native blessings, and he, with his race, are become rebels, and obnoxious to their Maker's displeasure. This, as Sophronius hinted in the first of our conferences, has been the sense of the more thinking heathens, as well as Jews and christians; and without an eye to some sort of original degeneracy, it is hard, if not impossible to give a satisfactory account for the poor, dark, stupid, and wretched circumstances in which so great a part of mankind, are brought to this world, wherein they live and grow up, age after age, in gross ignorance and vice, thoughtless of their duty to the God that created them, or their true happiness in the enjoyment of his favour.

LOG. But since I am not yet so far convinced, nor so comaisant as to confess this original degeneracy, and since it would lead us, perhaps, too far from our present point of debate, pray, my friend, try if you cannot say something else to clear the justice and the goodness of God from the imputation of dealing so hardly with his creature man.

PITH. I cannot waive this matter of some original degeneracy; for I think it is so necessary to the solution of the difficulties which attend this point, that it is not to be done without it: yet it is not the only answer to them neither; I will see what may be said from other topics also; but I cannot promise you to avoid this.

**Loc.** Well then, let us suppose mankind to come into the world in any circumstances of degeneracy, yet still it is agreed, that each of them has an immortal soul, each of them is accountable to God for his own actions, each of them is rewardable for his services to God, and punishable for his neglects of duty, and for the indulgences of vice; therefore, surely, all mankind hath a right, by the common laws of equity, to be furnished with the knowledge of those things for which they are accountable, the difference of vice and virtue, and the duties they owe to God and to man: They have a right to be endued with a sufficient power to find out, and to practise them: And if this sufficiency of light and power be not planted in the reason and nature of men, they have a right to have it by divine revelation: Otherwise they would be excusable in their foulest vices, in their neglect of duties, and their practice of all ungodliness, because they seem to be left under almost an unavoidable necessity of neglecting their duty, and of sinning against their Maker.

**PITH.** In such a degenerate and sinful world of creatures as we are, who have so shamefully rebelled against him that made us, perhaps it is sufficient to vindicate the equity of God, if he has left in mankind such a natural and remote power of sufficiency to find out and practise their duty as Sophronius has allowed in his distinction; as for the ruder and wilder nations, this is certainly and evidently the case: By their brutal thoughtlessness, their obstinate prejudices from age to age, their vicious propensities, and their long contracted habits of wilful ignorance and impiety, these natural powers of reason are so disused and unpractised in matters of piety and virtue, that they will scarce ever be rightly exercised, or lead them into the path of religion and happiness. They have forfeited the proximate and practical sufficiency of their reason, and without the superior light of revelation, they can hardly be ever supposed to recover it.

**Loc.** Dear Sir, I intreat you to consider, that however the great and righteous God might punish the first man by such a forfeiture, however such mere reliques of a natural and remote sufficiency be all that was afforded to the supposed first parent of our race himself, who sinned against God, yet can his children and posterity, for a hundred generations, be involved in this forfeiture? Though the equity of God may justify itself in confining Adam himself to such a limited and contracted capacity of attaining happiness after his sin, yet can the equity or goodness of God be justified in leaving his offspring in such hopeless and calamitous circumstances, with such a narrow pittance of reason and powers to find out their duty, to secure their own welfare, and obtain the felicity of their beings? What was the crime of these poor ignorant wretched infants, that could forfeit any part of the powers due to their natures? What have these millions of

African and American souls done, that they should be born under a dark and dismal climate, in the midst of such impious customs, such universal oblivion or neglect of God, such insuperable prejudices, and with such strong vicious propensities, that it is ten thousand to one, as you confess, if ever any of them come to the knowledge and favour of God, to the practice of true religion, and to the enjoyment of future felicity? Has the equity, or wisdom, or will of God acted fairly with all these miserable millions? Has divine and infinite goodness expressed itself toward them as becomes a Creator, a Father of his creatures, and a God of unbounded love? Or can his justice ever pronounce a sentence of condemnation, as a Judge upon them for sinning against such laws as they never knew nor had a practical and proximate capacity to find out?

PITH. Pray, good Logisto, calm your spirit, and rebate your fire? Be not so vehement and pathetic in your oratory for the sinful race of sinful man: Take heed that while you act the zealous advocate for rebel creatures, you do not repeat the crime, and the danger of which I took the freedom to warn you before: Have a care of running furiously upon an accusation of the all-wise and righteous Creator. If you give me leave, Sir, I will endeavour to soften and relieve the terror of this objection, by laying before you several weighty considerations. But before I begin them, I must remind you, that while you argue from the justice and goodness of God, that there ought to be such a proximate and practical sufficiency in all mankind, to obtain the favour of God in a way of religion, you argue against plain matter of fact again, and which you yourself have allowed, and that more than once, in this afternoon's conference.

Forgive me therefore, dear Sir, if I am constrained to repeat again to you, that plain fact is an unchangeable and obstinate thing, and will not bend to any of our arguments, though derived from the divinest topic. All our notions of the immense goodness and eternal equity and justice of God, and our strongest inferences from them, can never prove any thing contrary to plain fact, nor demonstrate that not to be the case, which really and actually is the case. And I am sure the argument is much stronger and more convincing when turned into this form, viz. This is the sad case of the African and American savages, and yet God is just and good; therefore it is certainly consistent with divine equity and goodness: This argument, I say, is much stronger than for you to tell me, it is not agreeable to your notions of divine equity and goodness, that this should be their case, and therefore, in opposition to plain fact, you infer, this is not their case.

Are you so sure that your scanty notions and your fallible reasonings on the equity and goodness of a God are exactly true,



softened and relieved, I think you ought to esteem it a sufficient answer to the objection, as you are a philosopher : But as I profess myself a christian, so I profess to believe most of these suppositions to be real truths, and therefore I call them a scheme of actual considerations, which relieve this difficulty, and not merely an hypothesis.

LOG. I long to hear these suppositions or considerations, call them what you please, set forth at large, and in their full strength and weight ; for I must acknowledge, since these our conferences, I find myself something disposed to hearken to them.

PITH. First then, let it be supposed, and I persuade myself you will readily assent to it, that when God made mankind at first, he gave them the knowledge of himself and of his will, so far as concerned their duty to him and to their fellow-creatures ; he furnished them with such principles and powers of reasoning and free choice, as were abundantly sufficient for them to find out and practise what he required of them, in order to their continuance in his favour : And it is probable also, that he gave them encouragement to expect the rewards of piety and virtue, in some future and happier state. But let it be supposed also, that he put them upon a state of trial by their own free choice, that they might enquire out and practise all their particular and daily duties, that they might chuse what was good, and refuse what was evil : whence it comes to pass, that though they were created in a state of innocence and virtue, and had powers given them richly sufficient to maintain it, yet they were capable of abusing these powers, of neglecting their duty, and of sinning against their Maker.

Secondly, it is but reasonable also to suppose, that he gave them sufficient notice, or taught their reason to inform them, that if they rebelled against him by neglecting their duty, or practising what was sinful, they should be exposed to his severe displeasure, that they should be liable to what pains and sorrows the wisdom and justice of their Maker and Governor thought proper to inflict, as well as incur a forfeiture of such blessings and privileges, both corporeal and intellectual, as he had bountifully bestowed upon them. And among these pains and penal sorrows, it is not at all improbable to suppose, that their kind and beneficent Maker let them know, that if they indulged their appetites and passions in sensuality and vice, in excess and intemperance, if they were carried away by the temptations of flesh or sense, to eat of such meats as they knew to be hurtful in their nature, or forbidden by their Maker, this would introduce diseases and pains into their animal nature, and expose their bodies to sickness and death, as well as their minds to the anguish of conscience, and the bitter reflections that would arise from their own abused powers and blessings.

Thirdly, it may also be very reasonably supposed, that God let his first human creatures know, either in some express manner, or by the sagacious dictates of their own reason, that they were to propagate their kind in their own likeness: And that if they continued in a holy and a happy state, their offspring should also be propagated holy and happy. But, on the other hand, if they abused their natural powers, if they lost the favour of their Maker by sinning against him, and incurred his displeasure, if they forfeited the sensual and intellectual blessings they enjoyed, if they impaired their animal or their rational powers by a criminal abuse of them, and brought folly and misery, sickness and pain, diseases and death, into their natures; it is probable, I say, that God gave them some evident intimations, that they should bring forth their offspring under these degenerate, enfeebled, and unhappy circumstances, according to the law and constitution of their natures. And we may well suppose that such a constitution of things, and such notice of it given to the first parents of mankind, would be a much more effectual motive to them to continue in the practice of religion and virtue, and a more powerful guard against their indulgence of sin, than if merely their own single happiness or misery were to have been the consequence or effects of it.

Fourthly, let us further suppose, what is sufficiently evident to our daily observations and experience, that all mankind are now a degenerate, feeble, and unhappy race of beings, that we are become sinners in the sight of God, and exposed to his anger: It is manifest enough, that this whole world is a fallen, sinful, and rebellious province of God's dominion, and under the actual displeasure of its righteous Creator and Governor. The overspreading deluge of folly and error, iniquity and misery, that covers the face of the earth, gives abundant ground for such a supposition. The experience of every man on earth affords a strong and melancholy proof, that our reasoning powers are easily led away into mistake and falsehood, wretchedly bribed and biassed by prejudices, and daily over-powered by some corrupt appetites or passions, and our wills led astray to chuse evil instead of good. The best of us sometimes break the laws of our Maker, by contradicting the rules of piety and virtue, which our own reason and consciences suggest to us. There is none righteous perfectly; no not one. Nor is there one person upon earth free from troubles and difficulties, and pains and sorrows, such as testify some resentments of our Maker. Even from our infancy, our diseases, pains and sorrows begin, and it is very remarkably evident in some families, that these pains, and diseases, the gout, the foul disease, frenzy, &c. are propagated to the offspring, as they were sometimes contracted by the vices of the parents; and

particular vicious inclinations, as well as particular distempers, are conveyed from parents to children sometimes through several generations. The best of us are not free from irregular propensities and passions even in the younger parts of life, and as our years advance, our sins break out, and continue more or less through all our lives. Our whole race then are plainly degenerate, sinful, and guilty before God, and under some tokens of his anger.

Though I own that I borrow this set of thoughts from the bible, as well as from reason and observation, yet I would say as little as possible to awaken your opposition; and therefore I say not now, whether God made one pair of human creatures, or more; I do not here determine, whether mankind sinned at once and fell from God, and their duty and their happiness, in one single family, or in one generation; or whether it came by a more slow and gradual degeneracy, by increasing habits of vice, by the evil influence of vicious examples, or by a complicated consent of multitudes rebelling against their Maker. In my present discourse, as far as possible, I would avoid every thing that might give you any uneasiness; and therefore I confine myself here to suppose only those things which may be very probably supposed by the exercise of our reasoning powers, upon the past and present condition of mankind throughout the world.

You know, Logisto, that I take it for granted, according to our scripture, that God made but one pair of first parents, Adam and Eve, and that they having broken the law of their God, have exposed themselves and their posterity to such a forfeiture of their privileges, to such a disorder in their rational and animal powers, to disease and sorrow, misery, and death. But I propose to you nothing else at present but an hypothesis.

Fifthly, suppose that our good and gracious God, in compassion to this sinful and miserable race of creatures, has continued to them many of the forfeited comforts of this life, has maintained their animal nature in some degrees of ease, and health, and vigour, and given them sun and rain, and food and gladness, that they might trace out the goodness of their Maker: Suppose he has also preserved their reasoning powers in such a measure of strength, as that they have a natural ability to search out the knowledge of their Maker, and the most important rules of their duty to him, and to their fellow-creatures, though with much more pains and difficulty, and uncertainty, than in their primitive state. Suppose also, that they are not only able to find out the main original points of religion and virtue, which God requires of an innocent creature, by the due exercise of their reason, but that their reasoning powers are also naturally sufficient to inform them what an offending creature ~~must~~ do, in order to obtain any hopes of pardon and acceptance with an offended God,

that is, that they must practise hearty repentance for past sins, prayer for divine forgiveness, and watchful endeavours to fulfil all duty, and avoid every sin for time to come. I suppose, therefore, that though mankind, according to the constitution and law of the propagation of their natures, is brought into the world under unhappy circumstances, with prejudices against truth and goodness, and propensities to evil, yet there is in the nature of man still, such a principle of reason and conscience remaining, as now and then gives him secret hints and intimations of the differences of good and evil, and the different consequences of them: And that if all these hints were duly attended to, and rightly pursued, they would lead him to true repentance, and give him encouraging hopes of acceptance in the sight of God. And this rational principle, I have granted, is found in some considerable degrees among the more learned and polite nations; nor are the most rude and unpolished tribes of mankind utterly destitute of it: And perhaps this is full as much as can be any way claimed, by a degenerate and sinful race of creatures at the hands of an offended Creator and righteous Governor. But I proceed,

Sixtily, let us suppose farther, in order to vindicate the justice and goodness of God in his conduct toward mankind, that he has made some particular and express revelation and discovery of his own laws, and his intended grace and mercy towards man, in his degenerate state; and that this discovery of duty and grace has been made to all mankind, that is, to all who are the parents and progenitors of the present race of mortals; and that it was committed to them for the use of themselves and their offspring. Suppose that God had, in some express manner, taught them what they should do, as men, to please him, and as sinners, to remove his anger, and to become afresh interested in his love, and to obtain happiness in a way of religion. And suppose after this, that mankind, or at least the greatest part of them, should have neglected to practise these rules of religion, or to transmit them to their offspring, is the wisdom and goodness of God bound to be perpetually renewing his discoveries of grace and mercy to every age? Is it not sufficiently manifest, in the nature of things, that parents should provide for their children's safety? Has not God wrought it in some measure, into the very constitution of men, that they should take care of the welfare and happiness of their offspring? What is that natural and almost universal tenderness that is found in parents towards their children? Is it not a dictate of the God of nature to them, that they might take care of the true happiness of those whom they bring into the world, and that in their relations to God, as well as their relations to this world? And has not the great and blessed God done all that justice or equity could require for such a sin-

ful and rebellious race of creatures, if he has taught one generation the way to recover his favour and happiness, and has wrought this principle not only into the powers of their reason, but even into their animal natures, that parents should take care of the welfare of their offspring, and should teach them the rules of duty and felicity?

Seventhly, suppose again, that notwithstanding all this care and goodness of the blessed God in revealing his laws, and his grace, that mankind by degrees have corrupted themselves again, and run into such an universal practice of impiety and vice, that God has manifested his indignation against their sins, and their neglect of religion, by an universal destruction of their whole race, excepting a few families. Suppose he has taught religion afresh to these few families who were saved from the universal punishment and desolation, and impressed a deep sense of his justice, and of the evil of sin, upon their minds, by this spreading ruin of their fellow-creatures: Suppose he has given further assurances of his grace and goodness, that if they repent, and do his will, and trust in his mercy, according to the methods he prescribed, they should be saved: yet after all, in some successive generations, the greatest part of them corrupt themselves again, and grow rebels against their Maker: What shall be said in a way of vindication or apology for such a race of criminals, who are neither to be kept in their duty by examples of vengeance, or discoveries of grace? What is there can reasonably be alledged by way of accusation against the justice and goodness of the great God, if he leave them to perish in their wilful ignorance and rebellion:

While I have been representing this matter, Logisto, while I have been shewing the repeated discoveries of grace and duty made to all mankind, I know you are so well acquainted with the bible, that your thoughts must needs run upon the grace manifested to Adam and Eve after their first sin, when God taught them sacrifices, and without doubt, promised them pardon and peace, and gave them intimations of a Saviour and salvation, in much plainer language, and greater variety, than the short history of Moses can be supposed to contain in a page or two in the book of Genesis: And I doubt not but when I speak of some universal vengeance destroying sinful man, and of a second revelation of grace made to all mankind, who were saved out of the general destruction of the world, you readily apprehend the the four couple of persons saved out of the general deluge in the ark, that is, *Noah, with his three sons, and all their wives*: And yet, even after all these instances of vengeance and grace, mankind grew most abominably ignorant, corrupt, and profligate, vicious, and profane, in most of the families of the world.

Now is the blessed God bound in every age of mankind to

new the discoveries of his mercy and their duty, of the true religion, and the way of salvation, and that to every family when is evident that he had twice made such discoveries to all mankind in the family of Adam, and in that of Noah, who were the progenitors of all human nature, in different ages? And especially since we believe God had both inclined and commanded the heads of these families, Adam and Noah, to instruct their children in these most important concerns, and since he had wrought into the constitution of every parent a natural tender concern for the welfare of all their offspring, to influence them to communicate these instructions. Has not God, the wise and the merciful, done all that justice can require, toward the propagation of the superadded light of grace through all the world, besides the common light of reason which is continued to them, and which in itself is naturally and remotely sufficient to lead them to religion and happiness?

Give me leave, Sir, to state this case in two similitudes, and to show whether the equity and goodness of God, the Creator and Governor of the world, may not be thereby sufficiently vindicated his conduct towards mankind.

The first similitude is this: Suppose a sovereign prince has banished the inhabitants of some city of his dominion breaking the general laws of his kingdom, and rebelling against him, and on that account, they are banished from that city, and from the king's presence, into a distant province, where they continue in their rebellion: their posterity are born under this banishment, and yet still rebel, and break the laws of their prince, and by degrees, forget these laws, and lose the knowledge of their duty. Suppose at any time the king publishes an act of grace, wherein he reveals their general duty to them afresh, and further declares to them, that whosoever of this race of rebels will repent of their crimes, will ask forgiveness upon their knees, will renew their oath of allegiance, obey his will, and trust in his mercy, shall be restored to their city, and to the king's presence and favour. The king having appointed this method of grace, and published it to the rebels, he justly expects, that that generation and their posterity should carefully transmit the knowledge of their duty to their offspring, and that all should conform themselves both to his general laws, and to the appointed methods in this act of grace, if he himself shall alter it: And whatsoever new or further methods this absolute sovereign shall appoint to them hereafter, for the obtaining his favour, all that hear of it, both they and their children, are bound to comply with it, if ever they would find favour at court. The king doth not think himself obliged every year, nor every age to give the rising generation a new and immediate promulgation of his general laws, nor of this act of grace, nor to repeat to them over again the testimony and proofs

of its royalty and authority. Yet the children being rebels still, may be still justly continued in their banishment, for their own and their parents rebellion, if they do not comply with the appointed method in the act of grace which was published in their great grandfather's days.

It is not a common case among mankind, that when any king makes a law with a penalty, and publishes it once through his whole nation, he doth not think himself bound to publish this anew, as often as new subjects are born in his dominions? And yet not only all the present subjects, but their posterity also, who break this law, are, in the common sense of mankind, liable to the penalty, because it is supposed, that nature obliges men to communicate such necessary knowledge to their own offspring. Much less would any king who freely published an act of grace to rebels, think himself obliged in justice to repeat the publication of this act to every new generation of rebels who should arise, and continue in the known and wilful rebellion of their fathers; for since he was not obliged to make any such act of grace at first, he can never be obliged to repeat the proclamation of it.

But let it be supposed yet further, that the king of the country should hear of the continued rebellion of those subjects, and that they had persisted in the violation of his laws, and despised and rejected, forgotten and lost the proclamations of his grace; and suppose he should send his army to destroy all that race of rebels, except a few families, in order to manifest his just indignation against their crimes, and thereby awaken those that were left, to a more awful sense of the majesty and justice of their king, and of their own duties to him: Yet further, we will suppose he should send another proclamation of mercy to these few families that he had spared out of the general slaughter, with some plainer discoveries of his royal goodness in it, and repeat afresh to them what duties they should perform, in order to partake of this mercy: Now if after all this discovery both of his justice and his grace, this race of rebels in two or three generations, should so abandon themselves to all manner of disobedience, should despise this new proclamation of mercy, and giving themselves up to riot and folly, should lose the knowledge of the laws, and grace of their sovereign; what possible apology could be made for this wretched race of rebels, why they should not be continued in their banishment, and under the displeasure of their king?

The rebellious children of these rebel subjects may complain indeed, that they were never told, nor did they know the general laws of the kingdom, nor were they acquainted with the particular acts of grace, and these special appointed methods of obtaining pardon and favour. But if the general laws of the

ngdom were so far agreeable to the laws of reason and nature, at if they would but seriously consider with themselves, and t their reason at work in good earnest, they might find out not ly these general laws, but so much also of the particular me- ods of grace, as to get some hope of pardon and acceptance, they sincerely practised them ; then, I say, these children are ighly criminal for not applying their rational powers to the work, nd for not seeking out and practising all that was within the urge and compass of their natural powers, in order to be restor- d to the favour of the king. And such criminal creatures justly ntinue under the displeasure of their sovereign. It is granted deed, that the parents who rebelled against the king, and ough up their offspring to rebellion and misery, who run coun- x to that compassion which nature gave them for their offspring, nd by continuing in their rebellion lost the knowledge of the ws, and the grace of their king themselves, and never taught em to their children, are much more culpable than the children, ho never actually knew them : Yet the children are far from eing innocent, since their natural powers, if they awakened em to a right and careful exercise, might lead them to so much nowledge of the laws, and methods of grace of their sovereign, s, if sincerely practised, they might hope to find mercy with him. he king may be wise, and just, and gracious still, and yet the ace of rebels may be in such circumstances, that not one in a housand are ever likely to be restored to his favour.

Take the thing in a little different view, under another imilitude : Suppose any particular family upon earth had some ainful and mortal disease hereditary to the house, derived from he vices of their parents, and more rooted in their constitution y their own personal vices ; and suppose the blessed God had omunicated a divine receipt or medicine to their whole family, hich would relieve and heal every one that made use of it ; is od obliged, by a miracle, or by inspiration, to restore the pre- ous secret to this family, when they have lost it by their own guilty negligence ? When the parents took no care to preserve he remedy, nor the children ever enquired for a cure ? Or hen they wandered after the most vain and most irrational retences, and the most ridiculous experiments to heal them- selves ? Is it unjust for God to let them die under their dis- ease ? Do they not deserve to perish under their own distemper and folly ?

Suppose yet further, that the wise and righteous God should, in the course of his providence, suffer this disease to spread itself, and rage with mortal fury in some single generation, so as to de- stroy the whole race, except seven or eight persons. Now by such a dreadful spectacle of death and desolation, these persons must have a very terrible sense of this mortal distemper impressed



upon their minds : And suppose God should again discover to this surviving family the noble medicine whereby they might be healed of this distemper : Suppose this family should publish the terrors of the late universal destruction, together with the precious remedy, to the following generations, as Noah published the history of the flood, and the laws and grace of God ; yet if all this be despised and neglected by their posterity, and the late desolation, as well as the new notice of the medicine, be banished from all their thoughts, and forgotten in a few ages, what can be said in excuse for them, or what accusation can be brought against the wisdom, justice, or goodness of God, if they are suffered to go on and die.

The crime is yet more inexcusable, and the justice and goodness of God yet more defensible, if we suppose some chief ingredients of this sovereign medicine, which make a great part of the composition, to be in some sense within the natural reach of their own faculties to find out, and within the native power of their hands to acquire and compose ; so far at least as would greatly relieve the distemper, and give them comfortable hopes of healing, if they searched it out, and used it. But if these wretched creatures under a mortal disease will never exercise their thoughts about a cure, will never employ their reason carefully and diligently to search and find out the proper ingredients, nor use their hands to attempt the composition, but will trifle away all their time in riot and sensuality, in dancing and singing, regardless of their own lives, what reasonable charge or censure can be brought against the great Governor of the world, for permitting them to go on to death in their own madness ?

This is the case of mankind among the savage nations of the earth, who were all derived from Adam and Noah, their fathers, to whom the laws of God, and the methods of grace and salvation were communicated by God himself, and who took care to inform their immediate posterity, what the world suffered by disobedience to God, at the fall and the flood, and took care also to teach them those truths and duties by the belief and practice of which they might be saved. It is probable, that some of these families did retain true religion for several ages : But in a few ages, others despised and lost the truths and duties of true religion : every generation grew worse than their fathers ; and now whole nations, without one exception, are led away by prejudices and sensuality into endless follies, errors, and impieties, without any care or effort of mind to recover the knowledge of the laws of their Maker, or the methods of his grace. A due survey of this last consideration will most effectually refute that wild and unreasonable charge against our doctrine, as if the great God left all the world, except the Jews, for four thousand

ears together, destitute of sufficient means to do their duty, and to obtain his favour ; which is as false as I believe the book of Genesis is true, and has not so much as a colour of argument to support it.

But before I leave this head of the shameful degeneracy, and gross apostacy of the heathen world, I cannot but take notice of one very remarkable aggravation of the crime both of parents and children, and that is, that though several of these nations in a few ages lost and abandoned the worship of the true God, the knowledge of his laws, and the discoveries of his grace, though the parents took no care to communicate them to their children, nor the children to retain any notices of them ; yet these very nations are most obstinately tenacious of the idolatry and impious ceremonies, the savage and the vicious customs and practices of their ancestors ; and their parents are as careful to teach them, and to breed them up in these iniquities and errors. If you ask the wild Americans, the Laplanders, the Hottentots, the reason of their ridiculous opinions and practices, their universal answer is, that *it is the custom of their nation, and their fathers and their grandfathers, for many ages, have believed and done so before them.* This in their esteem, is a sacred and sufficient reason for their immovable perseverance in their own nonsense and madness : So impiously fond have they been of the tradition of their ancestors, in their profane and vicious customs, while they so soon and so easily parted with the rules of virtue and religion, and the promises and hopes of grace and salvation, which their ancestors taught them. And thus the very same humour and practice which has had so strong and fatal an influence to maintain and propagate superstition, impiety, and vice among them, is a heinous aggravation of their crime in losing the rules of virtue, religion and happiness, since the same reverence for their early ancestors, the same temper and practice would have preserved the truths, duties, and rules of virtue and religion. It is time now to proceed to the next consideration, in order to vindicate the justice and goodness of God in the present constitution of things.

In the eighth place therefore, suppose that none of the race of mankind, whatsoever advantages or disadvantages they lie under, shall ever be condemned in the other world for the neglect of any duties, but what their own reason was in a practical and proximate sense sufficient to find out : Now there are a sufficient number of these neglects to bring condemnation upon every part of the heathen world, whether learned or barbarous. Suppose that no creature shall be punished hereafter for any sin but what was some way or other committed against his own light or conscience, or for a plain wilful neglect of seeking further knowledge of truth and duty, by such means as were plainly and

practically within their reach: Suppose that the great Judge at last shall pass a sentence of death upon no soul but who shall be made to recollect his own guilty conduct, either by opposing the dictates of his conscience, by stifling convictions of sin or duty, by suppressing some inward principles or tendencies towards truth or virtue, or at least by a wilful neglect to pursue such hints of knowledge as have been given him in the course of providence, or by the good Spirit of God: Will not this thought fairly relieve the objection, and vindicate the honour of the divine perfection? It is the character of the heathens; Rom. i. 18, 23, 28. *That they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, that they held the truth in unrighteousness; they stifled the dictates of their own minds; and when they knew God, they would not glorify him as God. Even the wise men of the nations, who were acquainted with the true God, wilfully complied with national idolatries, to the scandal of their own reason, and the great provocation of their Maker, so that he gave them up to judicial blindness, for their own vile abuse of the light of their reason and consciences. Is not the great Governor of the universe to be justified in this conduct?*

The design of the day of judgment is to justify or condemn men according to their works, and to make the equity of the great God as Governor of the world, appear in that sentence of justification or condemnation: and therefore I am inclined to believe, that no person in that day, shall fall under the condemning sentence of the Judge, but who shall also be judged and condemned by his own awakened conscience, for those very things upon which his condemnation proceeds from the lips of the Judge. *Every Mouth will be stopped* by such a procedure as this, and all the heathen world who shall be condemned in that day, shall be made to recollect their own resistance of conscience, and their wilful neglects, and by the light of their own reason shall confess the justice of the sentence, and the equity of him that condemns.

Though it has been sufficiently proved, that the barbarous and savage nations of the earth have not a proximate and practical sufficiency in their reasoning powers to find out the necessary truths and duties of religion, in order to obtain happiness, yet perhaps every single creature amongst them had a practical and proximate sufficiency to find out and know more of God and their duty, and to practise more rules of virtue than they ever actually found or practised. And let it be added also, that if there were any soul amongst them that had followed the leadings of his own reason and conscience, together with every beam of light, or hint of knowledge that occurred in the course of life, the blessed God would have manifested his goodness in giving that soul some further hints of the necessary truths and duties of religion. It is an universal law of heaven, *To him that hath, that is, improvet*

what he hath, *more shall be given* : And I am persuaded, God would never withhold his hand from communicating further hints of knowledge, till he sees the creature wilfully stop short of what he might attain, and neglect or suppress some intimations of truth or duty, which one way or other were suggested to him. It is rebelling against some degree of light that provoketh God to withhold grace from man, and would vindicate divine justice in its severest sentence. But in the

Ninth place, as there is infinite variety of degrees of guilt in particular persons, and their conduct in this world, there shall be the same variety of the degrees of punishment in the world to come. *Every man shall be judged* according to the advantages he enjoyed. *More is required* from those whose advantages were greater, and their guilt is more heinous in abusing or neglecting them. God the all-knowing and the righteous will weigh every circumstance, both of his favours and our use or abuse of them, in the nicest balance, and his sentence shall bear an exact proportion to the demerits of every sinner. *He that knew not his Master's will, shall be beaten but with few stripes*, in comparison with those criminals who knew it and fought against it. Suppose therefore that the punishment of these rudest and most stupid nations of the earth, in the future world, shall be exceeding small, in proportion to the very small degrees of light and knowledge which they have enjoyed, or which have laid fairly and practically within their reach ; will not this greatly relieve the difficulty ? And if even these lightest punishments which shall be assigned to the most ignorant part of the heathen world, should be thought something severe, yet none can be thought utterly unjust, if, as was before mentioned, none are punished, but for acting in some measure against the light of their own minds. Now, Sir, if we could put all these nine suppositions together, and place them in such a happy situation, as that they might, with their full force, project all their light upon this single spot of darkness in divine providence, about the state and circumstances of the heathen world, I persuade myself, they would illustrate this gloomy scene, they would clear up the difficulties, and relieve the charges which are cast upon the conduct of divine justice and goodness in this affair.

Let us suppose, that mankind at first were placed in happy circumstances, with a rich sufficiency of natural powers, to prolong and continue their own happiness through all their immortality, by knowing and doing their Maker's will : Suppose they had some proper notice given them, that if they sinned against God, they should not only expose themselves, but their offspring also, to a forfeiture of the blessings they enjoyed, and should introduce pains, and weaknesses, and death into their natures : Suppose it also evident, from observation and experience, from

the weaknesses of flesh and spirit, both from the pains and miseries of human nature, as well as from the universal corruption of morals in the world, that mankind has sinned against God, and is become a fallen and degenerate race of beings, under actual tokens of his displeasure, yet that they are not so utterly divested of their original powers and blessings, but that they have many of the comforts of this life left them to trace out the goodness of their Maker, and also a natural capacity to find out their duty, if they exerted this capacity to the utmost: Suppose yet further, that God has made several new discoveries both of his nature, his laws, and his grace, as well as of the severity of his punishing justice, to those families of mankind whence all the rest have been derived; but by degrees their criminal negligence, their irreligion, and their sensual vices have prevailed so far, as in some nations to blot out the remembrance of the true God, his laws, and his grace from amongst them: May not the goodness and justice of God be sufficiently vindicated, if these criminal nations are abandoned by heaven, and fall under divine punishment for these abominable offences? And especially if the justice of God proceed no further against them than to condemn and punish them for those offences only, which have been committed against some evident inward or outward manifestation of their duty, and the actual light of their own consciences; which offences being comparatively but few in number, call for a much lighter punishment than those sinners whose consciences have had higher degrees of light communicated to them in Jewish or christian nations?

**SOPH.** I thank you heartily, Pithander, for the large repetition you have given us of your last Sunday-morning's sermon, for I was then at church, and heard it with great satisfaction.

**PITH.** I acknowledge, Sir, I espied you there, and was almost ashamed to think how much I had borrowed from your discourse, in some of these conferences, toward the composition of that sermon: but gratitude and justice demand my hearty thanks to Sophronius; for I am constrained to confess, that I was not so well skilled in this controversy when I entered the list with Logisto: And I am resolved, Sir, for your sake, henceforth to entertain a better opinion of those who are not entirely with me in all the rites, laws, and powers of an established church. Thus I have learned at once from your agreeable conversation both wisdom and charity.

**SOPH.** You overwhelm me, Sir, with honours and civilities. I hope this conference hath not passed without my own considerable improvement, and am glad to find growing charity among all that profess the christian name, which I shall always endeavour to promote and cultivate; for without it I can never approve myself a disciple of the blessed Jesus.

**LOG.** Gentlemen, your mutual compliments return so thick on each other, that I have scarce room to put in my thanks to either of you, for the information I have received from both, I was wondering indeed, how Pithander came to deliver so long a discourse, in so regular a method and connexion on the sudden in free conversation : But Sophronius hath explained it to me, when he saith, it is the repetition of his sermon last Sunday. I acknowledge your goodness, Pithander, that you have given me the pleasure of hearing this excellent discourse, though I was not so good as to be at church : I must confess, Sir, these suppositions or considerations of yours are not at all improbable, and carry a good force of argument with them. You give me a little better opinion of the bible than I had before, since it teaches you to understand such a difficulty, and to shew us that God may be wise and good, notwithstanding the present wretched condition of the heathens, who overspread so great a part of this earth where we dwell. But then there is another difficulty ariseth here, and it is the very last I shall mention. " Has God, who is so wise and good a Being, left the greatest part of his creation to become finally miserable ?" Is this consistent with the designs of a Being who possesses infinite goodness and equal wisdom ?

**PITH.** Truly, Sir, the scripture seems to inform us, that there are but few which shall be saved : Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and they are but few who find it ; whereas the way to destruction is broad, and crowded with multitudes ; Mat. vii. 13, 14. And the apostle John tells us that though we who believe in Christ, are of God, yet the whole world lieth in wickedness ; 1 John v. 19. And if at last it should prove, that there are far greater numbers condemned to bear the anger of their Maker, than those who enjoy his love, they have nothing justly to complain of but their own ill conduct, since they shall be all condemned, even by their own consciences. God is just, even though all his creatures should make themselves miserable.

**SOPH.** Will you give me leave, Pithander, to try whether upon some principles of philosophy and the rules of government, together with some charitable turns of thought, I may not be able to give satisfactory answers to the present inquiry and objection of Logisto.

**PITH.** With all my heart, Sir, and I shall be happy to learn from you any further methods of relieving the difficulties that are supposed to attend the conduct of providence in its transactions with the race of men.

**SOPH.** In the first place then, what if I should venture to tell you of another supposition that has been raised from some charitable turns of thought concerning those rude and barbarous nations, those guilty and unhappy creatures who lived and died

in ignorance and vice, whose parents had lost the knowledge of God, and their duty before they were born, and who never came within the reach of the gospel in any of the dispensations of it, either by Noah or Abraham, Moses or Christ? What if we should suppose these wretches, by the overflowing mercy of God, should be favoured with some other state of trial or probation, before the final sentence of the last day condemns them to perpetual misery? You know some persons have supposed, that in the invisible regions where sinful spirits are kept, the souls of the rebels who were disobedient in the days of Noah, and were drowned in the flood, enjoyed the preaching of the gospel by Jesus Christ himself, and that after they had lain in prison and punishment some thousands of years Christ went into hell for that purpose; 1 Pet. iii. 19. and preached to the spirits in prison, who were once disobedient. Now what if these guilty and unhappy creatures, who never had any opportunity to acquaint themselves with the true God and his worship, and with any dispensation of his mercy, shall be raised again in the second resurrection, after the millenium, or the happy state of the church, is expired? And after they have sustained punishment for their former madness and folly from the time of their death till that day, what if they should be put upon another trial under the dispensation of christianity, that so none of all the race of Adam may be finally condemned without having the actual knowledge of the gospel, at least in some or other of the ancient or later dispensations of it? This would not afford the least glimpse of hope to those sinners who have finally rejected the divine revelations which have been made to them under any of the dispensations of the gospel, and especially under the light of christianity: Yet this would solve every difficulty, and remove every pretence against the justice of God, in his present conduct towards heathens. It is true, I cannot say that I can find this in my bible: but a very learned and ingenious divine of the church of England, who wrote about thirty years ago, thinks he hath found it there, and that is Mr. Staynoe, in his first volume of the *Salvation of Man by Jesus Christ*, to which essay on this subject I refer you: but I venture no further into these depths and unsearchables of the divine counsel. Yet it must be confessed, that if there should be any other state of trial appointed for those unhappy creatures, whom God is said to wink at in the days of their ignorance; Acts xvii. 30. and perhaps for this reason he is said to wink at them, because he intended another state of probation for them; I say, if there should be such a state, it is not improbable, that vast multitudes of them might repent and believe, and be saved.

**PITH.** This is a very strange supposition indeed: and I think there might be considerable objections raised against it from several places of scripture.

SORH. I only mentioned it, Sir, as a supposition that is not possible; for I cannot say that I come heartily into it, and therefore I will not undertake to be an advocate for it. Permit me then to make yet another supposition, in which many of our vices seem to have been encouraged by scripture; and that is, at before the final shutting up of the theatre of this world, ere may probably be a long space of time, at least a thousand years, wherein virtue, religion, piety, and happiness shall be read over the world as universally as vice and misery are now. Suppose also in this millennium there be a more regular and numerous propagation of mankind, when at the same time there shall be no wars, no public calamities and spreading depopulations of the world; would not this blessed scene of things go a great way to provide and prepare such multitudes of inhabitants in the heavenly regions as might nearly equal the numbers of men in the six thousand years past?

But suppose after all, it shall be found in the great day of decision, that far the greatest part of the inhabitants of this our world have been wilful criminals against the laws of their Maker, and fall under a sentence of condemnation and punishment; and suppose that, upon the whole, it must be acknowledged, that there be some degrees of severity exercised by the Lord and Governor of the universe against the inhabitants of this little globe of earth; why may he not chuse to make the final impenitents of his our sinful world a monument of his punishing justice, his vindication of his own injured honour? Why may he not set them up as an awful warning to millions of inhabitants of upper and larger worlds of his dominion, in comparison whereof perhaps this earth is no bigger than the prison of Newgate, when compared with the large and spacious cities of London and Westminster?

Is it esteemed any unreasonable severity in the government of Great Britain, if twenty or thirty prisoners in Newgate are pitifully punished every year, in order to deter the millions of inhabitants of these two great cities from the like crimes? Does not every governor find it proper and necessary that there should be some examples made, of executing and sustaining the penalties of the law, when villains, by their own crimes, have incurred these penalties? Does not prudence itself sometimes see it needful by such executions to vindicate the wisdom and justice of the government, to maintain the authority of the laws, and to secure the rest of the subjects in their constant obedience? And may not a sovereign prince chuse which criminals he pleases to pardon in a rebellious province, and which of them he will make a monument of terror to preserve the honour of his government, and secure obedience to his laws? And if by this means he secures millions of his subjects in their allegiance to himself, and in the en-



joyment of a thousand happy privileges, which he has bestowed upon them ; who can say, that this sovereign has acted any thing unbecoming a wise or a gracious ruler ?

Alas ! Sir, we have too ambitious and over-weening a conceit of ourselves, when we imagine, that we, who dwell on this little spot of ground, are the whole of the intellectual creation of God ; or even that we make any great or considerable part of it. Perhaps the world of those spirits which we call angels, may be as large and numerous as ours : There are many ranks and degrees of them, thrones and principalities, dominions and powers. The multitudes of their armies are ten thousand times ten thousand : And there may be some reason to think that even all these ranks of intelligent creatures are but an inconsiderably small portion of the intellectual works of God. Perhaps most, if not all these orders of angels might be formed with a regard to this earth only, to be divine agents and messengers to manage the affairs of this terrestrial province of God's dominion. It is possible, that all the intellectual creatures of which God has given us an account, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, have some special relation to this little world of ours. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation ? Heb. i. 14. And the fallen angels in the grand scheme of God's universal government, perhaps, have all their posts assigned to them by divine order, or by divine permission, to transact no other affairs but what relate to mankind. It is possible, that all we call angels and devils are only God's invisible ministers of this his kingdom of visible creatures called men, both in their bodied and unbodied state. Why may not his other visible dominions among the stars, which I shall point out presently, have also their proper ranks of invisible ministers, by which his providence and government may be carried on among them.

Let us consider yet further, what innumerable ranks of beings may be found in the vast universe which God has made, superior both to men and angels, in a gradation almost infinite. Let us think of the astonishing varieties and gradations of beings belonging to this our globe, in air, on earth, or in the sea, which lie in the descending scale or creatures betwixt the nature of man, and the nature of an oyster, or if there be any animal of lower life : And why may there not be another variety and gradation of beings as vast and astonishing in the ascending scale of existences, all superior to us, and yet the highest of them infinitely beneath God, its Maker ? surely the wisdom of God hath an inexhaustible sufficiency of invention to contrive, and his power to produce such gradations, and such varieties. How audacious a thing is it then, for such little creeping animals, who dwell on this clod of clay, to fancy ourselves so large a part of

e workmanship of God, or so considerable a portion of his extensive dominions? And since we are a sinful race of creatures, who have fallen from our original state of holiness, and felicity, why may not the blessed God think fit to make the greatest part of our rebellious world a monument of his just resentment against sin, while other numerous ranks of beings abide firm in their duty and in their happiness, and perhaps are commended in their allegiance and felicity, partly by the warning they receive from the revolt and punishment of the inhabitants of this earthly globe.

It is generally now agreed by philosophers, that the planetary worlds, such as Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn, are replenished with inhabitants; as well as this earth, which is a planetary body like themselves. They are placed in such a situation to the sun, which is a central fire, and are carried round it in certain periods of time, so as to receive light and heat from it in proportion to their distances and their revolutions, just as our earth is: and they seem to be as proper habitations for a variety of unknown creatures, as the globe on which we tread. Can we suppose, that the air, the earth, and the water all round this our world should be thus replenished every where as it is, with multitudes of inhabitants, and all, in some measure, under the dominion of mankind, whose race is propagated and spread all around it, and is there not as much reason to conceive, that these vast airy bodies, the planets, which are so well fitted for the residence of animal and intellectual creatures, should be mere waste wildernesses, huge solitudes of lifeless matter, without any vital beings to replenish, possess, and adorn them? Without any intellectual tenants there, who may give God the glory of his works? This seems not only contrary to the dictates of reason, and to the appearances of nature round about us, but to the words of scripture itself; for the prophet Isaiah tells us, chapter xlv. verse 18, that the God who created the heavens, and formed the earth, and made it, he created it not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited: Whence the inference is very natural and obvious, that it should be not formed it to be the habitation of some creatures, if it had been made in vain.

And may we not make the same inference concerning those large planetary globes of Saturn and Jupiter, which, perhaps, are two hundred times as big as this earth? They, surely, are made to be inhabited, and designed for some better and nobler purpose, than merely to give us mortals a little glimmering light in the absence of the moon, to direct a wandering ship at midnight, and to entertain the curiosity of an astronomer and his viewing-glass. These seem to be purposes too low and mean, too vile and inconsiderable for the prodigious vastness of those heavenly bodies, and the regularity of their situations and motions.

round the sun. The wisdom of a God does not aim at such poor and unworthy designs, by such stupendous fabrics as these rolling worlds. Caucasus, or Teneriff, or a taller mountain, if it were made only for the birth or residence of a mouse, would be a more proportionate contrivance, and, perhaps, a wiser design.

And what if we make yet another excursion beyond the circle wherein Saturn rolls, which is the most distant of our planetary globes? What if we suppose, with some modern virtuosos, that every fixed star is a sun, or central fire, to enlighten and warm a whole set of planetary worlds, which may roll round it? And what if all these worlds are furnished with intellectual inhabitants? What a stupendous idea shall we have of the magnificence of the works of God and the extent of his innumerable dominions? Where is the hurt or danger of it, if we should yield to these reasonings, and to the philosophy of the age, so far as to imagine these innumerable worlds to be the appointed residences of conscious beings? Let us suppose them all inhabited by animal and intellectual creatures of God, and, perhaps, better peopled than this our earth is, especially if sin and death have not entered amongst them.

Now though we are not favoured with the knowledge of the state, or laws, or circumstances of the inhabitants of those worlds, because we are a rebellious and criminal province of God's dominion, and deserve to dwell in ignorance and darkness; yet those upper regions and worlds may be favoured with a large and particular account of the state and circumstances of this earth, and of the conduct of God towards the rebel inhabitants of it: And this notice of the degeneracy and rebellion of mankind, together with the severity of God, our common Governor, against a great part of men, may have a happy influence to secure their obedience, and to preserve the inhabitants of those worlds in an everlasting state of duty and happiness.

As it has pleased God, in his wisdom and goodness, to reveal to us the heavy and endless punishment he has inflicted on the evil angels for their first rebellion and disobedience, and has told us, "That he spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell, and has reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day," and some greater punishment to ensue, in order to warn us of the dangerous crimes of pride and rebellion; 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6. 1 Tim. iii. 6. So it is very probable, that the same divine wisdom and goodness has made our crimes and punishments on this globe of earth a monument of his just severity, to give warning to some vast and unknown regions of upper worlds, lest they also should sin against their Maker, after our example, and fall under his dreadful displeasure, as mankind has done.

Though it should appear at the great day of judgment, that

est part of the inhabitants of this our earth are condemned to various degrees of unhappiness, yet, as I before said, perhaps all this earth, with all the number of its inhabitants together, are not so much in comparison of the holy worlds of intellectual beings which God has created, as the city of London is in comparison of the populous cities of Westminster and London: And if by the punishment of a few criminals there are many preserved in duty and happiness, then the great and glorious display of his justice and mercy above and beyond the exercise of his more awful judgments of justice or vengeance: And even the exercise of his merciful perfections upon a few of the subjects of his dominions, seems as it were a means in the hand of his goodness, to multiply blessings of them for ever blessed.

As though the largest part of mankind may be sinful and unhappy, yet I am persuaded, that the far largest part of the whole intelligent creation are holy and happy beings; here are some thousands of miserable immortal souls on this little globe, yet there may be, perhaps, above a thousand worlds of conscious beings, who are happy in the favour of the God who made them, who love and serve him, and live in his love through all the ages of their immortality. It is reasonable is it then for us to pass a judgment either on the conduct of God, or on the state of his intellectual creation, on such a narrow and limited survey of his wisdom, justice and goodness, as this our little planetary globe of earth can afford?

z. Well, Sophronius, I am wonderfully pleased with the speech of yours. This seems effectually to secure the defence of the divine perfections against all charges. If you shew us the inhabitants of these castles in the air, these airy worlds. But are not all these mere suppositions of fancy, and imaginary scenes? What certainty have you of the existence of these unknown creatures and unknown dominions of God the Father?

h. It is granted, Logisto, that these are suppositions, but they are such suppositions as I have shewn you are built upon principles of reason: the force of argument which sustains them is so strong, that, in my opinion, it rises to a very high degree of probability, and therefore they are not to be called imaginary scenes or the airy castles of wild fancy. If these reasonings are good and solid, then it will follow that these unknown worlds are so far from being mere airy castles, that they are the solid and real structures of God himself. Besides, Sir, as I remember, it was mentioned by Plotinus that if we can but find out any such hypotheses or principles which may solve real difficulties in the conduct of

God and providence, this will effectually prove, that these difficulties are not insolvable: and much more effectual are they to remove these difficulties, when the reason of things so far conspires with these suppositions, as goes very near to prove them great realities.

**PITH.** I am much inclined to come into these sentiments of Sophronius, since they carry such an appearance of reason and truth in them, and since they have so happy an effect as to represent far the greatest part of the intellectual works of God holy and happy, and hereby do so much honour to the equity and goodness of the great Creator.

**LOG.** I cannot but approve such a scheme as this, which bestows virtue and happiness upon almost all the intelligent creatures of God; for I can hardly conceive, that ever a being of such boundless wisdom, power, and goodness, should produce so many millions of creatures capable of pleasure and pain, felicity and misery, without designing and securing felicity to far the greatest part of them, as far as is consistent with the freedom of their will.

**SORN.** So far as things appear to me, Logisto, I cannot but agree with you in this sentiment: and by such considerations and reasonings as these, I think we have removed the grand difficulty that lay upon your mind with the greatest weight, viz. How it should come to pass that so many thousand inhabitants of the heathen world, who are originally fallen from God, should go on from age to age in the neglect of God and virtue, still running on in the paths of misery, and be so far abandon'd by their Creator, as not to have a practical and proximate sufficiency in their own reasoning powers to guide and conduct them to religion and happiness.

But after all, Sir, give me leave to say, that the nature of the great and blessed God is infinitely superior to all our powers and conceptions, his thoughts are so far above our thoughts, and his ways so far above our ways, that if there should remain such difficulties in the conduct of his providence towards his creatures, that we could not fairly account for by our reason, and by all our suppositions, yet we are still bound to believe matter of fact, when our reason, experience, and observation assure us of the truth of it. We cannot but believe, that the heathen world actually lies in a dark and deplorable state; and yet, on the other hand, we are bound to believe, that the great God is perfectly wise, and righteous, and good. The ways and works of God may be unknown and unsearchable, but they can never be unjust. There may be infinite schemes within his comprehensive view, whereby his wisdom can reconcile those things which we know not how to reconcile. Those different propositions in the science of theology, as well as in

ematical learning, stand within his view in a most perfect amiable consistency, which to our narrow thoughts appear inharmonious, and almost inconsistent. If there are such sort of seeming inconsistencies in some parts of geometry, when we run the doctrines of infinite and incommensurables, which yet all are right in the eye of God, much more may we suppose, that the works of the great God, and his divine schemes and transactions, there may be many things which seem to us all difficulty and darkness, and yet before him they stand in the fairest and the easiest light.

When St. Paul had considered the long darkness that lay upon the Gentile world for many ages, the peculiar privation of the Jews, to be made, during those ages, the favourites of God; when he considered again, these very favourites, almost the whole nation of them, so far left as to abuse the Son of God himself, to run into infidelity, and thereby to be abandoned of God, their Benefactor and their King; when again, in prophetic vision, after this once favourite people had continued long in unbelief, guilt, and misery, he saw that they should be pardoned, and restored to the true religion, and the favour of God, in his xi. chapter to the Romans; with what ecstacy of joy and surprise and adoration does he conclude his discourse! God hath shut up both the Gentiles and the Jews, by turns in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon both, in his appointed season: God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath seen his counsel? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be imputed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Log. I know not how to make a sufficient acknowledgment to you, gentlemen, for the favour you have done me, and the light you have given me in these conferences. I am fully satisfied, that the bulk of the heathen world is in a very dark and deplorable state, and amongst those who have lost all rational knowledge of divine revelation, their own reason is far from being sufficient in any practical sense, as you have endeavoured to lead them to virtue, religion and happiness. In a just review, I am convinced, that had I been so unhappy as to be born amongst them, my reasoning powers would have been exercised to no better purpose than theirs are: For why should I be so vain as to imagine myself the wisest man among many thousands of the present age, and the millions of other generations? I begin to see there is a necessity of some better advantages, in order to reform mankind, and to

render them wise, and pious, and happy: Nor do I know how this can be attained, but by some favourable discoveries sent from heaven: And as for all other religions, that in our age pretend to divinity and revelation, it is evident in itself, that none of them can compare with the doctrines of the New Testament, either for its own internal excellency, or the outward proofs that it came from God. I must confess therefore, I think I am come as far as king Agrippa, when he heard Paul's apology for himself; for you have almost persuaded me to become a christian.

PITH. Permit me, Sir, in the language of St. Paul, to make my reply: Would to God that not you only, but all the young gentlemen of our age, who have been tempted to abandon the religion of their fathers, and to forsake the gospel, and the faith in which they were educated, would bethink themselves ere it be too late, become not only almost, but altogether as firm believers in Christ as I profess myself to be.

SOPH. And as you have done me the honour, gentlemen, to put me into the place of the learned, and made me your moderator during this conference, I ask leave now to resign this honour and office; and since Pithander has formed such a benevolent and pious wish, I take pleasure to occupy the place of the unlearned, and confirm it with a most sincere and devout, *Amen.*

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**THE HOLINESS**

OF

**TIMES, PLACES, AND PEOPLE,**

*&c. &c.*

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## THE PREFACE

### HOLINESS OF TIMES, PLACES, AND PEOPLE," &c.

N I tell the world the various occasions of writing these papers here collected, my design is rather to gratify the curiosity of my fan to add any particular illustrations to the subjects here treated of. The first of these essays, viz. "On the Perpetuity of the Sabbath, or the Observation of the Lord's-day," owes its rise to a practical discourse on that subject, which is printed among the sermons preached at Berry-street, London, in the year 1733. While I was composing it, my thoughts were drawn out in the argumentative part, which I therefore cut off and laid aside, to be published at some other opportunity of publication. Since that time I have had occasion to review this discourse, and though I think the scheme there proposed to be just and right, yet if there be any weakness in any of the arguments of it, I pointed them out in the second appendix; and if they should, upon the strictest examination prove insufficient to support my conclusion, I there take the freedom to inform the world, what would be my own sentiments on this theme. But still I cannot but conclude that the expediency of a sabbath through all the ages of mankind, comes to a necessity: And if the observation of a Lord's-day be not a direct imitation of Christ, yet it comes as near as possible, that is, the direct example of the apostles.

The second Essay on the Hour of the Day for the Administration of the Lord's-supper," arose from the scruples of a pious soul now with God, some uneasiness of conscience about receiving the holy communion according to the custom of many churches. This was written in the year 1710. The third discourse was a sermon preached on the 20th of October, 1737, at the opening of a new meeting-house near Wapping, by the congregation under the pastoral care of my dear and esteemed friend Mr. David Jennings;" and when I translated it into English, in order to be published at the earnest request of many of my friends, I made a considerable enlargement both in the doctrinal and the practical parts. The fourth arose from my own meditations and anxious enquiries, whether the forms and rites of all the Jewish worship were much more prescribed by Moses to the Jews, than the forms of worshipping in Christian assemblies seem to be prescribed by Christ, or his apostles? This was written by me near thirty years, according to my best remembrance.

The last dissertation, viz. "On the Difference between the Visible Church, and the distinct Holiness of the Jewish Church and Synagogue," written in the year 1732," took its rise from a growing opinion in the world, viz. that the language of the prophets, both in prophecies and promises, addressed to Israel and Zion, must be understood no further than the Jewish church; and that the discourses of the prophets concerning the converted gentile churches concerning their former state, refer to idolatrous heathens; and that some of the duties prescribed to the Jews with such earnestness, particularly that of faith in Christ, must almost be understood to be constructed to the use of those primitive converts from superstition

and idolatry. Now if these opinions prevail, the writings of the prophets and apostles will seem to me to be too much impoverished and curtailed, and a great part of the advantage of these writings, both of the prophets and the apostles, will be cut off from christians in the present age, because they never were of the seed of Israel, nor have ever been idolatrous heathens, or utterly ignorant of the true God, and Christ Jesus his Son.

The consideration of the holiness of places of worship in my late sermons being urged to the press, inclined me to review many of my manuscripts, and to take these papers out of them which had any cognation or affinity to the same subject, viz. "The Holiness of Times, Places, or People, and to publish them together under this title. If my meditations on any of these arguments shall so far find acceptance with my readers, as to lead them into any clearer ideas of some part of our common christianity, let every degree of knowledge awaken some thankfulness to God, and some happy improvement in the christian life.

*Newington, May 4, 1738,*

I. WATTS.

THE HOLINESS  
OF  
TIMES, PLACES, AND PEOPLE, &c.

DISCOURSE I.

*e Perpetuity of a Sabbath, and the Observance of the  
Lord's-day.*

It is an unhappy thing indeed, that that very day, which God originally designed for a sacred rest here on earth, and pointed it to be a pledge and emblem of eternal rest in heaven, should become a matter of noisy dispute and contention in his church; but God hath seen fit to exercise our *faith and patience* through some darkneses and difficulties even in his own worship in this world, that we may breathe and long after the light and glory of the future state, with that more perfect rest, and more altered worship, which is enjoyed and practised in the world to come.

Several of the controversies which have risen, with regard to the sabbath, whether Jewish or christian, and the holiness of it, though they are not of the highest importance among the doctrines and duties of christianity, yet neither are they mean and trifling; for as we ought not to release the souls and consciences of men from any of the obligations which God and Christ have laid on them; so neither should we lay any yokes on the necks of disciples, from which Christ hath released them. However, since there seems to have been *one day in seven* appointed for rest and labour, or separated for divine worship, *from the beginning of the world*, through every dispensation of God to men, I cannot but think there is something of a moral nature in it; and on this account, I suppose God was pleased to begin a sabbath, as soon as he had made a creature who could observe it, and that he designed there should be a sabbath as long as the creature continued on earth; Gen. ii. 2. *God rested on the seventh day from his work, which he had made, and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it*, or pronounced it holy.

But that we may go on in a regular train of argument, and to be as brief as possible, I shall sum up my best thoughts on this subject, in the following propositions:

I. "Though man be placed on the earth for labour, or business

in this life ; yet he ought sometimes to enjoy rest from his earthly labours, and sometime pay worship to the God of heaven." Both these are taught us by the light of reason. There will be some seasons wherein the animal nature of man and beast require some rest from their toil, and that besides the mere sleep of the night. Constant and unceasing toil and labour, from morning to evening, throughout our whole life, would wear out natures made of flesh and blood too fast, and this would not be dealing well with our bodies, *our servants, or our cattle*. There must be some seasons also, wherein God our Creator must have worship paid him by his creature man ; and as he is a creature made for society, he ought to acknowledge God in societies, and to pay him some public worship ; and there must be some certain times appointed for this purpose. This also the light of reason requires.

Let it be observed further, there is some natural connection between these two, viz. rest and worship ; for when man is at rest from his own labours, he is more at leisure for religion, and the service of God : And when he performs worship to God, he must rest from his common labours. A vigorous employment of the head and hands, in the works of the natural life, is not consistent at the same time with such devotion as God requires of men, either in public or private, which I shall have occasion to mention again before I conclude.

II. "The light of nature and reason doth not evidently teach us what part of time, or how much should be devoted to bodily rest, and to divine worship." Can we absolutely determine, whether some part of every day is sufficient and most proper for both these purposes, or whether we should separate on this account one whole day out of five or ten, seven or seventeen ? Who can assign the just medium between too much and too little ? Human prudence indeed, and common experience will teach us in the main, that since social or public worship should be performed to God by many persons or families at once, it seems to be more convenient that a whole day should be separated now and then, rather than to make perpetual interruptions of the business of life, by separating a small part of every day for this purpose ; and prudence will also teach us, that this whole day should be publicly known and appointed, at least by consent, and common agreement. But there would be endless differences of opinion what day this should be, and how often it should return, if it were left merely to the fancies, conveniences, and agreements of men. Some of a covetous and cruel temper would scarce allow one day in twenty for rest to their servants or cattle : some have so little love to religion, that they would think one in forty enough for God. Others of a different make would perhaps incline to one day in four or five : And thus there would be probably a continual confusion in this matter, and neither the seasons of rest, nor of worship, tied to the days of labour.

I. "To guard against all those inconveniences, as soon as God made man, and set him to labour in the garden of Eden, appointed him one day in seven to be a day of rest from labour and also a season of religion and worship; Gen. ii. 3. *Blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he rested from his works.* This secured our first parents from doubts of this kind; and had this been faithfully observed by posterity, it would have maintained labour and rest, business and worship, in their due proportions, and have secured us also from many doubts and contentions on this subject. God teaches us to rest, and to worship; and though we cannot determine, with any certainty, by our reasonings, the precise quantity of time which is necessary to relieve animal nature by rest after its labours; nor can we tell which is a just proportion of time to be assigned to God, and employed for worship and other purposes; yet God in his infinite wisdom well knew the proper ends and relations of things, all the necessities of our animal nature, and the dues of his worship, and by the same wisdom he appointed one day in seven for both these. And I am persuaded that this is something perfectly proper, just and reasonable in the nature of things in the appointment of this proportion of time, *one day in seven*, for religious worship, as well as for bodily rest, which divine reason sees plainly, and because man's reason does not find it out, God has revealed it to him from the beginning of the world. Reason teaches us *to honour our parents*, but as we are our parents, must be told us by men, before we can obey them. It is a moral law, yet we need information of the subject before the law can be obeyed: So it is with the Sabbath.

The chief thing expressly mentioned in the institution of the Sabbath, is a day of rest from the common labours and businesses; and by comparing this with other texts of the Old and New Testament, it seems to be designed for these several ends: 1. To give our natures proper refreshment, as well as to relieve them from their toils, which could not well bear incessant labour.—2. To imitate the great God our Maker, who, after *six days rest in creating the world, rested from his work on the seventh day*, and is represented as surveying the works of his hand, and pronouncing them good. And as man was *made in the image of his Maker*, so he was appointed to act like him in this respect, *to rest from his labours*, and spend that time in contemplating and honouring his Creator.—3. To preserve a lasting remembrance of the creation of the world in six days among the succeeding generations of men, and hereby secure mankind against idleness, or forgetting the true God who made the world.—4. To declare and pledge to Adam, of the state of peace and rest.

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which God would give him, after he had fulfilled his labour of perfect obedience in a state of innocence. But I add also—5. That since this day was *sanctified*, or made holy, and was blessed of God in its first appointment to Adam, as appears from that text, it intimates to us, that the day should not be devoted entirely to sloth and idleness, but should be employed in some holy exercises, some performances of divine worship, and also a divine encouragement to expect and hope that the great God might bless his creatures with peculiar blessings at that time, or make it a blessed day to them.

Both these appointments of a seventh day for rest, and for worship, since the light of nature could not determine them, are here mentioned as appointed by God himself, and built on *God's own resting the seventh day from his own work, which he had created*. And what fitter time could there be for Adam and Eve, just created to celebrate the praises of their Maker for his works, than while God is represented as reviewing his own works with a peculiar approbation and delight; *when the morning stars of heaven sang together on this celestial festival, and all the sons of God on high shouted for joy*, as it is expressed in Job xxxviii. 7. How proper was it for Adam, the Son of God below, to join with this holy choir in his Creator's praise? I have observed that this appointment of *the sabbath, or one day in seven for rest*, and for worship, might be a sort of moral \* command, rising from the order of things, and the natural relation of such creatures to a God, and of six days labour to one day's rest, and so a natural and perpetual duty, though it is here expressed only as derived from the revelation, or discovery of God's resting-day, and as a positive institution.

Nor are these two things at all inconsistent; for there are other duties which are acknowledged to belong to the order and law of nature, and are of a moral kind, though it would be very hard for every man to have found them out by mere reason; and therefore they were kindly revealed and prescribed to man at first, and that in a way of correspondence with some transactions of God in his creation of the world. So the law of monogamy, or taking but one wife, is argued by the prophet Malachi, because *God made but one woman for one man at first*; Mal. ii. 14, 16. So the pre-eminence, or headship of the man above the woman, the institution of marriage, and the various suitable duties required on both sides, are laid on this foot, viz. because God made man before he made the woman, because *he made the woman for the man, and formed the woman out of the flesh and the bone of the man*; see Gen. ii. 23, 24. 1 Cor. xi. 3, 8, 9.

\* Note, the word moral is used here in a larger sense, than when it signifies only what the light of reason can find out. If the term offend, I do not insist on it.

1 Tim. ii. 12, 13. Mat. xix. 5. and yet all these things seem to be moral and perpetual: And then why may not the sabbath be so too, which being hard to be found out by the light of reason, was revealed and prescribed to man in the same manner as these? In short, a set time for divine worship seems to be a natural duty, or a moral law: That it should be one day in seven, is revealed and positive, yet in some sense moral and perpetual also: And that it should be *the seventh day*, from the beginning of God's creation, is merely positive, and therefore not perpetual, but changeable as will better appear afterward.

IV. "It is very probable that the pious patriarchs, in the beginning of the world, actually kept this seventh day, though there be no very plain and particular account of it, in so brief a history as that of Moses." Let us observe, that the reasons of it are perpetual, viz. a remembrance of the creating work of God in six days, and his rest on the seventh; the necessary rest that belongs to our bodies, our servants, and our cattle; as well as the necessity of the worship of God at certain seasons; all which are contained in the fourth commandment, where we are required to *keep the sabbath holy*. It may be doubted, indeed, whether all the patriarchs, in their pastoral manner of life, could, conveniently keep a sabbath, by meeting in large public assemblies: But as each master of a family was a priest to his own house, so it is most likely they worshipped God in large families assembled on that day in an eminent manner, and their neighbours might attend, though the bible be silent or obscure as to any notices of it. I say, obscure notices, because though there be no plain and evident examples of keeping the sabbath by the patriarchs: yet how many things are there of plain moral duty toward God and man, which the holy patriarchs without doubt practised, of which there is not the least hint in scripture? Must we conclude then they never practised them?

But, there are some texts which have been supposed by critics, to give hints of this practice. Some have thought that in Gen. iv. 3. "the end of the days" when Cain and Abel offered their several offerings, was the end of the week, which was the first, and perhaps the only regular and exact division of time then known in the world, besides day and night. They suppose also, that in Job i. 6. *the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord*, was the sabbath, when pious families came to meet and worship God; for they are called *sons of God*; Gen. vi. 2. And there is reason to suppose that Noah, that just and holy man, might observe the sabbath in the ark, and on the sabbath send out the dove, hoping on that day, to find rest or relief from his tiresome, wandering voyage and imprison-



ment; for it is evident, that he divided his days by sevens in sending out this creature; Gen. viii. 10, 12\*.

But suppose the bible were entirely silent on this subject; yet it may be justly remarked here, that as there is an express institution of a sabbath in the beginning of the bible, without any plain and uncontested example of the practice in the patriarchal ages, so in the first christian age, there are several plain examples of the practice of keeping the Lord's-day without any express institution of it in the New Testament. But as from such christian examples we reasonably infer an institution, so from the ancient institution, we as reasonably infer there were some patriarchal examples of the practice: But this is only a hint by the way.

Question. But may it not be reasonably supposed, as some writers have done, that Moses only mentions in the second chapter of Genesis, in the history of Adam, a certain sabbath by way of anticipation, which should be instituted in time to come among the Jews? Answer 1. Can it be imagined, that in so short a history of the creation of the world, Moses should take such particular notice of a certain day, as blessed and sanctified by the Creator, which should not be actually sanctified and blessed till two thousand and four hundred years afterwards? Could this be done only by way of anticipation.—2. Are not the finishing the creation and the institution of a sabbath expressly joined in close connection, in both places of the Mosaic history? And why should we not believe, that when *God rested on the seventh day from all his work, he blessed this seventh day, and sanctified it*, at that very time? Gen. ii. 2, 3. and Ex. xx. 11.—3. Did he bless and sanctify this day only for himself and his own rest? No surely, but for the rest of man, and to be kept holy by Adam and his posterity. *The sabbath was made for man*, as our Saviour expressly tells us, Mark ii. 27. And the reason given to man for the appointment of a sabbath, viz. *God's resting from his works of creation*, as it is expressed in the ii. Genesis, is the same in the xx. of Exodus: And why then should we not suppose it to be given by God to Adam, as well as to the Jews by Moses? Yet again,—4. I ask leave to say, I can hardly persuade myself, that God ever left the world so many ages without so necessary, or at least so very important a means to preserve the true religion in it as the sabbath is. Any religion without some appointed seasons for the celebration of the rites of it, is in great danger of being lost and forgotten by the bulk of

\* Besides former writers, Doctor Hant in his "Essay on Revelation," &c. p. 46. is of this mind. Nor can it be supposed here, that Noah by knowing the influence of the moon on the waters, sent out the dove at two succeeding distances of seven days: For he could never expect the waters to be abated from the face of the ground at the neap-tides, whatever he might do at the spring-tides; when as they rise the highest at the flood, they fall the lowest at the ebb.

those who have learned it. Even all the false religions in the world that we know of especially in every nation that is civilized, have some particular days or seasons set apart for the practice of some public ceremonies, or the performance of sacred things. The common light of reason shews men the necessity of it, where any religion is to be maintained; and why then should not the true religion enjoy the same advantage? Why should God be supposed so regardless of a matter of such importance? And I would add,—5. That even in very ancient times, there was a knowledge of the sacredness of one day in seven among the heathens, who would not borrow their religion from the Jews whom they hated, and would never knowingly reverence any of their ceremonies; and therefore these heathen notices of it, and regards to it, must be originally derived from some more ancient tradition of the divine institution of it. See the instances hereof in Dr. Owen of the Sabbath, page 74, &c. Days and nights, lunar months and solar years, are distinctions of nature, and therefore are in the general appearance and succession of them evident to all men by the sun, moon and stars; but how the weekly period of just seven days should make its entrance, can hardly be well accounted for, but by this tradition of a sabbath. The ancient Chaldeans had this distinction of seven days; Gen. xxix. 27. Fulfil her week, said Laban to Jacob at his marriage with Leah. And the Philistines had seven days festival at a wedding; Judges xiv. 12, 15, 17. But the instances cited out of heathen writers, viz. Homer, Hesiod, Callimachus, &c. concerning their days divided by sevens, are much plainer, as well as concerning the sacredness of a seventh day.

The silence of scripture, or the doubtful notices, of an actual observation of the sabbath by the patriarchs, are no sufficient proof that it was not observed: Or if they had forgot and lost it in any age, through the crimes and apostacy of their fathers, this does not prove it was not instituted at first to be always observed. The law of monogamy, or having but one wife, was lost among the patriarchs as well as the sabbath; and yet it was an original constitution from the beginning of the world. I will readily grant it very probable in some few ages before the flood, as well as in some ages after it, there was a degeneracy in this, as well as other parts of religion: The *one day in seven* might be lost among many nations, and it much wanted to be renewed among men.

V. "As soon as God set apart a nation to be a peculiar church and people to himself in the world, he appointed again *one day in seven for a day of rest* and of public worship." If the day of rest was utterly lost, as probably it was among the slaveries of Egypt or before, yet what day God would have them keep for a sabbath was pointed out by the manna not falling.

*Ex. xvi. 23, 26. The Lord hath said, to-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord. Six days shall ye gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, there shall be none. The notion of a sabbath seems to be mentioned here not as a new thing, or a thing utterly unknown, though the particular seventh day might be unknown and forgotten.*

Let it be observed here, that in the appointment of the sabbath to the Jews, a day of rest seems to be the prime end of the institution; rest from labour seems to be the most obvious original design of it; this appears from the very name sabbath, which is a hebrew word and signifies rest. It appears also from the frequent repetition of the law of the sabbath peculiarly as a day of rest, both in the books of Moses and the writings of the prophets. See the words of the fourth commandment: *Ex. xx. 8, 9, 10, 11. Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy: Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh-day, and hallowed it. Ex. xxiii. 12. Six days shalt thou do all thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest; that thy ox and thy ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed. And Ex. xxxi. 15. The seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever doth any work on the sabbath-day, shall surely be put to death. And in the lvi. and lix. chapters of Isa. Promises of mercy are made to those who keep the sabbath from polluting it, and do not their own pleasure on the holy day of God. The Jews were sent into captivity for neglecting and profaning the sabbath-day; Neh. xiii. 17, 18. And therefore in the History of Nehemiah's Reformation, after the return of the Jews from captivity in Babylon, you find frequent mention of his care, that they might rest from the labours of the week, and thus keep the sabbath; Neh. xiii. 16, 19, 21.*

The reason which is mentioned; *Ex. xx. 11. for the institution of the sabbath, is, because God rested from his work of creation on the seventh day. This was written on the tables of stone, and pronounced on mount Sinai. And in Deut. v. 14, 15. Moses gives another reason, viz. because Israel was then delivered out of bondage, and rested from Egyptian slavery. The Lord thy God brought thee out with a mighty hand, therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day. Thus it appears, that rest as a memorial of God's resting from his works of creation, and of Israel's rest and release from bondage, were the grand points kept in their view*

n the institution of their sabbath, or of the restoration of it to that people.

But the design of God herein was not that the Jews should wear away the day in lazy idleness; but since they rested and were released from common work, there were other sacred services appointed them; they were obliged to celebrate the worship of God: it was a day of holiness: *Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy.* God ordained on that day *there should be a holy convocation or assembly;* Lev. xxiii. 3. *The seventh day is a sabbath of rest, a holy convocation;* and therein the people were required to meet together for religious purposes, that is, to offer up prayers and praises to God. Thus, saith the Lord, in Isa. vi. 6, 7. *Every one that keepeth my sabbath from polluting it, I will make them joyful in my house of prayer.* And in Acts xvi. 13. *On the sabbath we went to a river-side, where prayer was wont to be made.* And the xcii. Psalm, wherein God is greatly praised, is called a *Psalm or Song for the Sabbath-day.* The law also was to be read and explained on the sabbath, and all this not only at the tabernacle or temple, but in every place where they dwelt: Lev. xxiii. 3. *It is a holy convocation, ye shall do no work therein, it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.* And the scripture assures us, in following times this was constantly done; Luke iv. 16. *Jesus went into the synagogue, as his custom was, and stood up to read.* Verse 31. *He taught them on the sabbath-days.* Acts xiii. 21. *The prophets are read every sabbath-day;* and xv. 21. *Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day.* And this practice was perhaps more ancient than some learned men allow for it. Ps. lxxiv. 4, 8. there is mention made of synagogues more than once.

There were also several sacrifices prescribed on that day expressly by Moses; Numb. xxviii. 9, 10. whereas there was *one lamb offered morning and evening, every day, as a continual burnt-offering: On the sabbath-day two lambs of the first year, and two tenth deals of flour and oil for a meat-offering, and drink-offering: This is the burnt-offering of every sabbath, besides the continual burnt-offering with its meat and drink-offering.* Thus it is sufficiently proved, that both rest and worship were included among the designs of the sabbath, as renewed to the Jews by Moses.

VI. "The Jewish sabbath had many peculiarities in it, or a peculiar Judaical holiness, which did not belong to a sabbath, before or after the Jewish dispensation, and which made it a special part of their covenant at Sinai, or the political or national covenant between God and that people, which belonged to them chiefly, if not to them only. Exod. xxxi. 13—17. "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep, &c.

Israel shall keep the sabbath, it is a sign between me and you in all your generations.

We may give, for instance, these things following, which seem to be peculiarly appointed to the Jews, and to belong to the Jewish sabbath, viz. That seventh day precisely, which indeed might be, or might not be, the same which the patriarchs had, viz. the seventh from the creation; but that seventh day, or sabbath, which they should keep, was pointed out to them only by the manna withheld; Exod. xvi. 23, 25. Let me add here, the addition of numerous sabbaths, which were appointed them, besides the seventh day of every week; Lev. xxiii. And that absolute and universal rest, which was enjoined them on their sabbath, beyond what the necessity of the relief of nature, or the worship of God required, commemorates their resting from slavery, and may justly be reckoned the ceremonial holiness of the Jewish sabbath; for there was contained in it a rigorous severity of abstinence from all common affairs: traffic and labours whatsoever, even for the conveniences of life; Exod. xxxi. 15. And also, the not making fires, or dressing victuals on that day; Exod. xxxv. 3. and xvi. 23. Not walking or travelling above one or two miles at most, which is called *a sabbath-day's journey*; Exod. xvi. 29. Acts i. 12. *Not bearing any burdens whatsoever*; Jer. xvii. 21, 22. The punishment of the profanation of the sabbath with death; Exod. xxxi. 14. and xv. 35. and the double sacrifice of lambs on that day; Numb. xxviii. 9, 10. These things, in their strict observance, do not belong to the natural and original law of God, they are not absolutely necessary either for giving due natural rest to creatures, or for the weekly worship of God, and improvement in religion; and therefore they may be reckoned among the peculiar laws of the Jews. As these things are plain scripture, so it would take up too much time to prove all this at present by citing particular texts at large.

VII. "The New Testament, or the dispensation of Christ by his apostles, seems to have abolished every thing of the sabbath which was purely Jewish, and which belonged to the ceremonial or the political laws given to the nation of Israel by Moses." This is the evident meaning of those texts wherein christians are forbid to subject themselves to the bondage of Jewish rites and formalities; Gal. iv. 3, 9, 10. *When we were children, that is, in the state of Judaism, we were in bondage under the elements of the world, that is, the rudiments and discipline of the Jewish state; but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son,—to redeem them that were under the law.—But now after that ye have known God, in the revelation of the gospel, how turn ye again to those weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*

observe days and months, and times and years, that is, the ceremonial appointments concerning all their sabbath-days, and new moons, and sabbatical years, which were appointed to the Jews. To the same purpose speaks the same apostle to the Colossians, chapter ii. verses 14, 16, 17, that God, or Christ, *blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances which was against us, and took it out of the way:—Let no man therefore judge us in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, in respect of a festival, or of the new moons, or of the sabbath-days, or of the Greek sabbaths, of which the law of Moses had many besides the seventh day of the week, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.* And verse 20. he speaks here in the same language which he uses to the Galatians, *Ye Christians are dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world.* The Jewish manner of observation of the several sabbaths appointed in the law of Moses, with all these rigours and severities mentioned in the last proposition, is a mark of the state of the church in the childhood of the church under strict discipline, and of the bondage of it under a yoke of ceremonies and numerous prescribed duties; but under the gospel or New Testament, the church is grown to a maturer age, as the apostle, Gal. iv. describes it; and therefore Christians are released from such yokes of bondage; and the apostle forbids Christians to return to them again, but urges them to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free*; Gal. v. 1. Now that it is the sabbaths and festivals of the Jews only which are here abrogated, appears from the words used both in the epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, which describe their sacred times, festivals, new moons, sabbatical years, &c. But the original sabbath-day, as appointed to the patriarchs, is not expressed or included therein; or that was out of sight here, being not the matter of contest or opposition.

VIII. “Notwithstanding the abolition of all Jewish sabbaths, and of that rigorous observance of an absolute rest on the seventh sabbath-day; yet under the Christian dispensation one day in seven, that is, *the first day of the week*, has been always observed from the beginning as a day of assembling for pious and religious purposes; and it is very reasonably supposed, to be appointed by Christ himself.” Christians under the liberty of the gospel, are not to suppose themselves released from the stated returns of a day of worship. When the Jewish dispensation ended, the paradisiacal command seems still in force to all the race of Adam. Yokes of bondage were broken, but natural religion and moral laws are of everlasting obligation. Christians must have a day to worship their God, as well as the patriarchs; and therefore they must rest from the common works of men. The evidences which persuade us of the truth of this practice among the first Christians are such as these:

1. On the very day of the resurrection of Christ, *the disciples were assembled*, probably for worship, with *the doors shut for fear of the Jews*: This was the first day of the week, and *Jesus came and stood in the midst of them*; John xx. 19. and he pronounced his peace upon them, convinced them of his resurrection, repeated his commission to them, *breathed on them, and said, receive ye the Holy Ghost*; and as he took all occasions to instruct them, so no doubt he gave them larger instructions and exhortations about the things which concerned his kingdom and gospel on this first christian sabbath, than the short history of the evangelists could well repeat; John xx. 19—23. As soon as the Lord rose from the dead, he became their preacher on this glorious day, and blessed the whole assembly.

2. The very next first day of the week, that is, *after eight days inclusively, the disciples were met together again and Thomas was with them*, when Jesus appeared to them, gave them farther proofs of his resurrection, with suitable remarks on the unbelief of Thomas. And doubtless, he spake many other words to them, as well as *wrought many other signs* in their presence, after his resurrection, as in John xx. 30.

3. The apostles and other brethren were met together on the day of Pentecost in one place, when *they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance*; Acts ii. 1—4. Now by an easy computation of Pentecost, which is seven weeks, or fifty days from the passover, it is justly supposed by learned men, that this also was the first day of the week, when the Spirit fell on the disciples, and the gospel was preached to great multitudes, and *three thousand souls* were converted to the faith, as it is recorded in Acts ii. 14, 41. Blessed success of the word preached on that same first day of the week when the Spirit was given! These actions and blessings seem to prepare the way for the apostolic appointment of the first day of the week, though it was not then publicly appointed.

4. We are informed also, that St. Paul observed this day; Acts xx. 7. *Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together at Troas to break bread, Paul preached to them.* This coming together on the first day must probably be an apostolic appointment, and is recorded as a customary practice. It is granted indeed, that the apostle went often to the synagogues and places of worship on the Jewish sabbath, to teach the people the gospel, because that was the chief opportunity that he could have of addressing a great many persons at once, and of giving particular instructions to the Jews, his kinsmen after the flesh; but when christians who were not Jews, nor judaizing, came together to worship, it was usually, if not always on the first day of the week, so far as appears in scripture. In this and the following

particular we justly suppose the Greek words *μικτῶν σαββάτων* to signify *the first day of the week*. But if it should signify what some would have it, the first of the two sabbaths, thence it is evident that there were two days accounted sabbaths; the seventh day by the Jews and judaizing christians, and the first by the pure and more complete christians: And as the Jewish converts were very hardly brought off from every judaical rite and ceremony, there was a connivance or permission during the standing of the temple and Jewish polity, to indulge many Mosaical rites as part of their civil or political law: so that the Jewish christians might have two sabbaths, viz. the seventh day and the first; though the first only for the pure christians.

5. St. Paul gives order concerning a collection for the saints, upon the first day of the week; at least, that every one should lay by him in store according as God had prospered him; and this same order he gave to the churches of Galatia; 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. Now their public meetings on this day gave them more conveniency of gathering their charity, than on any other. Besides, the word *ἐκταραξίω* may intimate a weekly collection; for it was designed to prevent collections when Paul came. And it was on the old sabbath or seventh day on which collections were made in the Jewish synagogues; for the giving of alms was ever reckoned a proper duty for the sabbath; and the apostle seemeth hereby to transfer the duties of the Jewish sabbath to the first day of the week.

6. The religious observation of the first day of the week among christians was so general and well known, that so early as in the days of the apostle John it acquired a honourable title, and was called *the Lord's-day*. This name of honour was given in scripture to nothing else, but *the Lord's supper*, and *Lord's-day*. Then it was also that John was favoured with the prophetic spirit; Rev. i. 10. *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's-day*, and he had the visions of Christ in his glory, and the discovery of things to come. This is called *the Lord's-day*, as relating to the honour of Christ, and to his appointment, as *the Lord's supper*, obtained that name, from its reference to the appointment and honour of our blessed Saviour; 1 Cor. x. 21, 22. and xi. 20. Here it may be proper to enquire, what good reason can be given, why in all these appearances of Christ, and meetings and transactions before-mentioned, there should be such particular notice taken by the holy writers, on what day of the week they were done, if it were not to point out a christian sabbath to us? We do not find the third or fourth, fifth or sixth day of the week mentioned for worship, or any other transactions in the New Testament, as I remember; nothing but the Lord's-day, or the Jewish sabbath are specified; one when the Jews worshipped, and the other when the christians met for worship.



7. The primitive writers give us a clear account of the usual observation of this first day of the week by those who professed the christian religion; and they were known and distinguished from the heathens as well as from the Jews, by this particular character of observing the Lord's-day. It would be too tedious in this place to cite all the testimonies of Ignatius, Justin, Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Clemens of Alexandria, Tertullian, and others\*, which give us an account of this matter of fact in the second and third ages of christianity; and they speak of it as a very early custom or practice, if not from the beginning of the christian church, as planted by the apostles, even while they expressly renounced the Jewish sabbatizing. Now from all these matters of fact put together, we may derive two good remarks toward the support of the observation of the Lord's-day as a christian duty.

Remark I. Apostolical practice, and the custom of the primitive churches, when joined together, are in themselves a good direction to the conscience of christians under any difficulty. When the apostle Paul seems to find it difficult to give sufficient evidence of the duty of a woman's wearing long hair, and a man wearing of shorter, so as to satisfy the scruples and consciences of christians, observe what he says, "if any man seem to be contentious, let this determine these lesser disputable points, that we the apostles of Christ, *have no such custom* for men to wear long hair, *nor the churches of God in the world*: 1 Cor. xi. 16. And why should not apostolical and primitive custom be a sufficient direction for our practice in regard to a sabbath, where clearer discoveries of duty are wanting.

II. The custom of primitive churches supported by the apostles' practice, makes it appear probable, that the observation of the Lord's-day was a divine institution, and that it was the will of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, manifested to his apostles, who were the prime ministers of his kingdom. Is it not highly probable, that this early and general practice was derived from the authority of Christ, who after his resurrection, continued forty days on earth, and was often assembled with the apostles, *speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*; Acts i. 3. Was not the observation of such a day necessary to his kingdom, that is, to the institution and support of his visible church? Is it not also unreasonable so suppose, that the apostles, who received their commission from Christ, to teach the nations to observe whatsoever he commanded them; Mat. xxviii. 20. should so zealously pronounce all the Jewish sabbaths abolished, in so many places, and such express language as St. Paul does; and that they should so frequently practise and encourage the assembling together on *the first day of the week*, as a day of christian

\* See the Appendix to this first Discourse.

worship, if they had received no hint of any order, or particular permission, or so much as a direction from Christ Jesus, their Lord, for both these things? In the Lord's-supper St Paul tells the Corinthians, *that he received from the Lord what he delivered them*; 1 Cor. xi. 23. And why should we not believe also concerning the Lord's-day, that he received of the Lord the appointment of this first day for christian worship, which he seems to have delivered to the churches where he preached? It is intended that none of these considerations before mentioned, if taken separately, will prove the duty of observing the Lord's-day, yet all joined together, are sufficient to direct our practice, where we have not clearer light. I grant also, that all these considerations here proposed, do not amount to a direct and plain institution of the Lord's-day; but the united force of them all tends so far toward the proof of such an institution, that renders highly probable: And where inferences and probabilities are many and weighty, they must determine our conduct in a thousand affairs of human life, if we would act like reasonable creatures.

IX. "If one day in seven be appointed in the New Testament for christian assemblies, and religious worship, it is most highly expedient, if not necessary, that it should be a day of rest from the common labours of this life." It is certain, the very hours, or minutes, spent in the outward exercises of christian worship, must necessarily be free from earthly business; we cannot in this respect actually serve God and this world at once, nor engage our solemnities of worship with earthly cares and labours. Rest is granted on all hands.

Yet some think the sabbath itself begins and ends with the public worship: whereas it is sufficiently evident, that unless the whole day be separated from earthly affairs, and labours, and pleasures, the hours and minutes of worship will be for the most part, but poorly improved, and will become much less profitable to our spiritual interest. It is hardly possible to attain the highest and best ends of christian worship, of preaching and hearing, praying and praising, and celebrating of the Lord's-supper, if we come into the sanctuary with our heads and hearts full of the cares of this life, and with all our earthly cares buzzing about our minds. How much less good will a sermon do us, if when the hour of worship is ended, we run immediately from God into worldly business, without giving our thoughts leisure and leave to reflect on what we have heard? What poor proficients shall we be in the school of Christ, if we plunge ourselves all over into the cares and businesses of this world, as soon as ever we have heard the blessing pronounced, and the assembly is separated? And much worse would it be, if we spent the rest of the day in recreations and sports; for these carnalize the spirit, and

estrangle it from God and things heavenly, more than the common labours of life.

Again, let it be considered, what multitudes there are among mankind, who have very little relish for religion, and have a little opportunity of retirement from the world, and meditating on the things of God and eternity. On the six days of the week, they are ever labouring. How very necessary then is the cessation from earthly affairs, to allow them due leisure to mind the important concerns of religion? Cut off the sabbath's-hours of rest and leisure from them, and you cut off both opportunity and encouragement from godliness: And under such disadvantages, it must be some very extraordinary influences from God, that must change such poor, earthly and sensual creatures to a spiritual and heavenly temper of soul, must bring them to the saving knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ his Son, and make them his disciples. As bad as the world is now, it would be much worse, if there were no observation of a sabbath-day, or weekly rest, no Lord's day among us, even though there were a weekly sermon or two preached in public assemblies.

I might even venture to leave the decision of this controversy to the consciences of all that are truly religious in our nation: Blessed be God! there is a day separated by the ruling powers of this kingdom from the businesses of this life, and that earthly labours are not suffered to intermingle themselves with the work of religion, so as to prevent or destroy the chief design for which that day is appointed. Tell me, ye devout souls, even ye best of christians, tell me, how difficult a matter do you find it to cast off all the cares and concerns of this world entirely, when you come into the presence of God, to celebrate his public worship? Though the whole day be appointed for God and religion, yet how hard is it to shake off all the dust of this earth, and to disengage yourselves from the bonds and burdens of it, when you would ascend to heaven in devotion? Though you have bid farewell to your secular concerns the night before, and have had a long interval of sleep to divide your thoughts from this vain and busy life, yet how do the crowding cares of it press in upon you, and hang continually upon your spirits, or the trifles and amusements of it hover and play about your souls, and how wretchedly do they divert your hearts from the exercises of godliness, and sadly interrupt those very acts of worship in which you are engaged? Though you have a day allotted for this very purpose, and time to compose your thoughts before-hand, yet how very difficult a thing has it been to secure to your souls one hour together of complete absence and abstinence from all that is carnal and earthly?

But how much harder would it be to fulfil the duties of the sanctuary with any good success, to improve public worship to

your further acquaintance with God, and things heavenly, to your greater delight in him, to the mortification of sin, and growth of holiness, if there were no time devoted to religion, but merely that hour or two in the morning, or afternoon, while you are at church? How would the words of the preacher run off from your souls, like a stream of oil gliding over a marble, if there were no recollection to fix it in your memory? How easily would Satan pluck up the good seed that was sown in the heart, if you join and assist him, by giving a loose immediately to the cares and delights of this life, and call them to break in upon you at the end of the sermon? How would all your good thoughts and holy desires vanish away like a cloud, and ascend and be lost like a vapour on the morning dew? A day of rest from the pleasures and toils of this life is necessary to render divine worship more effectual to our sanctification and salvation. We should therefore quit our heads and hands of worldly cares that day, that we may more easily converse with God and our own souls, and by secret and public devotion may be the better prepared for each other, in their turns, and improve more in religion by both of them. We may reasonably conclude then, if Christ appointed the first day of the week for a season of the worship of God, he appointed it also to be a season of rest from the concerns and labours of this life, that his worship might be better performed, and the great ends of it be best secured.

If it be enquired here, "why the first day of the seven was appointed for the christian sabbath, rather than any of the others?" It is usually answered, and with good reason, that when God rested from his work of creation, he appointed the seventh day for the ancient sabbath, to keep in mind the Creator of the world: and so when Christ rested from his works of redemption, he might appoint the first day, even the day, on which he arose from the grave, as most proper to keep the great work of our redemption in memory. That the first day of the week was observed by the apostles and first christians, in honour of the resurrection of Christ, is evident by its being called by a new and honourable name, the Lord's-day, as well as from other hints of scripture, and many plain and express assertions in the history of the primitive church.

You will say, why should not his birth, or his death, be as much a reason for pointing out a new sabbath, as his resurrection? I answer, because neither the day of his birth, nor his death, have such a name, or such honours put on it, as that of his resurrection: no apostles or churches have recommended it by their practice or example. Besides there are very great and learned men, who suppose that the apostle Paul in the fourth chapter to the Hebrews, proves a christian sabbath on this principle of Christ's finishing his work of redemption, and

his rising from the dead; verse 4. *He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all his works;* verse 7. *Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, to-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts: for if Jesus, that is Joshua, had given them rest, that is, if he had given them all that complete rest in the land of Canaan, which was typified by the Jewish sabbath, then he would not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest, or sabbatism, as the Greek word is, there remaineth the keeping of a sabbath to the people of God; for he that is entered into his rest, which they refer to Jesus Christ, in his work of redemption, he hath also ceased, or rested, from his own works, as God did from his.* See Doctor Owen, in his treatise of the sabbath\*. Thus the Son of God, the Redeemer, is supposed to have appointed a day, or sabbath, to celebrate his rest from his labours and sufferings, as God the Father, the Creator, did, when he rested from his works.

I might add here also, that as the redemption, or rest from Egyptian bondage, given them by God, and Moses, is mentioned in Deut. v. 15. as one reason of the Jewish sabbath; so our greater redemption by Christ; or rest from the bondage of sin and Satan, being on this day completed, seems to be a proper reason for a christian sabbath. Consider also, that our redemption from sin and hell was typified by the Jews' redemption from Egypt, and as the type had its commemorative day of rest appointed, so should the antitype have its day of commemorative rest also. Besides it is worthy of our notice, that by appointing the first day of the seven for a sabbath, after the seventh day was abolished, there remains still one day in seven, to perpetuate the memory of the creation, and it is the first day of the seven, to perpetuate the memory of the work of redemption: Thus our Lord's-day includes both. And by the appointment of the first day also, it-come to pass, that as soon as ever the Jewish sabbath was ended, and buried with Christ in the grave, the christian sabbath arises, when he arose from the dead, *The first day of the week* is consecrated to God, and if duly celebrated, will spread a blessing over the following week, as the first-fruits did upon all the harvest; though we must remember that any public promulgation or injunction of it upon christians, does not appear till a considerable time afterwards, and even this is manifested chiefly by example.

X. Upon the whole survey of things, it seems highly probable, " that there is some sort of sabbath, or one day in seven

\* I do not pretend to enter into this debate, or to support the argument drawn from the fourth of the Hebrews, as sufficient to prove the christian sabbath; yet so many congruities between the creation and redemption, in this respect, deserve our notice.

lively appointed for the rest of man, and for the worship of his God, which has run through all the dispensations both before and after Moses, and must remain to the end of the world\*," which will appear if we look back and consider,

1. The time of the first notice, and appointment of a sabbath, and the persons to whom it was given." It was in paradise, as soon as man was made: God having formed the world, and its inhabitants, in six days, and rested the seventh, he distinguished the days of the year into weeks, and claimed one day in seven for his own worship, as well as gave it unto Adam for his rest, or release from earthly business. *He sanctified it and blessed it*, he separated it for the purposes of rest and worship, and pronounced a blessing upon it, and upon them that observed it. Now there is as much reason, and as much need for all the sons of Adam, in all ages and nations, in their feeble and sinful state, to have a day appointed for their own rest, and for the worship of their God, as there was for Adam himself in paradise, and in a state of innocence; for his body was then in perfection of health and vigour, and his mind more inclined to remember God, and worship him.

2. "The original reason that is given for one day in seven to be sanctified, seems to confirm the perpetuity of it, viz. *God's own rest from his work of creating the world in six days*. The sabbath was given to man, to put him in mind of the creation of the world by the true God, and to do honour to God the Creator; but all mankind in all ages, should preserve this in memory, and the continual return of a seventh day of rest is an everlasting memorial of it, and gives new opportunities continually for paying this homage to that Almighty being that made us, and this habitable world.

3. "The place which this command of the sabbath bears in the law of God, when it was renewed and enjoined to the nation of Israel, doth," in the opinion of most divines, add considerable weight to this argument. It is one of the commands of the moral law, which was pronounced by the mouth of God himself on Sinai, with much glory and terror. It stands amongst those laws which are generally conceived to be moral and perpetual, except in some small limitations and accommodations to the Jewish state: *It was written with the rest in tables of stone*, which perhaps in that typical dispensation might denote perpetuity, and that it must last, like a rock, for ever. It was written *by the finger of God himself*, which gives a peculiar honour to it; and it was laid up in the ark of the covenant, on which God dwelt in

\* Though I have inserted most of the following particulars in a sermon on the Lord's day, published among many others; yet I thought it necessary to repeat the chief substance of them here also, because they are necessary to complete the argument.

a bright cloud, or a blaze of glory behind the cloud, and thus it was put under God's own eye and care. These considerations carry some weight in them, though I must confess, I do not build my opinion and practice chiefly on the fourth commandment.

4. "Consider the actual observance of one day in seven for christian worship, as appears by the practice of the apostles, and the church, from the earliest days of it, even when the Jewish ceremonies, and their absolute rest, in all the rigours and severities of it, were abolished." This is another probable proof, at least, of the appointment of the christian sabbath by our blessed Lord, to be observed by his church, as I argued before.

5. "The reasonableness, if not the necessity, of such appointment, in order to keep up religion in the world, as well as to give rest to the animal bodies of men and beasts, adds further proof of the morality or perpetuity of it." The seasons of worship which men would have chosen, and even of natural rest which some men would have allowed, would probably have been short and few enough, if God had not always devoted one day in seven to these purposes.

It is evident in common experience, and by observation made upon persons, and churches, and nations, that where no sabbath is observed, that is, where one day in seven is not separated to God, by a rest from the usual labours of life, and a dedication to his service, religion is in a very decaying state, and in great danger to be lost. As it is a common confession of persons, who fall into the vilest crimes, and are executed by the public justice of the magistrate, that their disregard of the sabbath, was the beginning of their guilt and ruin, and made way to all iniquity; so a careful observation of one day in seven, for religious purposes, has been the great spring and support of virtue and piety amongst mankind, and the constant guardian of it, in its purity and power. And there is reason to believe, that the nations before the flood, as well as for many ages after it, had not run into such universal corruption, such a forgetfulness of the true God, and such vile idolatry, if they had not neglected and lost that one day in seven, which God appointed from the beginning, to be observed in memory of the creation of the world by himself, in six days.

6. I know not whether it be improper to add in the last place, "that the spiritual or prophetic signification of the sabbath, or of this appointed day for rest and worship, seems to run through every dispensation of God to men." There seems to be an emblematical promise contained in it, that is, a heavenly rest promised by God to man, after his labours and services here on earth, and an everlasting day of final joy and worship in his own presence; and this both under the covenant of innocency made with Adam in paradise, and under the covenant of grace

made with fallen man, in every dispensation of it. The language which the apostle uses in the iv. chapter to the Hebrews, seems to denote thus much, viz. That a sabbath day to commemorate God's ceasing from his works of creation, was appointed to be observed by the seed of Israel, as a figure, pledge and promise of the land of Canaan, where the Jews should have rest, not only from the bondage of Egypt, but from their tiresome travels in the wilderness: And yet further it was a token and pledge of the rest which christians would enjoy under the gospel, that is, a release from the bondage of sin, as well as a figure of the final rest in the heavenly state, which all the people of God should be partakers of in the world to come. Now since the promise of this heavenly rest, and glorious state of divine worship, is not yet accomplished, I have not yet met with sufficient reason why one day of worship and rest, after six days of labour, which is a figure and emblem of it, should entirely cease. There are some figures and emblems in every dispensation, till all the graces and blessings signified thereby are fulfilled.

Now, if all these considerations put together, will but go so far as to make it highly probable, that one day in seven has been always the proportion of time which God has appointed for a sabbath, that is, for rest from labour, and for divine worship, this probability, as to the time and manner of a duty, should go for evidence, where no further evidence can be procured, and where the duty itself seems clear and certain. And since some rest from labour, and some seasons for worship are necessary, we cannot do a more reasonable thing, than to separate that proportion of time, which the wisdom of God has certainly separated in some of his dispensations to men, and most probably in all of them: Nor can we chuse a fitter day than that, which, by very probable reasons, is recommended to us by the example of the apostles, and primitive churches, when all Jewish sabbaths are entirely abolished.

Yet here I ask leave to make this remark, That though both rest and worship run through the law of the sabbath in all ages; yet by diligent reading the Old Testament, and the History and Laws of the Jews, we find that rest from their own labours, and business, and pleasures, on the seventh day, is the grand point kept chiefly in view, in the commands and threatenings relating to the sabbath, and that not only as an advantage to spiritual worship; but as being in itself the most noted and visible part of their sabbatizing: But in the New Testament, assembling for christian worship is most frequently represented as the design of the first day of the week, or Lord's-day. Which, of these two, is most noted and visible in the original and paradisaical sabbath, is doubtful. Now, may it not be inferred, that the Jews were required to worship God on their sabbath, because God had appointed it a day of rest from labour; and that christians should



rest from their labour on their Lord's-day, because God has appointed it a day of worship. And perhaps this may be one reason why the rest, or release from work, on the Jewish sabbath, was more strict and absolute, as being a ceremony primarily in view, or at least most express and obvious in the command : But in the christian sabbath, or Lord's-day, worship being the primary design of it, no more rest is necessary, than may attain the best ends and advantages of christian worship\*, and that will be such sufficient relief or rest for animal nature, as was designed from the beginning, and made perpetual.

The Jewish state, was the childish age of the church, as St. Paul to the Galatians represents, chapter iv. The christian dispensation, is its more mature age : Now children are trained up in religion, by being brought early into the public assemblies of worship first to teach them to sit still, and rest from labour, and from play and bodily exercises ; but when they grow up to mature years, they learn and practise the worship of God in public assemblies. In younger childhood, the chief design of their observation of a sabbath, or their coming to church, is a separation or obstinence from the things of the world : In their growing years, and riper age, it is, that they may honour and glorify their Creator and Redeemer.

I confess, this is but a similitude, but, it is borrowed from St. Paul's description of the Jewish and christian states : yet, to confirm this general remark, I would take notice, that the Jewish day for worship and rest is always called the sabbath, which signifies rest : The day for christian rest and worship is never called a sabbath in scripture, but *the first day*, or *the Lord's-day*, to denote its reference to our risen Lord, and his honour. Here are several questions which arise on this subject, but I shall only give a brief answer to three or four of them here.

*Question I.* Since it is granted, that at the abolition of Judaism, that paradisiacal or patriarchal command for observing the sabbath in general abides still in force, and since the seventh day from the creation was appointed in the same original command, why does not that abide in force too ? And why is not the seventh day the only true sabbath now, as well as it was in the days of the patriarchs, or from the beginning of the world.

*Answer I.* We can never find with certainty, which is the seventh day from the creation ; and God would never make it a necessary duty to observe such a day which is impossible to be found out. It is generally granted, that the seventh-day sabbath was lost under the Egyptian bondage, if not for many ages

\* Though worship be the chief design, yet I do not pretend, that actual worship should fill up the whole day ; but the best ends and advantages of worship, cannot be obtained, where there is not a day of rest from the businesses and labours of human life, as I have shewn before.

before : Now if there was so great an interruption, I think it is hard to be proved, that the Jewish sabbath\* was the seventh day from the creation of the world : this is often made a doubt and matter of dispute in this controversy. Some learned men, by exact calculations have pretended to find, that the sabbath which God discovered and marked out for their future observation by providing a double quantity of manna the day before, was really the sixth day of the week, and not the seventh from the creation. And if so, then christians who keep the Lord's-day are actually returned to the ancient paradisaical or patriarchal sabbath, that is, the last day of the week of the creation†.

\* Though the Jewish sabbath may be called sometimes the seventh day, this can only mean the day of rest after six days labour, which is the constant sense of it : but not the very seventh day on which God rested, and which he sanctified for a sabbath to Adam in paradise.

† Mr. Joseph Mede, that very learned writer, in the last age, discourses on the sabbath, from Ezek. xx. 20. *Hallow my sabbaths, and they shall be a sign between me and you, to acknowledge that I Jehovah am your God.* And here he supposes, that as in the xx. of Exodus, the creation of the world in six days, and God's resting on the seventh, is given as the reason why the Jews were appointed to keep one day in seven ; so in the fifth of Deuteronomy, their deliverance from Egypt, and their rest from bondage, was the reason why they were required to keep that particular day for their sabbath, whether it were the seventh from the creation or no. Scripture no where tells us it was so, though men take it for granted. Certain I am, saith he, the Jews kept not that day for a sabbath till the raining of manna : And when it had rained manna six days together, it rained none on the seventh, which was the twenty-second day of the second month, and this they were commanded to keep for their sabbath. Now if the twenty-second day of the month were the sabbath, the fifteenth should have been so too, if that day had been kept before as the seventh from the creation : But the text tells us plainly, Ex. xvi. 1. that they marched a wearisome march on that day, and this by God's own appointment, that is, by the leading cloud ; and therefore it is plain they did not keep it as a sabbath. Now since the beginning of their year was altered for a memorial of their coming out of Egypt ; Ex. xii. 2. why might not their day of holy rest also be altered for a memorial of the same mercy ? And thus God, as the Creator of the world, and as their Redeemer from the land of bondage, had his proper memorial of both in the Jewish sabbath, even Jehovah their Creator and Redeemer.

There is a learned author has written a treatise, 1683, whose running title is "The Patriarchal Sabbath ;" and he also, by computation drawn from the xvi. chapter of Exodus, says, "As God at the institution of the Passover appointed that month to be the first to the Israelites, which was not the first in respect of the creation, so he purposed to change the beginning of the week to the Israelites, and appoint that day their seventh, which was the sixth in the patriarchal account. And he left a plain note or character upon it, perhaps he means, the withholding the manna, page 99. And in page 186, he says, "all communion with heathens is pathetically forbidden to the Jews, lest they should by that means be drawn to idolatry ; and therefore, we have less reason to wonder that God should appoint the Jews another day for their weekly sabbath, than that which was instituted at first to all mankind, when the Gentiles had perverted the consecration of that day to the worship of the sun. And for the like reason, the christian church changed the name of Sunday into that of the Lord's-day, that she might secure her children from the opinion of the heathen world, that it was in honour of the planet of the sun."

But besides this, he adds, page 153, "The more special reason of God's appointing the Saturday for their sabbath, was because Saturday was the first day of rest they had from Egyptian bondage : For they marched from Rameses on

Whether these calculations of days, which I have here represented from the writings of learned men are just or no, yet still it seems that men of learning, even in our age, are not all agreed, and cannot certainly teach us, which was the true seventh day, or the sabbath of Adam and the patriarchs before Moses: And if it cannot be certainly known by the learned, it can never be known by the bulk of mankind, and therefore it is impossible to be observed; nor would God command all men to practise, what cannot be known, by the greatest part of them? Do we not esteem it a sufficient reason against the absolute necessity of the succession of bishops, or ministers, in a right line from the apostles, that this line of consecration and succession, by running through all ages of popery, and the contests of two or three popes at one time, has been so broken, that it can never be certainly known; and therefore such a sort of ecclesiastical succession and consecration, can never be absolutely necessary to furnish the christian church with ministers or holy ordinances? Now if this reason be good, in the case of persons who celebrate divine worship, why should it not be good also in cases relating to the time or day of divine worship? On the other hand, the true day of the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week, has certainly been conveyed down to us, by the christian churches without interruption: And since there are no such doubts about this day, as are about the seventh day after the creation, why should we not rather keep that day, which has so much encouragement and countenance in the New Testament, and may certainly be known by us?

*Answer 2.* But I add yet further, that the observation of one day in seven for rest and for worship, seems to be so far of a moral nature, as to be of perpetual obligation; as I have before proved; for it hath a necessary and very important influence, both toward the honour of the great God, and the temporal and spiritual welfare of mankind, to keep one day in a short rotation or compass of time; and because man could not find out the due proportion, God himself had manifested it from the beginning of the world: But that this should always be precisely the seventh day from the creation, carries no such necessity in it, nor does nature or scripture tell us so; and it is beyond the power of my reason, to find out the morality of

Friday the fifteenth day of the first month, and set up their booths at Succoth on Saturday, which I suppose this author takes to be too laborious a work for a sabbath; and that therefore Saturday could not be the ancient sabbath, but the next day they rested there.

The learned Doctor Wallis, in his controversy with Mr. Bamfield on this subject in 1692, and 1694, says, "whether this new seventh day from the first raising of maana, be the same with that from the creation, no man can tell; but there is six to one odds, that it is not." And Doctor N. Homes in 1637, wrote an essay to prove that our Lord's-day, is the same day in the week, which was the ancient -

it, or what necessary influence it has towards the honour of God, or the welfare of man ; and therefore I cannot see, that it is of perpetual obligation, or that it is unchangeable. And though God might once command it to the Jews, or to Adam and the patriarchs ; yet he might make a change of it upon any proper occasion. Since therefore, we christians obey the command of keeping one day in seven for rest and worship, which seems to be moral ; and since in the mere nature of things there seems to be as good reason to observe the first day of the week in honour of our Lord's resurrection, and our redemption from sin and hell, as the patriarchs had to keep the seventh in imitation of God's resting from creation, or the Jews' keeping their sabbath to commemorate their deliverance and rest from Egyptian bondage ; and further, since it was the direction and example of the apostles, and seems to be the most general opinion and practice, of the primitive christians and churches, to keep this day ; I think our reasonings on this side are the strongest and most weighty.

There is so far as I can find, no plain proof in all the New Testament of christians' \*keeping the seventh day as a sabbath, after the christian dispensation began at Pentecost ; Acts ii. and since the honours due to God for the creation of the world, as well as for the redemption by his Son, are paid to him one day in seven, by our resting and worshipping on that day, in conformity to apostolic example ; we think *the first day of the week* bids much fairer for our observance, than the sabbath of the Jews. But to make it yet plainer, that the keeping of the seventh day of the week has no morality in it, let us enquire whether there are not some cases, wherein it is impossible to be precisely observed, even though it were once known : As for instance,

If a nation kept their sabbath on the seventh day by supposed divine appointment, and a fleet of their ships should be sent round the world, travelling towards the west, this would make their days longer ; and as they would find fewer days in compassing the globe, so they would find their own sixth day to be the sabbath of their nation at their return home. Or suppose they should travel towards the east, their days would be shorter and more in number, and they would find their own eighth, or first day of the week, to be the nation's public sabbath at their return. Now if either the first or last day of the week appear to have any thing moral in them, surely it ought to be observed : And thus in the nation there would be three sabbaths kept, viz.

\* Some have supposed, that the apostle's argument in Heb. iv. it implies the seventh day sabbath observed by some christians. I have searched into that text, and I think Paul's argument is very good without that supposition. But if it be granted that Heb. iv. intimates the Jewish sabbath to be kept, it is only by converted Jews ; and let it be remembered that these Jewish christians were very long a weaning from Judaism.

the Friday by those who went westward, the Sunday by those who went eastward, and the Saturday by those who tarried at home. And by another such voyage, the eastern travellers would bring their sabbath to Monday, and the western to Thursday. Can we think that the moral law of God requires this diversity of sabbaths? Is it a moral command to the eastern travellers, that they should keep their seventh day, which is the eighth to the inhabitants of the nation? Is it a moral duty to the western travellers to keep their seventh, which is the sixth to all the nation besides? And if it were a moral duty, would it be lawful for either of them to resign their pretences to the custom of the nation when they came home, and to change their day? One day in seven may be moral, because it may be observed by all the dwellers and travellers round the earth; but the seventh day from the creation cannot be so; and therefore is not unchangeable.

Perhaps it will be replied here, does not this difficulty and uncertainty fall as hard and heavy on the first day of the week as it does on the seventh? I answer; By no means, for I bring it only to prove, that the very seventh day of the creation is not a moral law: Now we do not pretend, that the first day is of a moral nature, but is a mere positive appointment; and since we find out that, rather by the custom of the churches and apostles, than by express words of scripture; so I would follow the custom of the churches also in any such difficulty, where the first day should be lost or become doubtful, since it is not a duty of the moral law, and its institution by Christ, is not so express and evident, as could be desired. I own I lay not much stress upon such geographical arguments about the change of the day by travellers; but I had a mind to shew, that God would not lay much stress upon such a changeable point, and that this change of the day to travellers, does not so much affect the christian Lord's-day, as it does the seventh day from the creation, if the one be insisted on as a moral law and unchangeable, and the other does not pretend to such a morality and unchangeableness.

*Question II.* If the christian sabbath depend on the command in paradise, as to the proportion of one day in seven, why did it not immediately take place upon the abolition of all Jewish sabbatisms? And why was not this plain and original reason given for it by the apostles? And if the day was changed from the seventh to the first, what reason can be given, why the Jews did raise a violent opposition to it, at its first institution, who never failed to oppose every thing of that kind, contrary to the Mosaic law? And why did christians themselves keep the seventh day, which it is plain from church-history, that many of them did long after the pretended institution of the first day.

*Answer.* I join all these questions in one because I think

one answer will serve for them all. Though the original reason of a sabbath was the command in paradise, yet that idea had been probably lost before the days of Moses, and for many ages since it had been as it were overwhelmed with the various sabbatisms of the Jews, and the ceremonies depending thereupon: And though it stood in the Mosaic history, yet as many Mosaic laws were long forgotten and unpractised, during the state of Judaism, so this law of paradise did not immediately emerge and arise again into clear light and practice, but might be mingled with Jewish sabbatisms in the minds of men, nor appear even to christians themselves in a distinct light. It was by the wise providence of God, that it was permitted to lie unnoticed for a season, till the Jewish christians were more brought off from their excessive fondness for Mosaic rites.

And though the reasons of the change of the day, from the seventh to the first, came from the resurrection of Christ, and was plainly in many instances observed by the apostles; yet it was not, all at once, prescribed to christians as a new command, nor introduced into the churches. The first christians for many years were originally Jews, and the first great business and labour of the apostles, after preaching the essential doctrines of religion and the gospel, was to take them off from all Jewish ceremonies, of which their sabbatisms were some of the chief: this appears from scripture, with great evidence. But afterwards, when the gentiles were converted, and Jewish sabbaths not brought in among them, the importance and necessity of a certain fixed day for christian worship appeared more and more; and the observation of the first day, which had been intimated by apostolic example before, was more plainly taught and introduced among christians by degrees.

Nor is this strange that it should be so, when there are other doctrines and duties of more moment, such as the atonement of Christ for sin, faith in that atonement, &c. which our Saviour and his apostles introduced among men in the christian dispensation, not all at once, but gently and obscurely at first, and by such degrees, as men were able to bear it. And it is upon this account, that we do not read of any such signal opposition of the Jews to the observation of the first day of the week, as might have been expected: Yet the Jewish christians might make some opposition to it, as it seems from Rom. xiv. Col. ii. &c. And they did possibly observe the seventh day for some time, perhaps together with the first, or perhaps without it, because they were not perfectly cured of judaizing, and the gentile converts might sometimes join with them, partly being entangled with Jewish scruples, and partly by way of condescension and compliance with indifferent things for the sake of peace and charity, of which St. Paul gives us remarkable examples and rules on other occasions.

This will also give us a very fair answer to that argument for the continuance of the Jewish sabbath, which is drawn from our Saviour's advice to his disciples, relating to the destruction of Jerusalem; Mat. xxiv. 20. Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the sabbath-day, &c. This text will by no means prove that our Saviour intended that the Jewish seventh-day sabbath should be observed by christians after the time of the destruction of the Jewish polity: But he foresaw the prejudices both of Jews and Jewish christians would be so strong, that christians might find very great inconveniences thereby, both in their own consciences, and by the opposition of the Jews, if their flight from the destruction of the city, happened on the sabbath of the Jews. And if this signify their flight on the sabbath day, it is certain that our Saviour here can only mean to shew the hardships which might arise on this occasion from Jewish customs or prejudices; for neither Jews nor christians were by any laws of God forbidden to fight, or fly, or do any thing necessary; for the safety of their lives on a sabbath, either under Judaism or christianity. But while the Jewish polity was not yet absolutely and utterly dissolved, but only dissolving\*, the flight of his disciples might be, many ways, rendered exceeding troublesome on a sabbath. Yet I think Dr. Hammond's conjecture is not utterly to be omitted here; for if the word *σαββατον* in this place can mean the sabbatical year, their flight would be doubly inconvenient both in the winter, when there was no food in the field, and on the sabbatical year, when the fields were not sown, and both war and famine would come together. Now if this be the sense, the sabbath-day has nothing to do in this text.

*Question III.* Is not the holiness of days and times, abolished under the New Testament, as well as the holiness of places? Are not the expressions which abolish all sabbaths very plain and express? Does not the apostle severely reprove the Galatians, chapter iv. 10. for *observing days and months, and times and years*? Does he not teach the Colossians, chapter ii. 16. that *no man should judge them in meats or drinks, or in respect of a holy-day, or new moons, or sabbaths*? How can we suppose then, there is any holiness of days required, under the christian state? Or what holiness belongs to the Lord's-day wherein christians meet to worship.

\* Many of the Mosaical precepts, are to be considered as political, as well as religious ceremonies. Now while the Jewish polity subsisted, not only sabbaths but even circumcisions, some sacrifices, and several other things seem to be left, upon a foot of indifference, as things decaying and vanishing away, as the apostle speaks; Heb. viii. 13. and as things lawful to be complied with, according as prudence should dictate to the Jewish christians, in the places where they were; while at the same time the religious obligation was really finished at the setting up of the gospel-state, or christianity, at the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out.

*Answer.* The holiness either of days or places, has very great degrees of difference in it. The land of Canaan was the holy land, because the people of God dwelt in it. Jerusalem is yet a more holy city, because God chose it for his habitation and his temple-worship. The inner courts of the temple were holy, that the Gentiles might not walk in them; and besides that, there was the holy place where none might enter but the priests; and the most holy, where the high-priest only might appear, and that but once in a year. So it is also in times: there are several degrees of holiness in them. *God blessed the seventh day in paradise and sanctified it*, or made it holy, that is, separated it from the other days by a peculiar appointment for the rest of man, and the worship of God; so that the common labours of life were not to be continued or carried on upon that day. But it was a much higher degree of holiness that God put on the Jewish sabbath, by ordaining most peculiar ceremonies of worship, and by a more absolute and rigorous command, of resting from every purpose of human life, which was not absolutely necessary, and by severe penalties on the offender. Now all this Jewish holiness of times is abolished by the authority of Christ, and the writings of St. Paul under the gospel, as I have shewn before. And indeed our Saviour seemed to give hints of this kind to the Jews, that the rigorous observance of the ceremonial sabbath was vanishing when he told them, *the Son of man was Lord of the sabbath*; Mark ii. 28. and bid the paralytic whom he healed, *take up his bed and carry it*, on the sabbath-day; John v. 8—11.

These Jewish sabbatisings being now abolished by many scriptures, and all their ceremonial holiness, I think the holiness of the Lord's day, cannot rise higher than that of the paradisiacal sabbath before the Jewish ceremonies and holy things were introduced; for we have no such new order given us in the New Testament. If therefore we do but so far rest from the common business of life, as the due seasons of christian worship require, in order to render that worship most useful to the public honour of our blessed Lord, and to our own inward holiness and growth in grace, the chief designs of this day are complied with and obtained: Nor do I see any inconvenience in allowing that one day in seven, and particularly *the Lord's-day*, may have so much holiness as this in it; since we suppose the chief parts of it are to be separated from the common businesses of human life, in order to worship God, and our risen Saviour, whose name the day bears; while all Jewish sabbatisms, and holy days, are abolished and renounced for ever.

*Question IV.* If the observation of a holy sabbath, or one day in seven for worship and rest, be of such importance to preserve religion in the world, why is there not a more express and



plain command for it under the New Testament? Why should we be left in such obscurity, that we can only spell out our duty, by inferences from the Old Testament, and some examples and probabilities in the New, concerning the observation of one day in seven, as well as concerning the change of that day from the seventh to the first? Give me leave to answer this two or three ways.

First, If our Saviour, or his apostles, had insisted too early, and too plainly on the observation of one day in seven, as a day of holy rest from labour, they had been in danger of giving occasion to the Jewish christians to have continued their rigour of sabbatising; for they were so fond of these yokes and ceremonies, that they were very hardly weaned from them. Many of the weakly disciples would scarce have known how to distinguish between the strict ceremonial holiness of days imposed in Judaism, and the appointment of religious worship, under the gospel, with a merciful release from the labours of life on the *Lord's-day*. But I answer,

In the second place, by giving an instance of the like kind, wherein God has left a moral duty under the same obscurity. Was not monogamy, or the marriage of but one wife, as important, and as necessary to the peace of families, the regular and pious education of children, and the good order of the world in all ages and nations, as it is to christians under the gospel? And why then was the law, which prohibits more wives than one, left so obscure and so uncertain under the Old Testament in the patriarchal and Jewish age, that it seems to be unknown, and was often violated both by Jews and patriarchs? Why was there a sort of permission for divorces given by Moses upon other causes, besides fornication, when our Saviour forbids it under the gospel, and seems to declare it to have been an irregular thing even *from the beginning of the creation*; Mat. xix. 3—9? And yet there is no plain disapprobation of polygamy, nor divorces, till the days of Malachi, the last of the prophets; Mat. ii. 14—16.

But let it be observed, that our Saviour gives us the reason of this doubtful and uncertain notice of this moral duty, where he tells us, that [Moses, because of the hardness of their hearts, suffered them to put away their wives, though from the beginning it was not so ordained, that is, the general reason, why God left it under, this obscurity, and gave no such plain and express precepts and prohibitions about some of these things to the Jews and patriarchs, might be, because he foresaw that strong temptations from within and from without, from the customs of the world, and the appetites and passions of nature, would render the duty difficult to be constantly practised in their circumstances, or the sin difficult to be avoided: Now, where a duty is

clearly known or discovered, the crime of neglecting it is proportionably diminished. Sins against the light of reason, or relation, are scarce imputed, where there is not light enough to lead men into the knowledge of their duty, if there be but a sincere willingness to find out and practise every duty within the reach of their enquiries.

In like manner, when the religion of Christ was to be diffused amongst all ranks of people, rich and poor, bond and free, heathen nations, where there were no sabbaths observed, ouraviour knew it would be exceeding difficult, especially for persons in poor or servile circumstances, to keep a sabbath religiously, and rest from their labours one day in seven, and devote it to religious purposes: He might think it proper, therefore, to give no such express and solemn command about it, but introduce it by degrees into the churches, lest the consciences of his followers would be too much entangled and perplexed, between the express command, and the difficulty of practice. The case of the sabbath was not the same in the Jewish state: There was no such difficulty in keeping the appointed day. It was there commanded by God in express language, it was universally acknowledged by the people, taught by all the priests and preachers, and maintained by the high-priest, and all the magistrates of the country, both as a political law of the land, and as a religious ordinance, and was supposed to be publicly practised by all the nation.

Now this tenderness to weak christians is encouraged and exemplified in several instances in the conduct of our blessed Lord, when he was here on earth: He would not enjoin hard and painful practices on young and tender disciples; Mark ii. —22. *He preached the things of the gospel unto the people, as they were able to bear them*; Mark iv. 33. John xvi. 12. and in these cases, neither God nor his Son, neither prophets, nor apostles, would press such duties too plainly and strongly on the consciences of good men, as would endanger the casting a snare on them, that is, entangling their consciences, as the apostle speaks; 1 Cor. vii. 35. or would burden young disciples with many obligations. I mention this only as a conjecture, and if it be not approved, I am no way fond to support it. See more reasonings in answer to this question in discourse the fourth, On the Holiness of Places of Worship."

To conclude, since all Jewish festivals, new moons, and sabbaths, are abolished by St. Paul's authority, in such express and unlimited language, as may lead many sincere christians to believe that all manner of distinction of days whatsoever, whether Jewish or patriarchal, is finished; since the religious observation of days, in the xiv. chapter to the *Romans*, in general, is represented as a matter of doubtful disputation; since the observation of *the Lord's-day* is not built upon any express and plain institu-

tion by Christ or his apostles in the New Testament, but rather on examples, and probable inferences, and on the reasons and relations of things; I can never pronounce any thing hard or severe upon any fellow-christian, who maintains real piety in heart and life, though his opinion may be very different from mine on this subject. Nor does any man, who is humbly and sincerely studious of truth and duty, and desirous to find it, deserve any reproach or censure upon the account of different opinions about meats and days; unless he assume such haughty airs of assurance, as arise far beyond all his evidence and proof, or indulge a persecuting spirit, and reproach his brethren who differ from him.

*Whatsoever we do in our distinct practices, on these dubious subjects, let us do it sincerely as to the Lord: If we regard a day, let us regard it to the Lord; and if we neglect it for fear of superstition let this also be with a desire to honour the Lord; Rom. xiv. 6. Let religion be maintained in the life and power of it, by every one that names the name of Christ, and let him faithfully pursue those methods, which, according to the clearest discoveries of reason and scripture, will be most successful to obtain this end. While upon a just survey of things I am satisfied, that the observation of the Lord's-day, as a christian sabbath, is most for the service of God, for the honour of my blessed Saviour and his gospel, and for the increase of true religion and godliness, I am obliged to persist in this practice, though I have not so express and evident a command for it, as for many other things in the christian life: But I am persuaded, whosoever will take a faithful review of all that is written in this essay, will be inclined to confess, that I have not maintained this my opinion and practice, without some fair and just appearances, both of reason and scripture. There are other questions relating to the Lord's-day, viz. When must the christian begin his sabbath, and when must it end? What works of labour may be performed on this day? And how should it be spent or improved, &c. For answer to which, "I refer the reader to Dr. Samuel Wright's Treatise on the Lord's-day; and to a sermon a few years ago published on this subject, viz. Sermon xxxi. at Berry-street, on the Principal Heads of the Christian Religion."*

APPENDIX TO THE FIRST DISCOURSE,  
*wing the Testimonies of the Primitive Fathers to the Lord's-*  
*day.*

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Doctor Young, and Mr. Baxter, in their discourses on the Lord's-day, Placcette in his "Dissertation de Morale et de Theologie," Doctor Light on the "Observation of the Lord's-day," and several others, have cited these testimonies of the ancients. And the late learned and honourable Lord King, in his second part of the "Enquiry into the Primitive Churches," has particularly given us this account, which I shall here represent rather epitomised, changing some of his translations a little nearer to the words of the original. See page 155. § 6, 6—11.

"That there are particular seasons appointed for public and solemn worship appears from Clemens Romanus; he says, God hath required us to be diligent in him in the appointed times and seasons: And in two other places of his epistle, speaks of those "determined and commanded seasons," in which, as we worship, we may be blessed and accepted by him. And Pliny, the younger, reports, "that the christians in his time met together on an appointed day, to sing praises to Christ as to a God, and to bind themselves by a covenant. Now the chiefest of these appointed times was *the first day of the week*, on which they constantly met, to perform their religious services. Justin Martyr, "On the day that is called Sunday, all that dwell in the cities or the country come together in one place, or for the same end: the writings of the apostles or prophets are read, &c." with other religious exercises. And upon this account those parts of God's public worship are appointed by Tertullian, the "Lord's Solemnities, or Dominica Solemnia;" and Irenaeus tells us, that the reader, or clerk, "reads on *the Lord's-day*:" Victorinus Petavionensis says, "On *the Lord's-day*, we go forth to eat and drink with giving of thanks," which is the eucharist, or Lord's-supper: Minucius Felix mentions the christians assembling to a festival on a Sunday."

Clemens Alexandrinus, calls it the chief of days, and our rest indeed." Tertullian says, "On Sunday we give ourselves to gladness," saith Tertullian: And before him Barnabas says, "we keep the eighth day with gladness, on which our Lord arose from the dead:" And the learned author supposes, that Ignatius the observation of *the Lord's day*, by banishing every appearance of grief and sorrow at that time, insomuch that Tertullian says, "on *the Lord's-day* we think it amiss or sinful, either to fast or to kneel in worship:" And when he was a Montonist he excepted the sabbaths and the Lord's-day from fasting.

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, in his letter to the church of Rome, says, "to-day being *the Lord's-day*, we keep it holy, and therein we have read the gospel, the first epistle, and the first epistle of Clemens," who was pastor at Rome. The learned men of Alexandria writes, "that a true christian, according to the commandments of the gospel, observes *the Lord's-day*, by casting out all evil thoughts, and entertaining profitable ones, glorifying the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ by."

“ That this was done to commemorate the resurrection of the Redeemer, appears from the citations of Barnabas, and Ignatius, and Clemens of Alexandria, in the forecited places : And Justin Martyr relates, that on Sunday the christians assembled together, because it was the first day in which God changed the darkness and the chaos, and made the world, and Jesus Christ our Saviour in that day arose from the dead : For on the day before Saturday they crucified him, and the day after Saturday, which is Sunday, he appeared to the apostles and disciples, and taught them those things which we have given you.” And Origen, advises his auditors “ to pray unto God, especially on the *Lord's-day*, which is a commemoration of the passion of Christ : For the resurrection of the Lord is celebrated not only once in a year, but every seven days.” Hence it was that the usual appellation of this day, both by the greek and latin churches, was the *Lord's day*, *κυριακη ημερα*, or *κυριακη*, alone ; and “ *dies dominicus*,” or “ *dominicus alone*,” of which the author gives many instances from the primitive fathers : And sometimes they called it Sunday, that the heathens might particularly understand what day they meant.

“ But though they so far complied with the heathens as to call this day Sunday, yet I do not find that they ever so far indulged the Jews, as to call it the sabbath day ; for through all their writings, as may be seen especially in Tertullian and Justin Martyr, they violently declaim against sabbatizing, that is, the Judaical observation of the seventh day, and not the *Lord's-day*, whose sanctification is approved and recommended by Justin Martyr and Tertullian : To which we may add that passage of Ignatius, “ let us no longer sabbatise, but keep the *Lord's day*, or live according to the *Lord's-life*, on which day our life arose by him : “ Or as it is more fully expressed in his interpolated epistle, “ instead of sabbatizing, let every one that loves Christ keep the *Lord's day* as a festival, the day on which he arose, the supreme of all days, on which our life arose, and there was a victory obtained over death in or by Christ.”

“ It is granted, that the eastern churches, in compliance with the Jewish converts who were numerous in those parts, sometimes at least, performed on the seventh day, the same public religious services that they did on the first day, observing both the one and the other as a festival : But on the contrary, some of the western churches fasted on Saturday, that they might not seem to observe any sabbath with the Jews.” Thus far this learned writer : other testimonies have been adduced by other authors, and particularly that of Theopompus of Antioch, “ the third day, which taking its name from the resurrection of the Lord, is called the *Lord's day*, is the first day of the week :” And some later fathers speak more plainly still. There have been indeed some remarks upon two or three of these citations, which may render the force of the argument, drawn from them, a little doubtful ; but most of these testimonies are so plain, that they cannot well be answered, nor fairly turned to any other cause.

## THE SECOND APPENDIX TO THE FIRST DISCOURSE.

Since this discourse was written in the year 1733, I have resumed this controversy about the sabbath into an impartial examination, and have read all the essays since written, which have come within my notice. I confess, some of them contain several thoughts of great importance on this subject; but I do not find upon the whole review, any sufficient reason to change my former sentiments, though I hope I have been enabled to confirm and establish some of them by relieving objections which I had not met with before, and by adding, here and there, a further illustration.

If the scheme, which I have proposed, be deficient in any part of it, so as I can judge, it must be in these three particulars:—1. In the proof of the patriarchal sabbath to be moral and perpetual—2. In securing the appointment of the patriarchal sabbath from that general abolition of all manner of feasts and baths, and all distinction of days, which St. Paul seems to pronounce in 1 Cor. xiv. 5, 6. Gal. iv. 9, 10. and Col. ii. 16.—3. In proving the Lord's-day to be an actual solemn institution, or command of Christ and his apostles. Now, if the proofs of these things should appear to be insufficient and defective, and if I were thereby constrained to change the present scheme, upon my closest survey of things, I think I should do it, in this manner.

First, I would allow the institution of the patriarchal sabbath to be a positive command to the patriarchs, and reinforced by Moses to the Jewish nation, even as sacrifices were, or as circumcision, which were both enjoined by christianity. And though the law of the sabbath might have several rational expediencies in it, which look like moral duties, yet, perhaps, it is possible, they may not quite arise to an express moral command, and a law of perpetual obligation. So the Talian law of punishment for injuries, given among the Jews, *viz. an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*, has several appearances in it of rational expediency, and of a moral nature; yet it was not supposed to be made a moral and perpetual law; but together with all the other moral and perpetual laws of the Jews, it was abrogated when the Jewish church and state were dissolved.

Secondly, I might then allow the utter abolition of the patriarchal, as well as the Jewish sabbath, by the strong and unlimited expressions of St. Paul, concerning the abolition of all distinctions of meats, and days, and feasts and baths; even as sacrifices were begun with Adam, and circumcision with Abraham, yet both were finished at the introduction of christianity. But

In the third place, it will appear there is so much expediency, and almost a necessity of solemn and certain days appointed for the preservation of public religion, and for the celebration of christian worship, that the apostles thought it necessary, by their recommendation, and by their own example to devote or set apart one day in seven for this purpose; since God, in all his former dispensations, had sanctified and appointed one day in seven for his public worship. And as the Talian law, and some parts of the Jewish polity, seem to be grounded on a very reasonable expediency, and may be a proper direction and advice to every state in their making of laws, so the reasonableness and expediency of appointing *one day in seven* for public worship, appearing evident to the apostles from all God's former dispensations,

and almost from the nature of things, they gave it as their advice to the christian churches to follow this custom, and practised it themselves.

And since all the former distinctions of days, and their holiness were abolished, and even the observation of *the seventh day*, wherein *God finished his creation*, and since there must be some day agreed upon for public worship, they thought it very proper that since the great work of the redemption of Christ, which lays a foundation for the new creation, was finished on *the first day of the week* by Christ's resurrection from the dead, that this day should succeed in the place of the day appointed as a memorial of the old creation; and in order to keep both these important matters always within the view of christians, viz. both creation and redemption, therefore one day in seven, and particularly the first of the seven, was recommended by the apostles to be their constant day of public worship. And thus the observation of the Lord's-day, of which we have a plain and uncontested proof by way of divine solemn institution in the New Testament, will stand upon the foot of a most reasonable practice, partly borrowed from the institutions of God in all former ages, ever since the creation, and partly from the apostolical advice, recommendation and example in the last age of the church.

And if this should appear to be the case, then the only reason which I can think of, why so expedient and almost necessary a practice was not made an express and solemn institution, and why it was left rather upon the foot of apostolic advice and example was, that the consciences of good christians, especially while the world was all Jewish or heathen, might have some liberty indulged them, and might not be laid under so severe a yoke of bondage, as sometimes such an express institution might happen to lay upon them in Jewish or heathen countries. This reason I have mentioned in the discourse itself, as one way of accounting for the obscurity and doubtfulness of such an institution, if the Lord's-day was really instituted.

I say again, If I were to change my present sentiments, so far as I can yet judge, I should fall into these which I have now expressed; but I acknowledge I have not yet seen sufficient reason to depart from the sentiments I have maintained in the discourse itself, nor to relinquish our obligations to observe one day in seven for a day of rest and worship as a perpetual law, and particularly the Lord's-day, as an appointment of Christ and his apostles. *We know but in part*, and we should not be too positive beyond all our evidence. *Whereto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing*; and let us be followers of St. Paul and the other apostles, and mark, or imitate them that walk so, as we have them for our example; Phil. iii. 16, 17. What appears a sufficient evidence to one man, does not appear so to another: *Let us all follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*; Heb. xii. 14. *For the kingdom of heaven is not meats, and drinks, and days; but righteousness and peace*; Rom. xiv. 17.

## DISCOURSE II.

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*Time of Day for Administering the Lord's-supper; or, answer to that Question, "May it lawfully be administered at noon?"*

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THERE have been some pious and devout persons, who would fully fulfil all their duties of worship precisely according to the appointment of God, who have therefore scrupled to receive the Lord's-supper at noon, because it is called a supper, and is instituted and celebrated by our Lord Jesus Christ in the evening of the day. I will easily grant, that where the time of worship is expressly instituted and commanded by God, it is to be punctually observed; but it doth not necessarily follow at every circumstance of time or place, which happened in any part of worship, when the prophets, apostles, or himself performed it. must be observed also whensoever we perform that worship. John preached and instituted baptism in the river Jordan with a hairy garment upon him, and a leathern girdle; but it is not necessary that we should be baptised by the same, nor that the minister who preaches or performs it, wear such vestments of hair or leather. Christ prayed in the night, and on a mountain, he preached from a ship to the shore, and ordained his disciples to go forth and pray; but there was no necessity that they should always at any time observe the same hour or place.

In some other essays, I have shewn that there is a great difference betwixt religious ceremonies, and mere natural circumstances in worship. A religious ceremony is either an action, a manner or circumstance of action by which some special offering is designed to be paid to God; and therefore God alone can institute it, who alone can determine what shall be honoured by himself: these religious ceremonies have generally a relation of some thing spiritual, inward and invisible belonging to them. Mere natural circumstances are such as are necessary at least convenient to the performance of acts of worship, considered merely as natural actions, and abstracted from their religious design: Such are time, place, habit, gesture, &c. for no religious action can be put forth but it must be in some time, in some place, in some posture of body; and in public worship with some sort of garments on too. Now many of these, especially in the New Testament, are not precisely determined in christian worship; they have no holy signification in them, and are only for the convenience of each single person, or of each single congregation or church of Christ. Now let us apply these things to the Lord's supper, and see how many circumstances attending



the first administration thereof, are instituted ceremonies ; and how many of them are mere natural circumstances, which seem to be rather accidental than essential at the first celebration of this ordinance.

First, The time. 1. On Thursday. 2. The thirteenth or fourteenth day of the month. 3. *In the evening*. 4. *After supper*, Secondly, the place, 1. *A City*. 2. *An upper-room*. 3. *A large room*. 4. *A furnished room*, as in Mark xiv. 15, 16. *a large upper-room, furnished, &c.* Thirdly, The elements, 1. *Bread*, perhaps one loaf, as 1 Cor. v. 19. 2. *Wine* whether red or white, we know not. Fourthly, The actions. 1. Blessing the Bread and the wine distinctly and apart. 2. Breaking the bread. 3. Distributing. 4. Receiving. 5. Singing a hymn. Fifthly, The posture of the body, viz. sitting with their legs behind them, leaning upon the table with the left elbow, of which see Pool's Annotations ; Mat. xxvi. 20, &c. Sixthly, The words spoken, viz. *Take, eat ; this is my body.—Drink ye all of it, this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*, which are expressed in several varieties, by the several evangelists, and by the apostle Paul ; and therefore the same precise form of words cannot be necessary.

It is evident to the reason of every reader, that some things among the fore-mentioned particulars are necessary to the essence or substance of the ordinance itself.

1. The elements ; there must be bread and wine ; but whether it is absolutely necessary, that it should be bread made of wheat, and wine made of the juice of the grape, may afford a doubt and scruple. Why not barley or oaten bread, and wine of the juice of currants, be sufficient, especially in such regions, or such poor villages, where wheat and grapes are not found, nor hardly to be procured ?

2. There must be also the action of blessing the bread and wine, or giving thanks before this sacred feast, and praying for a blessing on it : This was done by our Saviour distinctly twice, that is, both before partaking of the bread, and of the cup. But is a distinct blessing of each element necessary whenever we celebrate this ordinance ? I own I like it best, because it seems as if it were singular and peculiar to this ordinance, and was not done at common meals : But I would not say, it is absolutely necessary at every administration, and that those who bless the bread and wine together do any thing unlawful.

3. There seems to be a necessity of breaking the bread, to signify that the body of our Saviour was broken for our sins ; *this is my body which is broken for you*. Yet it may be queried, whether dividing the bread by cutting may not be lawful and proper. For 1. As breaking bread was the usual way of

dividing it among the Jews, so is cutting it among us.—2. Cutting the bread represents his body being wounded with nails and thorns, and a spear as much as breaking. But however that be, it is agreed by all of us, that the bread may be cut almost through, to render the breaking it regularly more convenient and easy, as is usually practised in our churches.

4. The words of the institution should be certainly pronounced, or words of much the same sense, at the distribution of the elements, viz. *This is the body of Christ, or this is an emblem or figure of the body of Christ, &c.* and *this cup is the New Covenant or New Testament in the blood of Christ, or a sign and seal of the New Testament, or of the New Covenant, in his blood, which was shed for many for the remission of sins.* But it is by no means necessary to say always the very same words. For, it is certain, this ordinance was celebrated or performed by our Saviour but once, and yet the several evangelists differ in their relation of the words used by Christ; and St. Paul, in his account of it, differs from them all. Therefore it is evident, that the spirit of Christ in writing the New Testament, never designed to confine us precisely to one set of words, or the same phrases, but only to the same sense. Yet further :

5. The elements must be distributed that all may partake : But whether the pastor must distribute them to the hand of every communicant ; whether the deacons, who serve tables, may distribute them, or whether they may be distributed throughout the congregation by the communicants from hand to hand, this is not any where determined certainly, and is no evident part of the institution itself, and I think it may be practised any way.

In the last place, a table-gesture was the mode in which Christ administered, and his disciples did first receive this ordinance ; and I think a table-gesture is the most proper to represent a supper, or a religious feast and holy communion. But I dare not say, this is so much an instituted and necessary part of the ordinance, that it cannot be profitably celebrated without it. God forbid, that I should pronounce this sacrament null and vain to all the foreign protestant churches, most of which receive it standing, or to the English episcopal church, who receive it on their knees ! And let it be remembered, the Jewish table-gesture was very different from ours, and yet we have changed it for sitting.

But as for some other of the circumstances which first attended this ordinance, it is impossible that they should be necessary to our constant and repeated celebration of it. Does any christian think it necessary, that this sacrament should never be administered but in a large upper room ? Is it not lawful nor valid, if performed in a little room and on a ground floor ? Again, our Saviour administered this ordinance to twelve persons,

who were all men, and just after another supper ; but can any man think that we must never administer, but where there are just twelve men to receive it, and that no woman must ever partake of it ; and that we must always eat another supper before we receive this ?

Yet further, what christian ever thought it necessary, that it should be performed on the same day of the week, that is Thursday, and on the same day of the month too, as it was first instituted, that is the thirteenth or fourteenth of March ? Then it can be celebrated but once in five or six years, when the same day of the month happens on the same day of the week. And I believe, we all think it necessary to receive it oftener, that on the fourteenth of March only, even if that could possibly fall on the Lord's-day every year. Yet again, if the Lord's-supper must be always administered in the evening, it cannot be always at the same hour of the day as we compute our hours in England. The evening hour or sun-set, which is six o'clock in March and September, will be complete night in December, and complete day in June. And thus if we receive the Lord's supper every month, it will be sometimes perfect day, and sometimes perfect night, if we keep to the same hour in which our Lord administered it. Besides, St. Paul did not celebrate this ordinance always in the evening. See Acts xx. 7. *He continued his preaching at Troas till midnight.* Then Eutychus fell down asleep, was taken up dead, was restored to life, and after all this *they broke bread*, and continued in discourse till break of day. And the primitive christians often celebrated this sacrament "*horis ante lucanis,*" that is, "before break of day," as the ancients inform us, most probably for fear of being disturbed by their persecuting enemies. Thus the conveniency of performance must determine the season or hour of administration, as well as the place and other circumstances.

I confess it is usually called the Lord's-supper, because it was in the evening that Christ instituted it, just after the Jewish passover, which was a supper ; but let it be observed, that supper was a very considerable, if not a chief meal, in many countries in those days, as dinner is now amongst us. Therefore, if we may change the posture of leaning at table into sitting upright, because it is our present table-posture, why may we not as well change supper time, which was their chief meal, for the season of our chief meal, that is at noon ? Especially since we cannot find that the precise time is made any part of the worship itself, or has any holy or religious signification in it. *Let us stand fast then in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free and not be entangled with yokes of bondage ; Gal. v. 1.* nor impose hours and seasons upon our consciences, which we cannot find the word of God has imposed, but which Christ has left indifferent to the free conveniency of his churches.

### DISCOURSE III.

*the Holiness of Places of Worship, considered in a Sermon at the opening of a new Meeting-house, October 20th, 1737.*

Exod. xx. 24.—In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

THESE words were spoken to Moses at mount Sinai, and sent by him to the nation of Israel, just after the great God had pronounced the law of the ten commandments from heaven in lightning and thunder; And while the people lay under awful impressions of this *fiery law*, God takes further care to secure the honours of his own name and worship, and to appoint some of the earliest modes and ceremonies of it. Verses 23, 24. *Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall you make you gods of gold: An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings and thy peace-offerings, and I will meet thee and bless thee.* But before I come to explain or improve this promise, I ask leave to make these three remarks on the connexion of these words with the context.

I. As the preface to those ten commands which God spoke to the people in thunder was this, *I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the house of bondage*; Exod. xx. 2. therefore hear and obey; so the preface to those following commands which he sent to them by Moses; verse 22. was this, *I the Lord your God have talked with you from heaven*, therefore attend and obey. A God of such mercy and of such Majesty, who brings his people out of a long and painful bondage, and then pronounces his own laws in fire and thunder, ought to be heard and obeyed by sinful feeble creatures. Divine Majesty and divine mercy united, carry with them a powerful demand of attention and obedience.

II. As the blessed God begins his orders to his people by his own voice, with securing his own honour and worship in the first and second commandments; in the same manner he begins his message to them by Moses, by a sort of explication or comment on these two first commands; *Ye shall have no other gods but me*, or besides me; no gods of gold or silver: and ye shall worship me by sacrifices upon an altar made of earth. Though God was just going to direct them to build a glorious tabernacle with altars of brass and gold, yet, while ye are in this moving and travelling state, before I have built me a house or

mansion to dwell in, ye shall worship me, saith he, upon an altar of earth, such as may be easily set up or took down without expence of time and money : This shall be more acceptable to me than altars of hewn or polished stone, with all the ornaments and fineries which you can contrive. It is God's own appointment of the forms and instruments of his own worship, that makes that worship acceptable to him, whether the materials be of earth or gold.

III. When God had briefly mentioned this matter of duty to the people, he adds a rich promise of grace. *In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.* St. Paul observes ; Eph. vi. 2. *that honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, is the first commandment with a promise,* and a few hours and minutes after that command was given, this order to worship God according to his own appointment, was sent to them ; and it may be properly called the second commandment with promise ; and a glorious promise it is indeed, of the presence of God with his people, to encourage to an exact and punctual performance of all his institutions in their worship.

Now let me take a short survey of these words of promise, and explain them briefly in general terms. By God's recording his own name, we are here to understand, his appointing any thing relating to his honour by his own authority, or his giving some notice how or where he would be worshipped by men ; what place he has fixed, or what forms of adoration he hath stamped with his own name and authority : And wheresoever these his institutions are celebrated in all their appointed forms, there the name of God is recorded. By his own coming to his people, which he has here promised, we must understand, his favourable discoveries of himself to those who worship him in the place and manner which he ordains : and this he has often done by some signals of his own gracious presence with them. He will let them know that he approves them, favours them and resides amongst them. By his blessing his people, he intends to signify, that he will not only accept the worship which is paid to him according to his own appointment, but he will make their attendances upon him effectual for some blessed ends : He will bestow those blessings of the covenant of grace, which are sought for by his people in their attendance on his worship.

Now that we may raise such meditations from these words as may suit our present purpose of beginning to wait upon God in a new erected place of worship, permit me to lead your thoughts along in order by the following propositions :

I. " That God who has ordained his own worship, together with the special modes and forms of it, has often in ancient times appointed the particular place of his worship, on single or

special occasions." It was while Adam tarried in paradise after his fall, and before he was driven out of the garden of Eden, that he was doubtless taught and required to offer sacrifices of beasts; for since flesh was not then appointed to be eaten, what could it be but the skins of beasts which were offered in sacrifice, out of which God made coats or garments for him and his wife? And hereby paradise itself, where the first sin was committed, was the appointed place for that sort of worship by sacrifice, by which the first typical atonement should be made for sin. But it does not appear that there was any continuance of that appointment more than for one season of worship: For our first parents were quickly driven out of that delightful garden. Noah, when he came out from the ark, at the order of God, upon mount Ararat, where the ark rested, there he offered sacrifices, and that doubtless by divine appointment; for *the Lord smelled a sweet savour in them*, and gave him a promise that *he would not again curse the ground*; Gen. viii. 20, 21.

It was by the special appointment of God, in a certain spot of the land of Canaan, that Abraham sacrificed to God *a heifer, a goat, and a ram, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon, and divided them asunder*; and there God condescended to pass between these pieces, under the emblem of *a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, and made a covenant with his servant*; Gen. xv. 9—17. It was also upon mount Moriah that Abraham received orders from heaven to offer his own son Isaac *as a burnt-offering*, and there he received a further blessing from the Lord, and the promise of the great Messiah to be derived from his seed, *in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed*; Gen. xxii. 2, 17, 18. It was at mount Sinai, that God ordered the nation of Israel to worship him, when he had brought them forth from Egyptian bondage; Exod. iii. 12. and again he appointed the "young men of the seed of Israel, to sacrifice oxen unto him under the hill, with an altar and twelve pillars, and made a covenant with the people;" Exod. xxiv. 5—8. So in following times, Gideon, and Samuel, and David, under inspiration, were required sometimes to offer particular sacrifices, and pay solemn worship unto God, in places different from the general orders which were given to all Israel for the public worship of the nation; otherwise, they would not have dared to have done it, nor would their sacrifices have been accepted, by such evident and illustrious testimonies from heaven, as some of them received. These few instances make it evident, that God sometimes appointed a particular place for his own worship.

II. "Though the great God prescribed to several persons the particular spot of ground on which he would be worshipped on single and special occasions; yet when he appointed any special place for his own worship in the solemn returns of it at stated

seasons, it was only to the nation of Israel, who were a peculiar people, chosen to himself from among the rest of the nations." This he did first when there was a tabernacle built for him in the wilderness: For though that was a moveable house or building, yet it was always at the door of the tabernacle, that the brazen altar was to stand, where alone sacrifices were to be offered; Lev. xvii. 4, 8, 9. and incense was to be burnt no where at stated seasons but only in the tabernacle on the altar of gold; Exod. xxx. 1—10. When the Israelites were come to Canaan, Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, was the first appointed place for the settlement of the ark of God, and the tabernacle, and there only were sacrifices to be offered. Josh. xviii. 1. "And the whole congregation assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle there." Now, that this was done by divine appointment, see Jer. vii. 12. "Go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first." And this practice, of worshipping God in Shiloh, was repeated by the ancient saints at stated seasons. So Elkanah and Haannah worshipped God there yearly; 1 Sam. i. 3.

In some ages after this, the tabernacle, with the brazen altar was set up in a high place in Gibeon, upon what occasion, or at what time, is not known: The ark which had been carried long before into the camp of Israel, and taken captive by the Philistines, was returned and brought to mount Zion at Jerusalem. When David carried the ark to Zion, which was called his city, because he had taken it from the Jebusites and fixed his own palace there, yet he left the tabernacle of Moses with the brazen altar at Gibeon, and priests were appointed to sacrifice there. See 1 Chron. xv. 1—3. and xvi. 1, 37 \*, &c. And though sacrifices were offered in Zion, on that occasion, yet, doubtless, David did this by divine appointment; for he was often directed by divine inspiration, and was accepted of God in these services. God himself says, he would dwell in Zion, *for he had desired it*; Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14. At the ark in Zion was the most sensible and glorious residence of God on the mercy-seat; this was the most illustrious part of all the building of Moses, and conveyed by God's own order to the city of David. Thither all the tribes went up to worship in David's time: Psal. cxxii. 4. and cxxxii. 13. And, upon this account, Zion was mentioned, as the sacred and appointed place of worship, so often in the Psalms of David: And these Psalms being used in Jewish worship, the same name and language was

\* Though I cannot find any express order for setting up the tabernacle in Gibeon, yet possibly there was such an order; because God shewed his acceptance of Solomon when he offered a thousand sacrifices there, by appearing to him, and promising him wisdom for his royal office. Compare 2 Chron. i. 3. with 1 Kings iii. 4, 5. Though other high places were forbidden, that might be appointed.

tinued, even after a temple was built, and used by the prophets in following ages, to signify the place of God's residence and of his worship : And Zion was the word they used to represent and typify the church of God in future ages.

When Solomon was ordered to build that glorious temple in Jerusalem, it was upon another mountain, even mount Moriah, far off from Zion ; 2 Chron. iii. 1. and *the ark of the covenant was brought up thither out of the city of David which is Zion* ; 1 Kings viii. 1. And this temple was the constant fixed place of the worship of the Lord for many generations, even till the days of the Messiah, or the end of the levitical dispensation. Thus the appointed place of the Jewish worship in its special seasons, and at the stated returning seasons, was the tabernacle or the ark which was formed by Moses, or the temple built by Solomon, from the time of their departure from Egypt to the coming of the Messiah. There the daily sacrifices of the two lambs were to be offered, there the burning lamps were to be kindled, there the sweet incense was to smoke towards heaven every morning ; and every evening ; Ex. xxix. 38. and xxx. 7, 8. There God appointed his own worship with a special uniformity in the whole scheme, and a peculiar harmony betwixt the several parts of it, to hold forth by way of type and emblem, the beauty and glory of the church invisible, worshipping the great and invisible God.

III. " While these appointed places of worship continued to be approved of God, they were called *holy places* ; not only because God dwelt there, but because God claimed them as his own, and would have them solemnly separated for his own peculiar service : And he appointed also what special respect toward the people should pay to them in testimony of their holiness." When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush on mount Sinai, he commanded him to *put off his shoes from his feet, the place, says he, whereon thou standest is holy ground* ; Ex. iii. 5. that is, because God was there. When God manifested his presence in lightning and thunder, and thick smoke on mount Sinai, to pronounce his law from heaven, the mountains were to have *bounds or rails fixed round about it, that neither man nor beast might touch it* ; Ex. xix. 23. Heb. xii. 20. When God fixed his visible dwelling amongst his people Israel, even before they came to be settled in the land of Canaan, as well as afterwards, there were various degrees of holiness assigned to places according to their nearness of God, or the visible token of his presence. When he appointed the orders of the camp of Israel, the camp though moveable, had some degrees of holiness in it : God represents himself as dwelling in the midst of them, walking among them, therefore no unclean thing was to be public and visible there ; Deut. xxiii. 14.



When Moses was instructed and required to erect the tabernacle, it was to stand in the middle of the camp : There was the open court, surrounded with curtains, whither only the priests and the levites might come to perform the services of the sanctuary, and the daily sacrifices which God appointed. In this court stood the laver and altar of burnt-offerings : In this court stood the tabernacle itself, a covered building ; the first part whereof was called the holy place, where only the priests came who performed daily services : There stood the golden candlestick, the altar of incense, and the table of shew-bread ; the inner part of it was called the holy of holies, where God dwelt in a bright cloud ; there none but the high priest might enter, and that once a year on the great day of atonement ; Ex. xxvi. 33. When they were settled in the promised land, the land itself was called holy, for it was the Lord's ; Lev. xxv. 27. Zech. vii. 12. He claimed it for his own ; Jer. ii. 7. The towns and cities of it were called holy cities ; Isa. lxiv. 10. No man was suffered to inhabit within the gates of them, but who became a proselyte of the true religion, so far as to renounce all idols, and to worship the God of Israel only, and who took upon him, as is generally said, the observation of the seven precepts of Noah, about murder and eating blood, &c.

Jerusalem was peculiarly the holy city, or the holy mountain ; for in David or Solomon's time, and afterwards, the mountains of Zion and Moriah were included in it. David brought the ark of God into Zion, and Solomon built the temple on mount Moriah, which by that means were made holy ground. The temple in general contained in it many courts and buildings, whose holiness had very different degrees, as learned men have observed ; and the chief of them were formed according to the tabernacle of Moses, but others were not so.

1. There was the court of the gentiles, where the heathens and the proselytes of the gate were permitted to walk : Whether this was distinguished in Solomon's time is a doubtful enquiry ; it is most probable, it was not.

2. The court of the people, or the court of Israel, into which no uncircumcised person was suffered to enter : It was only for those who were originally of the seed of Israel, or were circumcised and entered into complete Judaism, and became the proselytes of righteousness, or the proselytes of the temple. The tabernacle of Moses had not these two courts : The camp of Israel, and the country round about served instead of them.

3. There was the court of the priests and levites, who performed the worship of sacrifices : this was according to the forms and orders of the tabernacle of Moses : And therefore in this court stood the brazen altar and the laver ; the one to signify

ement for sin, by sacrifice, and the other to denote realification of heart, by washing, which are both necessary in order to our appearance before God. All these three courts were open to the sky ; and they had afterwards, perhaps, some other divisions made in them ; 2 Chron. xx. 5. as there were, finally, galleries formed on pillars to secure persons from the outer, as well as chambers of lodging for the levites, where strangers might not lodge : Neh. xiii. 5, 7, 8.

4. The sanctuary, properly so called, or the holy place, wherein stood the altar of incense, the table of shew-bread and candlestick : And I question whether any priests were usually permitted to enter therein, but those whose turn it was to light the lamps, to place and remove the loaves of bread, or to burn incense.

5. The innermost sanctuary, or holy of holies, which was overlaid with gold, was divided from the holy place by a veil of fine linen. Here stood the ark, and the covering of it, which was called the mercy-seat, on which God appeared to reside in a cloud of glory : And hither no person whatsoever might enter but the high-priest only, and that but once a year, with the blood of the sacrifice, and with incense, on the great atoning day. The temple of Solomon, as well as the tabernacle of Moses, or the residence of the ark in Zion, were called *the beauty of holiness* ; 1st. xxix. 2. xvi. 9. and cx. 3. There David calls on men to love and worship God ; there *the beauty of his holiness* and the harmony of his glories were discovered to men. All the parts of the temple were so far holy, that no civil or common business of the world was to be transacted there. Our Saviour gives occasion to St. Mark, in his history to describe it ; Mark xi. 15—17. *when he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves ; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple ; saying, Is it not written, my house shall be called of all nations a house of prayer ? but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

Thus then was the holiness of places duly observed, when no persons entered into them, but who were appointed of God, and when nothing was done in them of the common affairs of the world, and that out of special reverence to the great Jehovah, the God of Israel, who had chosen these places for a visible habitation to himself, and had made them holy. Let it be also observed, that there were several particular forms and ceremonies appointed for the consecration or dedication of these places unto God : Many sacrifices were offered by Moses and Aaron on this occasion, as you may read at large in Exodus and Leviticus, and in the first and second books of Chronicles. The great God was invoked by David and Solomon by prayer to enter into these holy

places as his own habitation or place ; Psal. cxxxiii. 1. *Arise, O Lord, into thy rest ; thou and the ark of thy strength.* Psal. xxiv. 7. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.*

It may be noted here, mankind is ever prone to superstition, and wheresoever the great God for wise purposes affixes any holiness to places or things, by peculiarising them to his own worship and service, men are very fond of adding some other forms and appearances of holiness to God's own appointments : Their synagogues, their schools of instruction, and their prayer-houses, which were built only by the prudence of men, as we shall shew afterwards, had distinct degrees of holiness imputed to them, by the superstitious Jews, which God never appointed.

IV. "When it pleased God to appoint particular places for his worship, it was always for positive revealed worship, to be paid him by special forms and ceremonies, such as incense, sacrifices, &c. and he excluded other places from that honour ; yet he never appointed a certain place, for any part of natural worship, with the exclusion of other places."

If you turn to all the texts before cited, where God ordained any certain spot of ground, or any building, either for single acts of worship, or for the stated repetitions and returns of it, it was still for sacrifice, for incense, or for musical instruments, &c. that is, for some positive or ceremonious part of religion ; but the natural worship of prayers and praises offered to God, or attending to the ministry of his word whereby we might learn his will and our duty, was never confined to any certain place. Though there were no sacrifices offered in the captivity of Babylon, because they had not the holy ark, or temple, or tabernacle there ; yet Daniel prayed continually, and Ezekiel preached or prophesied to the captives, afar off from Judea and Jerusalem, and all the holy places, which had been there appointed and sanctified. And though we do not read of their singing there, that was not from any danger of singing upon unconsecrated ground, but from the desolation of their circumstances, which required tears rather than music, and because they would not give occasion for new insults and scoffs from their barbarous enemies. The cxxxviii. Psalm itself was a divine song, which was written on that occasion, and probably might be sung there in private though not when the Babylonians were in company.

It is granted indeed, that all the parts of natural worship, such as hearing the word of God, offering prayers and devout songs of praise to him, were also required, or rather implied and supposed, often if not always, to attend these positive institutions and revealed ceremonies at the temple or tabernacle. The house of God is always a *house of prayer* ; Mat. xxi. 13. And God who dwells in Zion is said to *inhabit the praises of Israel* : Pa

**xxii. 3.** But no part of mankind were ever forbid to offer this sort of worship in other places ; no not in the strictest times of the Jewish religion. When sacrifices and all such ceremonies were confined to the tabernacle and the temple, still the people might meet together to pray to God, or to praise him, or to hear his word in any place whatsoever, through all the land of Canaan, when it did not interfere with the appointed duties of the tabernacle, or the temple : Or otherwise, the people in so large a country would have had but very little public worship among them, if all the nation had no other place to attend on it, but the temple or tabernacle.

Thence came the custom of erecting synagogues or convenient houses for Jewish assemblies to worship God. These were built in many places of the land of Israel ; some hundreds are said to be in Jerusalem itself : And these were not of peculiar divine appointment, because only natural worship was performed in them\*. It was the prudence of good men agreeing to wait on God in the practice of natural religion, prayer, praise, and hearing his word, which built such convenient places for worshipping assemblies to meet in their several towns and cities. There they came together every sabbath, and worshipped God ; Acts xv. 21. *Moses, of old time, hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day.* How old or ancient these times were is hard to determine. It is highly probable, that synagogues were erected in the land of Canaan, long before the captivity of Babylon. The lxxiv. Psalm speaks of them, that the enemy had not only *cast fire into sanctuary, and defiled the dwelling place of the name of God to the ground,* that is, the temple ; but they had also *burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.* These places of worship were greatly encouraged and honoured by our Saviour himself, preaching often in them ; Mat. iv. 23. Luke iv. 15.

There were also prayer-houses, built in mountains and solitary places by the Jews, in which people might retire, and travellers might pray to God in secret, free from disturbance, and perhaps from the inconveniences of the weather also : These were called by a Greek name, " proseuchai," and were also approved by Christ, for he used them for this holy purpose ; Luke vi. 12. *He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in a prayer-house of God,* as the Greek word most properly implies. Now, these examples which are so encouraged by our Saviour and his apostles, as well as from the reason and necessity of the thing, gives us abundant encouragement to build conveni-

\* Though the law of Moses, and the writings of the prophets, were read weekly in the synagogues, which were all revelations from God ; yet, whensoever God has revealed his mind and will in writing, it is but a piece of natural divine service, to read and publish this among the people. The light of nature teaches this and the law of nature requires it.

ent places for public worship under the christian dispensation\*. And blessed be God, who has given this church and congregation, in the midst of which we are now worshipping, such a convenient building as this is, and who inspired the hearts of his people with liberality answerable to such an occasion.

V. "When God was pleased to put an end to this Jewish dispensation, and all that typical scheme of worship, with its forms and ceremonies, by the coming of the Messiah, he put an end also to all the holiness of places." He removed his dwelling from *places made with hands*, and dwelt bodily in the Man Jesus Christ as his noblest tabernacle. The substance being come, the shadows must fly away; for all these things were only *figures for the time then present*. And God therefore entirely finished all that shadowy frame of things which he erected for the Jewish church, and abolished his own ancient ordinances, which affixed holiness to places, to mountains, or cities, or edifices†, and confined his worship to any particular place: Nor does our blessed Saviour require or permit christians to make new holy places of their own; John iv. 21. *The hour cometh, saith our Saviour, when ye shall be confined to worship God the Father neither in this mountain, Gerizim, which you Samaritans suppose to be holy, nor at Jerusalem which God appointed to be the holy place for his own worship: But the time comes, and is just now at hand, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; without regard to particular places; for it is such the Father seeketh to worship him: Such persons shall find acceptance of him, wheresoever they pay their homage to him, without any distinction of places. Every place, where God is sincerely honoured shall be as holy for this purpose, as Jerusalem ever was. This is true christian liberty.*

\* The christian churches, and their constitution and worship is agreed by learned men to come much nearer to the assemblies and worship, in Jewish synagogues, than to that of the temple.

† It was a vain and idle imagination among the popish devotees, that holiness still belongs to those towns, or spots of ground, or buildings, such as Judea and Jerusalem, where David lived and worshipped, where Christ and his apostles travelled and preached, and to the sepulchre and the garden wherein the body of Jesus was buried. This foolish notion worked up by the popes and priests of those blind ages, sent out thousands from their native homes, sauntering over sea and land in silly pilgrimages to Jerusalem. This set the princes of Europe on fire with frantic zeal to recover the holy land, and those holy places out of the hands of the Turkish powers who possessed them. This was the spring of those croisades or holy wars, to which the pope sent kings and their armies, one age after another, on a ridiculous errand, to the destruction of many thousand lives of their subjects, and the utter neglect of their own important affairs at home. And if Tasso, the Italian poet, had not been a great bigot, he would never have employed and abused a noble muse to celebrate the knight-errantry of such wild attempts and achievements; nor would Casimire Sarbiewski, that admirable Polish genius, have wasted such sublime odes in giving alarms to christian princes, at the beginning of the last century to pursue this impertinence of the holy war.

And this is the sense of the primitive christian churches, as you may see in the writings of the ancient fathers. Clemens alexandrinus saith thus : " Every place in truth is holy, where we receive any knowledge of God ;" and Justin Martyr, who was before him, writes, " All the sacrifices that are offered to God through the name of Christ in every place of the earth by the christians, God accepts them, and witnesses that they are all-pleasing to him : " And therefore, though in times of peace they had convenient and fixed places of public worship, yet in times of persecution, as Dionysius of Alexandria saith, " Our place of assembly is a field, a desert, a ship, a public inn, or a prison," or wherever they could securely join together in religious service.

When God appointed a church for himself in one nation, he appointed a general place of worship there, to which the males of the tribes of Israel were obliged to resort, and to pay their homage to him *three times a year*. But our Lord Jesus is now sent his apostles through the nations to gather a church for himself from among all the inhabitants of the world ; and he has appointed, shall I say, a large and extensive temple for himself, that is, the whole earth, wheresoever any true worshippers are found in it. Our divines generally suppose that glorious prophecy ; Is. lxvi. 1, 2. must refer to the days of the gospel, cause of many plain expressions in the context relating to that state : And we think that all the holiness that belonged formerly to places of worship, is foretold to be abolished there. *Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool : Where is the house that ye build unto me ; and where is the place of my rest ? All these heavens and earth hath my hand made, and those things have been, that is, houses and temples for me to rest in ; they have been, saith the Lord, but their time is finished now ; and to this man will I look, and regard him as worshipper, who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that maketh an emblem at my word, wheresoever he shall call upon me and worship me."*

The first martyr, Stephen, when he cites this very place of the prophet in his speech to the Jews ; Acts vii. 49. designs to shew them how they know, that the holiness of their temple, in which they had worshipped, was just at an end : *The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; his habitation is not confined to material buildings.* The gospel, in its religious worship, comes much nearer to natural religion in this respect, that there are very few special rites and ceremonies that belong to it : And God sees no need of appointing any particular place for christian worship, since we have but these two plain ceremonies to perform, *baptism, and the Lord's supper.*

Since the great God has been pleased to put down and

abolish the holy and consecrated places of his own appointment, I cannot find the text wherein he has given to man any order or authority to pretend to make other places holy. Mortal men can never put holiness in ground or buildings, where God has not put it. No pompous ceremonies, no solemn forms, no magnificent appearances, no gaudy or golden solemnities can sanctify any place unto God and his worship, or make it more holy than it was before: And whatsoever fooleries and ridiculous rites or notions are found in the church of Rome in this case\*, I am well persuaded our wiser brethren of the church of England do not, cannot believe them to be of any value or importance, in order to make the worship more acceptable to God. They are of opinion indeed, that it is a very proper thing for christians to build large and convenient edifices, where considerable assemblies may meet together to worship God in and through Jesus Christ: They suppose, that nothing indecent should be done in these buildings, to bring them into contempt, and that they should usually be separated and kept for the sacred purposes of worship, for which they are built: And I think the protestant dissenters are of the same opinion. They believe also, that when a commodious building is erected for the worship of God, it is a very decent thing to begin the worship at that place, with solemn prayer or addresses to God, that the solemnities of the christian religion, which are performed there, may find acceptance of the God of heaven through Jesus Christ their Saviour; and that the christian ordinances, there celebrated, may be blessed to the edification of the souls of men: Nor do the dissenters differ from them in this practice, for we are met together here, this day, for this very purpose.

It is true, the conformists have been pleased to call this the consecration of their churches; but though the dissenters use not that name, when they begin to worship in their new erected buildings or meeting-houses, yet they generally suppose and intend these buildings should be set apart chiefly for this end, nor should be usually employed for mean, or dishonourable, or ridiculous purposes in human life, without some appearing necessity of it, or some very great convenience to be obtained thereby, which might overbalance the mere considerations of decency and propriety. Reason and humanity seem to dictate this separation or appointment of buildings for public worship. Should the senate-house where our law-givers assemble be used for a theatre or

\* It is no wonder, that the church of Rome should pretend to make common things and places holy, by the consecration of their bishops, when every priest, among them, assumes a power to turn a bit of senseless paste, into the holy body and blood of our blessed Saviour. Their ceremonies at the consecration of a church are so numerous and theatrical, that it would be very tedious to recite them; I shall only therefore, for a specimen, present you with a short abstract of the form of ceremonies, for blessing the first stone of any church, that is to be built, and this may be done by a common priest, provided he has power given him by the bishop. See the appendix at the end of this discourse.

roll-house, or for idle puppet-shews? Should the council-board be made a drinking or gaming table when the king is absent? Or the presence-chamber be an entertaining room for public mimics and scaramouches to divert the mob, as soon as his majesty is departed? Or is it proper that a place, built for divine service, should be alternately employed for the fooleries of human life to appear in, when the worship is ended? This would unite pleasures which are extremely distant, and blend together solemnity and ridicule. This would too nearly join things divine and secular, and mingle the images of such scenes in the fancy, as should for ever be kept separate.

If such things have been ever done, surely it has not been a matter of choice, but necessity, when the worshippers have been constrained to meet in such rooms, having no fitter place of worship near at hand. The common prudence of mankind and natural decency in general, would seem to forbid it. When we erect a house for the worship of God, we would not chuse to couple it with any ludicrous or dishonourable ideas. But though our friends here have built this house purely for divine worship, and we are all of us engaged this day in addressing the Majesty of heaven, that, when the congregation attends here, he would condescend to favour them with his divine presence and blessing; yet all this human prudence, this natural decency, and all these prayers do not amount to the sanctifying the spot of ground or the building, so as to make it holier than the rest, or put any such holiness upon it as belonged to the Jewish tabernacle or temple, where it was sinful either to work or play. It must be confessed indeed, that some of the forms of expression which have been used in consecrations, and applied to new-erected chapels and churches in our nation, do carry too evident airs or appearances of superstition, as though men could put holiness into them: but we suppose, that these things were some of the relics of the popish religion, that were not quite swept away when the reformation brought in better christianity. How few wise men are here, amongst all our brethren in the national church, that would now-a-days approve of the ridiculous ceremonies, rites, and gestures, whereby archbishop Laud heretofore consecrated Creed-church, near Aldgate, in London, and several others\*?

To make this agreement of sentiments between us and our brethren, yet further appear, let these three things be considered:

1. That many of the public churches, notwithstanding all their consecrations, are frequently used by the approbation of the minister, the church-wardens, and the whole parish, for other purposes than religious worship; such as the assembling of the

\* A short abstract of this is found in Mr. Neal's History of the Parishes, vol. II. p. 219. and a longer account in Rushworth's Collections.



vestry-men to chuse parish-officers and settle parish taxes, the choice of aldermen and common council-men in the city of London, in which they too often find such quarrels and mutual reproaches, such railing, such fraud, and falsehood in procuring votes at elections, as is very improper to be indulged, or even the probability of it admitted in a place, which has any real holiness in it. How many other secular affairs are sometimes transacted in churches in the country, and in church-yards too, though they are consecrated, because they are large and convenient? How many consecrated churches are appointed to teach little children their A, B, C, and all the rudiments of learning in them? And are not boys often indulged to play in churches, while men meet to ring bells there merely for diversion, or for any trivial purpose? Surely these places are not supposed to have much real holiness in them, where these things are continually practised, and universally connived at, if not publicly allowed.

2. Consider how many chapels in the nation are erected and used for religious worship, without any consecration at all: And the divine service is justly supposed to be as effectually performed, and as much accepted of God, as if it had enjoyed all the ceremonious formalities in the world to consecrate it. Nor are any former impurities supposed to render a convenient place unfit for divine worship, though there have been no purifying rites and forms to sanctify it. Has the royal banqueting-house, which was erected in the last age, and where our former kings celebrated other sort of festivals, than those of the apostles and martyrs, has it been ever consecrated by any of these forms, in order to make it a holy place for divine worship, which is regularly and constantly performed there in the present age?

3. I could never learn, that the consecration of new churches and chapels, has any certain set of ceremonies, appointed for it by the laws of the land. There is indeed an ancient form preserved, whereby Lancelot Andrews, bishop of Winchester, in the year 1617, consecrated a small chapel at Peartree near Southampton, which I have several times seen, and gazed at it, as that very building which gives us the model for our present consecrations. But I have not found any sufficient authentic acts of the kings or parliaments of England, whereby this is required or made necessary\*. Upon the whole then, I cannot find any great difference between the sentiments of the dissenters and the conformists of our age, in this point, among wise and thinking persons. They seem to agree, there is no such holiness in places, as weaker minds imagine.

\* This form of the consecration of churches, is found in bishop Sparrow's book, called "A Rationale of the Common Prayer," in octavo; and in the same author's "Collection of the Articles, Canons, &c." of the church of England in quarto.

VI. " Since there is no particular place appointed of God where christians must worship him ; then we cannot learn, where he has recorded his name any other way, but by the worship itself and its entire conformity to God's own ordinance and appointment." God resides in the midst of his people, wheresoever his divine institutions are celebrated, according to his mind and will. Ps. lxxviii. 18. compared with Eph. iv. 8. informs us, that when our Saviour ascended on high, he received gifts for men, and he diffused those gifts to make pastors and teachers, to build up his church amongst the Gentile nations, who, at that time were called the rebellious ; and he did it for this reason, " *That the Lord God might dwell amongst them, as he did in Sinai, as he did in Sion :*" And where these pastors or teachers celebrate his own ordinances, in their purity, there the great God condescends to dwell, and records his name there.

Time and places are necessary circumstances of all human actions, whether natural, civil, or religious. If God has appointed the time, let us keep to his appointments, and let us worship him one day in seven, according to his original institution ; and let that be on the first day of the week, when our Lord rose from the dead, and his apostles directed the churches to attend on their exalted Saviour in religious worship. But if he has not appointed the place, we are left to the best use of our reason and christian prudence, to raise our synagogues in the most convenient ground, and to agree upon our meetings or assemblies for the worship of God, where it may best suit the conveniency of the church, or the greatest part of the worshippers. And since God has appointed no particular spot of ground, no special building for this purpose, under the gospel, we may assure ourselves, that whosoever worships him in spirit and in truth, will find acceptance in every nation, and in every place.

The parts of natural worship, are always the same, throughout all ages, that is, to attend to what God speaks, both in the dictates of reason and in his word, read or explained ; to offer up our prayers to him for the mercies we want, and to celebrate his praises, and shew our thankfulness ; these are accepted of God in all places. And as for the two ceremonies of baptism, and the Lord's-supper, since they are attached to no particular place by the appointment of our Saviour, let us perform these solemnities in any convenient place, according to his will, and there God will reside among his people. Wheresoever the children of men separate themselves from the wicked world, and devote themselves to God in and through Jesus the Mediator, and practise pure and undefiled religion, there is Sion under the gospel ; there will he take up his habitation and his rest, for he hath desired it ; Is. cxxxii. 13, 14. *There is the temple of the living God, for he hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk among them, and I*

*will be their God, and they shall be my people* ; 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17. Here indeed a question may arise, "How shall we know with any certainty, where God has recorded his name? or what are the chief and most particular things, whereby we may judge, whether our religious worship be according to his appointment." To this I briefly answer under these four heads :

1. By endeavouring as far as possible to find out his mind and will, concerning his worship, both in the duties of natural and revealed religion. God has given us both the light of reason and the light of scripture to instruct us herein : Where reason fails us, the scripture directs, and where the scripture is silent, there we must betake ourselves to our own reason and conscience, to determine our practice in those things which are necessary to be determined : but without inventing new ceremonies out of our own fancy, and appointing rites and forms which God has never appointed ; or persisting in those which he has already abolished. Let us see to it, that such truths be published amongst us, as are agreeable to the written word, and that due honour is paid, to all the discoveries of his will, that he has made, in every part of our religious solemnities. A little mistake in these things, where the heart is sincerely inquisitive after the mind and will of God, shall never make our worship unacceptable to his mercy.

2. His name is recorded only there, "where worship is paid him in and through Jesus Christ, the great Mediator. Some have supposed his human nature to be that greater and more perfect *tabernacle, not made with hands,*" of which St. Paul speaks ; Heb. ix. 11. Whether that be so or no, this is certain ; it is through his hands, who is our *great High-priest over the house of God*, that our worship must be directed to the Father ; for the name of God is in him, it is *the Man Jesus*, who is the *one Mediator between God and man* ; 1 Tim. ii. 5. *in whom all the fulness of the godhead dwells bodily* ; Col. ii. 9. And it is only, on such worship, as is offered through God's incarnate Son, that he has recorded his own name : It is only in and by the name of his Son that we can have access to the Father, *no man cometh to the Father but by him* ; John xiv. 6. It is in his name he has taught us to offer up all our prayers ; John xvi. 24. If we *enter into the holiest*, that is, if our souls ascend to heaven in devotion, we must do it *by the blood of Jesus, as a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us* ; Heb. x. 20. Whatsoever is done *in word or deed*, must be *to the glory of God through Jesus Christ* ; so this great apostle Paul requires : Col. iii. 17.

3. If we would have the name of God recorded and stamped on our worship it must be performed through the desired aids of his own spirit. This is another qualification of

ic christian worship, such as God will accept; Eph. ii. 18. *Both Jews and Gentiles have access by this one Spirit unto the Father, and both grow up together as an holy temple in the Lord: they are all builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit; verse 21, 22.*

4. If we would see the name of God yet further recorded on his worship, "let us take care to awaken every christian virtue and grace into exercise, whensoever we are engaged in religious actions." Let us worship him in spirituality, and in sincerity of soul, God loves those only who adore him *in spirit & in truth*: Let us pay our honours to his Majesty, with great humility and self-abasement at his foot, remembering we are, only feeble creatures made out of the dust, but sinful creatures bowing before an almighty being of perfect holiness: Let us pray to him with fervency of spirit, and awaken all the powers of our nature to attend upon his word, with devout reverence and submission. When he speaks to us in the ministry of the word, we should diligently guard against every wandering thought, and keep out every flying vanity from our hearts. Let our hope in his promises be stedfast and lively, and our dependence be on his grace. Let us take heed, that we have no false, carnal, or hypocritical designs in our appearance before God, that our addresses to him; but let it be our zealous and affectionate desire to glorify our heavenly Father, to honour our dear Mediator, and to seek the eternal happiness of ourselves and our fellow-creatures. Where these things are found, God certainly recorded his name: There he dwells in such an assembly, and will encourage every sincere worshipper. But this brings me to the last proposition.

VII. "Wheresoever public worship is performed according to the will of God, in the instances before-mentioned, we have everlasting encouragement to hope, that he will condescend to visit his people and *bless them*." His ancient promise, which was sent by Moses to his chosen people in my text, continues its force through all generations. It is in Zion, that he assures us even in the Old Testament, that he will meet his people: *There has commanded the blessing, even life for evermore*; Ps. cxxxiii.

Every gospel church, constituted according to the appointment of Christ, is a little sanctuary, a little Zion, and hath the blessings of Zion belonging to it. Many of the promises, which were literally made to Israel, and Jerusalem, and mount Sion, are applied to christians, under the New Testament, by the apostles themselves; and by their example, we are encouraged in the same manner to apply them.

Our blessed Saviour himself also has given us assurance at Mat. xviii. 20. *That where two or three of his followers are met together in his name, and according to his institutions there he*

himself is, and *will be in the midst of them*. The Father and the Son will come and dwell with his people in such assemblies, and diffuse divine blessings amongst them. Let us take heed that we have the name and the authority of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, stamped upon all the parts of our worship, and we need not doubt his presence and blessing. But upon the mention of such a promise, our desire and zeal should awake, and earnestly enquire, how glorious and how various those blessings are, which God has promised to his people, where he has recorded his name. Let us take a delightful survey of them, and by the exercise of faith and hope, appropriate them to ourselves, in every place, and in every season, where we attend on the pure worship of God.

1. Concerning Sion and all her assemblies for worship, it is promised, that *her priests shall be clothed with salvation*; Ps. cxxxii. 16. If they are such, as our exalted Saviour calls to be the ministers of his gospel, they shall be filled with his saving graces, they shall be furnished with the gifts of knowledge and utterance, answerable to their call and duty, they shall shine in these divine ornaments, they shall be like the high-priest of old, whose clothing was made *for glory and beauty*, while the sacred perfume was poured upon his head, which trickled *down to the skirts of his garments*; Exod. xxviii. 40. Ps. cxxxiii. 2, 3. The ministers of Zion shall spread the savour of the knowledge of Christ, and his all-sufficient power to redeem and save. *His name from the lips of his ministers, shall be as ointment poured forth*: They shall diffuse the sweet odours of the gospel of Christ, to refresh and revive the humble and weary souls, that attend on his holy ordinances, wherein they minister. They shall have their various gifts of elocution, exhortation and consolation, awakened into a pleasurable exercise, and shall obtain blessed success, amongst the souls and consciences of the worshippers. *It shall be like the dew on the mountains of Zion, where God has commanded the blessing of everlasting life*.

Now can we, who are ministers of the word, rest satisfied without feeling some of this divine benediction; when we exercise our constant ministry in holy things? Can we go on, from week to week, still labouring in a formal round of services, and still contented without this heavenly favour? Are we not as it were clothed with salvation, by the messages of peace and love, which we are commissioned to convey to sinful men, in the name of Christ? And shall we be contented for many years together, without seeing any divine success attending them? O may the ministrations and messages of grace, which shall be delivered from week to week in this place, in this new building, be attended with the divine influences of the Spirit of God, that your worthy and beloved pastor may triumph in diffusing the know-

of Christ, and become *the savour of life unto life*, to a multitude of souls!

It is promised again unto Sion, *that it shall be said concerning her, this and that man was born there*; Psalm lxxxvii.

There shall be many souls, who are *by nature dead in sins and sins*, called, as it were, out of their graves, they be raised from the dead, they shall be born unto God in the assemblies of his people, under the reign of the Messiah. It is evident this Psalm belongs to the christian state and dispensation, for it prophesies concerning Egypt and Babylon, Tyre and Philistia, that the heathen countries shall become converts, the Gentiles shall be born a-new, shall be made the children of Sion.

It is by the word of God preached in the assemblies, that we are regenerated or born again; 1 Cor. iv. 15. 1 Pet. i. 23.

The divine truth contributing toward this blessed work. *The counsel of God* for the salvation of men must be preached every place: The knowledge of the law for the discovery of our guilt and danger, and distress, and the grace of the gospel for the relief of the distressed. It is this gospel of Christ that is *the power of God to salvation both to Jews and Gentiles*; Rom.

In Zion *the arm of the Lord shall be revealed*, and this report shall be believed; Is. liii. 1. The law of God must be preached with its severity of terror and its strictness of command, that sinners may be awakened and convinced of their guilt and weakness, of their helpless and hopeless state in themselves, that they may fly to the refuge that is set before them in the gospel. And where the law kills, the gospel can give life: where the law works despair, the gospel provides hope. Faith and hope soften the soul to repentance, and work up the heart to love, a holy, and an obedient temper, by the influence and motion of love. By this means, the loose, and the vile, and the carnal sinner is born into a new life of temperance; and the prodigal renounces his impiety, and grows in love with religion and holiness. Sion is the usual place, where these wonders, of converting grace, are wrought among men, by the presence of the sanctifying spirit.

Is it not a sad and dismal thing to read what Solomon says; Eccles. viii. 10. Is it not a most lamentable and deplorable case, that multitudes of the wicked in our days, should forsake the place of the holy, from the assemblies for the worship, and abide still dead in sin, and are buried without repentance? Let us enquire of our consciences, Is this the case of any soul of us here? Let us awaken our hearts this day earnestly unto God, that we may never more come and depart from the places where God is worshipped, without being born again unto God, without being regenerated by the word, without

being made new creatures. Shall I take the freedom to address you, more particularly, who belong to this congregation, and who usually meet together for divine services? Fathers and masters, do you bring your families with you to the place of worship, and never concern yourselves, whether this blessing of Sion attend your household? Whether your children or your servants be born again there; Or, whether they continue still in their state of nature, guilt, and wretchedness? Tender mothers, are you contented to have your sons and daughters attend you to the solemn assembly, and still be the children of the first Adam, in all the ruins of his fall, the children of Satan and *the children of wrath*? And can your eyes look upon them with satisfaction and pleasure, and never drop a tear of pity on their circumstances, while they are not yet become the *sons and daughters of the living God*? Speak each of you to your own hearts in secret, and charge them never to be at rest in a thoughtless indolence, never to cease your addresses to the mercy-seat till you can see some of the happy effects of this promise manifested to yourselves, and to all that are near and dear to you.

3. It is foretold concerning Sion and the church of God, that the *crown of David shall flourish there, that his horn shall be made to bud, and his enemies be clothed with shame*; Psal. cxxxii. 18. Jesus Christ, the true David, shall have his head crowned with glory and honour, in the assemblies of his people, where God has recorded his name. Here shall he receive the first homage of numerous subjects; *they shall be made a willing people in the day of his power*; Psal. cx. 3. Hither shall they come from the family of sin, and Satan, and death, and here shall they be made living subjects of Jesus their king. *His horn shall bud*, his power shall reveal itself, *he shall have a new seed to serve him*, growing up continually under the instructions of the sanctuary. *The Lord shall send the rod of his strength out of Zion*, and Jesus shall rule and reign in the midst of his enemies, and melt and soften the hearts of thousands of them into willing subjects. Satan, his grand enemy, shall be put to shame, by the loss of so many souls out of his dominions: All his arts of mischief to ruin mankind shall be confounded; the church of Jesus our king shall never be lost or die, *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*; Mat. xvi. 18. I persuade myself this promise has been fulfilled and acknowledged in your former place of worship; Jesus your king has been honoured in all his various offices, graces and glories. His empire has been enlarged by the addition of many subjects: Your own souls are thankful witnesses of his grace, and we cannot but hope and pray, that this new-erected building, and those that attend on God here, shall be witnessess of the same honours done to the blessed Saviour, and a large increase of his kingdom.

4. Another promise made to Sion, is, "that the poor and the hungry shall be satisfied with bread there, even with living bread, and the water of life, for God will *abundantly bless the provision* of his gospel-sanctuary;" Psal. cxxxii. 15. It is the poor alone, and the needy, and the humble in spirit that shall be fed with rich grace and abundant plenty; but those who are full of themselves, and are rich in their high opinion of their own circumstances, they shall be sent empty away. God will here provide supplies for the wants of every inhabitant in Sion. *The inhabitant shall not say any longer, I am sick, they shall be healed of their spiritual diseases by the sanctifying spirit, they shall be made to lift up their heads, and rejoice by the Spirit the comforter, for their iniquities shall be forgiven them* through the blood of the Son of God; Isa. xxxiii. 20, 24. All the particular necessities of hungry souls shall be here supplied: Those who come seeking and longing for some divine relief under their difficulties, shall often find a word suited to their case, they shall be supplied out of the stores of the sanctuary. Those who are bewildered in the dark, and are doubtful in their way, shall find a hint of happy advice; a beam of divine light, shining in their hearts, shall point them to the path, in which they should walk. Those who are mourning under a sense of guilt, or under the pressure of some heavy burden, shall be relieved and comforted out of the divine promises, and find the burden of their hearts made easy. Those who are bowed down, shall be supported and raised with a word of heavenly consolation; those who complain of hardness of heart, shall meet with a word of love and power, that shall melt their souls into tenderness and penitence, and mould them to the will of God their Saviour. Those who are surrounded with many and mighty adversaries, shall experience new strength conveyed to their hearts to wage the holy war with vigour, that they may come off conquerors; and those who are dying under a sense of sin, shall find divine life and salvation here. God will meet his own people, and supply them with every needful blessing of the covenant of grace.

5. In Sion, the worshippers shall be *made joyful in the house of prayer*: and the saints shall shout aloud for joy, Isa. lvi. 6, 7. Psal. cxxxii. 16. They shall offer up their praises with holy cheerfulness, and delight themselves in the blessings of the sanctuary. Surely when *the priests are clothed with salvation*, when the crown of David flourishes, and his kingdom is enlarged, when poor perishing creatures are born into a new life, by the powers and provisions of grace, then the saints cannot but sing and rejoice. "When the sons of the stranger shall join themselves to the Lord, he will bring them to Sion, and make them joyful there, according to his promise." Isa. lvi. 6, 7. He will exalt their joy into shouting, he will raise their delight



to a high degree, in his holy ordinances, where his name is recorded. May I enquire of you christians, have you never found this prophecy fulfilled, in your former attendance, on the ordinances of divine worship? Have you never experienced, that this promise has been made good to you, and this divine joy conferred upon you? Take it as a pledge and earnest of the full satisfactions and delights of the house of God on high, and in such proportion as it makes you holy and humble.

Happy will it be for your minister, if he can say from sweet experience, that he has been clothed with divine salvation, when he ministers in this place, that he has been taught to spread the savour of the knowledge of Christ, through a numerous assembly, in this building. Happy for the people, when many of them shall be enabled to say, I was once blind and dead, but I was here awakened into divine light and life. I was new-born in Sion, and through the grace of God I am taken out of the family of Satan, and am become a son or a daughter of the Most High. I was overwhelmed with fears about my soul, and with the terrors of God which hung about me, but here I found the way of salvation, by Christ Jesus, made known unto me; thus all my terrors were scattered, and divine peace was spoken to my conscience. I was pained at my heart, under a sense of my guilt, and from such a text of scripture, or from such a sermon, I found divine rest and relief. My inward corruptions were strong, my irregular passions were wont to get the victory over me, but here I met with a word of power and grace to subdue them. I was entangled with a strong temptation, and here the snare was broken. I was oppressed with heavy sorrows, and I found support and comfort from the word of God, which was dispensed in this place: And, may this be the happy case, may this be the salvation and the joy of multitudes, that shall attend the future seasons of worship here!

The Use.—It is now time to conclude my discourse, and I shall do it by setting before you these four plain and natural lessons, which may be derived from it. 1. We may learn by this discourse, our obligations to give thanks to the Lord, for the general and special instances of his grace and goodness to us, in the things whereof I have been speaking. Come then and *bless the Lord, all our souls, and let all that is within us bless his holy name.* That he has built houses and habitations for himself, in this sinful miserable world; that he has not banished us for ever from his sight, and retired far away and withdrawn himself for ever from such a defiled and wretched place as this earth is made by the iniquity of its inhabitants. Bless the Lord, that he has recorded his name upon any thing that we can do, or we can enjoy, and that he has permitted sinners to make any approaches to him in all the ages of mankind, since the guilt and

fall of our first parent ; that he has given so many rich and precious promises for our encouragement to attend his habitation, and that he has ordained institutions of solemn worship for us to maintain any communion with himself. Bless him, that he has sent his gospel to Great Britain, to enlighten us from heaven, while other nations lie in gross darkness and death ; that he has taught us his name and his grace, and the forms of his worship ; that he has called the inhabitants of our islands to assemble together in churches ; that he has raised these dwelling-places for himself in the midst of us, for every church of Christ, even in the heathen nations, is a little Sion, a sanctuary where God dwells. We cannot say, God has his name at all recorded in the large nations of heathenism and idolatry, where the true God is not worshipped, nor his Son Jesus known ; Jesus, in whom his name dwells for ever. We can hardly say, his name is recorded in popish countries, though there is abundance of blasphemous and superstitious use of it there ; but idolatry and antichristian worship are powerful and prevalent over every thing that is evangelical and divine. It is the name of Babylon and antichrist that are recorded there, rather than the names of God and his Son. Blessed be God, from our very souls, that our lot is not cast in such a land, where gods of wood and stone are worshipped, where the name of the true God is not recorded, and where we can have no special promises, no reasonable expectation and hope, that he should meet and bless us.

Let us again give thanks to our God, who has so formed our civil constitution and government, at this day, that we have liberty to worship God, through Jesus Christ the Mediator, in his own appointed ways ; that we are not persecuted from corner to corner, but in every place we are permitted to erect synagogues for divine service, and to attend on our God in those ordinances, on which he has stamped his own name. How many scattered christians are there up and down in the popish nations, where they are forbid to meet in any place for the solemnizing of true christian worship ? How many nations are there where the places of protestant worship are utterly demolished, and christians are not suffered to unite their prayers and praises to the God whom they adore, in spirit and in truth ? Let us yet again give thanks unto God, that, in the course of his providence, we have convenient places to assemble for his pure religion ; that we are provided with so many advantages, that we are not exposed to the inconveniences of wind, or rain, or sultry seasons, and are secured from the disturbances of a sinful world. Let us bless God, that he has so plentifully stored the provinces of this land with such buildings, that we are not exposed to the labour and hardships of long travel, which was a burdensome ceremony imposed on the Jews, who were required to wait upon their God

*three times a year*, where he recorded his name, at Shiloh, or at Jerusalem; we may meet him nearer at hand, and receive his public blessings, in so many of the streets of this great city, and in so many of the towns and villages of the British isles.

And you, my friends of this congregation, have abundant occasion and reason for thankfulness, that God by his providence has fixed your assembly in so convenient a place, wherein you begin this day to pay him your worship. May you long enjoy it in undisturbed peace! O blessed be his name, that many of you have found God with you in former places of assembling, and that you are daily training up under his divine instructions and blessings, for the worship and happiness of the heavenly state, and for his more joyful and immediate presence.

2. There is a lesson of self-enquiry to be derived from this discourse. Do we, on good ground, believe, that the name of God is recorded on the worship we offer to him? Otherwise we cannot possibly claim, or reasonably expect the accomplishment of this divine promise. Let us examine our consciences on this head, according to the evidences before given of such worship whereon God has stamped his authority and his name. Do we heartily and sincerely seek, to learn the mind and will of God in his own word, concerning the religion that we should chuse, and the worship which we perform? Do we engage in such services, as we find directed and appointed by him? Are the sermons on which we attend, the prayers and the songs which we offer up to God, and all the ministrations of the holy ordinances amongst us such as are formed and guided by the rules of holy scripture, so far as scripture has given us any prescriptions about them? Do we take care to perform all that God has enjoined as far as possible, and do we take as much care to let nothing creep into our worship, but what the word of God or the necessary reason of things dictates to us? Do we make no additions, of our own, to the religious practices which God has enjoined, or the ceremonies which he has instituted? And can we appeal to God, so far as we know our own hearts, and can understand his word, that we practise nothing herein but according to his mind and will? Again,

Do we offer up all our religious services to the Father, in the name and by the mediation of his Son? Do we seek to draw near to the Father only in that *new and living way*, which he has ordained? Do we seek for acceptance at the throne, through the atoning sacrifice of our great *High-Priest*, and through his intercession as our advocate at the right hand of God? Can we appeal concerning our own conduct herein even to our Lord Jesus Christ himself, *Lord, thou, who knowest all things, knowest that we love thee*, and that we would never draw near to the mercy seat without thee.

Do we pray for the assistance of the Holy Spirit of God in all our acts of devotion and attendance on his word? Do we seek to have our minds enlightened, to have our thoughts directed, and our wills made obedient by this blessed Spirit? Do we seek earnestly for the influences of this Spirit, to raise our hearts towards heaven, and to animate and warm all our affectionate powers in religious worship? Do we depend on him for divine aids, so that we may get nearer to God by every part of the religious services we perform? Where the Spirit of God is utterly neglected, I fear it will be hard to prove, that the name of God is recorded in that worship.

Do we endeavour to exercise every christian grace, suited to those parts of worship in which we are engaged? Do we appear before God, with all holy reverence of his majesty? Do we enter into his courts, even the assemblies of his people, with a religious temper of mind, desirous to see God in his sanctuary? Do we address him in prayer with holy fervency for what we want, and yet with humble resignation to his wisdom and will? Do we keep our spirits intent and watchful, in the season of prayer, or do we let our thoughts wander as they please, to the ends of the earth? Do we offer up our souls in sincere praises, and rejoice before the Lord in our holy songs? Do we attend, on the ministrations of his word with trembling and fear, with hope and desire to profit? Do we long to learn something further concerning the will of our God and Father, concerning the characters and offices of our blessed Jesus, and all the glorious grace which the gospel contains? Do we receive the precepts of God concerning our duty to God and to our neighbours with all holy submission and obedience, and are none of his commands grievous to us? Do we relish the joys of his sanctuary, in this lower world, with a delightful expectation and hope of paying better worship to him, in a superior state? Are our souls daily growing up towards a more perfect conformity to the blessedness, and the business of the heavenly world, so far as we are permitted to know it here on earth? If we find these characters upon ourselves, and on the worship which we perform, we may then reasonably hope that God has recorded his name amongst us, and will come and meet us and bless us.

3. Another lesson we may learn here, is a direction what we should pray for, especially on this day, together with a strong encouragement for prayer, and expectation of the presence of God with us, and his blessing upon us. He has connected our duty with his promises, and we should encourage our faith, and learn to expect the promises fulfilled, when, upon the sincerest searches of our own hearts, we find them engaged in a proper manner, in his service, and our duty. We are met together this day, to pray that God would be pleased to accomplish

his gracious word of promise both to the minister and to the people, who hope to pay their worship to the great God, if he permit, for many following years in this place. Let our prayers then be directed by the divine words of promise. We would pray for all the blessings of Zion on you, who shall worship God here. That your minister may be clothed with salvation, that he may diffuse the savour of the name of Christ in this place, with great success ; that his gifts and graces may be multiplied and increased for your edification, and that his health may be restored and maintained to your great advantage and joy.

We would pray, that souls may be born again, in multitudes, in this place : That some may be taken, as it were from Egypt, and from Babylon, from the vile and wicked generations of men, from the persecutors, and the profligate of this world, and may be born into a new and divine life by the word of grace, as it is here ministered : That the lewd and drunken, the profane and the vicious, if any such attend in this place, may be convinced of their sins here, may here be released from the bonds of their iniquities, and return no more to madness and folly : That the cruel and malicious may here be taught to put on meekness, and gentleness, and love ; and the wrathful and passionate, learn to govern their spirits : That the covetous wretch may have his hands released from the greedy gripe of gold and silver, and his heart learn here to despise earthly possessions, in comparison of the riches of grace ; and may seek after an inheritance more glorious, and more durable than lands or houses on earth. In short we should pray that every part of the gospel of Christ may have its due place in the ministrations which shall be performed here, that grace and duty may go hand in hand ; and that many who are *children of wrath, and dead in trespasses and sins*, may here be *created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works*, and made the children of Zion, the sons and daughters of God.

We would pray, that the crown of David may here flourish on his head, that Jesus the king of Zion may see a large increase of his kingdom, and many souls subjecting themselves to the sceptre of his righteousness, and his mercy, and receive him in every sacred office he sustains for the salvation of sinful men : We would pray, that *the poor may be satisfied here with bread* ; that every hungry soul may find something here suited to his sacred appetite and pious desires, may find some word in the ministry, to relieve and support him, under every want, to advise and direct him, under every darkness and difficulty, and to strengthen him under every weakness of mind ; that those who are *poor in spirit*, and empty and despairing in themselves, may be filled with all heavenly blessings with pardon and peace, with righteousness and grace and holy consolation through Jesus Christ.

us put up our united prayers, that in this congregation, "saints of God may *shout aloud for joy*; that God may *bit the praises* of his people here, and that you may all be *joyful in this house of prayer*; that ye may sing the songs of *Moses and David*, and find divine pleasure here, raising your eyes towards those *rivers of pleasure*, which flow at the right hand of God. In fine, that you may have much of the presence of God with you, whensoever you shall meet together here, in the present or occasional seasons of divine worship, and that he may abundantly fulfil all his words of promise.

4. The last lesson I would recommend to your learning here, 'a holy elevation and joy of soul in the faith and prospect of heavenly worship, and the more complete accomplishment of the best promises of God, in the heavenly Jerusalem, which is every holy, in the Zion which is above.'" There surely he recorded his name in all its most glorious characters, for his seat and brightest residence is there, among *the innumerable army of angels and the church of the first born* on high. There he has stamped the name of his holiness and his majesty, the name of his justice and mercy, the name of his all-sufficiency and his faithfulness in eternal signatures, which shall never be faded out. There he will meet his people, and bless them with lasting blessings, such as *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor it entered into the heart of man to conceive them*. He will make them *exceeding joyful, with the light of his countenance*, in his house of praise, when earthly scenes shall vanish from sight, and all that is low and mortal shall be forgotten.

There we trust, you and your pastor shall appear, and you shall be his glory and his *crown of rejoicing in that day*, as he also shall be yours. Your appearance there will be an undoubted eternal evidence, that he has not prayed or preached in vain, that you have not heard the gospel from his lips in vain. There shall your mutual satisfactions rise high in your united prayers; for it is there God has appointed the place of his everlasting worship, and the united devotions and joys of all his saints. In happy and unceasing harmony shall *the song of Moses, and the Lamb* be sung for all our deliverances and for all our sal-  
vations, while we travelled through the wilderness of this world, he had brought us to the holy land of promise, and to eat the fruits of paradise. There shall we join with that unmeasurable assembly of angels, and with all the glorified saints that have gone before us, in one divine hymn of praise, *salvation, honour and glory, to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever*. Amen.

## APPENDIX TO THE THIRD DISCOURSE.

*The Blessing of a Corner-stone, in the building of a Popish Church, taken out of the Rituale Romanum.*

**T**HE day before the first stone is blessed, let the priest fix a wooden cross on that spot of the ground where the altar is to stand; the next day this stone, which must be exactly square and well cornered, shall be blessed in this manner. The priest having put on his proper attire, his albe or surplice, his surcingle and other ecclesiastical robes, having some more priests and clerks with him, must bless the salt and the water, unless he has holy water ready before, and while the following Psalm is sung by the clerks, he must sprinkle the place where the cross is with holy water, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, put the sign of salvation in this place, and permit not the blasting angel to enter." Then the lxxxiv. Psalm is sung alternately with responses. When the Psalm is ended the priest turning to the place that was sprinkled, says, "Let us pray." "O Lord God, who although thou art not contained in the heavens and the earth yet condescendest to have a house here, where thy name is daily invoked: Visit this place, we pray, with the light of thy countenance, by the intercession and merits of the blessed virgin, and of all the saints, and particularly saint M. or N. to whose honour this church is built, and purify it from all defilement, by the infusion of thy grace, and preserve it purified, &c.—that all spiritual wickednesses may fly from hence, by our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with thee for ever." Amen.

Then he blesses the stone with the responses of the clerk or clerks thus: Priest. "Our help is in the name of the Lord." Resp. "Who made heaven and earth." Pr. "Let the name of the Lord be blessed." R. "Henceforth, and for evermore." Pr. "The stone which the builders rejected." R. "The same is become the head of the corner." Pr. "Thou art Peter." R. "And upon this rock will I build my church." Pr. "Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." R. "As it was in the beginning, now is, and ever shall be." Amen. "Let us pray." "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,—who art the corner-stone cut out of the mountain without hands, and the unchangeable foundation, confirm this stone which is now to be placed in thy name, &c." Then the priest sprinkles the stone with holy water, and taking a knife, engraves or scrapes the sign of the cross on every side of it, saying "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," making the sign of the cross at each of the three names. Amen. "Let us pray." "Bless, O Lord, this creature of stone, making the sign of the cross, and grant by the invocation of thy holy name, that whosoever have assisted with a pure heart in building this church, may have health of body and the cure of their souls by Christ our Lord." Amen. Afterwards let the ordinary litanies be said: Then the mortar being ready, and the mason standing by, the priest begins thus, the clerks following him. "Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it, and vowed a vow. Surely this place is holy, and I knew it not."

Then let the cxvii. Psalm be read, "Except the Lord build the house,

ey labour in vain that build it, &c. Glory be to the Father, as it was in the beginning, &c." Which being said, the priest standing, touches or lays his hand on the stone all the while the mason is placing it with the mortar, and says, "In the faith of Jesus Christ, we place this chief stone in the foundation in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, that true faith may flourish here, and the fear of God, and the love of the brethren, &c." Speaking this, he makes a cross at each name in the masonry. Then the priest sprinkles holy water upon the stone saying, "Thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be clean: Thou shalt wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Then the li. Psalm is read. Then again, "Glory to the Father, &c." And if the foundations are laid open, he sprinkles holy water upon them all; but if they are not opened, he walks round the place designed for the foundation of the church, and begins to sprinkle, saying these words, and the clerks following, "O how dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God: This is the gate of heaven."

Then the lxxxvii. Psalm is read, "His foundation is in the holy mountains, &c." while he is sprinkling all the foundation, and the others repeating as a response, "O how dreadful is this place, &c." After all this, he adds at last, "Let us pray." "Almighty and merciful God, who has given to thy priests such grace above other men, that whatsoever is perfectly and worthily done by them in thy name shall be believed to be done by thee: We pray thine infinite mercy that thou wouldst visit what we visit, that thou wouldst bless what we bless,--and at our entrance here, as mean as we are that devils fly, and the angel of peace enter, by the merits of thy saints, through Christ our Lord," Amen. And with another short prayer the ceremony is ended. After all this is done, and many other ceremonies which the priest performs towards blessing the church, and the walls of it when they are built, it is purified sufficiently to admit mass to be said in it: Yet still the consecration of the church is reserved for the bishop himself, at a proper season.



APPENDIX TO THE THIRD DISC

*The Blessing of a Corner-stone, in the building of a J... ; or Reason  
out of the Rituals Romanum. Churches, are  
which Moses gave*

**T**HE day before the first stone is blessed, let f... on that spot of the ground where the altar is to e... which must be exactly square and well corne... ner. The priest having put on his proper at... cingle and other ecclesiastical robes, havin... communion of saints, as him, must bless the salt and the water, ur... with the duties that depend and while the following Psalm is sung... christianity in the world, place where the cross is with holy w... our blessed Lord did not, in a the sign of salvation in this place, un... constitute the formation of chris... Then the lxxxiv. Psalm is sung alter... of public worship and order, in ended the priest turning to the pla... church-worship be of such import- " O Lord God, who although thou... affairs, that relate to the officers yet condescendest to have a bi... sionary, preaching, praying, and cele- Visit this place, we pray, wh... more particularly described and sion and merits of the bless... command? Was not God pleased, to saint M. or N. to whose ho... refers to the Jews, concerning their wor- all spiritual wickednesse... temple, their priests and sacrifices, and lives and reigns with f...

Then he blesses... Priest. " Our help i... and earth." Pr. " and for evermore."... same is become... upon this rock v... Son, and to the... ever shall be... living God,— and the ur... placed in t... ter, and t... side of it... Holy G... Amen. sign of... ever... healt'... war... mar... ros... po... j

It is granted indeed, that there might some difficulties and doubts arise in the Jewish worship, about some of the natural circumstances, that relate to the performance of it : As, whether the child must be circumcised with a sharp stone as Zipporah did, or a knife as Joshua? And, who must perform that office? Whether the father or mother, the ruler or the priest? Whether in sacrifices the jugular vein of the creature must be cut, or whether it must be stabbed to the heart? Whether in their washings and purifications, for any accidental impurity, they must put their whole bodies under water, with every part of all their garments, or whether sprinkling or other methods of washing in some cases, were not sufficient? These things, and many others, as the Jews pretend, are determined by their oral law and tradition, wherein the

church of Rome has imitated them exactly, and gives us her traditions to clear up the darkness, and supply the defects of scripture. And though we justly maintain the sufficiency of scripture, without their traditions, to teach all that is necessary to please God, always supposing the common use and exercise of our reasoning powers, yet still it must be confessed, that many of the same sort of things, under the gospel, are but obscurely prescribed, in comparison of the plain and express prescriptions of the Jewish law; and much is left to be gathered by our own reasonings, from the light of nature, and the occasional hints which are given in the history of the New Testament.

Let the instance be the order of priesthood, and the persons appointed to minister in divine service. Whosoever was of the seed of Levi, was born to sacred work; the eldest son of the house of Aaron, was the high-priest, and the inferior priesthood was all composed of his brethren and kindred. The method of their consecration was by offering such particular sacrifices, putting the blood on their thumbs, ears, and toes: besides some special washings, sprinklings, and vestments, as Exod. xxix. The maimed or deformed in body were to be secluded from this office; their maintenance was determined to arise from tithes, and some appointed portions of the sacrifices. But under the gospel, the different degrees of church-officers, bishops, pastors, teachers, seem not to be distinguished with quite so much evidence; their characters are much more inward and spiritual, and therefore not so easy to be discerned; the method of their appointment and ordination is the subject of perpetual controversy? and their support arises from the voluntary contributions of the people, of which the New Testament has not assigned the proportion.

What is now mentioned concerning ecclesiastical offices, holds true in other parts of christian administrations; and we are forced to collect rules for the performance of many of them, by a comparison of several scriptures together, by matters of fact, circumstances, examples, and precedents, and by long trains of consequential deductions, because we find not the rules prescribed in any express words of command.

Let the business of baptism of infants be another instance. How clearly is the appointment of the circumcision of the infant males, on the eighth day, expressed in comparison of the baptism of christian children? Take the observation of any sabbath, and particularly of the Lord's-day, to be another example of this obscurity, of the time of christian worship, in comparison with the exact rules of Jewish sabbatisms. We have none of these things prescribed in any express words of command. Some persons have taken laudable pains, to shew how many of these things are revealed, in the gospel, acts, and epistles, by way of

hint and intimation, and may be found by deductions and inferences from some of the occasional incidents in the sacred history: but though some of these, I think, are just and strong, yet others of these inferences are but feeble and dubious, and some have been found to be mistakes; so that it must be granted after all, that, under the Jewish œconomy, several things were required, in more express language of direction and command, than under the New Testament. This difficult enquiry has sometimes exercised and puzzled my thoughts, and the most considerable reasons, which I have ever been able to suggest and assign for this difference, are such as these, viz.

*First,* The state of the Jews was the infancy of the church of God, and children had need of every letter and syllable to be marked down for them with the plainest pen, that they might spell over their lessons, learn their duties, perform their bodily exercises, and fulfil their tasks. And therefore also their rites and ceremonies were so very numerous, to keep them always employed; their infancy being less suited to the more spiritual parts of religion without such carnal aids. St. Paul in the epistle to the Galatians, seems to express this in plain words; chapter iv. 3. *We, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world, so he calls the train of Jewish ceremonies.* But our Lord Jesus, the great reformer of his church, finished that infant dispensation by his death, and raised his people to a more mature age, by his own resurrection, and the gospel; and sent down his Spirit, and sent abroad his apostles, to teach the world a more manly, spiritual, and refined worship, and such as is more suited to the nature of God, and his intellectual creation.

Now the more inward and seraphic all the devotion is, the less doth it need preciseness of form, either to assist or adorn it; therefore the modes of worship in the heavenly state shall, probably, be the mere dictates of glorified nature, and perhaps shall be incumbered with no prescribed ceremonies at all; and for the same reason, the rites and ceremonies, that Christ ordained in the evangelical state, were few and easy; and if the exact forms of them be not so very evident, in the New Testament, as the forms of the yokes of bondage were in the Old, it is to teach us, that the nature of christian worship is less ceremonious, is more spiritual and free, and approaches nearer to the heavenly state, than that of the Jews; and it informs us also, that we, under the gospel, are esteemed as out-growing the state of infancy, and it is supposed that manly prudence should direct us, especially in all those common natural circumstances of worship, which were more exactly prescribed to children.

*Secondly,* As the church or nation of the Jews, was a

type or figure of the whole invisible church of God, so the ceremonies of their religion, were typical and figurative of gospel times, and spiritual things under the great Messiah ; and even many of the common and natural circumstances of action prescribed in that religion, viz. times, places, &c. were also designed, to be types of evangelical affairs, and heavenly things : therefore it was necessary, that God himself, who only knew all his own future schemes, should prescribe and determine them, that they might exactly correspond, with the great anti-types, which were to be revealed hereafter. God only can appoint types and emblems of his own future blessings : He did not think fit to leave these things to the reason of men, who could not fore-know the glories of the gospel. But the religion of the gospel is not such a typical religion, and therefore there is not such a necessity that circumstantials should be so strictly prescribed. The instances that prove this are abundant. The high-priest or chief officer in the Jewish church, was particularly described and appointed, with all his characters, and all his garments, and his forms of officiating in sacred things, because he was an appointed type of Jesus the Son of God, *our great High-priest*, in his various characters and offices, which offices and characters, only the great God fore-knew and could describe, because he fore-ordained them all.

The places where the ark, the tabernacle, or the temple stood, were the only appointed places, where common sacrifices were to be offered, and where God would accept them : Now the tabernacle and temple, were types of the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which God dwells. Christ calls his body *a temple* ; John ii. 19. All our *spiritual sacrifices* of prayer and praise must be brought to Christ, otherwise they will not be accepted of God. *The veil*, through which we draw near to God is his flesh ; Heb. x. 20.

The Jewish sabbaths and festivals of several kinds, were appointed times of rest from labour, and of paying worship to God ; but these were types of the rest from sin and guilt, and a spirit of bondage, that believers should enjoy under the gospel by the mediation of Jesus Christ ; Heb. iv. 3, 4, 9, 10. Col. ii. 17. as well as of the eternal rest, that the saints shall enjoy in heaven. Every morning and every evening were appointed times for killing, and offering of the daily sacrifice ; but these were types of the perpetual efficacy and virtue of the one sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, powerful to atone for our daily transgressions, as if he was daily offered up afresh. See Heb. vii. 24, 27. and x. 14. So the morning and evening incense, in the holy place, was a type of his continual intercession in heaven, which may be collected from various parts of scrip-

ture compared together. The holy of holies, was the place appointed for the high-priest, *once a year, to enter into with the blood of the sacrifice*; but this was a type of heaven, into which our Lord Jesus Christ, our great High-priest, is *entered with his own blood, to appear before God for us*; Heb. ix. 24. I might instance in many other parts of the Jewish worship. It is no wonder then that places and times, and particular circumstantials of worship and order, in the church of the New Testament, are not so particularly prescribed, as under the Old Testament, because they were types and shadows which could be appointed only by God, who knew the antitypes : and these shadows are now fled away, and we have the substances themselves set in view by the gospel of Christ.

*Thirdly*, Another reason why the Jewish dispensation was confined to such nice rules of exactness and uniformity, might be, because it was ordained for the men of one nation only, who sprung all from a single family, whose manners, tempers, and customs were near a-kin to each other, and who were all under the same government, and their governors bound to the same forms of worship with themselves. And indeed the whole form of their government was inwrought with their religion, and their political laws were designed to correspond with all the rites and ceremonies of their worship, and to support them. Besides, as they lived in a country of no large extent, and their males as representatives of their whole church and nation, were required to meet three times a year at Jerusalem ; they were more easily reduced and confined to precise and uniform modes and rituals of worship. But the religion of Christ, was brought into the world quite in another manner ; not to one nation only, but to be propagated among all nations, and to be practised by men of most various and distant climates ; men of contrary customs, manners, and laws ; men that lived under governors of different religions, and such as hated the name of Christ. These could not so easily be reduced to a precise uniformity in any public worship, nor be maintained and kept in it ; therefore though our Lord, by his apostles, has drawn the great outlines and boundaries of worship, and the master-strokes of discipline, partly in precepts, and partly in examples, yet many lesser incidences and appendices, which were necessary to be determined, in order to the actual support and practice of social worship, he left to be agreed upon by churches or christian societies, as was suited best to attain the great end of edification in knowledge, holiness, and peace.

*Fourthly*, When we survey the religion of the Jews, we must distinguish between the worship of the synagogue, and

that of the tabernacle, or temple. The church was their whole nation, for it was ordained of God to be a national church, and the tabernacle or temple was the place of national worship : And that there might be an appearance of the whole church worshipping together, all the males of Israel *three times a year* were required to come up to the tabernacle or temple, I might add, or the ark of God in Zion, and pay their sacrifices to the Lord there. And the modes and formalities of this worship were prescribed with great exactness, as being typical of the universal invisible church, and the spiritual worship to be performed by it, and the spiritual blessings that belong to it, as was hinted before ; but the worship of the synagogue, was the natural social worship of prayer and praise, which was agreed to be paid to God weekly, by so many persons as lived in a convenient neighbourhood. The forms hereof were not instituted by God himself, but left much to the discretion and agreement of elder and wiser men among themselves.

Now the worship in christian churches, which were to be raised in every nation, is much more a-kin to the practice of the synagogues, where one congregation met together, who *with one mouth could glorify God*, than it is to the practice of the temple-worship, which was chiefly ordained for the Jewish national church. In the synagogues there was preaching, praying, and reading the scriptures every sabbath. Now here it was not determined in holy scripture, how often they should pray or sing psalms, whether before or after preaching or reading, or both ; nor which persons of the levites should perform those offices ; and some of the descendants of other tribes might be, and were employed in this ministry : Some of the prophets who preached to the people of old, were of other tribes ; Paul, of the tribe of Benjamin, was desired to give an exhortation, as well as Jesus our Lord, of the tribe of Judah, read and preached in the synagogue ; Acts xiii. 15. Luke iv. 16.

In short, the worship and order of the synagogues, as to the modes and circumstances of it, were such as the common prudence of men, or the light of nature directed, together with so much of the doctrines and duties of the revealed religion of Moses and the patriarchs, as might be practised on any time, or at any place, or by any persons qualified for it, and appointed by men to that service.—And so is the worship and order of the christian church : It is such as the light of nature dictates, mingled with, and regulated by the doctrines and duties of christianity, so far as Christ and his apostles have taught and prescribed them. And these are to be practised in all nations, the light of nature, reason, and common prudence, of the fellow-worshippers, agreeing upon such circumstances of human actions, as are necessary to be determined, and such as the new testament has left undetermined and uncertain.

It is no wonder then that the circumstances of these parts of order and worship, are not confined to precise rules and uniformity, in the christian church, any more than they were in the Jewish synagogue. The common reason and prudence of mankind points out the chief and most necessary parts, both of the one and the other, always supposing the difference between the Jewish and the christian revelations of doctrine and duty, which being mingled with the worship and order, did something toward the regulation of the form thereof.

*Fifthly,* The last reason I offer why many things, in the christian worship, are not so particularly prescribed, nor so essential as in the Jewish, may be, because in the christian religion, the new command, as St. John calls it, or the duties of love and charity are more abundantly required and enforced, beyond what they were under the law of Moses, and that notwithstanding we may differ in particular opinions: And christianity being to be diffused through all nations among persons of a thousand different notions and prejudices, it was very probable, there would be more varieties of opinion, in sacred things, than would be found in one nation only: And in many parts of christian practice there is more room left by this obscurity, for the trial of our mutual love, and more occasion given for the exercise of charity among those, that are true disciples of Christ, than if all were confined to uniformity of practice, by express precept. And where the scripture has left any obscurity upon doctrines or practices, I would be very unwilling to quarrel with my fellow-christians, for taking up a principle or practice different from mine. The xiv. chapter to the Romans leaves several points of practice undetermined for this very purpose. Let every one of us search as far as we can, by diligence and prayer, to find our duties in the word of God: *It is joy we have obtained, let us walk by the same rule, and continue still to love all those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity,* though they differ from us in meats and days, and other matters of such a kind. Amen.

## DISCOURSE V.

*The Holiness of the Jewish and Christian Churches considered  
and compared.*

**T**HE Jewish nation was once the only visible church of God among men, and the Gentiles were excluded; but for near seventeen hundred years past, the visible church of God has been made up of the several christian churches, scattered through the world, from whence unbelievers only are excluded. In what relation each of them stand to the invisible church, will appear in the following propositions; and thereby we may learn the different sort of holiness, that belonged to them:

I. Since the apostacy of our first parents from God, mankind comes into the world under much more unhappy circumstances, than they would have done, in a state of perfect innocency. There are many such vicious propensities, disorders, and corruptions in human nature, as tend to lead men astray from God, and from their own duty and happiness. In this state of depravation, before they are renewed by divine grace, they follow the sinful appetites and passions that work in them, they fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind, they live in darkness, ignorant of God, or at least thoughtless and regardless of him, as creatures *without God in the world*, creatures that appear to have none of the moral characters of his children, nor bear his holy image, nor are entitled to his favour: They are led and governed, not only by the course and *fashion of this world*, but, also, by the temptations of the devil, and they are led captive by the prince of darkness, that evil spirit whose dominion is spread through all the earth, who is, as it were, *the God of this world*, and who works powerfully, in all the sons and daughters of Adam, as they are in a state of degeneracy: They are *children of disobedience*, for they break the laws of their Maker wilfully, they neglect or renounce God, and set up idols in his stead; they are idolaters to their own lusts, their pleasures, their honours or their possessions, and they are rather the children and imitators of Satan, than the children of God, or born of him, or like to him: They are by nature strangers to his covenant of mercy, have no interest in his salvation by his Son Jesus Christ, nor share in the spiritual and eternal blessings of the gospel; and as they dwell in this world without God, so without any solid hope of a better world. They are *dead in trespasses, in sins, and know not the way of life and peace*. This is the plain,



obvious, and common state of all mankind, till they are changed and renewed, and become religious and holy. Scripture is full of such descriptions of mankind; but if we had no scripture to support this charge, our daily experience and observation give a deplorable evidence to the truth of the greatest part of it.

It is granted indeed, that some, by reason of their particular complexion, have a few more natural virtues, and moral deficiencies, than others; and some by the advantage of education, and especially where divine revelation is known, are restrained thereby from those degrees of excess in some vices, which would otherwise prevail over them: But in the main, it is certain, that we are born of sinful parents, and partake of the irregular appetites and evil passions that are in them, and that *none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean; Job xiv. 4. that we are conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity; Ps. li. 7. that what is born of the flesh is flesh, or sinful nature, and prone to evil; John iii. 6. that every imagination of the thought of the heart of man, that is, by nature as now corrupted, is only evil, and that continually, and even from his childhood, or youth. The nature of man was pure and holy in its original, as it came from the hand of God; but as it now comes into the world, it hath the principles and seeds of all iniquity within it: And these, which I have described, are the general characters of all mankind in greater or less degrees till they are changed, converted, and born again, or born of the Holy Spirit; John iii. 6, 7. Instead of enlarging on the other proofs of this proposition, I shall refer only to Rom. iii. 9—19. Where all mankind, as things now stand, both Jews and Gentiles, without the recovering grace of God, are represented by the apostle in a state of sin and death; all are sinners, there is none that doeth good, no not one: The way of peace have they not known, every mouth is stopped, and the whole world guilty before God\*.*

II. "From the beginning of the world throughout all ages, there have been some persons of this fallen race of man, who have been recovered by divine grace, converted to God, translated out of darkness into light, raised from a death in sin to a life of holiness, and are become *children of the light, and heirs of life: Whose soul and spirit have been awakened to repentance and serious religion; whose hearts are circumcised to love God, who do really renounce and cut off, subdue and mortify the lusts of the flesh, and of the mind, and resist the temptations of the evil one; who are born of God, are adopted by him, become his people, his children, and have his image renewed in them; who are his saints, his holy ones, and are partakers of*

\* That this character and sentence is absolutely universal and without exception, see farther proved at the end of this discourse, just before the recapitulation.

his holiness; who abandon all idols, and walk with God in the world, maintaining a holy intercourse with him by prayer and praise, faith and obedience; who have the spirit of God dwelling in them, and they are his temple, they are his chosen people, his peculiar inheritance, redeemed from the bondage of their own lusts, and the slavery of Satan the prince of darkness; and travel through this world, as through a wilderness, under the direction of God, towards the promised inheritance, the heavenly country: They have hope in his mercy and his promises, they are the objects of his love and mercy, they are sanctified and devoted to God, *a holy people, a chosen generation, elected or chosen, and called by his grace, a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to him, with acceptance, and these are usually called, the invisible church of God.*

III. As God has designed, in all ages, to draw out of this sinful race of man some holy souls to be objects of his mercy, so it hath pleased his wisdom to carry on his transactions with men, throughout all his dispensations towards them, in a way of type, emblem, and figure; frequently appointing carnal, temporal, and visible things, characters, persons, and families, to become emblems and figures of things and characters spiritual and invisible. This in several particulars is most evident from express scripture. The first man Adam was a type or figure of Christ the second Adam; 1 Cor. xv. 45—49. and Rom. v. 14. Aaron the high-priest, and David the king among the Jews, were types of Jesus Christ, the high-priest and king of his people. This farther appears in many places; so the manna from heaven, and the water from the rock in the wilderness, were a figure of Christ feeding his people with his own flesh and blood; 1 Cor. x. 1—4. John vi. 49, 51, 53. The tabernacle, the sacrifices, the washings and purifications, and many of the ceremonies of the Jewish worship; are figures or shadows of Jesus Christ, and his atonement for sin, and the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, and the spiritual blessings that belong to the gospel, Col. ii. 16, 17. 1 Cor. v. 7. Heb. ix. 8, 9, 13. and x. 1, &c. and Canaan is a type of the heavenly inheritance; Heb. iv. 1. and xi. 19, 16. Those who have written on the doctrine of types, have made these things appear beyond all just and reasonable exception.

Now, from the beginning of the world, God seems to have designed there should be some outward and visible types and figures, of these two sorts of mankind, the good and the bad, the holy and the unholy, or the church and the world, and some plain distinction between them made in a visible manner. These different persons were at first called *the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent*; Gen. iii. 15. Then the family of Cain who went from the presence of the Lord; Gen. iv. 14, 16, *and were called the sons and daughters of men*; Gen. vi. 1.

were a figure of the wicked, and were generally all wicked persons : And the family of Seth, who came in the room of righteous Abel : Gen. iv. 25. and who called upon the name of the Lord, or were called by the name of God, that is, *the sons of God* : Gen. iv. 26. and vi. 2. were a figure of righteous men, of the saints of God, and had most good men amongst them. Again, Shem the blessed son of Noah, with his family, was thus distinguished as a visible church, from Ham and his posterity, who were cursed. After that Abraham was called from the rest of the idolatrous world, as a figure and pattern, or father of all true believers, and children of God. So Isaac the son of promise, was distinguished from Ishmael the son of the flesh ; Gal. iv. 23, 24, 29. So Jacob from Esau : Rom. ix. 13. And when God divided the world into Jews and Gentiles eminently by Moses, the scripture gives us abundant ground to reckon those two different people, Jews and Gentiles, a visible emblem of the division of all mankind into these two parts, the church and the world, or the righteous and the wicked, as will appear in what follows :

IV. The nation of Israel appears in the representations of scripture to be a figure or emblem of the righteous or religious part of mankind, of the saints of God, or his holy ones, his invisible church. The Israelites were the natural seed of Abraham *the friend of God*, the great believer, *the father of the faithful*, and the peculiar favourite of heaven. They derived many blessings through him ; they had many privileges by their covenant at Sinai, and the promises of many divine favours ; they had *the adoption* or sonship ; God was their father, they were his first-born, and his favourites ; they were his chosen people, an elect nation, and the beloved ; they were redeemed by him, from the bondage of Pharaoh king of Egypt ; he was their Redeemer, and their *holy one in the midst of them* : they were the people of his salvation, conducted by him to the promised land through the wilderness : They are called his saints, or holy ones, having circumcision and other outward marks of holiness, or dedication to God ; they had the true God for their God and their King, the Lord of their visible church, and head of their civil state, and he dwelt amongst them in a visible cloud of glory on the mercy-seat : They were *a peculiar people to himself, a holy nation, a royal priesthood*. See these characters ; Rom. ix. 4, 5. Ex. xix. 5, 6. and iv. 22. and many other places.

Now these titles and characters, which belonged heretofore in an external, visible, and typical sense to the nation of Israel, do really and spiritually belong to the invisible church of God, his chosen, called, and faithful people, who were born of God, and who are the children of Abraham, and imitators of his faith, and heirs of the promise ; Rom. iv. 11. Gal. iii. 29. Who are

wardly and spiritually holy, whose hearts are circumcised to  
 ve the Lord, and are interested in his everlasting love ; and on  
 is account a real saint is called *an Israelite indeed* ; John i. 47.  
*Jew inwardly* ; Rom. ii. 29. True christians, in the New  
 estament, are called *the Israel of God* ; Gal. vi. 16. as well  
 ; they are often represented, by the ancient prophets, under that  
 me. These are *the true circumcision, inwardly in the heart*  
*id spirit* ; Som. ii. 29. These are *the circumcision, who wor-*  
*ip God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus* ; Phil. iii. 3.  
*ho are circumcised with the circumcision without hands, by put-*  
*ng off the body of the sins of the flesh* ; Col. ii. 11.

And to confirm this doctrine, the scripture proceeds yet fur-  
 er, and represents even the best of blessings and the heavenly  
 ate, or the final reward of all the saints by the same sort of  
 nblems, borrowed from the Jews. They go to *the bosom of*  
*Abraham* ; Luke xvi. 22, 23. *They sit down with Abraham,*  
*saac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven* ; Mat. viii. 11.  
*The blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles* ; that is, that  
 od is their God, and *their exceeding great reward* ; Gal. iii. 14.  
 hey are heirs of the heavenly inheritance, according to the  
 ncient promise made to Abraham ; verse 29. They enter into  
 at promised rest, *that remains for the people of God*, typified  
 y Canaan, the rest promised to the Jews ; Heb. iii. and iv.\*  
 here let it be noted, that there were multitudes, in this visible  
 urch of Israel, to which these outward titles and privileges be-  
 onged, who had not so much as a credible profession of real  
 rtue, or holiness, or inward goodness ; nor was it necessary,  
 order to be members of that church ; for they not only came  
 to this relation by their natural birth, as the sons of Abraham,  
 saac, and Jacob, but they always continued members of the  
 urch of Israel, so long as they continued members of the civil  
 ommunity, and were accounted parts of the nation, or king-  
 om of Israel : Their common immoralities did not cut them  
 ff from their civil rights, nor were they ever properly cast out  
 f the state too ; and according to the bible, when they were cut  
 ff from their people, they lost their civil as well as ecclesiastical  
 riviliges.

V. On the other hand, the Gentiles or heathens, that is, all  
 e nations besides the Jews, had the visible marks of a people

\* I think the language of the New Testament, in the texts which I have  
 ited, makes it evident, that the Jewish visible church was not so properly a  
 ype of the visible christian church, in its outward and visible form, as it was a  
 ype of the state and blessings of the true and real children of God, that is, of  
 he invisible church of God in all ages ; though it is granted, that the visible  
 hristian church is founded upon a supposition that the members of it are, or  
 ould appear to be, members of the invisible church also, which was not the  
 ase in the visible Jewish church, and the persons who composed it, whose  
 urch membership was built on another foundation.

afar off from God, being neglected by him, and by their iniquities and their wretchedness, they appeared as *children of wrath* under divine displeasure; Eph. ii. 3. By their own practices they abandoned God, and were *without God in the world*; Eph. ii. 11, 12. They were *children of disobedience*, as to the true God: They had another God; or ruler; even the devil, who is called *the god of this world*, this heathen world, and him they obeyed, he was their God; 2 Cor. iv. 4. He ruled in them as their prince, and they were carried captive by him, at his pleasure; Eph. ii. 2. To him they sacrificed, *even to devils, and not to the true God*; 1 Cor. x. 20. They walked in *darkness, and ignorance*; Eph. iv. 17, 18. and *were alienated from the life of God, because of the blindness of their heart*; they were *dead in trespasses and sin, following the lusts of the flesh, and of the mind*, that is, carnal and spiritual iniquities; Eph. ii. 3. *uncircumcised in flesh and heart, undevoted to God, strangers or aliens from the covenant of promise, without Christ, and without hope*; verse 12, this is their literal character.

And as the Israelites are evidently figures of God's true invisible church, his real saints, or holy ones; so the Gentiles are, evidently, a figure and emblem of all the sinful world, the unholy, unconverted part of mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, whom I have before described, as in a state of corrupt nature, in the first proposition, and who are not born of God, or renewed by grace, and repentance, and a sincere change of heart. The word *uncircumcision*, is the very name and literal character of the Gentiles, and it is used to signify sinful souls, unholy, and unbeloved of God; Jer. ix. 26. The house of Israel is *uncircumcised*, that is, Gentiles in heart, and un sanctified. In Rom. ii. 25—29. the words *circumcision* and *uncircumcision*, are used both in their spiritual sense, to signify holiness and unholiness, as well as, in their literal sense, to denote Judaism and Gentilism; verse 25. *If thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision*, that is, thy person, notwithstanding all its marks of mortification, is counted unholy, un sanctified in the sight of God. The Gentiles are described, as a sinful character; Gal. ii. 15. *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles*. And some suppose the *ungodly*; Rom. iv. 5. and Rom. v. 6. to signify the Gentiles, where Paul says, *who believeth on him, that justifieth the ungodly; and when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*. The Gentiles, and the *ungodly*, or sinners, are used as synonymous terms; and the descriptions of them, in scripture, are much the same. The working of the will of the Gentiles, is an expression to signify a sinful course of life, or an unconverted state, even by the apostle Peter who was a Jew; 1 Pet. iv. 3.

Yet, I would lay down this caution, that I do not, hereby,

made every individual heathen at that time, from the invisible church of God; for Jethro at that time a Midianite was probably a good man; and so might some others upon the foot of Noah's covenant, even as several of the Jews were wicked men: But considering these two parts of mankind, Jews and Gentiles, in the bulk, they were types and figures of the two sorts of people; the world, viz. the good and bad, or saints and sinners. And I think, it is pretty evident, that the holy writers use the same sort of language, which I have recited, in the first and fifth propositions, sometimes to signify the literal and external state of the Gentiles, before the gospel came to them, and sometimes to signify the real, internal, and spiritual state of all, who are not renewed again, not converted to God, nor renewed to holiness; and the one seems to be designed, by all these spiritual parallels, as a type and emblem of the other.

VI. During the time of the Jewish dispensation, there were always some of the Israelites, really religious and holy, who were the spiritual seed of Abraham, as well as natural, that is, imitators of his faith and holiness; and in this double sense, Abraham is their father: for, in the spiritual sense, he is *father* *all who believe*, and trust in God and obey him, even of the Gentile believers, as well as of the Jews; Rom. iv. 16. Gal. 3. 29. These religious Jews were real saints, members of the visible church, and the true Israel, that is, they were, in reality, what the whole nation of Israel was, in type, and figure, and appearance; Rom. ix. 6. The apostle saith, *they are not all Israel, which are of Israel, nor because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children*, implying that the true Israel are really, what the whole nation was visibly: And chapter ii. 20. *he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter only*: Such were not only the part of God's visible church, and had the visible privileges thereof, but were also members of his invisible church, and the children of his special love.

But, at the same time, the bulk and multitude of the visible church of Israel, which was the visible church, were generally great sinners, and with all their glorious titles of external and special holiness, and divine favour, they were inwardly wicked, and belonged really to the kingdom of Satan, and not to the invisible church of God. There were multitudes of *Sadducees* in that church, *who neither believed there was any angel or spirit, nor any immortal soul in man, any resurrection of the dead, nor indeed, any future state of rewards or punishments, and they lived according to these principles*. Hopeful church-members indeed, the Jewish church had been to be composed of real saints! No other body of them were Pharisees, whose inward wickedness was great, as even many of their outward practices were

very vile, and abominable. It is certain, there were very many of them who continued for some time members of the outward visible Jewish church, to whom John the Baptist, and our blessed Saviour, ascribed the vilest of characters relating to their inward and real state, viz. that they were *hypocrites, children of the devil*, they had him for their father, for they did his works, a *generation of vipers*, and such as *could not escape the damnation of hell*.

VII. When the times of the gospel came, God designed to set up a more spiritual kingdom, or visible church, in the world, which should come much nearer to his invisible church, in true and real holiness, than that of the Jews did; and of which there was frequent notice given, by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Malachi, and particularly, by John the Baptist; Mat. iii. 9, 10. "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father, for God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham: Now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; therefore every tree, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." If ever, therefore, you would be worthy members of such a church, as God is going shortly to set up in the world, by introducing baptism, as the badge and seal of it, you must *bring forth fruits of repentance*, and holiness.

Our Saviour, also, gives notice of the same thing to Nicodemus; John iii. 3. *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. It is, as if John and Jesus had agreed, to tell the Jews, "Your being born of Abraham will by no means secure to you, any visible and eternal blessings, in the kingdom of God, nor will your natural and fleshly relation to Abraham, any longer constitute you members of the visible church, or of that kingdom, which God is going to set up, unless you are born of the Spirit of God, unto holiness of heart and life, or appear to be so, as far as the state, of a visible church can require; unless you declare that you *repent and believe the gospel*, and make a credible profession of it, by bringing forth fruits, &c. for God will make a clearer discovery of his spiritual designs, under the gospel, and that he has an invisible church which are all holy; and he will make his visible church much more like it than they were in the days of Judaism, wherein several evident immoralities did not exclude them from church-fellowship, and the outward covenant of Abraham, if they did but perform their outward rites of religion, and, in cases of political or ceremonial defilement, fulfilled their purifications and atonements, by proper washings and sacrifices: But now, the tree that brings not good fruit, must be cut down, and cast out of the vineyard.

VIII. When God came to set up this more spiritual kingdom and church in the world, those among the Jews who professed that they received the Messiah, and submitted themselves

his holy and spiritual religion, were received by baptism, and were counted the people of God and his visible church, and they continued in all the visible privileges of church-fellowship in all their extent; and if their profession was sincere, they were entitled to all the inward privileges of the invisible church, and the spiritual blessings of the gospel. Note, I do not mention anything here relating to the infants of true believers, because I could not embarrass the present argument with another controversy, and because they are, at best, but incomplete members of the christian church; and, in my opinion also, so far as they are acknowledged to be any way members of the visible christian church, it is upon a supposition of their being, together with their parents, members of the invisible church of God. I proceed therefore in my argument.

Every person then, among the Jewish nation, who made a visible and credible profession of christianity with his lips, and in his life, was, in a judgment of charity, to be counted sincere in his profession, and consequently, they were to be esteemed parts of the invisible church of God; Gal. vi. 16. *As many as walk according to this rule of the gospel, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon all the Israel of God*, that is, upon all real saints. These believed in God and his promises, as Abraham did, and they become both the spiritual seed of Abraham, by imitating his faith and obedience, and children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ; Gal. iii. 26, 29. and heirs of the heavenly inheritance, according to his promise. These, among the common multitudes of the nation of Israel, are his special people Israel, *whom God reknw*, and whom he hath not cast away; Rom. xi. 1, 2. these are *the remnant, according to the election of grace*, verse

*These are the election which have obtained faith and salvation*, when the rest of the Israelites were blinded, or hardened; Rom. xi. 7. These are the Sons of God, brought into this relation by receiving Jesus Christ his Son, or believing in his name: these are said to be *born of God*; John i. 12, 13. *Being born of water, and of the Spirit*, that is, regenerated by his holy spirit, and washed with water, as the seal of it, they became actual visible members of this gospel-church, or the kingdom of God: John iii. 5, 6.

IX. Those particular persons, among the Jewish nation, that rejected the Messiah, who was sent to be their prophet, priest and king, were cut off from all pretences to these spiritual privileges, and from all the inward blessings which were signified by their outward and carnal privileges; and they did also cut themselves off from the visible church, which God was then bringing to a purer and more spiritual frame, by renouncing the Son of God the Messiah, who was the king of Israel. These are become the Lo-ruhamah, and Loammi, mentioned in Hosea i. 6, 9.



For they are not the favourites, or beloved of God, they are not his people. There were the *natural branches* of Abraham's family, or the visible church, who though they are of Israel, yet are not the true Israel; Rom. ix. 6. These are *the natural branches of the good olive-tree, who were broken off because of unbelief*; Rom. xi. 20, 21. and after the christian church was set up and established, they no more belonged to the visible church of God, as they did never at all belong to the invisible.

X. And when the christian church was thus set up and established in the world, the nation of the Jews, who were for the most part unbelievers in the Messiah, were cut off as a nation, from all appearance of God's visible church and people, by the destruction of their city and temple, and utter ruin of their state or commonwealth. Thus their being cut off from the privileges of being his visible church, as he was their God, and, from being his visible subjects, as he was their king, considered as a public body and community, went hand in hand, as fast as human affairs could permit. The Jews were then, in a most notorious and visible manner, cast out of the favour and protection of their God and king, in the sight of the world, and abandoned of him; and since they renounced the Son of God, who was appointed their king, and slew him, and thereby filled up the measure of their iniquities, he also renounced them from being his subjects, or his kingdom: He sent the sword amongst them, for their destruction, and *the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost*, as that text has been usually explained; 1 Thess. ii. 14—16. and they have not, so much as the face of a visible church or people of God remaining these sixteen hundred years. God has fulfilled his word, and cut them off according to his threatenings, from their relation to him as their God, nor are they any longer his people; they have *left their names for a curse* to his chosen people, that is, the gospel church made up chiefly of Gentiles, who esteem the name of a Jew a reproach or a curse, and God has called his people, *by another name*, that is, christians, as he threatened so plainly by Isaiah, his prophet, chapter lxxv. 15. These were the children of the kingdom concerning whom our Saviour foretels, that they should not sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, but *should be cast out into outer darkness*; Mat. viii. 11, 12.

XI. Those, among the Gentiles, who received the Messiah, and believed in him, who practised faith and repentance, come into the real spiritual privileges, of which all the external glories of Judaism were types and figures; even as the inwardly pious Jews of old had those spiritual blessings, which were typified by their own outward peculiarities. The Gentile believers, who were naturally branches of *the wild olive, are grafted into the good olive-tree*; Rom. xi. 17, 18. They are the seed of

Abraham, and he is their father; Rom. iv. 11, 16. Gal. iii. 8, 9, 29. They are called God's people, *who were not his people*; Rom. ix. 24, 25. They are invested with the honourable titles which the carnal Jews enjoyed; 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10. "A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." And in Eph. ii. 19. "They are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God," his elect, his beloved, and he dwells among them, and in them, as in his city and his temple, by his Holy Spirit, verse 22. and 1 Cor. vi. 19. and 2 Cor. vi. 16.

XII. As those Gentiles who do, really and inwardly, receive the Messiah, and practise his religion in faith and holiness, come into all these inward, real, and spiritual privileges and blessings; so all that make a visible and credible profession of faith, and holiness, and universal subjection to Christ, come into all the outward privileges of the visible church, under the gospel: Some few of which privileges are continued from the Jewish church, but the greatest part of them are abolished, because the gospel state is more spiritual than the dispensation of the levitical law, and not such a typical state as that was; and none are to be admitted into this visible church, and esteemed complete members of it, but those who make such a declaration and profession of their faith in Christ, and their avowed subjection to him, as may be supposed, in a judgment of charity, to manifest them to be real believers in Christ, the true subjects of his spiritual kingdom, and members of the invisible church. See Proposition VII.

XIII. When therefore St. Paul and Peter write to the Gentile christian churches, they give them such honourable titles as these, *Holy brethren, called to be saints, called and holy, sanctified in Christ Jesus, the elect of God, the beloved of God, washed from their sins, justified, sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, risen from a death in trespasses and sins, raised together with Christ, set down with him in heavenly places, followers of us, and of the Lord, to whom the gospel came not in word only, but also in power, elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, who have obtained precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Saviour, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, even the people of God who have now obtained mercy, &c.*

And the reason of these glorious titles is this, that they are

members of the christian church, which receives none but upon profession of true faith in Christ, and sincere repentance; none but those who profess to be members of the invisible church, and, in a judgment of charity, are to be so esteemed: For persons of scandalous or immoral characters, or who walked disorderly, their fellow-members were warned not to keep them company, nor to eat with them; 1 Cor. v. 11. The church are required to withdraw from them, and they were to be cast out of the church; 2 Thess. iii. 6. *Purge out the old leaven*, saith the apostle, that is, *put away from among yourselves that wicked person, who was amongst them, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened*, that is, without the leaven of malice or wickedness; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8, 13. And therefore the apostle writing to the Philippians, charitably supposes them all to be in a state of grace; chapter i. 6. "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform or fulfil it unto the day of Jesus Christ, even as it is meet for me to think this of you all," that is, to think you all, in general, real saints, in a judgment of charity, and without unreasonable suspicions of the credibility of your profession, or the sincerity of your hearts. It is granted indeed, there might be, here and there, single persons in primitive christian churches, whose apparent sinful lives deserved to have them cast out; such were among the Thessalonians, and Philippians too: And, concerning such as these, the apostle, here and there, gives directions to withdraw from them, and to cast them out of the church, which was to be done by proper degrees. But this does not hinder the bulk or body of the church from being still esteemed, and called saints, and holy brethren.

*Objection I.* But was it not a sufficient qualification to become a member of a christian church, if a person professed the name of Christ in general, viz. that he would be of that sect or party in religion, without making what you call a credible profession, that is, without having such a serious spirit, and a life of piety and virtue, as might give any just reason to conclude that person was a member of the invisible church. *Answer.* This I have spoken of, in another place, about christian communion, and therefore I shall only speak very briefly here, and say, that John the baptist gave an early hint, that an entrance into the gospel church was not to stand upon the same terms, as that of the Jewish: They were to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance*, as well as profess it: for *the axe is laid to the root of the tree*; Mat. iii. 7—10. And those will be cut off from their visible standing in the church *who bear not good fruit*. So Acts xix. 18. "Those that believed, came and confessed, and shewed their deeds."

Besides, it may be justly granted, that the mere present

profession of the religion of Christ, against the general opposition of the world, and the danger of prosecution in those primitive days, was reasonably counted as sufficient an evidence of inward repentance, faith and true religion, as many weeks or months of outward visible piety and virtue might be in our day, because the profession of Christ is no matter of hazard and difficulty, as it was then. Far the greatest part of christian professors in that age were real inward christians, and all of them pretended and appeared to be so, on which account the apostles, in writing to them, give them those glorious titles and characters, belonging properly to none but real saints. Nor can we justly oppose the apostle would give such sublime and blessed titles and characters, to persons who were openly vicious and profane, under this spiritual dispensation of the gospel, whatever belief they professed of christian principles.

I would only ask upon this occasion, whether, if St. Paul were to write a letter to all that profess the christian religion in London, at this day, all the ignorant, the stupid, the careless and profane wretches who dwell in that great city, wherein the greatest part are visibly unholy, or at least have no visible appearances of holiness: I would ask, whether he would bestow these sacred titles upon them, and call them *holy brethren, elect of God, sanctified in Christ Jesus, faithful and beloved of God?* Surely, no; he could not do it; and therefore these sacred titles were given to the primitive christian churches, not as typically holy, but as professing themselves to be really and inwardly holy and religious, and in a judgment of charity appearing so to be.

*Objection II.* But were not many of these sacred and glorious titles given to the whole church or nation of the Jews, the greatest part of which were so wicked, that our Lord and St. Paul agree, but *few of them should be saved*; Mat. vii. 14. Rom. ix. 27. *Answer.* The Jewish church and state were distinguished from other people and nations, by such an external and typical holiness, as was designed to be an emblem of the invisible church, which was really and inwardly holy; and therefore these titles are given them only in an external, figurative, and typical sense, as having the outward emblems of those divine qualities, privileges and favours, which really and inwardly belong only to the church invisible; for the foundation both of their church and state was not so much as laid in a profession of inward holiness, but in being the seed of Abraham, and conforming to outward ceremonies. It was a much more carnal dispensation than that of the New Testament, and therefore it was an outward emblem of what is more real and spiritual under the gospel.

XIV. As the apostles, when they write to Gentile christian

churches, use the word *we*, and rank themselves amongst them in their present state of faith and holiness; so when they speak of their former state of corrupt nature, and before their conversion, they used the word *we* also, and rank themselves with them, as having been in a state of corrupt nature as well as the Gentiles, before their faith and repentance, though they were never Gentiles by nation, but Jews or Israelites. So Eph. ii. 1, 3. *You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh, in the children of disobedience; among whom, also, we all had our conversation, in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* Verse 5. *When we were dead in sins, God hath quickened us together with Christ.* Tit. iii. 3. *We ourselves, also, were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another:* which, by the way, the learned author of "Miscellanea Sacra," attributes particularly to St. Paul himself, in his unconverted state, volume II. page 63. See the same characters applied to St. Paul, by the learned author of the paraphrase and notes on the epistle to Titus; but I ask leave to include Titus and other Gentile christians in the word *we*, and not confine it merely to the apostle himself, as that author does. The words *hateful, and hating one another*, *αλλήλους*, must imply mutual and reciprocal action, which is sufficient to prove, that St. Paul includes others, together with himself, in these vile characters. St. Peter expresses himself in the same manner, when he was writing to the converted Gentiles. 1 Pet. iv. 3. "The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries."

It is true, indeed, that Peter and Paul could not apply all these expressions personally to themselves in a state of nature and unconversion, in the same literal sense in which they might be applied to the Gentile christians, in their unconverted state; but the apostles themselves, and the best of christians were, by nature, such sort of sinners as might be figured out by these literal characters of the Gentiles; as living too much without God, giving themselves up to their lusts and the idols of their heart, and to the course of a sinful world, and the temptations of the devil, so that they were, inwardly, and really in the sight of God, such sort of sinful creatures, in a state of corrupt nature, in a spiritual sense, as the Gentiles were, in more visible outward appearance and practice: It is in this respect the heathens, as I said before, were figures or emblems of all the uncon-

verted world, which lies in wickedness, and in this sense says the apostle; Eph. ii. 3. *We all, that is, Jews and christians, as well as Gentiles, had our conversation in times past, and were dead in sins, and children of wrath, even as others, that is, just objects of the wrath of God and condemnation, as well as the rest of the unconverted world.*

*Objection I.* But the apostles, when writing to Gentile christians, would ingratiate themselves with them, and, therefore, when they are going to speak hard things, of the former conversation of these christian Gentiles, they join themselves with them, and use the words *we* and *us*, in a way of pleasing oratory and address, in order to take off the severity of reflection, and to obtain a better hearing.

*Answer.* But, for the sake of such pleasing oratory and address, we must not explain the apostles into direct falsehood: The words, *we* and *us* in the plural, certainly include *I* and *me* in the singular; for, though there are several places, where the word *we* means only the single person who speaks, as 1 Thess. ii. 8. *We would have come to you, even I Paul;* and John xxi. 24. *We know;* and 1 John iii. 12. *We testify;* yet, I believe, there will hardly be found any place, where the person speaking is quite excluded. Perhaps that text 1 Thess. iv. 17. may be objected, *We which are alive and remain, at the coming of Christ, &c.* Could St. Paul suppose he should remain alive on earth till that time? I answer, yes, very probably; for this epistle was written the first of all St. Paul's epistles, and he might not then have it revealed to him, that Christ should delay his coming so long. And it is evident that by some expressions in this very epistle, the Thessalonians were led into a supposition of Christ's very speedy appearance. See 2 Thess. ii. 2\*. The apostles therefore when they use the word *we*, took their share in these self-accusing expressions, concerning their sinful state by nature: and if there be not a literal sense wherein these expressions were true concerning the apostles, there must be a kindred, similar or spiritual sense, wherein it is true of them, according to their own design and meaning, lest we make them speak false things in a compliment. They, together with the Gentile idolaters, were therefore in reality children of wrath, by nature, or in a state of depraved nature and guilt, though the Gentiles had more outward and visible marks of it than the Jews.

\* Perhaps, it may be granted, that the pronouns "*we*" and "*us*," may signify sometimes the men of our nation, as "*we*" Jews, or people of our profession, as *we* christians, though it speaks of something done before they were born; because they are looked upon as one with all that nation or all that profession; but this is so easily distinguished by the sense, that there is no danger of leading the hearer into a mistake, and doth not at all invalidate the present argument, concerning the universal corruption of Jews and Gentiles.

*Objection II.* But was not Paul even when he was a pharisee, a man of morals, a man who *lived in all good conscience*, as he testifies of himself; Acts xxiii. 1. and *touching the righteousness that was in the law, blameless*; Phil. iii. 6. Nor have we any ground to think Peter was really one of those wicked persons, though he says; 1 Pet. iv. 3. *We walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelling, banquetting, and abominable idolatries.*

*Answer I.* There is no need among such catalogues, always to apply every single character to every single person, included in the plural number, *we*. Even among the heathens themselves, there were some who might not be actual gluttons, or given to excess of wine, and to whom every one of these characters could not be literally applied; but all these characters, in general, must be scattered and distributed amongst the *we*; of whom they were spoken. There are instances of this sort of speech, in many places of scripture: See, for instance; Heb. xi. 32, 33. Gideon, Barak, Sampson, &c. and *the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, &c.* Not that each of these performed all these exploits, but some did one, and some another. So when the apostle says, *we wrought the will of the gentiles, walking in rioting, excess of wine, idolatry, &c.* some of these predicates must in some sense or another belong to the apostles, at least as part of the sinful race of mankind, Jews as well as gentiles, in order to secure their veracity; for we must not explain them so, as to make the apostles yield up the truth of things to complaisance and fair speech, especially in such cases, wherein a multitude of their readers would be very liable to mistake them.

*Answer II.* In general, it must be acknowledged, that as we are in a state of depraved nature, the seeds and principles of all iniquities are found in us, both the lusts of the flesh and the mind, and in this sense all men, by nature, have the springs of all sin in them: Nor is this a harder censure than the apostle Paul lays upon all mankind, Jews and gentiles, without the exception of one individual, when he cites out of the Old Testament, the several characters of wicked men; Rom. iii. 9—19. and pronounces them true in general concerning Jews and gentiles; and some of them belong to every particular person in the world; *all are under sin*, that is, in a state of nature: *there is none righteous no not one; there is no fear of God before their eyes, &c.* Thus every mouth is stopped; and all the world, even every individual son and daughter of Adam, is guilty before God, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. And that this includes every individual person; because otherwise there would be some persons who need not justification, by grace, through the redemption of Christ, which is the only relief which the apos-

he proposes for all mankind in the following verses : Thus, it is made pretty evident, that the good character of the Jews, as God's chosen visible church, are applied by the writers of the New Testament to all true christians, even gentiles as well as Jews ; and the evil characters, of the gentile world, are applied to all sinners, in a state of nature and unconverted, as well Jews as gentiles.

XV. From all this discourse there appears a sufficient reason why the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament which display the mercy of God to the Jewish nation, are often cited in the New Testament as belonging to true christians, and applicable to them, whether Jews or gentiles ; because the Jews were the figure of the true church of God, and the spiritual meaning of those promises is designed to be applied to all, who are the true Israel of God, that is, truly pious, whether Jews or gentiles. See for instance ; Lev. xxvi. 11, 12. *I will set my tabernacle or dwelling among you : I will walk among you, and be your God, and you shall be my people ;* Jer. xxxi. 1. *I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.* Which promises are made expressly to the Jews, in the Old Testament ; but St. Paul applies them to the Corinthian christians ; 2 Cor. vi. 16. *I will dwell in, or among them, and walk among them : I will be their God, and they shall be my people.* So again ; Is. lii. 11. *Depart ye, depart, go out from thence, touch no unclean thing, &c. and the Lord will go before you.* These words are addressed to Jerusalem and Israel only ; but St. Paul addresses the gentile converts in the same manner : *come out, or depart from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, &c.* 2 Cor. vi. 17. And then he tells them these promises are theirs, chapters vii. 1. So Is. lx. 1. *Arise, shine, for thy light is come,* is applied to the Ephesian christians ; Eph. v. 14. *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, &c.* And such kind of promises may be used and improved by us gentile christians ; *for they were written for our instruction, that we through patience, and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope ;* Rom. xv. 4. and therefore in verse 10. *Rejoice, ye gentiles, with his people.*

And in the same manner, the promises of the Old Testament, which are made to the gentiles, may be assumed and pleaded by sinners, who are in a state of corrupt nature, in order to their obtaining grace and salvation, because the gentiles were a type and emblem of them ; Is. xlv. 12. *Look unto me from the ends of the earth, and be saved.* And Hos. i. 10. and ii. 23. which are cited by Paul to the Romans, *I will call them my people which were not my people ;* chap. ix. 24—26. Where it is said, *ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the*



*living God.* Which scriptures may be very appositely and properly applied to encourage the worst of sinners to come God, by the gospel of Christ, even those that are, as it were, in the ends of the earth, afar off from any relation to God, or his people.

**RECAPITULATION.**—The sum and design of these propositions may be thus represented in short. There are but two sorts of persons in the world, saints and sinners, the holy and the unholy. The Jews and gentiles stand in scripture as figures or emblems of these two sorts, that is, of saints and sinners; or of the invisible church of God, and of the wicked world; the one, under the kingdom of God, the other, under the kingdom of Satan: For the visible church of God, in the Old Testament, was under its typical and shadowy administration; and this visible Jewish church, into which persons were admitted by being born of Israel, was a type of all that are really the subjects of God's kingdom of grace, being born of God; whereas the heathens, who were not of this visible church and kingdom of God, were subjects of the visible kingdom of Satan, and were types of all that are really in a state of corrupt nature, and so are subjects of the devil. In the times of the gospel, God introduced a more spiritual state and economy, even of his visible church, and appointed our entrance into it, to be made by a visible proof of our being born of God, of real faith in Christ, of true repentance, and inward holiness; supposing that the christian visible church ought to be composed of such persons, who, in a judgment of charity, should have those inward spiritual qualities, which were denoted by the Jewish outward privileges, forms and ceremonies, and which should render them real members of the invisible church of God.

And therefore, the apostles in writing to christian churches, speak of unconverted, or unsanctified persons, under the common descriptions and characters, which literally belonged to the heathen or gentile nations, in the days of their heathenism: And, when they speak of the visible members of christian churches, it is under the common descriptions and characters which literally belonged to the Jewish nation or church, as a type of the spiritual invisible church; and the reason is, because visible christians are all bound to profess these characters, in their spiritual sense, that is, real inward holiness, and special relation to God, and, in a judgment of charity, they are to be esteemed as possessing these characters and qualifications. Thence it follows, that these glorious and holy characters, are not ascribed to professing christians, in that typical and figurative sense, in which these characters were applied to the Jewish church and nation, because the Jews were but a type or emblem of what God's invisible church always was, and what the christian visible church ought to be; and if the discipline of the primitive days were still

practised, every christian church would be such as might be charitably presumed to have all these inward and glorious characters ; and however possibly there might be some particular wicked persons in it, who deserved to be cast out, yet this did not hinder the bulk and body of them, from enjoying these honourable appellations, as supposing them to be saints indeed. And, hence also it comes to pass, that many of the promises made to the Jews of old, are applied, in the New Testament, to all true christians for their comfort ; and the promises made to the gentiles may be applied to great sinners, to encourage their hope : But this must be understood only where the state, and circumstances, either of saints or sinners are such as to stand in need of those promised blessings, and to render such promise pertinent to their case. *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we both Jews and Romans through these scriptures, might have hope and divine consolation ;* Rom. xv. 6.

And indeed without such a liberty of explaining and applying the promises of the Old Testament, to our own souls, as the apostles have taught us, for our private and spiritual advantage, a good part of the writings of the prophets, even some of those which refer to the days of the Messiah, would be impoverished and drained of many of their richest blessings, and would become of little use to us, unless it were for the mere proof of the truth of christianity : Whereas there is a rich and heavenly treasure, of grace and blessings, contained in these *exceeding great and precious promises*, and transferred to the gentile church under the New Testament ; which treasure is opened and unfolded to us, and set before us, by this doctrine, which the holy apostles have taught us, both by their word and practice ; and which I have now been endeavouring to establish. Upon many of these ancient promises, have true christians lived in all succeeding ages, as well as in the apostolic times, and in them they have found support and relief, under their temptations and sufferings : So what was spoken by the Lord to Joshua for his support and encouragement, is applied to all christians by the apostle. See Josh. i. 5. and Heb. xiii. 5. *I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee.*

These words of grace have drawn sinners, near to God, under the gospel, by the language of the Old Testament happily applied to their consciences. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, that is, the waters of life ;* Isa. lv. 1. compared with Rev. xxii. 17. *Let him that is athirst, come and take of the water of life freely.* It is by many of these *exceeding great and precious promises*, that the gentiles have been made partakers of the divine nature, and have escaped the corruptions of the world ; 1 Pet. i. 4. It is by these the christian church has

been gathered and animated, has been nourished and propagated to this day. These promises, which were given to the Jews and to their children, shall be made good to those that are afar off, that is, the gentiles ; even to as many as the Lord our God shall call ; Acts ii. 39. For in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek ; Gal. iii. 28. but all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God ; 2 Cor. i. 20.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.













