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A

BODY OF DIVINITY:

WHEREIN THE

DOCTRINES

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

ARE EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED.

BEING THE

SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL LECTURES

ON

THE ASSEMBLY'S LARGER CATECHISM.

BY THOMAS RIDGLEY, D. D.

WITH NOTES, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED,

BY JAMES P. WILSON, D. D.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

.....

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE THIRD EUROPEAN EDITION.

.....

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY AND FOR WILLIAM. W. WOODWARD, CORNER OF CHESNUT AND SOUTH SECOND STREETS.

1814.

District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

Seal. BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the seventeenth day of May, in the thirty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1813, William W. Woodward, of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

“A Body of Divinity: wherein the doctrines of the christian religion, are explained and defended. Being the substance of several lectures on the Assembly’s larger catechism. By Thomas Ridgley, D. D. With notes, original and selected, by James P. Wilson, D. D. In four volumes. First American, from the third European Edition.”

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, intituled, “An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such Copies during the times therein mentioned.”—And also to the Act, entitled “An Act supplementary to An Act, entitled “An act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the Copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such Copies during the times therein mentioned,” and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

D. CALDWELL, Clerk of the
District of Pennsylvania.

TO THE READER.

In this first American edition the original text remains unaltered, the notes which Dr. Ridgley had subjoined to his work are retained, and for the sake of distinction, printed in Italics. The other notes have been added by Dr. Wilson; and in every instance wherein they have been selected by him from others, they are accompanied by marks of quotation, and the name of the author or book from whence they were taken.

THE PREFACE.

THE influence which the different sentiments of men, in matters of religion, have, for the most part, on their temper and behaviour towards one another, affords very little ground to expect that any attempt to explain or defend the most important doctrines of Christianity, should not be treated with dislike and opposition by some, how much soever it may afford matter of conviction to others. This consideration would have put a stop to my pen, and thereby saved me a great deal of fatigue, in preparing and publishing the following sheets, had it not been over-balanced by what I cannot, at present, think any other than a sense of duty, in compliance with the call of providence. I heartily wish there were no occasion to vindicate some of the great doctrines of the gospel, which were more generally received in the last age, than at present, from misrepresentation, as though the method in which they had been explained led to licentiousness, and the doctrines themselves, especially those of election, particular redemption, efficacious grace, and some others, that depend upon them, were inconsistent with the moral perfections of the divine nature: these are now traduced by many, as though they were new and strange doctrines, not founded on scripture, nor to be maintained by any just methods of reasoning deduced from it, or as if the duties of practical religion could not be inculcated consistently therewith. If this insinuation were true, our preaching would be vain, our hope also vain, and we should be found false witnesses for God, and have no solid ground whereon to set our feet, which would be a most tremendous thought. And, if this be not sufficient to justify my present undertaking, I have nothing to allege of equal weight.

I must confess, that when I took the first step, in order to the setting this design on foot, by consenting that proposals

should be printed, about two years since, I reckoned it little other than an expedient to disengage myself from any farther thoughts, and my friends from any expectation of it, which I could not well do, but by having a proof of the backwardness of persons to encourage, by subscription, a work which would be so very expensive to the undertakers; but, the design being countenanced, beyond what I could have imagined, and numbers subscribed for, with more expedition than is usual, I was laid under an obligation immediately to prepare my notes for the press, and set forward the work, which, through the divine goodness, has been thus far carried on; and I cannot but take occasion to express my grateful acknowledgment of the respect that has been shewed me, by those who have encouraged this undertaking. If it may answer their expectation, and subserve their spiritual advantage, I shall count my labour well employed, and humbly offer the glory thereof, as a tribute due to God, whose interest is the only thing that demands all our time, strength, and utmost abilities. If I may but have a testimony from him that I have spoken nothing concerning him that is a dishonour to his name, unbecoming his perfections, or that has a tendency to lead his people out of the right way to the glorifying and enjoying of him, my end is fully answered. Whatever weakness I have discovered, arising from mine inequality to the greatness of the subjects insisted on, I hope to obtain forgiveness thereof from God, whose cause I have endeavoured to maintain; and, to be excused by men, as I may truly say, I have not offered, either to him or them, what cost me nothing. I have, as far as I am able, adapted my method of reasoning to the capacities of those who are unacquainted with several abstruse and uncommon words and phrases, which have been often used by some who have treated on these subjects, which have a tendency rather to perplex, than improve the minds of men: terms of art, as they are sometimes called, or hard words, used by metaphysicians and schoolmen, have done little service to the cause of Christ.

If I have explained any doctrine, or given the sense of any scripture in a way somewhat different from what is commonly received, I have never done it out of the least affectation of singularity, nor taken pleasure in going out of the beaten path, having as great a regard to the footsteps of the flock, as is consistent with that liberty of thinking and reasoning, which we are allowed to use, who conclude nothing to be an infallible rule of faith, but the inspired writings.

As to what I have advanced concerning the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost, I have thought myself obliged to recede from some common modes of explication, which have been used, both by ancient and modern

THE PREFACE.

writers, in insisting on these mysterious doctrines, which, probably, will appear, if duly weighed, not to have done any great service to the cause, which, with convincing evidence, they have maintained; since it is obvious that this is the principal thing that has given occasion to some modern Arians to fill the margins of their books with quotations, taken out of the writings of others, whom they have either, without ground, pretended to have been on their side of the question, or charged with plucking down with one hand, what they have built up with the other.

Whether my method of explaining these doctrines be reckoned just, or no, I cannot but persuade myself, that if what I have said, concerning the subordination of these divine persons, be considered in any other view, than as an explication of the Sonship of Christ, and the procession of the Holy Ghost, it will not be reckoned a deviating from the common faith of those who have defended the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity; and, if it be an error to maintain that these divine persons, as well as the Father, are independent, as to their personality, as well as their essence, or to assert that the manner of their having the divine essence, as some express it, is independent, as well as the essence itself, then what I have delivered, on that subject, is to no purpose, which, when I am convinced of, I shall readily acknowledge my mistake, and count it an happiness to be undeceived.

As to what respects the decrees of God, and more particularly those that relate to angels and men, and his providence, as conversant about sinful actions, and the origin of moral evil, I have endeavoured to account for them in such a way, as, I trust, does not in the least, infer God to be the author of sin; nor have I, in any instance, represented God as punishing sin, or determining to do it, out of his mere sovereignty, as though he designed to render his creatures miserable, without considering them as contracting guilt, and thereby procuring this to themselves. And, when I have been led to insist on the freeness of divine grace, and the covenant of grace, as made with Christ, and, in him, with the elect, and maintained the absoluteness and independency hereof on the will of man to render it effectual to salvation, I have, notwithstanding, said as much as is necessary concerning the conditionality of our claim to the blessings thereof, and the inseparable connexion that there is between practical religion and salvation, which fences against the charge that is often brought against this doctrine, as though it led to licentiousness. This I could not omit to mention, that the reader might not entertain groundless prejudices against some of the doctrines insisted on, before he duly weighs the method in which they are handled, or considers whether my

defence of them against the popular objections, of that or any other kind, be just or no. Some, it may be, will see reason to conclude that it is; and others, who think that there are many unsurmountable difficulties on our side of the question, may be convinced, that there are difficulties of another nature, as great, if not greater, attending the opposite scheme, which they themselves maintain. But this I rather chuse to submit to the impartial judgment of those who are not disposed to condemn a doctrine, without desiring to know what may be said in its defence.

As to what concerns the work in general, it may be observed, that when I have occasion to illustrate an argument, by making use of any criticism that may be of advantage to it, or to give the sense of ancient writers, either for or against what I have laid down, I have inserted it in *Italics* in the notes, that it might not appear to be a digression, or break the thread of the discourse.

Though the title of every page mentions only the general subject of the question, there is a table prefixed to each volume, that comprises the contents thereof, laid down in such a form, as that the reader may easily see the heads of argument, under every question, in their proper method and connexion.

And, at the end, there is an index of scriptures, in which only those are inserted that are either more largely or concisely explained. This, together with the table, was drawn up by a kind brother, which I thankfully acknowledge, as having afforded me more leisure to attend to the work itself.*

As to what concerns the second edition,† it was undertaken at the request of some who did not expect that the former would be so soon out of print. That which gives me great satisfaction is, the acceptance it has met with from many judicious divines and others, in North-Britain; and I cannot but reckon the honour that the learned professors in the university of Aberdeen did me, in signifying their approbation of it, much more to be desired, than the highest titles that could have been conferred upon me without it.

I have nothing farther to trouble the reader with in this preface; but would only request of him, that, what thoughts soever he may entertain concerning the way in which I have endeavoured to state and defend some great and important truths, he would search the scriptures, and explain them agreeably to the divine perfections, and not think the worse of the gospel, which stands upon a firmer basis, than the weak efforts of fallible men, who use their best endeavours to defend it. If we had not a

* And besides the above-mentioned Indexes there are now added to this edition an alphabetical index to the whole matters contained in the work.

† And the same reason may be assigned why this third is now offered to the public.

surer rule of faith, than the methods of human reasoning, religion would be a matter of great uncertainty, and we should be in danger of being *tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine*. But our best security against this, will be our having hearts established with grace, and rightly disposed to make a practical improvement of what we learn; and, if we are enabled to follow on to know the Lord with minds free from prejudice, and, if under a due sense of our weakness, we humbly present our supplications to him, who is able to make us wise to salvation, we may then hope to attain to that knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus, which shall be attended with peace and comfort here, and crowned with blessedness and glory hereafter.

May the great God, in whose hand is the life and usefulness of all men, succeed, with his blessing, what is humbly offered to his service, so far as it is adapted thereunto, and approved of by him, that hereby it may be conducive to the spiritual advantage of professing families, and the rising generation.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

BEFORE we enter on our present undertaking, we shall premise a few things leading to the subject matter thereof; and that we may begin with what is most obvious, let it be considered,

I. That it is a duty incumbent on all who profess the Christian name, to be well acquainted with those great doctrines on which our faith, hope, and worship are founded; for, without the knowledge hereof, we must necessarily be at a loss as to the way of salvation, which none has a right to prescribe, but he who is the author thereof. (a)

a "CHRISTIANITY," it hath been said, "is not founded in argument." If it were only meant by these words, that the religion of Jesus could not, by the single aid of reasoning, produce its full effect upon the heart; every true Christian would cheerfully subscribe to them. No arguments unaccompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit; can convert the soul from sin to God; though even to such conversion, arguments are, by the agency of the Spirit, rendered subservient. Again, if we were to understand by this aphorism, that the principles of our religion could never have been discovered, by the natural and unassisted faculties of man; this position, I presume would be as little disputed as the former. But if, on the contrary, under the cover of an ambiguous expression, it is intended to insinuate, that those principles, from their very nature, can admit no rational evidence of their truth, (and this, by the way, is the only meaning which can avail our antagonists) the gospel, as well as common sense, loudly reclaims against it.

The Lord Jesus CHRIST, the author of our religion, often argued, both with his disciples and with his adversaries, as with reasonable men, on the principles of reason, without this faculty, he well knew, they could not be susceptible either of religion or of law. He argued from prophecy, and the conformity of the event to the prediction. Luke xxiv. 25, &c. John v. 39, & 46. He argued from the testimony of John the Baptist, who was generally acknowledged to be a prophet. John v. 32, & 33. He argued from the miracles which he himself performed, John v. 36. x. 25, 37, 38. xiv. 10, 11. as uncontrovertible evidences, that God Almighty operated by him, and had sent him. He espoules with his enemies, that they did not use their reason on this subject. *Why*, says he, *even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?* Luke xii. 57. In like manner we are called upon by the apostles of our Lord, to act the part of *wise men* and *judge impartially of what they say*. 1 Cor. x. 15. Those who do so, are highly commended, for the candour and prudence they discover, in an affair of so great consequence. Acts xvii. 11. We are even commanded, to be *always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of our hope*; 1 Pet. iii. 15. *in meekness to instruct them that oppose themselves*; 2 Tim. ii. 25. *and earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*. Jude 3. God has neither in natural nor revealed religion, *left himself without a witness*; but has in both given moral and external evidence, sufficient to convince the impartial, to silence the gainsayer, and to render inexcusable the atheist and the unbeliever. This evidence it is our duty to attend to, and candidly to examine. We must *prove all things*, as we are expressly enjoined in holy writ, if we would ever hope to *hold fast that which is good*. 1 Thess. v. 21.

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II. This knowledge of divine truth must be derived from the holy scriptures, which are the only fountain of spiritual wisdom, whereby we are instructed in those things that could have been known no other way, but by divine revelation.

III. It will be of singular use for us not only to know the doctrines that are contained in scripture; but to observe their connexion and dependence on one another, and to digest them into such a method, that subsequent truths may give light to them that went before; or to lay them down in such a way, that the whole scheme of religion may be comprised in a narrow compass, and, as it were, beheld with one view, which will be a very great help to memory: and this is what we call a system of divine truths, or a methodical collection of the chief articles of our religion, adapted to the capacity of those who need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God: and if they are designed to give the world a specimen of that form of sound words, which the church thinks itself obliged to hold fast, and steadfastly to adhere to, then we call it a confession of faith; or, if digested into questions and answers, we call it a catechism. And though systems of divinity, confessions of faith, and catechisms, are treated with contempt, instead of better arguments, by many who are no friends to the doctrines which they contain, and who appear to be partial in their resentment, in as much as they do not dislike those treatises which are agreeable to their own sentiments, by whatever name they are called; yet we are bound to conclude that the labours of those who have been happy in the sense they have given of scripture, and the method in which they have explained the doctrines thereof, in what form soever they have been, are a great blessing to us; though we are far from concluding that they are of equal authority with scripture, or that every word which they use is infallible; nor do we regard them any farther than as they are agreeable to, or sufficiently proved from scripture.

IV. Confessions of faith and catechisms are not to be reckoned a novel invention, or not consonant to the scripture rule, since they are nothing else but a peculiar way of preaching or instructing us in divine truths. Therefore, since scripture lays down no certain invariable rule concerning this matter, the same command that warrants preaching the word in any method, includes the explaining of it, as occasion serves, in a catechetical one.

V. As there are many excellent bodies of divinity printed in our own and foreign languages, and collections of sermons on the principal heads thereof; so there are various catechisms, or methodical summaries of divine truths, which, when consonant to scripture, are of great advantage to all Christians, whether elder or younger.

VI. The catechisms composed by the Assembly of Divines at

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Westminster, are esteemed as not inferior to any that are extant, either in our own or foreign languages, the doctrines therein contained being of the highest importance, and consonant to scripture; and the method in which they are laid down is so agreeable, that it may serve as a directory for the ranging our ideas of the common heads of divinity in such an order, that what occurs under each of them may be reduced to its proper place. It is the larger of them that we have attempted to explain and regulate our method by; because it contains several heads of divinity not touched on in the shorter. And if, in any particular instance, we are obliged to recede from the common mode of speaking, (though it is to be hoped not from the common faith, once delivered to the saints) we submit our reasoning to the judgment of those who are disposed to pardon less mistakes, and improve what comes with sufficient evidence to the best purposes.

The work indeed, is large, but the vast variety of subjects will render it more tolerable; the form in which it appears is somewhat differing from that in which it was first delivered, in a public audience, though that may probably be no disadvantage to it, especially since it is rather designed to be read in families than committed to memory, and repeated by different persons, as it has been. The plainness of the style may contribute to its usefulness; and its being less embarrassed with scholastic terms than some controversial writings are, may render it more intelligible to private Christians, whose instruction and advantage is designed thereby. It would be too great a vanity to expect that it should pass through the world without that censure which is common to all attempts of the like nature, since men's sentiments in divinity differ as much as their faces; and some are not disposed to weigh those arguments that are brought to support any scheme of doctrine, which differs from what they have before received. However, the work comes forth with this advantage, that it has already conflicted with some of the difficulties it is like to meet with, as well as been favoured with some success, and therefore the event hereof is left in his hand whose cause and truth is endeavoured to be maintained.



THE
DOCTRINES
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION
EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED.

OF MAN'S CHIEF END.

QUEST. I. *What is the chief and highest end of man?*

ANSW. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him for ever.

1. **I**T is supposed, in this answer, that every intelligent creature, acting as such, designs some end, which excites endeavours to attain it.

2. The ends for which we act, if warrantable, may be considered as to their degree of excellency, and, in proportion to it, are to be pursued by proper means conducing thereto.

3. There is one that may be termed the chief and highest end, as having an excellency and tendency to make us blessed above all others : this consists, as it is observed in this answer, in the glorifying and eternal enjoyment of God, the fountain of blessedness.

If it be enquired with what propriety these may both be called chief and highest, the answer is obvious and easy, *viz.* That the former is absolutely so, beyond which nothing more excellent or desirable can be conceived ; the latter is the highest or best in its kind, which, notwithstanding, is referred, as a means leading to the other ; and both these ends, which, with this distinction, we call chief and highest, are to be particularly considered by us, together with the connexion that there is between them. (a.)

I. We are to consider what it is to glorify God. In order to our understanding of this, let it be premised,

a He who glorifies God intentionally, thereby promotes his own happiness. Our enjoying God is glorifying him. The two objects coalesce. Vide note on page 19.

1. That there is a great difference between God's glorifying himself and our glorifying him ; he glorifies himself when he demonstrates or shews forth his glory ; we glorify him by ascribing to him the glory that is his due : even as the sun discovers its brightness by its rays, and the eye beholds it. God glorifies himself, by furnishing us with matter for praise ; we glorify him when we offer praise, or give unto him the glory due to his name.

2. Creatures are said to glorify God various ways : some things do it only objectively, as by them, angels and men are led to glorify him ; thus *the heavens declare his glory*, Psal. xix. 1. The same might be said of all other inanimate creatures which glorify God, by answering the end of their creation, though they know it not : but intelligent creatures, and particularly men, are said to glorify God actively ; and this they do by admiring and adoring his divine perfections : these, as incomprehensible, are the object of admiration ; and accordingly the apostle admires the divine wisdom, Rom. xi. 33. *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !* and as they are divine, so they are the object of adoration : God is to be admired in all the displays of his relative or manifestative glory ; and *his work which men behold*, is to be *magnified*, Job xxxvi. 24. But he is to be adored more especially for his essential perfections.

We are to glorify God, by recommending, proclaiming, and setting forth his excellency to others. What we have the highest value for, we desire that others may have the same regard to it with ourselves : thus it is observed by the evangelist, that when the disciples received their first conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, they imparted this to others ; as Andrew to Peter, and Philip to Nathanael, John i. 41, 45. so the woman of Samaria being convinced hereof, endeavoured to persuade all her neighbours to believe in him, as she did, John iv. 28, 29. Thus we glorify God by making mention of his name with reverence, proclaiming his goodness with thankfulness, and inviting others, as the Psalmist does, Psal. xxxiv. 8. *to taste and see that he is good.*

But since this is a very comprehensive duty including in it the whole of practical religion, it may be considered under the following particulars.

1. We glorify God by confessing and taking shame to ourselves for all the sins we have committed, which is interpretatively to acknowledge the holiness of his nature, and of his law, which the apostle asserts to be *holy, just, and good*, Rom. vii. 12. This Joshua advises Achan to do ; *to give glory to God, by making confession to him*, Josh. vii. 19. And thus the peni-

tent thief, who was crucified with our Saviour, glorified God, by confessing that he received the *due reward of his deeds*, Luke xxiii. 40, 41. So did the Levites, in their prayer recorded by Nehemiah, when they said to God, *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us, for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly*, Neh. ix. 33.

2. By loving and delighting in him above all things, which is to act as those who own the transcendent amiableness of his perfections, as the object of their highest esteem. Thus the Psalmist says, Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none, or nothing, upon earth, that I desire besides thee.*

3. By believing and trusting in him, committing all our concerns, both in life and death, for time and eternity, into his hands: thus Abraham is said *to be strong in faith, giving glory to God*, Rom. iv. 20. And the apostle Paul, 2 Tim. i. 12. *to have committed his all to him.*

4. By a fervent zeal for his honour; and that either for the honour of his truth and gospel, when denied, disbelieved, or perverted; or for the honour of his holiness, or any of his other perfections, when they are reflected on, or reproached, either by the tongues or actions of those who set themselves against him.

5. By improving our talents, and bringing forth fruit in proportion to the means we enjoy; *herein*, says our Saviour, *is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*, John xv. 8.

6. By walking humbly, thankfully, and cheerfully before God. Humility acknowledges that infinite distance which is between him and us; retains a due sense of our own unworthiness of all we have or hope for; and owns every thing we receive to be the gift of grace; *By the grace of God*, says the apostle, *I am what I am*, 1 Cor. xv. 10. Thankfulness gives him the glory, as the author of every mercy; and accordingly sets a due value on it, in that respect. And to walk cheerfully before him, is to recommend his service as most agreeable, whereby we discover that we do not repent that we were engaged therein; which is what the Psalmist intends, when he says, Psal. c. 2. *Serve the Lord with gladness.*

7. By heavenly-mindedness; when we desire to be with him to behold his glory. To which we must add, that all this is to be done in the name of Christ, our great Mediator, and by strength derived from him.

8. As we are to glorify God, by yielding obedience to his commanding will, as in the aforesaid instances, so we are to do it by an entire submission to his disposing will; particularly, when under afflictive dispensations of providence, we must own his sovereignty and right to *do what he will with us as his own*,

Matth. xx. 15. and that these afflictions are infinitely *less than our iniquities deserve*, Ezra ix. 13. And we must adore his wisdom and goodness in trying our graces hereby, and dealing with us in such a way as is *needful*, and that *only for a season*, 1 Pet. i. 6. And we are to own his goodness in suiting our strength to our burdens, and over-ruling all this for our spiritual advantage. It also consists in an easy, patient, and contented frame of spirit, without the least murmuring or repining thought; concluding, that whatever he does is *well done*, Psal. cxix. 65. And, which is something more, in rejoicing that we are counted worthy to suffer the loss of all things, yea, even of life itself, if called to it, for his sake; of which we have various instances in scripture, Acts v. 41. Heb. x. 34. Acts xx. 24.

Moreover, we ought to glorify God in all the natural, civil, and religious actions of life, which are to be consecrated or devoted to him. We enjoy the blessings of life to no purpose if we do not live to the Lord, and thankfully acknowledge that we receive them all from his hand; and whatever the calling be, wherewith we are called, we must therein abide with him, and see that we have his warrant to engage in it, and expect success from his blessing attending it, or else it will be to no purpose. Thus says Moses, *It is the Lord thy God that giveth thee power to get wealth*, Deut. viii. 18. And, in all our dealings with men, we are to consider ourselves as under the inspection of the all-seeing eye of God, to whom we are accountable for all we do, and should be induced hereby, to exercise ourselves always to keep consciences void of offence towards God and man.

As for religious duties, wherein we have more immediately to do with God, we are to glorify him, by taking up a profession of religion in general, as being influenced by his authority, encouraged by his promised assistance, and approving ourselves to him, as the searcher of hearts: and we must take heed that we do not rest in an outward form or shew of godliness, without the power thereof; or in having a name to live without a principal of spiritual life, by which we may be enabled to put forth living and spiritual actions agreeable thereunto: and all these religious duties must be performed by faith, whereby we depend on Christ, our great Mediator, both for assistance and acceptance; by which means we glorify him, as the fountain of all grace, in whom alone both our persons and services are accepted in the sight of God, and redound to his glory. And this is to be done at all times; so that when our thoughts are not directly conversant about any of the divine perfections, as it often happens, when we are engaged in some of the more minute, or indifferent actions of life; yet we are to glorify him habitually, as having our hearts right with him; so that whatever we do may refer ultimately to his glory. As every step

the traveller takes is toward his journey's end, though it may not be every moment in his thoughts; so the less important actions of life should be subservient to those that are of greater consequence, in which the honour of God and religion is more immediately concerned; in which sense we may be said to glorify him therein.

Thus having considered, that it is our indispensable duty to make the glory of God our highest end in all our actions, we might farther add, as a motive to enforce it, that God is the first cause of all things, and his own glory was the end he designed in all his works, whether of creation or providence: and it is certain, that this is the most excellent end we can propose to ourselves; therefore the most valuable actions of life ought to be referred to it, and our hearts most set upon it; otherwise we act below the dignity of our nature; and, while other creatures, designed only to glorify him objectively, answer the end for which they were made, we, by denying him that tribute of praise which is due from us, abuse our superior faculties, and live in vain.

II. The next thing to be considered is what it is to enjoy God.

1. This supposes a propriety in, or claim to him, as our God. We cannot be said to enjoy that which we have no right or claim to, as one man cannot be said to enjoy an estate which belongs to another; so God must be our God in covenant, or we cannot enjoy him; and that he is so, with respect to all that fear him, is evident, inasmuch as he gives them leave to say, *Psal. xlvi. 14. This God is our God*; and, *Psal. lxxvii. 6. God, even our God, shall bless us.*

2. To enjoy God, is to have a special gracious communion with him, to converse or walk with him, and to delight in him; as when we can say, *1 John i. 3. Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* This enjoyment of God, or communion with him, is,

(1.) That which we are blessed with in this world, which is but imperfect, as we know and love him but in part, and our communion with him is often interrupted and weakened, through the prevalency of indwelling sin: and that joy and delight which arises from thence is often clouded and sullied; and, at best, we enjoy him here but in a mediate way, in and under his ordinances, as agreeable to this present state.

(2.) Believers shall enjoy him perfectly and immediately in heaven, without intermission or abatement, and that for ever; this is called, *Seeing him as he is*, *1 John iii. 2.* and being *with him where he is, to behold his glory*, *John xvii. 24.* And in order hereto, their souls shall be made capable or receptive hereof, by the removal not only of all sinful but natural imper-

fections, and shall be more enlarged, as well as have brighter discoveries of the divine glory: and this shall be attended with a perfect freedom from all the consequences of sin; such as sorrow, divine desertion, and the many evils that attend us in this present life; as well as from all temptations to it. So that their happiness shall be confirmed and secured to them, and that with this advantage, that it shall be impossible for them to be dispossessed of it. This is certainly the most desirable end, next to the glory of God, that can be intended or pursued by us.^(b)

III. This leads us to consider the connexion that there is between our glorifying God and enjoyment of him. God has joined these two together, so that one shall not be attained without the other. It is the highest presumption to expect to be made happy with him for ever, without living to his glory here. For in as much as heaven is a state of perfect blessedness, they, who shall hereafter be possessed of it, must be trained up, or made meet for it; which is the grand design of all the means of grace. How preposterous would it be to suppose, that they, who have no regard to the honour of God here, shall be crowned with glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, in his presence hereafter! Therefore a life of holiness is absolutely necessary to the heavenly blessedness; and since these two are so connected together, they who experience the one, shall not fail of the other; for this is secured to them by the faithfulness of God, who has promised to give *grace and glory*, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. Therefore, *he who begins a good work in them, will perform it*, Phil. i. 6. and give them *the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls*, 1 Pet. i. 8.

From the connexion that there is between our glorifying and enjoying God, we may infer,

1. That it is a very preposterous thing for any one to assign this as a mark of grace, that persons must be content to perish eternally, that God may be glorified. It is true, it is alleged in favour of this supposition, that Moses, and the apostle Paul, seem to give countenance to it; one by saying, Exod. xxxii. 32. *If thou wilt forgive their sin; and, if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written*; the other, Rom. ix. 3. *I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh*.

But to this it may be answered, that Moses, in desiring to be blotted out of the book which God had written, must not be supposed to be willing to perish eternally for Israel's sake; but he

(b) The answer connected with this question makes the glorifying and enjoyment but *one* end; and thus the enjoyment is supposed to consist in the glorifying God.

is content to be blotted out of the book of the living, or to have his name no more remembered on earth; and seems to decline the honour which God had offered him, when he said, *Exod. xxxii. 10. Let me alone, that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation*; he desires not the advancement of his own family, if Israel must cease to be a people, to whom God had promised to be a God.

As for the apostle Paul's wish, it is either, as some suppose, a rash and inconsiderate flight of zeal for God, and so not warrantable, though in some respects proceeding from a good principle; or rather, as I humbly conceive the meaning is, he could wish himself accursed from Christ, so far as is consistent with his love; or he is content to be under the external marks of God's displeasure; or deprived of the comfortable sensation of his love, or many of those fruits and effects thereof, which the believer enjoys in this life: for I cannot, in the least, think he desires to be deprived of a real interest in it, or to be eternally separated from Christ, on any condition whatsoever. (c)

(c) It is not probable that the idea of a *book of life*, which is not to be understood literally, was at all in use in the days of Moses. The term *νοχουμν* used by Paul is not hypothetical, but affirmative, and in the past tense, *I did wish*, or rather *I was wishing* to be separated from Christ. The truth of this assertion no one, who is acquainted with his history, can doubt; for he had been a persecutor. Such a wish, made after he was a subject of saving grace, would have been unnatural, irrelevant, impious and impossible. It has been nevertheless, zealously contended by some learned and pious modern divines that, "the benevolent person is disposed, and willing to give up, and relinquish his own interest and happiness, when inconsistent with the public good, or the greatest good of the whole."* By *benevolence* they mean love to being in general, without regard to any excellency in that being, "unless mere existence"† be such. In this they place all virtue, and all religion. And that they may the more clearly distinguish this species of love from that of *complacency* and *gratitude*, in which the party ever has his eye upon his own advantage, they usually adopt the phrase *disinterested benevolence*, yet not wholly discarding the idea of the party's own interest, but viewing it only on the general scale with that of all other beings.

True holiness consists in a disposition, and suitable expressions of it, in conformity to the *revealed will* of God; so far as this accords with the good of the whole, such benevolence will run parallel with holiness; but every attempt to substitute any other rule of action or ground of obligation than the authoritatively expressed will of God, approaches the crime of idolatry. It is certainly a very high stand we assume, when we profess to pass by all the amiableness, and excellency of the divine character; and all his goodness, and mercy to us; and to love his *being* only together with created existences, with the same independent, and dignified love of benevolence, which he exercises towards his helpless creatures. All the displays of his perfections and compassions seem designed rather to elicit the affections of *complacency* and *gratitude*. That the advantages of religion in this world, and the next may be sought from selfish, and mercenary views is a lamentable truth; but because carnal minds may find their own destruction in aiming at the blessings which the spiritual only can enjoy, this is no reason wherefore the saints should not find their ultimate interest to accompany their duty in every instance. Accordingly, for their encouragement, the blessings of peace, and spiritual consolations here, and of eternal happiness, are exhib-

* Dr HOPKINS.

† President EDWARDS.

2. Since the eternal enjoyment of God is one great end which we ought to have in view, it is no sign of a mercenary spirit to have an eye to the heavenly glory, to quicken us to duty; seeing this is promised by God to those who are faithful, thus, Psal. lxxxiii. 24. *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.* The like promises we have in many other scriptures, which are designed to excite our desire and hope of this blessedness; therefore the exercise of these graces, from such motives, is far from being unlawful: yea, it is commended in the saints, who are said, Heb. xi. 16. *to desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.* And Moses is commended for having the *recompence of reward* in view, when he preferred the *reproach of Christ* before the *treasures of Egypt*, ver. 26.

Nevertheless, when this respect to future blessedness is warrantable, it must be considered as an expedient for our glorifying God, while we behold his glory; and when we consider it as a reward, we must not look upon it as what is merited by our service, or conferred in a way of debt, but as a reward of grace, given freely to us, though founded on the merits of Christ.

QUEST. II. *How doth it appear that there is a God?*

ANSW. The very light of nature in man, and the works of God, declare that there is a God; but his word and Spirit only, do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation.

BEFORE we enter on the proof of this important doctrine, let it be premised, that we ought to be able to prove by arguments, or give a reason of our belief that there is a God.

bited to their view in glowing colours. But this would not have been done if it were essential to the character of their love, that they should be willing to be *separated from Christ*. That we have by nature a fearful propensity to earthly good, which is vain, illusory, disgusting and debasing, must be acknowledged; and that we are therefore required to *deny our natural selves* is known unto every christian. But it by no means results, that because we must turn away from the temptations of *temporal things*, we may not aspire to those blessings which are *spiritual and eternal*. God himself is eternally happy in his *own self complacency*, and has encouraged us to expect everlasting happiness from the same source. Jesus Christ, whose benevolence towards us is an eternal appeal to our *gratitude*, which supposes a regard to our own interest; in suffering death had respect also to the joy which was set before him, and shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. Love is essential to duty, without which it is forced, and cannot be deemed obedience in the view of him who searches the heart. This has been noticed by the Saviour, but he has omitted those distinctions, which are accounted so important in modern times; yet his doctrines are *not less* spiritual, than ours after we have sublimated the gospel to the highest pitch of refinement.

1. Because it is the foundation of all natural and revealed religion; and therefore it must not be received merely by tradition, as though there were no other reason why we believe it, but because others do so, or because we have been instructed herein from our childhood; for that is unbecoming the dignity and importance of the subject, and would be an instance of great stupidity, especially seeing we have so full and demonstrative an evidence thereof, taken from the whole frame of nature; in which there is nothing but what affords an argument to confirm our belief that there is a God.

2. There is a great deal of atheism in our hearts, by reason whereof we are prone sometimes to call in question the being, perfections, and providence of God. To which we may also add, that the Devil frequently injects atheistical thoughts into our minds; which is a great affliction to us, and renders it necessary that we should use all possible means for our establishment in this great truth.

3. The abounding of atheism in the world, and the boldness of many in arguing against this truth, renders it necessary that we should be able to defend it, that we may stop the mouths of blasphemers, and so plead the cause of God, and assert his being and perfections against those that deny them; as Psal. xiv. 1. *The fool, who saith in his heart there is no God.*

4. This will greatly tend to establish our faith in those comfortable truths that arise from our interest in him, and give us a more solid foundation for our hope, as excited by his promises, which receive all their force and virtue from those perfections which are implied in the idea of a God.

5. This will make us set a due value on his works, by which we are led to conclude his eternal power and Godhead, and so to admire him in them, Job xxxvi. 24. *Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold.*

We shall now consider those arguments mentioned in this answer, by which the being of a God may be evinced; as,

I. From the light of nature in man, by which we understand that reason which he is endowed with, whereby he is distinguished from, and rendered superior to, all other creatures in this lower world, whereby he is able to observe the connexion of things, and their dependence on one another, and infer those consequences which may be deduced from thence. These reasoning powers, indeed, are very much sullied, depraved, and weakened, by our apostacy from God, but not wholly obliterated; so that there are some remains thereof, which are common to all nations, whereby, without the help of special revelation it may be known that there is a God.

But this either respects the principle of reasoning, which we were born with, upon the account whereof infants are called in-

telligent creatures; or the exercise thereof in a discursive way, in the adult, who only are capable to discern this truth, which they do more or less, in proportion to their natural capacity, as they make advances in the knowledge of other things. Now for the proof of the being of a God from the light of nature, let the following propositions be considered in their respective order.

1. There hath been, for many ages past, a succession of creatures in the world. (*d*)

2. These creatures could not make themselves, for that which is nothing cannot act; if it makes itself, it acts before it

(*d*) "As for *our own existence*, we perceive it so plainly, and so certainly, that it neither needs, nor is capable of any proof. For nothing can be more evident to us than our own existence; *I think, I reason, I feel pleasure and pain*: can any of these be more evident to me, than my own existence? If I doubt of all other things, that very doubt makes me perceive my own *existence*, and will not suffer me to doubt of that. For if I know *I feel pain*, it is evident I have as certain perception of my own existence, as of the existence of the pain I feel: or, if I know *I doubt*, I have as certain perception of the existence of the thing doubting, as of that thought which I call *doubt*. Experience then convinces us, that *we have an intuitive knowledge of our own existence*, and an internal infallible perception that we are. In every act of sensation, reasoning or thinking, we are conscious to ourselves of our own being, and, in this matter, come not short of the highest degree of *certainty*."—

"In the next place, man knows by an intuitive certainty, that bare *nothing can no more produce any real being, than it can be equal to two right angles*. If a man knows not that non-entity, or the absence of all being, cannot be equal to two right angles, it is impossible he should know any demonstration in Euclid. If, therefore, we know there is some real being, and that non-entity cannot produce any real being, it is an evident demonstration, that from eternity there has been something; since what was not from eternity, had a beginning, and what had a beginning, must be produced by something else.

Next, it is evident, that what had its being and beginning from another, must also have all that which is in, and belongs to its being from another too. All the powers it has must be owing to, and received from the same source. This eternal source, then, of all being, must also be the source and original of all power; and so *this eternal Being must be also the most powerful*.

Again, a man finds in himself *perception and knowledge*. We have then got one step farther; and we are certain now, that there is not only some being, but some knowing intelligent being in the world.

There was a time, then, when there was no knowing being, and when knowledge began to be; or else there has been also a *knowing being from eternity*. If it be said, there was a time when no being had any knowledge, when that eternal Being was void of all understanding: I reply, that then it was impossible there should ever have been any knowledge; it being as impossible that things wholly void of knowledge, and operating blindly, and without any perception, should produce a knowing being, as it is impossible that a triangle should make itself three angles bigger than two right ones. For it is as repugnant to the *idea* of senseless matter, that it should put into itself sense, perception and knowledge, as it is repugnant to the *idea* of a triangle, that it should put into itself greater angles than two right ones.

Thus, from the consideration of ourselves, and what we infallibly find in our own constitutions, our reason leads us to the knowledge of this certain and evident truth, that *there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing being*; which whether any one will please to call *God*, it matters not. The thing is evident, and

exists ; it acts as a creator before it exists as a creature ; and it must be, in the same respect, both a cause and an effect, or it must be, and not be, at the same time, than which nothing can be more absurd ; therefore creatures were made by another, upon which account we call them creatures.

3. These creatures could not make one another ; for to create something out of nothing, or out of matter altogether unfit to be made what is produced out of it, is to act above the natural powers of the creature, and contrary to the fixed laws of nature ; and therefore is too great a work for a creature, who can do nothing but in a natural way, even as an artificer, though he can build an house with fit materials, yet he cannot produce the matter out of which he builds it ; nor can he build it of matter unfit for his purpose, as water, fire, air, &c. All creatures act within their own sphere, that is, in a natural way : but creation is a supernatural work, and too great for a creature to perform ; therefore creatures cannot be supposed to have made one another.

4. If it was supposed possible for one creature to make another, then superiors must have made inferiors ; and so man, or some other intelligent creature, must have made the world : but where is the creature that ever pretended to this power or wisdom, so as to be called *the Creator of the ends of the earth*.

5. If any creature could make itself, or other creatures of the same species, why did he not preserve himself ; for he that can give being to himself, can certainly continue himself in being ? or why did he not make himself more perfect ? Why did he make himself, and other creatures of the same species, in such a condition, that they are always indigent, or stand in need of support from other creatures.

from this *idea* duly considered, will easily be deduced all those other attributes, which we ought to ascribe to this eternal Being. If, nevertheless, any one should be found so senselessly arrogant, as to suppose man alone knowing and wise, but yet the product of mere ignorance and chance ; and that all the rest of the universe acted only by that blind hap-hazard : I shall leave with him that very rational and emphatical rebuke of *Tully*, *l. 2. de leg.* to be considered at his leisure. "What can be more sillily arrogant and misbecoming than for a man to think that he has a mind and understanding in him, but yet in all the universe beside there is no such thing ? Or that those things, which with the utmost stretch of his reason he can scarce comprehend, should be moved and managed without any reason at all ?" *Quid est enim verius, quam neminem esse oportere tam stultè arrogantem, ut in se mentem et rationem putet inesse, in cælo mundoque non putet ? Aut ea quæ vix summa ingenii ratione comprehendat, nulla ratione moveri putet ?*

From what has been said, it is plain to me, we have a more certain knowledge of the existence of a God, than of any thing our senses have not immediately discovered to us. Nay, I presume I may say, that we more certainly know that there is a God than that there is any thing else without us. When I say we *know*, I mean there is such a knowledge within our reach, which we cannot miss, if we will but apply our minds to the ; as we do to several other inquiries."

Or farther, supposing the creature made himself, and all other things, how comes it to pass that no one knows much of himself comparatively, or other things? Does not he that makes things understand them? therefore man could not make himself, or other creatures.

6. It follows therefore from hence, that there must be a God, who is the first cause of all things, necessarily existing, and not depending on the will of another, and by whose power all things exist; *Of him, and through him, and to him are all things*, Rom. xi. 36. *In him we live, and move, and have our being*, Acts xvii. 28.

Thus much concerning the more general method of reasoning, whereby the light of nature evinces the being of a God; we proceed,

II. To consider more particularly how the being of God may be evinced from his works. The cause is known by its effects; since therefore, as was but now observed, creatures could not produce themselves, they must be created by one who is not a creature.

Now, if there be no medium between God and the creature, or between infinite and finite, between a self-existent or underrived, and a derived being; and if all creatures exist, as has been shewn, by the will and power of their Creator, and so are finite and dependent; then it follows, that there is one from whom they derived their being, and on whom they depend for all things; that is, God. This is usually illustrated by this similitude. Suppose we were cast on an unknown island, and there saw houses built, but no men to inhabit them, should we not conclude there had been some there that built them? Could the stones and timber put themselves into that form in which they are? Or could the beasts of the field build them, that are without understanding? Or when we see a curious piece of workmanship, as a watch, or a clock, perform all its motions in a regular way, can we think the wheels came together by chance? (e) should we not conclude that it was made by one

(e) "In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer, that, for any thing I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever; nor would it, perhaps, be very easy to shew the absurdity of this answer. But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be enquired how the watch happened to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given, that, for any thing I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet, why should not this answer serve for the watch, as well as for the stone? Why is it not as admissible in the second case, as in the first? For this reason, and for no other, viz. that, when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive (what we could not discover in the stone) that its several parts are framed, and put together for a purpose, e. g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day; that, if the several parts had been differently shaped from what they are, of a different size from what they

of sufficient skill to frame and put them together in that order, and give motion to them? *Shall the clay say to him that fashion-*

are, or placed after any other manner, or in any other order, than that in which they are placed, either no motion at all would have been carried on in the machine, or none which would have answered the use, that is now served by it. To reckon up a few of the plainest of these parts, and of their offices, all tending to one result: We see a cylindrical box, containing a coiled elastic spring, which, by its endeavour to relax itself, turns round the box. We next observe a flexible chain (artificially wrought for the sake of flexure) communicating the action of the spring from the box to the fusee. We then find a series of wheels, the teeth of which catch in, and apply to, each other, conducting the motion from the fusee to the balance, and from the balance to the pointer; and at the same time, by the size and shape of those wheels, so regulating that motion, as to terminate in causing an index, by an equable and measured progression, to pass over a given space in a given time. We take notice that the wheels are made of brass, in order to keep them from rust; the springs of steel, no other metal being so elastic; that over the face of the watch there is placed a glass, a material employed in no other part of the work, but, in the room of which, if there had been any other than a transparent substance, the hour could not be seen without opening the case. This mechanism being observed (it requires indeed an examination of the instrument, and perhaps some previous knowledge of the subject, to perceive and understand it; but being once, as we have said, observed and understood,) the inference, we think, is inevitable; that the watch must have had a maker; that there must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer, or artificers who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer; who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.

I. Nor would it, I apprehend, weaken the conclusion that we had never seen a watch made; that we had never known an artist capable of making one; that we were altogether incapable of executing such a piece of workmanship ourselves, or of understanding in what manner it was performed: all this being no more than what is true of some exquisite remains of some ancient art, of some lost arts, and, to the generality of mankind, of the more curious productions of modern manufacture. Does one man in a million know how oval frames are turned? Ignorance of this kind exalts our opinion of the unseen and unknown artist's skill, if he be unseen and unknown, but raises no doubts in our minds of the existence and agency of such an artist, at some former time, and in some place or other. Nor can I perceive that it varies at all, the inference, whether the question arise concerning a human agent, or concerning an agent of a different species, or an agent possessing, in some respects, a different nature.

II. Neither, secondly, would it invalidate our conclusion, that the watch sometimes went wrong, or that it seldom went exactly right. The purpose of the machinery, the design, and the designer, might be evident, and in the case supposed would be evident, in whatever way we accounted for the irregularity of the movement, or whether we could account for it or not. It is not necessary that a machine be perfect, in order to shew with what design it was made: still less necessary, where the only question is, whether it were made with any design at all.

III. Nor, thirdly, would it bring any uncertainty into the argument, if there were a few parts of the watch, concerning which we could not discover, or had not yet discovered, in what manner they conduced to the general effect; or even some parts, concerning which we could not ascertain, whether they conduced to that effect in any manner whatever. For, as to the first branch of the case; if, by the loss, or disorder, or decay of the parts in question, the movement of the watch were found in fact to be stopped, or disturbed or retarded, no doubt would remain in our minds as to the utility or intention of these parts, although we should be unable to investigate the manner according to which, or the connection by which, the ultimate effect depended upon their action or assistance: and the more complex is the machine, the more likely is this obscurity to arise. Then, as to the second thing supposed, namely, that there were parts which might be

ed it, What makest thou, or thy work, He hath no hands? Isa. xlv. 9.

spared without prejudice to the movement of the watch, and that we had proved this by experiment; these superfluous parts, even if we were completely assured that they were such, would not vacate the reasoning which we had instituted concerning other parts. The indication of contrivance remained, with respect to them, nearly as it was before.

IV. Nor, fourthly, would any man in his senses think the existence of the watch, with its various machinery, accounted for, by being told that it was one out of possible combinations of material forms; that whatever he had found in the place where he found the watch, must have contained some internal configuration or other; and that this configuration might be the structure now exhibited, viz. of the works of a watch, as well as of a different structure.

V. Nor, fifthly, would it yield his enquiry more satisfaction to be answered, that there existed in things a principle of order, which had disposed the parts of the watch into their present form and situation. He never knew a watch made by the principle of order; nor can he even form to himself an idea of what is meant by a principle of order, distinct from the intelligence of the watch-maker.

VI. Sixthly, he would be surprised to hear, that the mechanism of the watch was no proof of contrivance, only a motive to induce the mind to think so:

VII. And not less surprised to be informed, that the watch in his hand was nothing more than the result of the laws of *metallic* nature. It is a perversion of language to assign any law, as the efficient, operative, cause of any thing. A law presupposes an agent; for it is only the mode, according to which an agent proceeds: it implies a power; for it is the order, according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the *law* does nothing; is nothing. The expression, "the law of metallic nature," may sound strange and harsh to a philosophic ear; but it seems quite as justifiable as some others which are more familiar to him, such as "the law of vegetable nature," "the law of animal nature," or indeed as "the law of nature," in general, when assigned as the cause of phenomena, in exclusion of agency and power; or when it is substituted into the place of these.

VIII. Neither, lastly, would our observer be driven out of his conclusion, or from his confidence in its truth, by being told that he knew nothing at all about the matter. He knows enough for his argument. He knows the utility of the end: he knows the subserviency and adaptation of the means to the end. These points being known, his ignorance of other points, his doubts concerning other points, affect not the certainty of his reasoning. The consciousness of knowing little, need not beget a distrust of that which he does know."—

Suppose, in the next place, that the person who found the watch, should, after some time, discover, that, in addition to all the properties which he had hitherto observed in it, it possessed the unexpected property of producing, in the course of its movement, another watch like itself; (the thing is conceivable;) that it contained within it a mechanism, a system of parts, a mould for instance, or a complex adjustment of laths, files, and other tools, evidently and separately calculated for this purpose; let us enquire, what effect ought such a discovery to have upon his former conclusion!

I. The first effect would be to increase his admiration of the contrivance, and his conviction of the consummate skill of the contriver. Whether he regarded the object of the contrivance, the distinct apparatus, the intricate, yet in many parts intelligible, mechanism by which it was carried on, he would perceive, in this new observation, nothing but an additional reason for doing what he had already done; for referring the construction of the watch to design, and to supreme art. If that construction *without* this property, or, which is the same thing, before this property had been noticed, proved intention and art to have been employed about it; still more strong would the proof appear, when he came to the knowledge of this further property, the crown and perfection of all the rest.

II. He would reflect, that though the watch before him were, *in some sense*;

This leads us to consider the wisdom of God in his works, which demonstrates his being. This the Psalmist mentions

the maker of the watch, which was fabricated in the course of its movements, yet it was in a very different sense from that, in which a carpenter, for instance, is the maker of a chair; the author of its contrivance, the cause of the relation of its parts to their use. With respect to these, the first watch was no cause at all to the second: in no such sense as this was it the author of the constitution and order, either of the parts which the new watch contained, or of the parts by the aid and instrumentality of which it was produced. We might possibly say, but with great latitude of expression, that a stream of water ground corn: but no latitude of expression would allow us to say, no stretch of conjecture could lead us to think, that the stream of water built the mill, though it were too ancient for us to know who the builder was. What the stream of water does in the affair, is neither more nor less than this: by the application of an unintelligent impulse to a mechanism previously arranged, arranged independently of it, and arranged by intelligence, an effect is produced, viz. the corn is ground. But the effect results from the arrangement. The force of the stream cannot be said to be the cause or author of the effect, still less of the arrangement. Understanding and plan in the formation of the mill were not the less necessary, for any share which the water has in grinding the corn: yet is this share the same, as that which the watch would have contributed to the production of the new watch, upon the supposition assumed in the last section. Therefore,

III. Though it be now no longer probable, that the individual watch which our observer had found, was made immediately by the hand of an artificer, yet doth not this alteration in any wise affect the inference that an artificer had been originally employed and concerned in the production. The argument from design remains as it was. Marks of design and contrivance are no more accounted for now, than they were before. In the same thing, we may ask for the cause of different properties. We may ask for the cause of the colour of a body, of its hardness, of its heat; and these causes may be all different. We are now asking for the cause of that subserviency to an use, that relation to an end, which we have remarked in the watch before us. No answer is given to this question by telling us that a preceding watch produced it. There cannot be design without a designer; contrivance without a contriver; order without choice; arrangement, without any thing capable of arranging; subserviency and relation to a purpose, without that which could intend a purpose; means suitable to an end, and executing their office in accomplishing that end, without the end ever having been contemplated, or the means accommodated to it. Arrangement, disposition of parts, subserviency of means to an end, relation of instruments to an use, imply the presence of intelligence and mind. No one, therefore, can rationally believe, that the insensible, inanimate watch, from which the watch before us issued, was the proper cause of the mechanism we so much admire in it; could be truly said to have constructed the instrument, disposed its parts, assigned their office, determined their order, action, and mutual dependency, combined their several motions into one result, and that also a result connected with the utilities of other beings. All these properties therefore, are as much unaccounted for as they were before.

IV. Nor is any thing gained by running the difficulty further back, i. e. by supposing the watch before us to have been produced by another watch, that from a former, and so on indefinitely. Our going back ever so far brings us no nearer to the least degree of satisfaction upon the subject. Contrivance is still unaccounted for. We still want a contriver. A designing mind is neither supplied by this supposition, nor dispensed with. If the difficulty were diminished the further we went back, by going back indefinitely we might exhaust it. And this is the only case to which this sort of reasoning applies. Where there is a tendency, or, as we increase the number of terms, a continual approach towards a limit, *there*, by supposing the number of terms to be what is called infinite, we may conceive the limit to be attained: but where there is no such tendency or approach,

with admiration, Psal. civ. 24. *O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all!* When we see let-

nothing is effected by lengthening the series. There is no difference as to the point in question, (whatever there may be as to many points) between one series and another; between a series which is finite, and a series which is infinite. A chain composed of an infinite number of links, can no more support itself, than a chain composed of a finite number of links. And of this we are assured, (though we never *can* have tried the experiment) because, by increasing the number of links, from ten for instance to a hundred, from a hundred to a thousand, &c. we make not the smallest approach, we observe not the smallest tendency, towards self-support. There is no difference in this respect (yet there may be a great difference in several respects) between a chain of a greater or less length, between one chain and another, between one that is finite and one that is indefinite. This very much resembles the ease before us. The machine, which we are inspecting, demonstrates, by its construction, contrivance and design. Contrivance must have had a contriver; design, a designer; whether the machine immediately proceeded from another machine, or not. That circumstance alters not the case. That other machine may, in like manner, have proceeded from a former machine: nor does that alter the case: contrivance must have had a contriver. That former one from one preceding it: no alteration still: a contriver is still necessary. No tendency is perceived, no approach towards a diminution of this necessity. It is the same with any and every succession of these machines; a succession of ten, of a hundred, of a thousand; with one series as with another; a series which is finite, as with a series which is infinite. In whatever other respects they may differ, in this they do not. In all equally, contrivance and design are unaccounted for.

The question is not simply, How came the first watch into existence? which question, it may be pretended, is done away by supposing the series of watches thus produced from one another to have been infinite, and consequently to have had no such *first*, for which it was necessary to provide a cause. This, perhaps, would have been nearly the state of the question, if nothing had been before us but an unorganized unmechanised substance, without mark or indication of contrivance. It might be difficult to shew that such substance could not have existed from eternity, either in succession (if it were possible, which I think it is not, for unorganized bodies to spring from one another,) or by individual perpetuity. But that is not the question now. To suppose it to be so, is to suppose that it made no difference whether we had found a watch or a stone. As it is, the metaphysics of that question have no place; for, in the watch which we are examining, are seen contrivance, design; an end, a purpose; means for the end, adaptation to the purpose. And the question, which irresistibly presses upon our thoughts, is, whence this contrivance and design? The thing required is the intending mind, the adapting hand, the intelligence by which that hand was directed. This question, this demand, is not shaken off, by increasing a number or succession of substances, destitute of these properties; nor the more, by increasing that number to infinity. If it be said, that, upon the supposition of one watch being produced from another in the course of that other's movements, and by means of the mechanism within it, we have a cause for the watch in my hand, viz. the watch from which it proceeded, I deny, that for the design, the contrivance, the suitableness of means to an end, the adaptation of instruments to an use (all which we discover in the watch,) we have any cause whatever. It is in vain, therefore to assign a series of such causes, or to allege that a series may be carried back to infinity; for I do not admit that we have yet any cause at all of the phenomena, still less any series of causes either finite or infinite. Here is contrivance, but no contriver; proofs of design, but no designer.

V. Our observer would further also reflect, that the maker of the watch before him, was, in truth and reality, the maker of every watch produced from it; there being no difference (except that the latter manifests a more exquisite skill) between the making of another watch with his own hands by the mediation of files, laths, chisels, &c. and the disposing, fixing, and inserting, of these instra-

ters put together, which make words or sentences, and these a book, containing the greatest sense, and the ideas joined together in the most beautiful order, should we not conclude that some man, equal to this work, had put them together? Even so the wisdom that shines forth in all the parts of the creation, proves that there is a God. This appears,

In the exact harmony and subserviency of one part of the creation to another, Hos. ii. 21, 22. *I will hear, saith the Lord; I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth. And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel.* One part of this frame of nature ministers to another. Thus the sun, and other heavenly bodies, give light to the world, which would be no better than a cave or dungeon without them; and afford life and influence to plants and trees; and maintain the life of all living creatures. The clouds send down rain that moistens the earth, and makes it fruitful; and this is not poured forth by whole oceans together, but by small drops, Job xxxvi. 27. *He maketh small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof;* and these are not perpetual, for that would tend to its destruction. The moist places of the earth, and the sea supply the clouds with water, that they may have a sufficient store to return again to it. The air fans and refreshes the earth, and is necessary for the growth of all things, and the maintaining the life and health of those that dwell therein. This subserviency of one thing to another is without their own design or contrivance; for they are not endowed with understanding or will; neither doth this depend on the will of the creature. The sun doth not enlighten or give warmth to the world, or the clouds or air refresh the earth at our pleasure; and therefore all this is subject to the order and direction of one who is the God of nature, who commands the sun, and it shineth, and the clouds to give rain at his

ments, or of others equivalent to them, in the body of the watch already made, in such a manner, as to form a new watch in the course of the movements which he had given to the old one. It is only working by one set of tools, instead of another.

The conclusion which the *first* examination of the watch, of its works, construction, and movement suggested, was, that it must have had, for the cause and author of that construction, an artificer, who understood its mechanism, and designed its use. This conclusion is invincible. A *second* examination presents us with a new discovery. The watch is found in the course of its movement to produce another watch similar to itself: and not only so, but we perceive in it a system of organization, separately calculated for that purpose. What effect would this discovery have, or ought it to have, upon our former inference? What, as hath already been said, but to increase, beyond measure, our admiration of the skill, which had been employed in the formation of such a machine? Or shall it, instead of this, all at once turn us round to an opposite conclusion, viz. that no art or skill whatever has been concerned in the business, although all other evidences of art and skill remain as they were, and this last and supreme piece of art be now added to the rest? Can this be maintained without absurdity? Yet this is atheism."

PALEY.

pleasure. It is he that gave the regular motion to the heavenly bodies, and, by his wisdom, fixed and continues the various seasons of the year, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, day and night, and every thing that tends to the beauty and harmony of nature; therefore these curious, and never-enough to be admired, works, plainly declare that there is a God. This is described with unparalleled elegance of style, Job xxxvii. 9, &c. *Out of the south cometh the whirlwind; and cold out of the north. By the breath of God, frost is given; and the breadth of the waters is straitened. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud; he scattereth his bright cloud. Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? How thy garments are warm when he quieteth the earth by the south-wind? (g)*

(g) "The works of nature want only to be contemplated. When contemplated, they have every thing in them which can astonish by their greatness; for, of the vast scale of operation, through which our discoveries carry us, at one end we see an intelligent Power arranging planetary systems, fixing, for instance, the trajectory of *Saturn*, or constructing a ring of a hundred thousand miles diameter, to surround his body, and be suspended like a magnificent arch over the heads of his inhabitants; and, at the other, bending a hooked tooth, concerting and providing an appropriate mechanism, for the clasping and reclasping of the filaments of the feather of a humming-bird. We have proof, not only of both these works proceeding from an intelligent agent, but of their proceeding from the same agent: for, in the first place, we can trace an identity of plan, a connexion of system, from *Saturn* to our own globe; and when arrived upon our own globe, we can, in the second place, pursue the connexion through all the organized, especially the animated, bodies, which it supports. We can observe marks of a common relation, as well to one another, as to the elements of which their habitation is composed. Therefore one mind hath planned, or at least hath prescribed a general plan for, all these productions. One being has been concerned in all.

Under this stupendous Being we live. Our happiness, our existence, is in his hands. All we expect must come from him. Nor ought we to feel our situation insecure. In every nature, and in every portion of nature, which we can descry, we find attention bestowed upon even the minutest parts. The hinges in the wings of an *earwig*, and the joints of its antennæ, are as highly wrought, as if the Creator had had nothing else to finish. We see no signs of diminution of care by multiplicity of objects, or of distraction of thought by variety. We have no reason to fear therefore, our being forgotten, or overlooked, or neglected.

The existence and character of the Deity, is, in every view, the most interesting of all human speculations. In none, however, is it more so, than as it facilitates the belief of the fundamental articles of *Revelation*. It is a step to have it proved, that there must be something in the world more than what we see. It is a further step to know, that, amongst the invisible things of nature, there must be an intelligent mind, concerned in its production, order, and support. These points being assured to us by Natural Theology, we may well leave to Revelation the disclosure of many particulars, which our researches cannot reach, respecting either the nature of this Being as the original cause of all things, or his character and designs as a moral governor; and not only so, but the more full confirmation of other particulars, of which, though they do not lie altogether beyond our reasonings and our probabilities, the certainty is by no means equal to the importance. The true Theist will be the first to listen to any credible communication of divine knowledge. Nothing which he has learnt from Natural Theology, will diminish his desire of further instruction, or his disposition to receive it with humility and thankfulness. He wishes for light: he rejoices in

But that we may farther evince this truth, we shall lay down the following arguments to prove the being of a God, which appears,

light. His inward veneration of this great Being, will incline him to attend with the utmost seriousness, not only to all that can be discovered concerning him by researches into nature, but to all that is taught by a revelation, which gives reasonable proof of having proceeded from him.

But, above every other article of revealed religion, does the anterior belief of a Deity, bear with the strongest force, upon that grand point, which gives indeed interest and importance to all the rest—the resurrection of the human dead. The thing might appear hopeless, did we not see a power under the guidance of an intelligent will, and a power penetrating the inmost recesses of all substance. I am far from justifying the opinion of those, who “thought it a thing incredible that God should raise the dead;” but I admit that it is first necessary to be persuaded, that there *is* a God to do so. This being thoroughly settled in our minds, there seems to be nothing in this process (concealed and mysterious as we confess it to be,) which need to shock our belief. They who have taken up the opinion, that the acts of the human mind depend upon *organization*, that the mind itself indeed consists in organization, are supposed to find a greater difficulty than others do, in admitting a transition by death to a new state of sentient existence, because the old organization is apparently dissolved. But I do not see that any impracticability need be apprehended even by these; or that the change, even upon their hypothesis, is far removed from the analogy of some other operations, which we know with certainty that the deity is carrying on. In the ordinary derivation of plants and animals from one another, a particle, in many cases, minuter than all assignable, all conceivable dimension; an aura, an effluvium, an infinitesimal; determines the organization of a future body: does no less than fix, whether that which is about to be produced, shall be a vegetable, a merely sentient, or a rational being; an oak, a frog, or a philosopher; makes all these differences; gives to the future body its qualities, and nature, and species. And this particle, from which springs, and by which is determined a whole future nature, itself proceeds from, and owes its constitution to, a prior body: nevertheless, which is seen in plants most decisively, the incepted organization, though formed within, and through, and by a preceding organization, is not corrupted by its corruption, or destroyed by its dissolution; but, on the contrary, is sometimes extricated and developed by those very causes; survives and comes into action, when the purpose, for which it was prepared, requires its use.—Now an œconomy which nature has adopted, when the purpose was to transfer an organization from one individual to another, may have something analogous to it, when the purpose is to transmit an organization from one state of being to another state: and they who found thought in organization, may see something in this analogy applicable to their difficulties; for, whatever can transmit a similarity of organization will answer their purpose, because, according even to their own theory, it may be the vehicle of consciousness, and because consciousness, without doubt, carries identity and individuality along with it through all changes of form or of visible qualities. In the most general case, that, as we have said, of the derivation of plants and animals from one another, the latent organization is either itself similar to the old organization, or has the power of communicating to new matter the old organic form. But it is not restricted to this rule. There are other cases, especially in the progress of insect life, in which the dormant organization does not much resemble that which incloses it, and still less suits with the situation in which the inclosing body is placed, but suits with a different situation to which it is destined. In the larva of the libellula, which lives constantly, and has still long to live, under water, are described the wings of a fly, which two years afterwards is to mount into the air. Is there nothing in this analogy? It serves at least to shew, that, even in the observable course of nature, organizations are formed one beneath another; and, amongst a thousand other instances, it shews completely,

I. From those creatures that are endowed with a lower kind of life than man.

1. No creature can produce a fly or the least insect, but according to the fixed laws of nature; and that which we call life, or the principle of their respective motion and actions, none but a God can give; so that his being is plainly proved, from all living creatures below man, which are subservient, many of them, to one another, and all to man, and that not by our ordering; therefore this is done by the hand of him who is the God of nature.

2. The natural instinct of living creatures, every one acting according to its kind; and some of the smallest creatures producing things that no human art can imitate, plainly proves a God. Thus the bird in building its nest; the spider in framing its web; the bee in providing store-houses for its honey; and the ant in those provisions which it lays up in summer against

that the Deity can mould and fashion the parts of material nature, so as to fulfil any purpose whatever which he is pleased to appoint.

They who refer the operations of mind to a substance totally and essentially different from matter, as, most certainly, these operations, though affected by material causes, hold very little affinity to any properties of matter with which we are acquainted, adopt, perhaps, a juster reasoning and a better philosophy; and by these the considerations above suggested are not wanted, at least in the same degree. But to such as find, which some persons do find, an insuperable difficulty in shaking off an adherence to those analogies, which the corporeal world is continually suggesting to their thoughts; to such, I say, every consideration will be a relief, which manifests the extent of that intelligent power which is acting in nature, the fruitfulness of its resources, the variety, and aptness, and success of its means; most especially every consideration, which tends to shew, that, in the translation of a conscious existence, there is not, even in their own way of regarding it, any thing greatly beyond, or totally unlike, what takes place in such parts (probably small parts) of the order of nature, as are accessible to our observation.

Again; if there be those who think, that the contractedness and debility of the human faculties in our present state, seem ill to accord with the high destinies which the expectations of religion point out to us, I would only ask them, whether any one, who saw a child two hours after its birth, could suppose that it would ever come to understand *fluxions*;* or who then shall say, what further amplification of intellectual powers, what accession of knowledge, what advance and improvement, the rational faculty, be its constitution what it will, may not admit of, when placed amidst new objects, and endowed with a sensorium, adapted, as it undoubtedly will be, and as our present senses are, to the perception of those substances, and of those properties of things, with which our concern may lie.

Upon the whole; in every thing which respects this awful, but, as we trust, glorious change, we have a wise and powerful Being, (the author, in nature, of infinitely various expedients for infinitely various ends,) upon whom to rely for the choice and appointment of means, adequate to the execution of any plan which his goodness or his justice may have formed, for the moral and accountable part of his terrestrial creation. That great office rests with him: be it ours to hope and prepare; under a firm and settled persuasion, that, living and dying, we are his; that life is passed in his constant presence, that death resigns us to his merciful disposal."

PALEY.

* See Search's *Light of Nature*, *passim*.

winter; the silk-worm in providing cloathing for man, and in being transformed into various shapes, and many others of smaller sort of creatures, that act in a wonderful way, without the exercise of reason or design, these all prove the being of God.

3. The greater, fiercer, or more formidable sort of living creatures, as the lion, tiger, and other beasts of prey, are so ordered, that they fly from man, whom they could easily devour, and avoid those cities and places where men inhabit, that so we may dwell safely. They are not chased into the woods by us; but these are allotted, as the places of their residence by the God of nature.

4. Those living creatures that are most useful to men, and so subject to them, *viz.* the horse, camel, and many others, these know not their own strength, or power, to resist or rebel against them; which is ordered by infinite wisdom: and there are many other instances of the like nature, all which are very strong arguments to prove that there is a God, whose glory shines forth in all his works.

II. From the structure of human bodies, in which respect we are said to be fearfully and wonderfully made; this, if it be abstractedly considered without regard to the fixed course and laws of nature, exceeds the power and skill of all creatures, and can be no other than the workmanship of a God, and therefore is a demonstration of his being and perfections. No man ever pretended to give a specimen of his skill therein. The finest statuaries or limners, who have imitated or given a picture, or representation of human bodies, have not pretended to give life or motion to them; herein their skill is baffled. The wisest men in the world have confessed their ignorance of the way and manner of the formation of human bodies; how they are framed in their first rudiments, preserved and grow to perfection in the womb, and how they are increased, nourished, and continued in their health, strength, and vigour for many years. This has made the inquiries of the most thoughtful men issue in admiration: herein we plainly see the power and wisdom of God, to which alone it is owing.

Here it may be observed, that there are several things very wonderful in the structure of human bodies, which farther evince this truth. As,

1. The organs of sense and speech.

2. The circulation of the blood, and the natural heat which is preserved for many years together, of which there is no instance but in living creatures. Even fire will consume and waste itself by degrees, and all things, which have only acquired heat, will soon grow cold; but the natural heat of the body of man is preserved in it as long as life is continued,

3. The continual supply of animal spirits, and their subserviency to sense and motion. (*h*)

4. The nerves, which, though small as threads, remain unbroken, though every one of these small fibres performs its office, and tends to convey strength and motion to the body.

5. The situation of the parts in their most proper place : the internal parts, which would be ruined and destroyed if exposed to the injuries that the external ones are : these are secured in proper inclosures, and so preserved, Job x. 11. *Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.*

6. All the parts of the body are so disposed, that they are fitted for their respective uses, as being situate in those places which render them most fit to perform their proper actions.

7. The differing features of different bodies, so that we scarce see persons in all respects alike, is wonderful, and the result of divine wisdom : for even this is necessary for society, and our performing the duties we owe to one another.

8. The union of this body with the soul, which is a spirit of a very different nature, can never be sufficiently admired or accounted for ; but gives us occasion herein to own a superior, infinitely wise being. Which leads us,

III. To consider how the being of God may be evinced from the nature of the soul of man. He is said, Zech. xii. 1. *To have formed the spirit of man within him.* And hereby his power and wisdom, and consequently his being, is declared. For,

1. The nature of a spiritual substance is much less known than that of bodies ; and therefore that which we cannot fully understand, we must admire.

If the wisdom and power of God is visible in the structure of our bodies, it is much more so in the formation of our souls ; and since we cannot fully describe what they are, and know little of them but by their effects, certainly we could not form them ; and therefore there is a God, who is the *Father of spirits.*

2. The powers and capacities of the soul are various, and very extensive.

(1.) It can frame ideas of things superior to its own nature, and can employ itself in contemplating and beholding the order, beauty, and connexion of all those things in the world, which are, as it were, a book, in which we may read the divine perfections, and improve them to the best purposes.

(2.) It takes in the vast compass of things past, which it can reflect on and remember, with satisfaction, or regret : and it can look forward to things to come, which it can expect, and accordingly conceive pleasure or uneasiness in the forethoughts thereof.

(A) The theory of a nervous fluid, or animal spirits, is generally abandoned.

(3.) It can chuse or embrace what is good, or fly from and reject what is evil and hurtful to it.

(4.) It is capable of moral government, of conducting itself according to the principles of reason, and certain rules enjoined it for the attaining the highest end.

(5.) It is capable of religion, and so can argue that there is a God, and give him the glory that is due to his name, and be happy in the enjoyment of him.

(6.) It is immortal, and therefore cannot be destroyed by any creature; for none but God has an absolute sovereignty over the spirits of men; *No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death*, Eccles. viii. 8.

IV. From the nature and office of conscience, which is that whereby the soul takes a view of itself, and its own actions, as good or evil; and considers itself as under a law to a superior being, from whom it expects rewards or punishments; and this evidently proves a God. For,

1. Conscience is oftentimes distressed or comforted by its reflection on those actions, which no man on earth can know: and therefore when it fears punishment for those crimes, which come not under the cognizance of human laws, the uneasiness that it finds in itself, and its dread of punishment, plainly discovers that it is apprehensive of a divine being, who has been offended, whose wrath and resentment it fears. All the endeavours that men can use to bribe, blind, or stupify their consciences, will not prevent these fears; but the sad apprehension of deserved punishment, from one whom they conceive to know all things, even the most secret crimes committed, this makes persons uneasy, whether they will or no. Whithersoever they fly, or what amusement soever they betake themselves to, conscience will still follow them with its accusations and dread of divine wrath: *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest*, Isa. lvii. 20. *A dreadful sound is in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him*, Job xv. 21. *Terrors take hold of him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east-wind carrieth him away, and he departeth; and as a storm hurleth him out of his place. For God shall cast upon him, and not spare; he would fain flee out of his hand*, Job xxvii. 20, 21, 22. *The wicked flee when no man pursueth*, Prov. xxviii. 1.

And this is universal, there are none but are, some time or other, liable to these fears, arising from self-reflection, and the dictates of conscience; the most advanced circumstances in the world will not fortify against, or deliver from them, Acts xxiv. 25. *As Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.* Even Pharaoh himself, the most hard-hearted sinner in the world, who would fain have forced

a belief upon himself that there is no God, and boldly said, *Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?* yet he could not ward off the conviction that there is a God, which his own conscience suggested. Therefore he was forced to say, *Exod. ix. 27. I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* And indeed all the pleasures that any can take in the world, who give themselves up to the most luxurious way of living, cannot prevent their trembling, when conscience suggests some things terrible to them for their sins. Thus Belshazzar, when in the midst of his jollity and drinking wine, having made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, when he saw the finger of a man's hand upon the wall, it is said, *Dan. v. 6. The king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him; so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.*

Thus concerning those dictates of conscience, which make men very uneasy, whereby wicked men are forced to own that there is a God, whether they will or no; we now proceed to consider good men, as having frequently such serenity of mind and peace of conscience, as affords them farther matter of conviction concerning this truth. It is, indeed, a privilege that they enjoy, who have the light of scripture revelation, and so it might have been considered under a following head; but since it is opposed to what was but now brought, as a proof of the being of a God, we may here observe, that some have that composure of mind, in believing and walking closely with God, as tends to confirm them yet more in this truth. For,

(1.) This composure of mind abides under all the troubles and disappointments they meet with in the world: those things which tend to disturb the peace of other men, do not so much affect them; *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord, Psal. cxii. 7.* And as this peace abides under all the troubles of life, so it does not leave them, but is sometimes more abundant, when they draw nigh to death.

(2.) It is a regular and orderly peace that they have, accompanied with grace, so that conscience is most quiet when the soul is most holy; which shews that there is a hand of God in working or speaking this peace, as designing thereby to encourage and own that grace which he has wrought in them; *Rom. x. 13. thus the God of hope is said to fill us with all joy and peace in believing.*

(3.) Let them labour never so much after it, they can never attain this peace, without a divine intimation, or God's speaking peace to their souls; therefore when he is pleased, for wise ends, to withdraw from them, they are destitute of it; so that God is hereby known by his works, or by those influences of his grace, whereby he gives peace to conscience.

V. The being of a God appears from those vast and boundless desires, which are implanted in the soul; so that it can take up its rest, and meet with full satisfaction, in nothing short of a being of infinite perfection: therefore there is such an one, which is God. This will farther appear if we consider,

1. We find, by experience, that though the soul, at present, be entertained, and meets with some satisfaction in creature-enjoyments, yet it still craves and desires more, of what kind soever they be; and the reason is, because they are not commensurate to its desires; *The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, Eccles. i. 8. That which is wanting cannot be numbered, ver. 15.*

2. We cannot rationally suppose that such boundless desires should be implanted in the soul, and yet that there should be nothing sufficient to satisfy them; for then the most excellent creature in this lower world would be, in some respects, more miserable than other creatures of a lower order, which obtain their ultimate desire. Thus the Psalmist, speaking of the brute creatures, says, *Psal. civ. 28. They are filled with good; that is, they have all that they crave.* Therefore,

3. There must be one that is infinitely good, who can satisfy these desires, considered in their utmost extent; and that is God, the fountain of all blessedness.

VI. The being of a God may be farther evinced, from the consent of all nations to this truth. Now that which all mankind agrees in, must be founded in the nature of man, and that which is so, is evident from the light of nature. It is true, there are many who have thus *known God, who have not worshipped and glorified him as God; but have been vain in their imaginations, and have changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, as the apostle says, Rom. i. 21, 25.* But it doth not follow from hence, that the heathen, who were guilty of idolatry, had no notion of a God in general, but rather the contrary; that there is something in the nature of man, which suggests, that they ought to worship some divine being, whom they could not, by the light of nature, sufficiently know, and therefore they did service to those who were by nature no gods; however, this proves that they were not wholly destitute of some ideas of a God, which therefore are common to all mankind. Now that all nations have had some discerning that there is a God, appears,

1. From the credit that is to be given to all ancient history; which sufficiently discovers that men, in all ages, have owned and worshipped something that they called a God, though they knew not the true God.

2. The heathen themselves, as may easily be understood

from their own writings, reckoned atheism a detestable crime, for this reason, because contrary to the light of nature; and therefore some of them have asserted, that there is no nation in the world so barbarous, and void of reason, as to have no notion of a God.

3. We may consider also, that no changes in the world, or in the circumstances of men, have wholly erased this principle: whatever changes there have been in the external modes of worship, or in those things which have been received by tradition, still this principle has remained unalterable, that there is a God. Therefore the being of a God may be proved by the consent of all nations.

Object. 1. But it is objected to this, that there have been some speculative atheists in the world. History gives us an account of this; and we are informed, that there are some whole countries in Africa and America, where there is no worship, and, as to what appears to us, no notion of a God. Therefore the being of a God cannot be proved by the consent of all nations.

Answer. 1. As to the first branch of this objection, that there have been some speculative atheists in the world; it is true, history furnishes us with instances of persons who have been deemed so, yet their number has been very inconsiderable; so that it will not follow from hence, that the idea of a God is not some way or other, impressed upon the heart of man. Might it not as well be said, that, because some few are born idiots, therefore reason is not natural to man, or universal? And it may be farther observed, that they who are branded with the character of atheists in ancient history, or such as appear to be atheists in our day by their conversation, are rather practical atheists than speculative. We do not deny, that many in all ages have, and now do, assert, and pretend to prove, that there is no God; but it is plain that they discover, at some times, such fear and distress of conscience, as is sufficient to disprove what they pretend to defend by arguments.

2. As to the second branch of the objection, that there are some parts of the world, where the people seem to be so stupid, as not to own or worship a God; this is hard to be proved; neither have any, that have asserted it, had that familiarity with them, as to be able to determine what their sentiments are about this matter.

But suppose it were true in fact, that some nations have no notion of a God or religion, nothing could be argued from it, but that such nations are barbarous and brutish, and though they have the principle of reason, do not act like reasonable creatures; and it is sufficient to our purpose to assert, that all men, acting like reasonable creatures, or who argue from those

principles of reason, that they are born with, may from thence conclude that there is a God.

Object. 2. It is farther objected by atheists against the being of God, and indeed against all religion, which is founded thereon, that both one and the other took its rise from human policy, that hereby the world, being amused with such-like speculations, might be restrained from those irregularities, which were inconsistent with the well-being of civil government; and that this was readily received, and propagated by tradition, and so by an implicit faith transmitted from one generation to another, among those who enquired not into the reason of what they believed; and that all this was supported by fear, which fixed their belief in this matter: so that human policy invented, tradition propagated, and fear rooted in the minds of men, what we call the natural ideas of God and religion.

Answ. This is a vile insinuation, but much in the mouths of atheists, without any shadow of reason, or attempt to prove it; and indeed it may be easily disproved. Therefore,

1. It appears that the notices we have of the being of a God, are not in the least founded in state policy, as a trick of men, to keep up some religion in the world, as necessary for the support of civil government. For,

If the notion of a God, and religion consequential hereon, were a contrivance of human policy, it would follow,

(1.) That it must be either the invention of one single man, or else it was the result of the contrivance of many convened together in a joint assembly of men, in confederacy, to impose on the world.

If it was the invention of one man, who was he? when and where did he live? What history gives the least account of him? or when was the world without all knowledge of a deity, and some religion, that we may know, at least, in what age this notion first sprang up, or was contrived? Or could the contrivance of one man be so universally complied with, and yet none pretend to know who he was, or when he lived? And if it was the contrivance of a number of men convened together, how was this possible, and yet the thing not be discovered? or how could the princes of the earth, who were at the head of this contrivance, have mutual intelligence, or be convened together? By whose authority did they meet? or what was the occasion thereof?

(2.) It is morally impossible, that such a piece of state policy should be made use of to deceive the world, and universally take place, and yet none in any age ever discover the imposture. The world could never be so imposed on, and yet not know by whom; the plot would certainly have been confessed by some who were in the secret.

(3.) If human policy had first invented this notion, certainly the princes and great men of the world, who had a hand in it, would have exempted themselves from any obligation to own a God, or any form of worship, whereby they acknowledge him their superior; for impostors generally design to beguile others, but to exempt themselves from what they bind them to. If any of the princes, or great men of the world, had invented this opinion, that there is a God, and that he is to be worshipped, their pride would have led them to persuade the world that they were gods themselves, and ought to be worshipped; they would never have included themselves in the obligation to own a subjection to God, if the notion of a God had, for political ends, been invented by them.

(4.) If the belief of a God was invented by human policy, how came it to be universally received by the world? It is certain, that it was not propagated by persecution; for though there has been persecution to enforce particular modes of worship, yet there never was any such method used to enforce the belief of a God, for that took place without any need thereof, it being instamped on the nature of man.

If therefore it was not propagated by force, neither was the belief of a God spread through the world by fraud, what are those arts which are pretended to have been used to propagate it? It took its rise, say they, from human policy; but the politicians not known, nor the arts they used to persuade the world that there is a God found out. How unreasonable therefore is this objection, or rather cavil, against a deity, when the atheists pretend that it was the result of human policy!

2. It appears that the belief of a God was not propagated in the world merely by tradition, and so received by implicit faith. For,

(1.) Those notions that have been received with implicit faith by tradition, from generation to generation, are not pretended to be proved by reason; but the belief of a God is founded on the highest reason; so that if no one in the world believed it besides myself, I am bound to believe it, or else must no longer lay claim to that reason which is natural to mankind, and should rather shew myself a brute than a man.

(2.) No schemes of religion, that were propagated merely by tradition, have been universally received; for tradition respects particular nations, or a particular set of men, who have propagated them. But as has been before considered the belief of a God has universally prevailed. Moreover, if the belief of a God was thus spread by tradition through the world, why was not the mode of worship settled, that so there might be but one religion in the world? The reason is, because their respective modes of worship were received, by the heathen, by tradition;

whereas the belief of a God was not so, but is rooted in the nature of man.

(3.) Whatever has been received only by tradition, has not continued in the world in all the turns, changes, and overthrow of particular nations, that received it ; but the belief of a God has continued in the world throughout all the ages and changes thereof : therefore it is not founded in tradition, but by the light of nature.

3. It appears, moreover, that the belief of a God could not take its first rise merely from fear of punishment, which men expected would be inflicted by him, though that be a strong argument to establish us in the belief thereof. For,

(1.) A liableness to punishment for crimes committed, supposes that there is a God, who is offended by sin, and from whom punishment is expected. Therefore as the effect cannot give being to the cause, so fear could not be the first ground and reason of the belief of a God. But,

(2.) The principal idea which mankind has of God, and that which is most natural to us, is, that of an infinitely amiable object, and so we conceive of him, as a being of infinite goodness, 1 John iv. 8. *God is love*. Thus we conceive of him, as the spring of all we enjoy and hope for ; and as for fear, that is only what arises in the breasts of wicked men, and is founded in the secondary ideas we have of him ; to wit, as taking vengeance, supposing he is offended. But they who do not offend him are not afraid of his vengeance ; and the sentiments of the worst of men are not to be our rule in judging concerning the being of a God. If these believe that there is a God, only because they fear him, others believe him to be the fountain of all blessedness, and as such they love him : therefore the ideas that men have of the being of a God, did not arise from fear.

VII. The being of a God, may be proved from the works of providence, whereby the world is governed, as well as preserved from returning to its first nothing. It is that which supplies all creatures with those things that their respective natures or necessities require : creatures could no more provide for themselves than they could make themselves ; therefore he that provides all things for them is God. All finite beings have their respective wants, whether they are sensible thereof or no ; and he must be all-sufficient that can fill or supply the necessities of all things, and such an one is God.

Thus the Psalmist speaks of this God, as supplying the necessities of *beasts and creeping things* ; who are said, *to wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season*, Psal. civ. 25, 27. Psal. cxlv. 15, 16.

In considering the providence of God, whereby his being is evinced, we may observe,

1. The extraordinary dispensations thereof, when things happen contrary to the common course, and fixed laws of nature, as when miracles have been wrought. These are undeniable proofs of the being of a God ; for herein a check or stop is put to the course of nature, the fixed order or laws thereof controuled or inverted ; and this none can do but he who is the God and author thereof. To deny that miracles have been wrought, is little better than scepticism ; since it hath been proved, by the most unquestionable testimony, contained not only in scripture, but in other writings, and is confessed, even by those who deny the principal things designed to be confirmed thereby. It is true, they were never wrought with an immediate design to prove that there is a God, since that is sufficiently demonstrated without them ; but in as much as they have been wrought with other views, the being of a God, whose immediate power has been exerted therein, appears beyond all contradiction.

2. This may be proved from the common dispensations of providence, which we daily behold and experience in the world.

These we call common, because they contain nothing miraculous, or contrary to the laws of nature : they are indeed wonderful, and have in them the traces and footsteps of infinite wisdom and sovereignty, and therefore prove that there is a God. For,

(1.) It cannot otherwise be accounted for, that so many things should befall us, or others in the world, that are altogether unlooked for. Thus one is cast down, and a blast thrown on all his endeavours, and another raised beyond his expectation, Psal. lxxv. 6, 7. *Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge ; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.*

(2.) The wisest and best concerted schemes of men are often baffled, and brought to nought, by some unexpected occurrence of providence, which argues a divine controul, as God says, 1 Cor. i. 19. *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.* And who is it that can turn the counsels of men into foolishness ; but an infinitely wise God ?

VIII. The being of a God may be proved by the foretelling future events, which have come to pass accordingly. For,

1. No creature can, by his own wisdom or sagacity, foretel future contingent events with a certain peremptory and infallible knowledge, and not by mere conjecture, Isa. xli. 24. *Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.* And the reason is plain, because our knowledge reaches no farther than to see effects, and judge of them in and by their causes. Thus we may easily foretel that necessary

causes will produce those effects that are agreeable to their nature : but when the effect is not necessary, but contingent, or purely arbitrary, then we have nothing to judge by, and therefore cannot come to the knowledge of things future, without an intimation given us thereof, by him who orders and disposes of all things, and that is God : and therefore to foretel things to come in this sense, is an evident proof of the being of God.

2. That there have been such predictions, and that the things foretold have come to pass accordingly, is very obvious from scripture : and if it be highly reasonable to believe that which is so well attested, as scripture is, we are bound from hence to conclude that there is a God.

But since we are arguing, at present, with those who deny a God, and consequently all scripture-revelation, we will only suppose that they whom we contend with will allow that some contingent events have been foretold ; and then it will follow, that this could be done no other way, but by some intimation from one that is omniscient, and that is God.

IX. The being of a God appears from his providing for the necessities of all living. Here let us consider,

1. That there is a natural instinct in all creatures, to take care of and provide for their young, before they are capable of providing for themselves. This is not only observable in mankind, as the prophet says, Isa. xlix. 15. *Can a woman forget her sucking child?* but also in the lower sort of creatures ; and among them in those who are naturally most fierce and savage, even they provide for their young with extraordinary diligence, and sometimes neglect, and almost starve, themselves to provide for them, and sometimes endanger their own lives to defend them.

2. They bring forth their young at the most convenient season of the year, when the grass begins to spring to supply them with food, and when the fowls of the air may get a livelihood by picking up the seed that is sown, and not covered by the earth, and when the trees begin to put forth their fruits to supply and feed them.

3. When they bring forth their young, there is a providence that provides the breast, the paps, the udder replenished with milk to feed them ; and there is a natural instinct in their young, without instruction, to desire to receive their nourishment that way.

4. Providence has furnished many of the beasts of the fields with weapons for their defence, and has given others a natural swiftness to fly from danger, and has provided holes and caverns in the earth to secure them from those that pursue them. And this cannot be the effect of mere chance, but it is an evident proof of the being of a God.

5. Providence is, in a peculiar manner, concerned for the supply of man, the noblest of all creatures in the world; *He giveth food to all flesh*, Psal. cxxxvi. 25. *Thou preservest man and beast*, Psal. xxxvi. 6. The earth is stored with variety of food; and whereas the poor, which is the greater part of mankind, cannot purchase those far-fetched, or costly dainties, which are the support of luxury, these may, by their industry, provide that food which is most common, and with which the earth is plentifully stored, whereby their lives and health are as well maintained, as the rich, who fare deliciously every day; and if their families increase, and a greater number is to be provided for, they generally have a supply in proportion to their increasing number.

6. Providence has stored the earth with various medicines, and given skill to men to use them as a relief against the many sicknesses that we are exposed to. All these things, and innumerable other instances that might be given, argue the care and bounty, and consequently prove the being of God, whose tender mercies are over all his works.

Here let us consider how the providence of God provides for the safety of man against those things that threaten his ruin.

The contrariety and opposition of things one to another would bring with them inevitable destruction, did not providence prevent it. As,

(1.) Those things, which are the greatest blessings of nature, would be destructive, were there not a providence: as the sun that enlightens and cherishes the world by its heat and influence, would be of no advantage, were it situate at too great a distance, and would burn it up if it were too near. So the sea would swallow up, and bring a deluge on the earth, if God had not, by his decree, fixed it within certain bounds, and made the shore an inclosure to it, and said hitherto shalt thou go and no farther.

(2.) The elements are advantageous to us, by their due temperature and mixture; but, were it otherwise, they would be destructive. So the various humours and jarring principles in our bodies would tend to destroy us, but that they are so mixed, as the God of nature, has tempered and disposed them, for the preservation of life and health.

(3.) The wild beasts would destroy us, had not God put the fear and dread of man into them, or, at least, caused them not to desire to be where men live; the forests and desert places, remote from cities, being allotted for them; and some creatures would be destructive to men, by the increase of their number, did they not devour one another. And insects would destroy the fruits of the earth, did not one season of the year help forward their destruction, as another tends to breed them.

(4.) Men by reason of their contrary tempers and interests, and that malice and envy, which is the consequence of our first apostacy, would destroy one another, if there were not a providence that restrains them, and gives a check to that wickedness that is natural to them, whereby the world is kept in a greater measure of peace than otherwise it would be; hence, the Psalmist says, *Psal. lxxvi. 10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

Object. It is objected, by atheists, against the being of a God, that the wicked are observed to prosper in the world, and the righteous are oppressed. This temptation the Psalmist was almost overcome by; as he says, *my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipt. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked, Psal. lxxiii. 2, 3.*

Ans. To this it may be answered,

1. That the idea of infinite sovereignty is included in that of a God; and this distribution of good and evil, if made at any time, without regard to the deserts of men, argues the sovereignty of providence; and therefore proves that there is a God, who gives no account of his matters, but has an absolute right to do what he will with his own.

2. There is a display of infinite wisdom in these dispensations of providence, in that the good man is made better by affliction, as hereby the kindness and care of providence appears; and the wicked man is forced to own, by his daily experience, that all the outward blessings he enjoys in this world, cannot make him easy or happy, or be a sufficient portion for him.

3. Outward prosperity doth not prevent or remove inward remorse, or terror of conscience, which embitters the joys of the wicked; *A dreadful sound is in his ears; in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him, Job xv. 21. Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness, Prov. xiv. 13.* And, on the other hand, outward trouble in the godly is not inconsistent with spiritual joy and inward peace, which is more than a balance for all the distresses they labour under; it is said, *The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy, Prov. xiv. 10. He shall be satisfied from himself, ver. 14.*

4. We are not to judge of things according to their present appearance, when we determine a person happy or miserable, but are to consider the end thereof, since every thing is well that ends well. Thus the Psalmist, who, as was before observed, was staggered at the prosperity of the wicked, had his faith established, by considering the different events of things. Concerning the wicked he says *Psal. lxxiii. 18, 19, 20. Thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down to destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment!*

they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh : so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image ; which is a very beautiful expression, representing all their happiness as imaginary, a vain dream, and such as is worthy to be contemned : but as for the righteous, he represents them as under the special protection and guidance of God here, and at last received to glory, and there enjoying him as their everlasting portion.

Having considered how the light of nature, and the works of God prove his being, we shall proceed to shew how this appears from scripture, as it is observed in this answer, that the word and Spirit only do sufficiently and effectually reveal him unto men for their salvation. The arguments hitherto laid down are directed more especially to those who are not convinced that there is a God, and consequently deny the divine original of scripture : but this argument supposes a conviction of both ; but yet it must not be supposed unnecessary, in as much as we are oftentimes exposed to many temptations, which tend to stagger our faith ; so that though we may not peremptorily deny that there is a God, yet we may desire some additional evidence of his being and perfections, beyond what the light of nature affords ; and this we have in scripture. Herein the glory of God shines forth with the greatest lustre, and we have an account of works more glorious than those of nature, included in the way of salvation by a Mediator. The light of nature, indeed, proves that there is a God ; but the word of God discovers him to us as a reconciled God and Father to all who believe, and is also attended with those internal convictions and evidences of this truth, which are the peculiar gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit ; and therefore it is well observed, that this knowledge only is sufficient and effectual to salvation ; which leads us to consider the insufficiency of the light of nature to answer this end. The knowledge of God, that may be attained thereby, is sufficient, indeed, in some measure, to restrain our corrupt passions, and it is conducive to the peace and welfare of civil societies : it affords some conviction of sin, and, in some respects, leaves men without excuse, and renders their condemnation less aggravated than that of those who sin against gospel light ; but yet it is insufficient to salvation, since it is a truth of universal extent, that *there is salvation in no other, but in Christ*, Acts iv. 12. and that it is *life eternal to know not only the true God, but Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent*, John xvii. 3. and this cannot be known by the light of nature, but by divine revelation ; which leads us to consider in what respect the knowledge of God, as it is contained in and derived from scripture, is sufficient to salvation.

Here we do not assert the sufficiency thereof, exclusive of the

aids of divine grace, so as to oppose the word to the Spirit: therefore it is said, in this answer, that the word and Spirit of God alone can reveal him to men sufficiently to their salvation. The word is a sufficient rule, so that we need no other to be a standard of our faith, and to direct us in the way to eternal life; but it is the Spirit that enables us to regard, understand, and apply this rule, and to walk according to it: these two are not to be separated; the Spirit doth not save any without the word, (a) and the word is not effectual to salvation, unless made so by the Spirit.

That nothing short of scripture-revelation is sufficient to salvation, will appear, if we compare it with the natural knowledge we have of God. For,

1. Though the light of nature shews us that there is a God, it doth not fully display his perfections, so as they are manifested in scripture, wherein God is beheld in the face of Christ.

2. Neither doth it discover any thing of the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the divine essence, who are equally the object of faith: nor doth it give us any intimation of Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, in whom we obtain forgiveness of sins: this is known only by scripture-revelation; therefore, since this is necessary to salvation, we are bound to conclude that the scripture alone is sufficient to lead to it.

3. The light of nature suggests, it is true, that God is to be worshipped; but there is an instituted way of worshipping him, which depends wholly on divine revelation; and since this is necessary, it proves the necessity of scripture.

4. There is no salvation without communion with God; or he that does not enjoy him here, shall not enjoy him for ever hereafter. Now the enjoyment of God is what we attain by faith, which is founded on scripture. Thus the apostle says, 1 John i. 3. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ.*

But since it is one thing to say, that the knowledge of God, which is derived from scripture, is sufficient to salvation in an objective way; that is, that it is a sufficient rule to lead us to salvation, and another thing to say, that it is made effectual thereunto: we are now to inquire when it is made so. In answer to which, let us consider, that the doctrines contained in scripture are made effectual to salvation; not by all the skill or wisdom of men representing them in their truest light, nor by all the power of reasoning, which we are capable of, without the aids of divine grace, but they are made effectual by the Spirit; and this he does,

(a) See this doubtful doctrine discussed post Quest. 60

(1.) By the internal illumination of the mind, giving a spiritual discerning of divine truth, which the natural man receiveth not, as the apostle says, 1 Cor. ii. 14. and it is called, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *a shining into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.*

(2.) By subduing the obstinate will of man, and so enabling it to yield to a ready, chearful, and universal obedience to the divine commands contained in scripture; and, in particular, inclining it to own Christ's authority, as king of saints; and to say, as converted Paul did, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6.

(3.) He works upon our affections, exciting in us holy desires after God and Christ, and a very high esteem and value for divine truth, and removes all those prejudices which are in our minds against it, opens and enlarges our hearts to receive the word, and comply with all the commands thereof, thus, Acts xvi. 14. *The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul.* So David prays, Psal. cxix. 18. compared with v. 5. *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*

QUEST. III. *What is the Word of God?*

ANSW. The holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience.

IN speaking to this answer, we shall consider the several names by which the scripture is set forth with the import thereof, and more particularly that by which it is most known; to wit, the Old and New Testament, and then speak of it as a rule of faith and obedience.

I. There are several names given to the word of God, in Psalm cxix. one of which is found in almost every verse thereof.

It is sometimes called his law, statutes, precepts, commandments, or ordinances, (a) to signify his authority and power to

(a) He who has created all things, with all their relations, and who is the universal Sovereign, has a right to the allegiance of his rational creatures, and they are under obligation to obey his laws, because it is his will that they should do so. He has connected our *interest* with our duty, as a motive to obedience, and because he is good; but if we should substitute utility for his authority, and conform to his laws, merely because they are advantageous, we rebel against our Sovereign, and renounce his authority, that we may pursue our own advantage. Virtue is amiable for its intrinsic rectitude. If we choose to practice it merely because *beautiful*, we please ourselves; and though the excellency of virtue is intended as a motive, and it is well for the man who is charmed by it, yet, if this be the only inducement, he has lost sight of the Divine authority, and his virtue is

demand obedience of his creatures which he does therein, and shews us in what particular instances, and how we are to yield obedience to it.

It is also called his judgments, implying that he is the great Judge of the world, and that he will deal with men in a judicial way, according to their works, as agreeable or disagreeable to this law of his, contained in his word; and, for this reason, it is also called his righteousness, because all that he commands in his word is holy and just, and his service highly reasonable.

It is also called God's testimonies, as containing the witness, evidence, or record, that he has given to his own perfections, whereby he has demonstrated them to the world. Thus we are said, 2 Cor. iii. 18. *To behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.*

It is also called his way, as containing a declaration of the glorious works that he has done, both of nature and grace; the various methods of his dealing with men, or the way that they should walk in, which leads to eternal life.

Moreover, it is called, Rom. iii. 2. *The oracles of God*, to denote that many things contained in it could not have been known by us till he was pleased to reveal them therein. Agree-

no obedience to the laws of God. If the obligation of virtue be founded solely on its utility, or beauty, we are at liberty to forego our advantage, or pleasure without guilt, and remorse of conscience will be unaccountable. It is also *fit and proper*, that we should practice virtue, but this is no more to be substituted for the Divine authority, than the other motives of advantage or pleasure. If it be objected, that the fitness of moral good is eternal, and a rule even to Deity, and so may be deemed a foundation of the obligation of human virtue. It is conceded that the fitness of virtue is eternal, for God is eternal, and has been always holy, and just; in the same manner also the beauty of virtue is eternal; but to suppose these to have existed anterior to thought and action, and to be independent of an eternally and immutably holy God is to indulge the mind in speculations, which, to say the least of them, are groundless. We may as well assign a cause to eternal existence, as to eternal holiness. When the Creator formed the Universe of intelligent creatures, he gave them, with their existence, the various relations and circumstances which sprang up with them; and their obligations with respect to him and his works originated at the same time, and from the same source; which could be no other than the Divine pleasure; and the positive express appointments, which have been since super-added, rest upon the same basis, the will of God.

That we might discern his will and conform to it, he has set before us his own character, which in all things is good. He has given us reason, or active intellectual powers capable of pursuing the truth, and discovering his character, as a rule of our conduct. And because reason is matured by slow degrees, and the advantages for its improvement are unequal, he has given us a sense susceptible of the impressions of good and evil, by which we can distinguish between moral good and evil almost as easily, as by our natural senses we discern the differences between light and darkness, sweetness and bitterness; and thus has rendered the judgment upon our own actions almost always unavoidable. The light of nature has been confirmed by express revelation; and because the law of nature identifies itself with the written law of God, the obligation of both rests upon the same foundation, the Sovereign will.

ably hereto, the apostle speaks of the great things contained in the gospel, as being hid in God; hid from ages and generations past, but now made manifest to the saints, Eph. iii. 9, Col. i. 26.

Again it is sometimes called the gospel, especially those parts of scripture which contain the glad tidings of salvation by Christ, or the method which God ordained for the taking away the guilt, and subduing the power of sin; and particularly the apostle calls it, *The glorious gospel of the blessed God*; 1 Tim. i. 11. and *the gospel of our salvation*. Eph. i. 13.

And, in this answer, it is called the Old and New Testament; that part of it which was written before our Saviour's incarnation, which contains a relation of God's dealings with his church, from the beginning of the world to that time, or a prediction of what should be fulfilled in following ages, is called the Old Testament. The other which contains an account of God's dispensation of grace, from Christ's first to his second coming is called the New.

A testament is the declared or written will of a person, in which some things are given to those who are concerned or described therein. Thus the scripture is God's written will or testament, containing an account of what he has freely given in his covenant of grace to fallen man; and this is the principal subject matter of scripture, as a testament; therefore it contains an account,

1. Of many valuable legacies given to the heirs of salvation; the blessings of both worlds, all the privileges contained in those great and precious promises, with which the scripture so abounds. Thus it is said, *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory*; Psal. lxxiii. 24. and *the Lord will give grace and glory*, Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

2. It describes the testator Christ, who gives eternal life to his people, and confirms all the promises which are made in him; as they are said, 2 Cor. i. 20. *To be in him yea and amen, to the glory of God*; and more especially he ratified this testament by his death as the same apostle observes, which is a known maxim of the civil law, that *where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of the testator*, (a) Heb. ix. 16, 17. upon which the force or validity thereof depends. And the word of God gives us a large account how all the blessings, which God bestowed upon his people, receive their validity from the death of Christ.

3. It also discovers to us who are the heirs, or legatees, to whom these blessings are given, who are described therein, as

(a) Where a covenant is, there should be the death of the devoted victim

repenting, believing, returning sinners, who may lay claim to the blessings of the covenant of grace.

4. It has several seals annexed to it, *viz.* the sacraments under the Old and New Testament, of which we have a particular account in scripture.

This leads us to consider how the scripture is otherwise divided or distinguished.

(1.) As to the Old Testament, it is sometimes distinguished or divided into *Moses and the prophets*; Luke xvi. 29. or *Moses, the prophets, and the psalms*, Luke xxiv. 44. And it may be considered also as containing historical and prophetic writings, and others that are more especially doctrinal or poetical; and the prophets may be considered as to the time when they wrote, some before and others after the captivity. They may also be distinguished as to the subject matter of them: some contain a very clear and particular account of the person and kingdom of Christ, *e. g.* Isaiah who is, for this reason, by some, called the evangelical prophet. Others contain reproofs, and denounce and lament approaching judgments, as the prophet Jeremiah. Others encourage the building of the temple, the setting up the worship of God, and the reformation of the people upon their return from captivity: thus Zechariah and Haggai. As for the historical parts of scripture, these either contain an account of God's dealings with his people before the captivity; as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, &c. or after it, as Ezra and Nehemiah.

(2.) The books of the New Testament may be thus divided. Some of them are historical, *viz.* such as contain the life and death of our Saviour, as the four gospels, or the ministry of the apostles, and the first planting and spreading of the gospel, as the Acts of the Apostles. Others are more especially doctrinal, and are wrote in the form of an epistle by the apostle Paul, and some other of the apostles.

One book is prophetical, as the Revelations, wherein is foretold the different state and condition of the church, the persecutions it should meet with from its Anti-christian enemies, its final victory over them, and its triumphs, as reigning with Christ in his kingdom.

This leads us to consider, when God first revealed his will to man in scripture, and how this revelation was gradually enlarged, and transmitted down to the church in succeeding ages. There was no written word, from the beginning of the world, till Moses's time, which was between two and three thousand years; and it was almost a thousand years longer before the canon of the Old Testament was completed by Malachi the last prophet, and some hundred years after that before the canon of the New Testament was given; so that God revealed

his will, as the apostle says, in the beginning of the epistle to the Hebrews, at *sundry times*, as well as in *divers manners*, and by divers inspired writers.

Notwithstanding the church, before it had a written word, was not destitute of a rule of faith and obedience, neither were they unacquainted with the way of salvation; for to suppose this, would be greatly to detract from the glory of the divine government, and reflect on God's goodness; therefore he took other ways to supply the want of a written word, and hereby shewed his sovereignty, in that he can make known his will what way he pleases, and his wisdom and goodness, in giving his written word at such a time when the necessities of men most required it. This will appear, if we consider,

1. That when there was no written word, the Son of God frequently condescended to appear himself, and converse with man, and so revealed his mind and will to him.

2. There was the ministry of angels subservient to this end, in which respect the word was often spoken by angels, sent to instruct men in the mind and will of God.

3. The church had among them all this while, more or less, the spirit of prophecy, whereby many were instructed in the mind of God; and though they were not commanded to commit what they received by inspiration to writing, yet they were hereby furnished to instruct others in the way of salvation. Thus Enoch is said to have prophesied in his day; Jude ver. 14, 15. and Noah is called, *a preacher of righteousness*, 2 Pet. ii. 5. Heb. xi. 7.

4. Great part of this time the lives of men were very long, (*viz.*) eight or nine hundred years, and so the same persons might transmit the word of God by their own living testimony.

5. Afterwards in the latter part of this interval of time, when there was no written word, the world apostatised from God, and almost all flesh corrupted their way; not for want of a sufficient rule of obedience, but through the perverseness and depravity of their nature; and afterwards the world was almost wholly sunk into idolatry, and so were judicially excluded from God's special care; and since Abraham's family was the only church that remained in the world, God continued to communicate to them the knowledge of his will in those extraordinary ways, as he had done to the faithful in former ages.

6. When man's life was shortened, and reduced to the same standard, as now it is, of threescore and ten years, and the church was very numerous, increased to a great nation, and God had promised that he would increase them yet more, then they stood in greater need of a written word to prevent the inconveniences that might have arisen from their continuing any longer without one, and God thought fit, as a great instance of

favour to man, to command Moses to write his law, as a standing rule of faith and obedience to his church.

This leads us to consider a very important question, *viz.* whether the church, under the Old Testament dispensation, understood this written word, or the spiritual meaning of those laws that are contained therein? Some, indeed, have thought that the state of the church, before Christ came in the flesh, was attended with so much darkness, that they did not know the way of salvation, though they had, in whole or in part, the scriptures of the Old Testament. The Papists generally assert, that they did not; and therefore they fancy, that all who lived before Christ's time, were shut up in a prison, where they remained till he went from the cross to reveal himself to them, and so, as their leader, to conduct them in triumph to heaven. And some Protestants think the state of all who lived in those times, to have been attended with so much darkness, that they knew but little of Christ and his gospel, though shadowed forth, or typified by the ceremonial law; which they found on such-like places of scripture as that, where Moses is said to have put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished; and that this veil is done away in Christ, 2 Cor. iii. 13, 14. and those scriptures that speak of the Jewish dispensation, as a *night of darkness*, compared with that of the gospel, which is represented as a *perfect day*, or the *rising of the sun*, Isa. xxi. 11. Cant. ii. 17. Malachi iv. 2. And as these extend the darkness of that dispensation farther than, as I humbly conceive, they ought to do, so they speak more of the wrath, bondage, and terror that attend it, than they have ground to do, especially when they make it universal; since there are several reasons, which may induce us to believe that the church, at that time, understood a great deal more of the gospel, shadowed forth in the ceremonial law, and had more communion with God, and less wrath, terror, or bondage, than these suppose they had; for which I would offer the following reasons,

1. Some of the Old Testament saints have expressed a great degree of faith in Christ, and love to him, whom they expected to come in our nature; and many of the prophets, in their inspired writings, have discovered that they were not strangers to the way of redemption and reconciliation to God by him, as the Lord our righteousness. A multitude of scriptures might be cited, that speak of Christ, and salvation by him in the Old Testament, Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. Zech. xiii. 7. Psal. xxxiii. 1, 2. compared with Rom. iv. 6. Thus Abraham is described, as *rejoicing to see his day*, John viii. 56. and the prophet Isaiah is so very particular and express in the account he gives of his person and offices, that I cannot see how any one can reasona-

bly conclude him to have been wholly a stranger to the gospel himself, Isa. xxii. 25. ch. liii. 13, 14, 15. Can any one think this, who reads his 53d chapter, where he treats of his life, death, sufferings, and offices, and of the way of salvation by him?

Object. It is objected hereunto that the prophets who delivered these evangelical truths, understood but little of them themselves, because of the darkness of the dispensation they were under. Thus it is said, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, 12. that *the prophets, indeed, searched into the meaning of their own predictions, but to no purpose; for it was revealed to them, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they ministered;* that is, the account they gave of our Saviour was not designed to be understood by them, but us in this present gospel-dispensation.

Answ. The answer that may be given to this objection is, that though the prophets are represented as enquiring into the meaning of their own prophecies, yet it doth not follow from thence that they had but little or no understanding of them: all that can be gathered from it is, that they studied them, as their own salvation was concerned therein; but we must not suppose that they did this to no purpose, as what they were not able to understand; and when it is farther said in this scripture, that *not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things that are now reported;* the meaning is, not that they did not understand those things, or had not much concern in them, but that the glory of the gospel state, that was foretold in their prophecies, was what we should behold with our eyes, and not they themselves, in which sense they are said *not to minister to themselves, but to us;* so that this objection hath no force in it to overthrow the argument we are maintaining; we therefore proceed to consider,

2. That it is certain, that the whole ceremonial law had a spiritual meaning annexed to it; for it is said, *That the law was a shadow of good things to come,* Heb. x. 1. and that all those things *happened to them for ensamples, [or types] and they are written for our admonition,* 1 Cor. x. 11.

3. It is unreasonable to suppose that the spiritual meaning of the ceremonial law should not be known by those to whom it was principally given; or that the gospel, wrapt up therein, should not be seen through this shadow till the dispensation was abolished, the ceremonial law abrogated, and the nation cast off to whom it was given.

4. If the knowledge of the gospel, or faith in Christ, which is founded upon it, be necessary for our salvation, it was necessary for the salvation of those who lived in former ages; for it was as much a truth then as it is now, that there is salvation in no other; therefore the church of old were obliged to believe in him to come, as much as we are to believe in him as already

come; but it is inconsistent with the divine goodness to require this knowledge, and not to give them any expedient to attain it; therefore we must either suppose this knowledge attainable by them, and consequently that he was revealed to them, or else they must be excluded from a possibility of salvation, when, at the same time, they were obliged to believe in Christ, which they could not do, because they did not understand the meaning of that law, which was the only means of revealing him to them; or if Christ was revealed in the ceremonial law, and they had no way to understand it, it is all one as though he had not been revealed therein.

5. They had sufficient helps for the understanding the spiritual meaning thereof, *viz.* not only some hints of explication, given in the Old Testament, but, besides these, there was,

(1.) Extraordinary revelation and inspiration, with which the Jewish church more or less, was favoured, almost throughout all the ages thereof; and hereby it is more than probable that, together with the canon of the Old Testament, they received the spiritual sense and meaning of those things which were contained therein.

(2.) There was one whole tribe, *viz.* that of Levi, that was almost wholly employed in studying and explaining the law of God; therefore it is said, *They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law*, Deut. xxxiii. 10. and that *the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth*; Mal. ii. 7. that is, the priests should, by all proper methods, understand the meaning of the law, that they might be able to teach the people, when coming to be instructed by them.

(3.) There were among them several schools of the prophets (in some ages at least of the Jewish church) in which some had extraordinary revelations; and they that had them not, made the scriptures their study, that they might be able to instruct others; so that, from all this, it appears that they had a great deal of knowledge of divine truths, and the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament; though yet we will not deny that the gospel dispensation hath a clearer light, and excels in glory. (a.)

(a) PROPHETS BEFORE THE CAPTIVITY.

With the order and times of their Prophecies.

Years before Christ.		
812	AMAZIAH king of Judah } Jeroboam II. king of Israel }	Jonah sent with a message. 2 Kings xiii. 20. xiv. 25.
800	Uzziah king of Judah } Jeroboam II. }	Joel i. ii. iii.
800	Jeroboam II. king of Israel } Uzziah king of Judah }	Amos i.—ix.
800	Jeroboam II. Uzziah	Hosea i. ii. iii.
772	Menahem I.	Hosea iv.
770	Menahem II.	Jonah i. ii. iii. iv.

We shall now proceed to consider, how far the Old Testament is a rule of faith and obedience to us, though that dis-

759	Uzziah 52. Pekah 1.	Isaiah vi. ii. iii. iv. v.
753	Jotham 5. Pekah 7.	Micah i. ii.
742	Ahaz 1. Pekah 18.	Isaiah vii.
	In the same year	Isaiah viii. ix. x.
	In the same year	Isaiah xvii.
740	Ahaz 3. Pekah 20.	Isaiah i.
	In the same year	Isaiah xxviii.
739	Aphaz 4.	Hosea v. vi.
726	Hezekiah 2.	Isaiah xiv. ver. 28, &c.
	In the same year	Isaiah xv. xvi.
725	Hezekiah 3. Hoshea 6.	{ Hosea vii.—xiv.
		{ Micah iii. iv. v. vi. vii.
720	Hezekiah 7.	Nahum i. ii. iii.
715	Hezekiah 13.	Isaiah xxiii.—xxvii.
714	Hezekiah 14.	Isaiah xxxviii. xxxix.
714	Hezekiah 14.	Isaiah xxix. xxx.—xxxv.
	In the same year	Isaiah xxii. ver. 1—15.
	In the same year	Isaiah xxi.
713	Hezekiah 15.	Isaiah xx.
	In the same year	Isaiah xviii. xix.
710	Hezekiah 18.	Isaiah x. ver. 5, &c. xi. xii. xiii. xiv. ver.
		28, &c.
	In the same year	Isaiah xxxvi. xxxvii.
	In the same year	Isaiah xl.—xliii. &c.
698	Manasseh 1.	Isaiah xxii. ver. 15.
628	Josiah 13.	Jeremiah i. ii.
623	Josiah 18.	Jeremiah xi. ver. 1—18.
		Jeremiah iii.—x. xii.—xxi.
		Jeremiah xi. ver. 18, &c.
		Habbakkuk i. ii. iii. Zephaniah i. ii. iii.
611	Josiah 31.	Jeremiah xxii. ver. 1—24.
610	Jehoiakim 1.	Jeremiah xxvi.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xxv.
606	Jehoiakim 4.	Jeremiah xxxv.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xlvi.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xxxvi. ver. 1—9.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xiv.
	In the same year	Daniel i.
605	Jehoiakim 5.	Jeremiah xxxvi. ver. 9, &c.
603	Jehoiakim 7.	Daniel ii.
599	Zedekiah 1.	Jeremiah xxii. ver. 24, &c.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xxiii.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xiii. ver. 13, &c.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xxiv.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xlix. ver. 34, &c.
598	Zedekiah 2.	Jeremiah xxix.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xxx. xxxi.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xxvii.
596	Zedekiah 4.	Jeremiah xxviii.
	In the same year	Jeremiah l. li.
595	Zedekiah 5. Jehoiachin's capt. 5.	Ezekiel i.—vii.
594	Zedekiah 6. Jehoiachin's capt. 6.	Ezekiel viii.—xi.
593	Zedekiah 7. Jehoiachin's capt. 7.	Ezekiel xii.—xix.
	In the same year, fifth month	Ezekiel xx.—xxiii.
591	Zedekiah 9. Jehoiachin's capt. 9.	Jeremiah xxi. xxxiv. ver. 1—8.
	In the same year	Jeremiah xlvii.

pensation be abolished; for we are not to reckon it an useless part of scripture, or that it does not at all concern us. Since,

In the same year	Jeremiah xlvi. xlix. ver. 1—34.
In the same year	Ezekiel xxiv. xxv.
590 Zedekiah 10. Jehoiachin's capt. 10.	Jeremiah xxxvii. ver. 1—11.
In the same year	Jeremiah xxxiv. ver. 8, &c.
In the same year	Jeremiah xxxvii. ver. 11—16.
In the same year	Jeremiah xxxii. xxiii.
In the same year	Ezekiel xxix. ver. 1—17. xxx.
In the same year	Jeremiah xxxvii. ver. 17, &c.
In the same year	Jeremiah xxxviii. ver. 1—14.
In the same year	Jeremiah xxxix. ver. 15, &c.
In the same year	Jeremiah xxxviii. ver. 14, &c.
589 Zedekiah 11. Jehoiachin's capt. 11. first month	Ezekiel xxxvi. xxxvii. xxxviii.
In the same year, third month	Ezekiel xxxi.
In the same year, fourth month	Jeremiah xxxix. ver. 1—11. lii. ver. 1—30.
In the same year, fifth or sixth month	Jeremiah xxxix. ver. 11—15. xl. ver. 1—7.
In the same year	Jeremiah xl. ver. 7. xli. xlii. xliii. xliv. ver. 1—8.

PROPHETS AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE, DURING THE CAPTIVITY.

588 JEHOIACHIN's captivity 12. tenth month	Ezekiel xxxiii.
In the same year, twelfth month	Ezekiel xxxii.
Between the 12 and 25 captivity	Ezekiel xxxiv. xxxvi. xxxvii. xxxviii. xxxix.
In the same year	Obadiah
In the same year	Ezekiel xxxv.
In this year Nebuchadnezzar set up his golden image	Daniel iii.
574 Jehoiachin's captivity 25.	Ezekiel xl. xli. &c.
569 Jehoiachin's captivity 30.	Ezekiel xxxi. ver. 17, &c.
In the same year	Daniel iv.
562 Jehoiachin's captivity 37.	Jeremiah lii. ver. 31, &c.
555 Belshazzar 1.	Daniel vii.
553 Belshazzar 3.	Daniel viii.
539 Belshazzar 17.	Daniel v.
538 Darius the Mede 1.	Daniel vi.
In the same year	Daniel ix.
536 Cyrus 1.	Ezra i. ii.
535 Cyrus 2.	Ezra iii.

PROPHETS AFTER THE CAPTIVITY UNDER THE SECOND TEMPLE.

535 CYRUS 2.	Ezra iv.
In the third year of Cyrus, and third after the captivity	Daniel x. xi. xii.
520 Darius Hystaspis 2. sixth month	Haggai i. ver. 1—12.
In the same year and month	Haggai i. ver. 12, &c. Ezra v.
In the same year, seventh month	Haggai ii. ver. 1—10.
In the same year, eighth month	Zechariah i. ver. 1—7.
In the same year, ninth month	Haggai ii. ver. 10, &c.

(1.) The greatest part of the doctrines contained therein are of perpetual obligation to the church, in all the dispensations or changes thereof.

(2.) As for the ceremonial law, which is abolished, with some other forensick, or political laws, by which the Jews, in particular, were governed, these, indeed, are not so far a rule of obedience to us, as that we should think ourselves obliged to observe them, as the Jews were of old: notwithstanding,

(3.) Even these are of use to us, as herein we see what was then the rule of faith and obedience to the church, and how far it agrees as to the substance thereof, or things signified thereby, with the present dispensation; so that it is of use to us, as herein we see the wisdom, sovereignty, and grace of God to his church in former ages, and how what was then typified or prophesied, is fulfilled to us. Thus it is said, that *whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope*, Rom. xv. 4.

The scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation of the whole mind and will of God, and therefore are very justly styled a perfect rule of faith and obedience. Nevertheless,

We do not hereby intend that they contain an account of every thing that God hath done, or will do, in his works of providence and grace, from the beginning to the end of time; for such a large knowledge of things is not necessary for us to attain. Thus it is said, John xx. 30. that Christ did many *other signs*, that are not written in the gospel; but those things that are contained therein, are *written that we might believe*; there-

"In the same year, eleventh month	Zechariah i. ver. 7, &c. ii.—vi.
516 Darius 3.	Ezra v. ver. 3, &c.
318 Darius 4.	Ezra vi. ver. 1—15.
In the same year, ninth month	Zech. vii. viii.
Subsequent to the fourth year	
of Darius Hystaspes	Zechariah ix.—xiv.
515 Darius 6.	Ezra vi. ver. 15, &c.
462 Ahasuerus 3.	Esther i.
461 Ahasuerus 4.	Esther ii. ver. 1—16.
458 Ahasuerus 7.	Ezra vii.—x.
In the same year	Esther ii. ver. 16—21
457 Ahasuerus 8.	Esther ii. ver. 21, &c.
453 Ahasuerus 12.	Esther iii. iv. v. &c.
445 Ahasuerus 20.	Nehemiah i.—iii. &c.
433 Ahasuerus 32.	Nehemiah xiii. ver. 6.
429 Ahasuerus 36.	Malachi i.—iv.
428 Ahasuerus 37.	Nehemiah xiii. ver. 6, &c.
296 Prolemy Soter 9.	The Canon of the Old Testament com- pleted, by adding two books of Chro- nicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Malachi; by SIMON the Just."

fore we have a sufficient account thereof to support our faith; and that *there were many other things which Jesus did, which, if they should be written every one, the world would not contain the books that should be written*, John xxi. 25. (a)

Nor do we understand hereby, that God has given us an account of all his secret counsels and purposes relating to the event of things, or the final estate of particular persons, abstracted from those marks on which our hope of salvation is founded, or their outward condition, or the good or bad success that shall attend their undertakings in the world, or the time of their living therein: these, and many more events of the like nature, are secrets which we are not to enquire into, God having not thought fit to reveal them in his word, for wise ends best known to himself, which shews his sovereignty, with respect to the matter of revelation; *Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children*, Deut. xxix. 29. When Peter was over-curious in enquiring concerning the future estate or condition of John, our Saviour gives him this tacit reproof, *What is that to thee?* John xxi. 21, 22.

Nor are we to suppose that the divine perfections, which are infinite, are fully and adequately revealed to man, since it is impossible that they should, from the nature of the thing; for that which is in itself incomprehensible, cannot be so revealed that we should be able fully to comprehend it, though that which is possible, or at least necessary, to be known of God, is clearly revealed to us.

Again, we do not suppose that every doctrine, that is to be assented to as an article of faith, is revealed in express words in scripture, since many truths are to be deduced from it by just and necessary consequences, which thereby become a rule of faith.

Nor are we to suppose that every part of scripture fully and clearly discovers all those things which are contained in the whole of it, since there was farther light given to the church, by degrees, in succeeding ages, as it grew up, from its infant-state, to a state of perfect manhood; therefore there is a clearer and fuller revelation of the glorious mysteries of the gospel, under the New Testament-dispensation, than there was before it. The apostle uses the same metaphorical way of speaking, when he compares the state of the church, under the ceremonial law, to that of an heir under age, or of children under the direction of tutors and governors, whose instruction and advances in knowledge are proportioned to their age; so God

(a) *κοσμος* is the *unregenerate world*, John vii. 7 and *χαρρατι*, is to *receive him* 2 Cor. vii. 2.

revealed his word at *sundry times*, as well as in *divers manners*, Gal. iv. 1, 3. Heb. i. 1.

The word of God, accompanied with those additional helps before mentioned, for the churches understanding the sense thereof, was always, indeed, sufficient to lead men into the knowledge of divine truth; but the canoa being compleated, it is so now in an eminent degree; and it is agreeable to the divine perfections that such a rule should be given; for since salvation could not be attained, nor God glorified, without a discovery of those means, which are conducive thereto, it is not consistent with his wisdom and goodness that we should be left at the utmost uncertainty as to this matter, and, at the same time, rendered incapable of the highest privileges which attend instituted worship. Can we suppose that, when all other things necessary to salvation are adjusted, and many insuperable difficulties surmounted, and an invitation given to come and partake of it, that God should lay such a bar in our way, that it should be impossible for us to attain it, as being without a sufficient rule?

And since none but God can give us such an one, it is inconsistent with his sovereignty to leave it to men, to prescribe what is acceptable in his sight. They may, indeed, give laws, and thereby oblige their subjects to obedience; but these must be such as are within their own sphere; their power does not extend itself to religious matters, so that our faith and duty to God should depend upon their will; for this would be a bold presumption, and extending their authority and influence beyond due bounds; therefore since a rule of faith is necessary, we must conclude that God has given us such an one; and it must certainly be worthy of himself, and therefore perfect, and every way sufficient to answer the end thereof.

That it is so, farther appears from the event, or from the happy consequences of our obedience to it; from that peace, joy, and holiness, which believers are made partakers of, while steadfastly adhering to this rule: thus it is said, that *through comfort of the scriptures they have hope*, Rom. xv. 4. and that hereby *the man of God is made wise to salvation, and perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 17. The perfection of the law is demonstrated, by the Psalmist, by its effects, in that it *converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes*, Psal. xix. 7, 8.

We might farther argue, that the scripture is a perfect rule of faith, from those threatnings which are denounced against them, who pretend to add to, or take from it; this was strictly forbidden, even when there was but a part of scripture committed to writing. Thus says God; *Ye shall not add to the word which I command you; neither shall ye diminish ought*

from it, Deut. iv. 2. And the apostle denounces an anathema against any one who should pretend to preach any other gospel, than that which he had received from God, Gal. i. 8, 9. And, in the close of the scripture, our Saviour testifies, to every man, that *if any should add to these things, God would add to him the plagues written in this book. And if any should take away from this book, God would take away his part out of the book of life*, Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

Thus having considered the scripture as a rule of faith, we proceed to shew what are the properties which belong to it as such.

1. A rule, when it is designed for general use, must have the sanction of public authority: thus human laws, by which a nation is to be governed, which are a rule to determine the goodness or badness of men's actions, and their desert of rewards or punishments accordingly, must be established by public authority. Even so the scripture is a rule of faith, as it contains the divine laws, by which the actions of men are to be tried, together with the ground which some have to expect future blessedness, and others to fear punishments threatened to those who walk not according to this rule.

2. A rule by which we are to judge of the nature, truth, excellency, perfection, or imperfection of any thing, must be infallible, or else it is of no use; and, as such, nothing must be added to, or taken from it, for then it would cease to be a perfect rule: thus it must be a certain and impartial standard, by which things are to be tried: Such a rule as this is scripture, as was but now observed. And it is an impartial rule, to which, as a standard, all truth and goodness is to be reduced and measured by it; *To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*, Isa. viii. 20.

3 All appeals are to be made to a rule, and controversies to be tried and determined by it. Thus the scripture, as it is a rule of faith, is a judge of controversies; so that whatever different sentiments men have about religion, all must be reduced to, and the warrantableness thereof tried hereby, and a stop put to growing errors by an appeal to this rule, rather than to coercive power, or the carnal weapons of violence and persecution.

Moreover, the judgment we pass on ourselves, as being sincere or hypocrites, accepted or rejected of God, is to be formed by comparing our conduct with scripture, as the rule by which we are to try the goodness or badness of our state, and of our actions.

4. A rule must have nothing of a different nature set up in competition with, or opposition to it; for that would be to ren-

der it useless, and unfit to be the standard of truth: *thus scripture is the only rule of faith, and therefore no human traditions are to be set up as standards of faith in competition with it, for that would be to suppose it not to be a perfect rule.* This the Papists do, and therefore may be charged, as the Pharisees were of old by our Saviour, with *transgressing and making the commandment of none effect by their tradition*, Mat. xv. 3, 6. concerning whom he also says, that *in vain they worship him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*, ver. 9. What is this but to reflect on the wisdom, and affront the authority and sovereignty of God, by casting this contempt on that rule of faith which he hath given?

Having considered scripture as a rule of faith and obedience, it is farther observed, that it is the only rule thereof, in opposition to the Popish doctrine of human traditions, as pretended to be of equal authority with it; by which means the law of God is made void at this day, as it was by the Jews in our Saviour's time, and the scripture supposed to be an imperfect rule; the defect whereof they take this method to supply; and to give countenance thereto,

1. They refer to those Scriptures, in which, it is said, our Saviour *did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written*, John xx. 30. and his own words, wherein he tells them, that he had *many things to say unto them, which they could not then bear*, John xvi. 12. as also to the words of the apostle Paul, Acts xx. 35. in which he puts the church in mind of a saying of our Saviour, received by tradition, because not contained in any of the evangels, *viz. it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

To which it may be replied,

Ans. (1.) That though it is true there were many things done, and words spoken by our Saviour, which are not recorded in Scripture, and therefore we must be content not to know them, being satisfied with this, that nothing is omitted therein which is necessary to salvation, yet to pretend to recover, or transmit them to us by tradition, is to assert and not to prove, what they impose on us as matters of faith.

(2.) Those things which our Saviour had to say, which he did not then impart to his disciples, because they were not able to bear them, respected, as is more than probable, what he designed to discover to them after his resurrection, during his forty days abode here on earth, or by his Spirit, after his ascension into heaven, concerning the change of the Sabbath, from the seventh, to the first day of the week, the abolition of the ceremonial law, the Spirituality of his kingdom, which they were at that time less able to bear than they were afterwards, and other things relating to the success of their ministry, the

gathering and governing of those churches, which should be planted by them; these seem to be intended by that expression, and not those doctrines which the Papists transmit by oral traditions; such as the use of oil and spittle, together with water in baptism, and the sign of the cross therein; the baptism of bells, the lighting up of candles in churches at noon-day: nor that of purgatory, or praying for the dead, or giving divine adoration to images or relics, which are altogether unscriptural, and such as he would not have, at any time, communicated unto them.

(3.) Those words of our Saviour, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*, though they are not contained in one distinct proposition, or in express words in the gospels, yet he therein exhorts his people *to give to him that asketh*; and speaks of the blessing that attends this duty, *that they might be*, that is, approve themselves to be *the children of their Father*, Mat. v. 42. compared with 45. and exhorts them to hospitality to the poor, and adds a blessing to it, Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14. Or, suppose the apostle refers to a saying frequently used by our Saviour, which might then be remembered by some who had conversed with him; this is no sufficient warrant for any one to advance doctrines contrary to those our Saviour delivered, under a pretence of having received them by unwritten tradition.

2. This doctrine is farther defended from the words of the apostle, in 1 Tim. vi. 20. where he advises Timothy to *keep that which was committed to his trust*, viz. those traditions which he was to remember and communicate to others: and also the advice which he gives to the church, *To hold the traditions which they had been taught, either by word or by his epistle*, 2 Thess. ii. 15. the former respects, say they, unwritten traditions, the latter is inspired writings.

Answ. That which was committed to Timothy to keep, was either *the form of sound words*, or the gospel, which he was to *hold fast*, 2 Tim. i. 13. or the ministry which he had received of the Lord, or those gifts and graces which were communicated to him, to fit him for public service. And as for those traditions which he speaks of in the other scripture, the meaning is only this: that they should remember not only the doctrines they had received from him, which were contained in his inspired epistles, but those which were agreeable to scripture, that he had imparted in the exercise of his public ministry; the former were to be depended upon as an infallible rule of faith, the latter to be retained and improved as agreeable thereunto, and

3. They farther add, that it was by this means that God instructed his church for above two thousand years before the scripture was committed to writing.

Answ. To this it may be replied, that God communicated

his mind and will to them, during that interval, in an extraordinary manner, as has been before observed, page 52, 53. which cannot be said of any of those traditions which are pleaded for by them.

4. It is farther argued, that the book of the law was formerly lost in Josiah's time; for it is said, that when it was found, and a part of it read to him, he rent his clothes, and was astonished, as though he had never read it before, 2 Kings xxii. 8. to 11. yet he being a good man, was well instructed in the doctrines of religion; therefore this must have been by tradition.

Answ. To this it may be answered, that the book, which was then found, was doubtless, an original manuscript of Scripture, either of all the books of Moses or Deuteronomy in particular, but it is not to be supposed that he had never read it before; for a person may be affected at one time in reading that portion of scripture, which he has often read without its having the like effect upon him; and doubtless, there were many copies of scripture transcribed, by which he was made acquainted with the doctrines of religion, without learning them from uncertain traditions.

5. They farther allege, that some books of scripture are lost, and therefore it is necessary that they should be supplied this way; the instances they give of this are some books referred to in scripture, *viz.* *the book of the wars of the Lord*, Numb. xxi. 14. and another going under the name of Jasher, 2 Sam. i. 18. compared with Josh. x. 13. and another called *the book of the acts of Solomon*, 1 Kings xi. 41. and also his Songs and Proverbs, and the account he gives of *trees, plants, beasts, fowls, creeping things, and fishes*, 1 Kings, iv. 32. 33. There are also other books said to be written by Samuel, Nathan, and Gad, 1 Chron. xxix. 29. the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and *the visions of Iddo the seer*, 2 Chron. ix. 29. and Jeremiah's lamentation for Josiah, is said to be written in *the books of the Lamentations*, 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. whereas there is no mention of Josiah in the book of scripture, which goes under that name; therefore they suppose that there was some other book so called, which was written by that prophet, but is now lost.

Answ. 1. As to the argument in general, that some books of scripture are lost, suppose we should take it for granted that they are so, must this loss be supplied by traditions, pretended to be divine, though without sufficient proof: however, I am not willing to make this concession, though, indeed, some Protestant divines have done it, as thinking it equally supposable, that some books, written by divine inspiration, might be lost, as well as many words spoke by the same inspiration: but even these constantly maintain that whatever inspired writings may have been lost, yet there is no doctrine necessary to the edifica-

tion of the church, in what immediately relates to salvation, but what is contained in those writings, which are preserved, by the care and goodness of providence, to this day; but, without giving into this concession, I would rather adhere to the more commonly received opinion, that no book designed to be a part of the canon of scripture is lost, though many uninspired writings have perished; and therefore as to those books but now mentioned, they refer to some books of scripture, in which we have no mention of the inspired writers thereof, which, as is more than probable, were wrote by some noted prophet that flourished in the church at that time, which their respective histories refer to; therefore some suppose that the books of Nathan and Gad, or Iddo, refer to those of Kings or Chronicles, which are not lost. But since this is only a probable conjecture, we pass it over, and add, that it is not unreasonable to suppose that the books said to be written by them, as also those of Solomon, that are not contained in scripture, were not written by divine inspiration, which is not only a safe but sufficient answer to the objection. As for Jeremiah's lamentation for Josiah, it is probable that the book of scripture, which goes under that name, was written on the occasion of Josiah's death, in which, though he doth not mention the name of that good king, yet he laments the desolating judgments which were to follow soon after it.

Moreover, the Papists pretend, that some part of the New Testament is lost; particularly the epistle from Laodicea, mentioned in Col. iv. 16. and one written to the Corinthians, *not to company with fornicators*, 1 Cor. v. 9. and another mentioned, 2 Cor. vii. 8. *by which he made them sorry*.

Answ. 1. As to the epistle from Laodicea that was probably one of his inspired epistles, written by him when at Laodicea, and not directed, as is pretended, to the Laodiceans.

2. As to that epistle, which he is supposed to have written to the Corinthians, it is not expressly said that it was another epistle he had wrote to them; but it is plainly intimated, ver. 12. that he refers to the epistle, which he was then writing to them: a part of which related to that subject, as this chapter, in particular does,

3. As to the letter, which he wrote to them, *which made them sorry*, it is not necessary to suppose that it was written by divine inspiration; for as every thing he delivered by word of mouth, was not by the extraordinary *afflatus* of the Holy Ghost, why may we not suppose that there were several epistles written by him to the churches, some to comfort, others to admonish, reprove, or make them sorry, besides those that he was inspired to write?

Having considered the arguments brought to prove that some

books of scripture are lost, we shall now prove, on the other hand, that we have the canon thereof compleat and entire. Some think this is sufficiently evident from what our Saviour says, *Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot, or tittle shall not pass from the law*, Mat. v. 18. and *it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail*, Luke xvi. 17. If God will take care of every jot and tittle of scripture, will he not take care that no whole book, designed to be a part of the rule of faith, should be entirely lost? It is objected, indeed, to this, that our Saviour hereby intends principally the doctrines or precepts contained in the law; but if the subject matter thereof shall not be lost, surely the scripture that contains it shall be preserved entire.

But this will more evidently appear, if we consider that the books of the Old Testament were compleat in our Saviour's time; for it is said, *That beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself*, Luke xxiv. 27. and this may also be proved from what the apostle says, *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning*, Rom. xv. 4. now it is impossible that they should be written for our learning if they are lost.

To this it may be added, that the goodness of God, and the care of his providence, with respect to this church, farther evinces this truth; for if he gave them ground to conclude that *he would be with them always, even to the end of the world*, Matth. xxviii. 20. surely this argues, that he would preserve the rule he had given them to walk by, from all the injuries of time, so that it should not be lost to the end of the world.

Again, the Jews were the keepers of the oracles of God, Rom. iii. 2. now they are not reprov'd by our Saviour, or the apostle Paul, for any unfaithfulness in not preserving them entire; and certainly our Saviour, when he reprov'd them for making void the law by their traditions, and threatens those that should add to or take from it, if he had found them faulty, in not having faithfully preserved all the scriptures committed to them, he would have severely reprov'd them for this great breach of trust.

Object. It is objected against the scriptures being a perfect rule of faith, that they are in several places corrupted, viz. that the Old Testament was so by the Jews, out of malice against our Saviour, and the Christian religion, that they might conceal, or pervert to another sense, some prophecies relating to the Messiah, and the gospel-state. And as for the New Testament, they pretend that it was corrupted by some heretics, in defence of their perverse doctrines.

Ans. 1. As to the Old Testament, it is very improbable.

and unreasonable to suppose that it was corrupted by the Jews.
For,

(1.) Before our Saviour's time, no valuable end could be answered thereby; for then they expected the Messiah to come, according to what was foretold by the prophets, and understood their predictions in a true sense.

(2.) After he was come, and Christianity took place in the world, though malice might have prompted them to it, yet they would not do it, because they had always been trained up in this notion, that it was the vilest crime to add to, take from, or alter it: so that one of their own writers* says concerning them, that they would rather die an hundred deaths, than suffer the law to be changed in any instance; yea, they have such a veneration for the law, that if, by any accident, part of it should fall to the ground, they would proclaim a fast as fearing lest, for this, God would destroy the whole world, and reduce it to its first chaos: and can any one think, that, under any pretence whatever, they would designedly corrupt the Old Testament? Yea, they were so far from doing it, that they took the greatest care, even to superstition, to prevent its being corrupted, through inadvertency, and accordingly numbered not only the books and sections, but even the words and letters, that not a single letter might be added to, or taken from it.

(3.) If they had any inclination to do this, out of malice against Christianity, it would have been to no purpose, after our Saviour's time; for it was then translated into Greek, and this translation was in the hands of almost all Christians; so that the fallacy would soon have been detected. And if they had corrupted some copies of the Hebrew Bible, they could not have corrupted or altered them all; therefore to attempt any thing of this kind, would have been to expose themselves to no purpose.

(4.) It would not have been for their own advantage to pervert it; for, in altering the texts that make for Christianity, they would (especially if the fraud should have been detected) have weakened their own cause so far, that the reputation of scripture being hereby lost, they could not have made use of it to that advantage, to prove their own religion from it.

But, notwithstanding all this out-cry of the scriptures being perverted, they pretend to give no proof hereof, except in two or three words, which do not much affect the cause of Christianity; whereas, if the Jews had designed to pervert it, why did they not alter the fifty-third of Isaiah, and many other scrip-

* *Vid. Philo. Jud. de Vit. Mosis; & eund. citat. ab Euseb. in Præp. Evang. l. viii. c. 6. & Joseph. contr. App. l. ii.*

tures, which so plainly speak of the person and offices of the Messiah?

2. As to the other part of the objection, that the New Testament hath been corrupted by heretics since our Saviour's time, whatever charge hath been brought against the Arians, and some others, of leaving out some words, or verses, which tend to overthrow their scheme, they have not been able, even when the empire was most favourable to their cause, to alter all the copies; so that their fallacy has been detected, and the corruption amended.

As for those various readings that there are of the same text, these consist principally in literal alterations, which do not much tend to pervert the sense thereof. It was next to impossible for so many copies of scripture to be transcribed without some mistakes, since they who were employed in this work were not under the infallible direction of the Spirit of God, as the first penmen were; yet the providence of God hath not suffered them to make notorious mistakes; and whatever mistakes there may be in one copy, they may be corrected by another; so that the scripture is not, for this reason, chargeable with the reproach cast upon it, as though it were not a perfect rule of faith.

QUEST. IV. *How doth it appear that the scriptures are the word of God?*

ANSW. The scriptures manifest themselves to be the word of God by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God; by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers to salvation: but the Spirit of God bearing witness by and with the scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it, that they are the word of God.

BEFORE we proceed to consider the arguments here brought to prove the scriptures to be the word of God, some things may be premised.^(a)

(a) "Since God has been pleased to leave us the Records of the *Jewish* Religion, which was of old the true religion, and affords no small testimony to the Christian religion, it is not foreign to our purpose, to see upon what foundation the credibility of these is built. That these books are theirs, to whom they are ascribed, appears in the same manner as we have proved of our books. And they, whose names they bear, were either Prophets, or men worthy to be credited; such as *Esdras*, who is supposed to have collected them into one volume, at that time, when the Prophets *Haggai*, *Malachi*, and *Zacharias*, were yet alive. I will not here repeat what was said before, in commendation of *Moses*. And not only that first part, delivered by *Moses*, as we have shewn in the first book, but the

1. When we speak of the scriptures as divine, we do not only mean that they treat of God and divine things; to wit,

latter history is confirmed by many *Pagans*. *Thus the *Phœnician* annals mention the names of *David* and *Solomon*, and the league they made with the *Tyrians*. And *Berosus*, as well as the *Hebrew* books, mention *Nabuchadonosor*, and other *Chaldeans*. *Vaphres*, the king of *Egypt* in *Jeremiah* is the same with *Apries* in *Herodotus*. And the *Greek* books are filled with *Cyrus* and his successors down to *Darius*; and *Josephus* in his book against *Appion*, quotes many other things relating to the *Jewish* nation: To which may be added, that we above took out of *Strabo* and *Trogus*. But there is no reason for us Christians to doubt of the credibility of these books, because there are testimonies in our books, out of almost every one of them, the same as they are found in the *Hebrew*. Nor did Christ when he blamed many things in the teachers of the law, and in the *Pharisees* of his time, ever accuse them of falsifying the books of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, or of using supposititious or altered books. And it can never be proved or made credible, that after Christ's time, the scripture should be corrupted in any thing of moment; if we do but consider how far and wide the *Jewish* nation, who every where kept those books, was dispersed over the whole world. For first, the ten tribes were carried into *Media* by the *Assyrians*, and afterwards the other two. And many of these fixed themselves in foreign countries, after they had a permission from *Cyrus* to return: the *Macedonians* invited them into *Alexandria* with great advantages; the cruelty of *Antiochus*, the civil war of the *Asmonæi*, and the foreign wars of *Pompey* and *Sossius*, scattered a great many; the country of *Cyrene* was filled with *Jews*; the cities of *Asia*, *Macedonia*, *Lycœonia*, and the Isles of *Cyprus*, and *Crete*, and others, were full of them; and that there was a vast number of them in Rome, we learn from *Horace*, *Juvenal*, and *Martial*. It is impossible that such distant bodies of men should be imposed upon by any art whatsoever, or that they should agree in a falsity. We may add further that almost three hundred years before Christ, by the care of the *Egyptian* kings, the *Hebrew* books were translated into *Greek* by those who are called the *Seventy*; that the *Greeks* might have them in another language, but the sense the same in the main; upon which account they were the less liable to be altered: And the same books were translated into *Chaldee*, and into the *Jerusalem* language; that is, half *Syriac*; partly a little before, and partly a little after Christ's time. After which followed other *Greek* versions, that of *Aquila*, *Symmachus*, and *Theodotim*; which *Origen*, and others after him, compared with the seventy Interpreters, and found no difference in the history; or in any weighty matters. *Philo* flourished in *Caligula's* time, and *Josephus* lived till *Vespasian's*. Each of them quote out of the *Hebrew* books the same things that we find at this day. By this time the Christian religion began to be more and more spread, and many of its professors were *Hebrews*: Many had studied the *Hebrew* learning, who could very easily have perceived and discovered it, if the *Jews* had received any thing that was false, in any remarkable subject, I mean, by comparing it with more ancient books. But they not only do this, but they bring very many testimonies out of the Old Testament, plainly in that sense in which they are received amongst the *Hebrews*, which *Hebrews* may be convicted of any crime, sooner than (I will not say of falsity, but) of negligence, in relation to these books; because they used to transcribe and compare them so very scrupulously, that they could tell how often every letter came over. We may add, in the first place, an argument, and that no mean one, why the *Jews* did not alter the scripture designedly; because the Christians prove, and as they think very strongly, that their Master Jesus was that very Messiah who was of old promised to the forefathers of the *Jews*; and this from those very books, which were read by the *Jews*. Which the *Jews*

* Thus the *Phœnician Annals*. &c.] See what *Josephus* cites out of them, Book VIII. Chap. 2. of his *Ancient History*; where he adds, "that if any one would see the Copies of those Epistles which *Solomon* and *Hiram* wrote to each other, they may be procured of the public Keepers of the Records at *Tyrus*." (We must be cautious how we believe this; however, see what I have said upon 1 *Kings* v. 3.) There is a remarkable place concerning *David*, quoted by *Josephus*, Book VII. Ch. 6, of his *Ancient History*, out of the 1Vth of *Damascenus's* History.

his nature and works, as referring principally to the subject matter thereof; for this may be said of many human uninspired writings, which, in proportion to the wisdom of their authors, tend to set forth the divine perfections. And when, as the consequence hereof, we assert that every thing contained therein is infallibly true, we do not deny but that there are many things, which we receive from human testimony, of which it would be scepticism to entertain the least doubt of the truth; notwithstanding, when we receive a truth from human testimony, we judge of the certainty thereof, by the credibility of the evidence, and, in proportion thereunto, there is a degree of certainty arising from it: but when we suppose a truth to be divine, we have the highest degree of certainty equally applicable to every thing that is so, and that for this reason, because it is the word of him that cannot lie. Thus we consider the holy scriptures, as being of a divine original, or given by the inspiration of God, or as his revealed will, designed to bind the consciences of men; and that the penmen were not the inventers of them, but only the instruments made use of to convey these divine oracles to us, as the apostle says, 2 Pet. i. 21. *Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost:* and the apostle Paul says, Gal. i. 11, 12. *I certify unto you, that the gospel, which was preached of me, is not after man; neither received I it of man; neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ:* the former asserts this concerning scripture in general, and the latter concerning that part thereof which was transmitted to us by him: this is what we mean when we say the scripture is the word of God.

2. It is necessary for us to know and believe the scriptures to be the word of God, because they are to be received by us as a rule of faith and obedience, in whatever respects divine things, otherwise we are destitute of a rule, and consequently our religion would be a matter of the greatest uncertainty; and as this faith and obedience is divine, it is a branch of religious worship, and as such, contains an entire subjection to God, a firm and unshaken assent to whatever he reveals as true, and a readiness to obey whatever he commands, as being influenced by his authority; which is inconsistent with any hesitation or doubt concerning this matter. Moreover, it is only therein that we have an account of the way in which sinners may have access to God; the terms of their finding acceptance in his sight, and all the promises of eternal blessedness, on which

would have taken the greatest care should never have been, after there arose a controversy between them and the Christians; if it had ever been in their power to have altered what they would." GROTIVS.

their hope is founded, are contained therein; if therefore we are not certain that the scriptures are the word of God, our faith and hope are vain; it is herein that *life and immortality is brought to light*, and, by *searching them*, we think that we have eternal life.

3. As divine revelation is necessary, so it is not impossible, contrary to reason or the divine perfections, for God to impart his mind and will to men in such a way as we call inspiration: these things must be made appear, otherwise it is a vain thing to attempt to give arguments to prove the scriptures to be the word of God; and, in order hereto, let it be considered,

(1.) That divine revelation is necessary; this appears because as religion is necessary, so there are some things contained in it which cannot be known by the light of nature, to wit, all those divine laws and institutions, which are the result of God's expressed will; and these could not be known by the light of nature, or in a way of reasoning derived from it, therefore they must be known by special revelation. Positive laws, as opposed to those that are moral, depend upon a different foundation; the glory of God's sovereignty eminently appears in the one, as that of his holiness doth in the other: now his sovereign pleasure relating thereto could never have been known without divine revelation, and then all that revenue of glory, which is brought to him thereby, would have been entirely lost, and there would have been no instituted worship in the world; and the gospel, which is called the *unsearchable riches of Christ*, Eph. iii. 8. must have been for ever a hidden thing, and the condition of those who bear the Christian name would have been no better than that of the heathen, concerning whose devotion, the apostle Paul, though speaking of the wisest and best of them says, Acts xvii. 23. that they *ignorantly worshipped an unknown God*: and elsewhere, 1 Cor. i. 24. that *the world by wisdom knew not God*; and the reason is, because they were destitute of divine revelation.

(2.) It is not impossible, contrary to reason or the divine perfections, that God should reveal his mind and will to man, which may be argued from hence; it contains no impossibility, for if it be possible for one creature to impart his mind and will to another, then certainly God can do this, for there is no excellency or perfection in the creature but what is eminently in him; and if it be not unworthy of the divine majesty to be omnipresent, and uphold all things by the word of his power, it is not unbecoming his perfections to manifest himself to intelligent creatures, who, as such, are fit to receive the discoveries of his mind and will; and his endowing them with faculties capable of receiving these manifestations, argues, that he designed that they should be favoured with them; and therefore

whatever displays there may be of infinite condescension therein, yet it is not unbecoming his perfections so to do.

(3.) As God cannot be at a loss for an expedient how to discover his mind and will to man, and is not confined to one certain way, so he may, if he pleases, make it known by inspiration; it is not impossible, neither is there any thing in the subjects that should hinder him from impressing whatever ideas he designs to impart, on the minds of men. This a finite spirit may do; and that there is such a thing as this, will hardly be denied by any, but those who, with the Sadducees, deny the nature and power of spirits: it hence follows, that God can much more impress the souls of men, or immediately communicate his mind to them in such a way, as we call inspiration; and to deny that there is such a thing as inspiration, is not only to deny the credibility of scripture history, as well as its divine authority, but it is to deny that which the heathen, by the light of nature, have universally believed to be consonant to reason, and therefore they often represent their gods as conversing with men; and they appear, in many of their writings, not to have the least doubt whether there has been such a thing as inspiration in the world.

These things being premised, we are now more particularly to consider those arguments which are brought to prove the scriptures to be the word of God, or that they were given by divine inspiration: these are taken either from the internal evidence we have hereof, *viz.* the subject matter of scripture, from the majesty of the style, the purity of the doctrines, the harmony or consent of all its parts, and the scope or tendency of the whole to give all glory to God; or else external, taken from the testimony which God himself gave to it, at first by miracles, whereby the mission of the prophets, and consequently what they were sent to deliver, was confirmed, and afterwards, in succeeding ages, by the use which he hath made of it in convincing and converting sinners, and building up believers to salvation. These are the arguments mentioned in this answer, which will be distinctly considered, and some others added, as a farther proof of this matter, to wit, those taken from the character of the inspired writers, particularly as they were holy men, and so they would not impose on the world, or pretend themselves to have been inspired, if they were not; and also, as they were plain and honest men, void of all craft and subtilty, and so could not impose on the world; and, had they attempted to do so, they had a great many subtle and malicious enemies, who would soon have detected the fallacy. To this we shall also add an argument taken from the sublimity of the doctrine, in which respect it is too great, and has too much wisdom in it for men to have invented; and others taken from the anti-

quity thereof, together with its wonderful preservation, notwithstanding all the endeavours of its enemies to root it out of the world; and then we shall consider how far the testimony of the church is to be regarded, not as though it contained the principal foundation of our faith, as the Papists suppose; but yet this may be, if duly considered, an additional evidence to those that have been before given; and then we shall speak something concerning the witness of the Spirit with the scripture in the heart of man, which inclines him to be persuaded by, and rest in the other arguments brought to support this truth: and if all these be taken together, they will, we hope, beget a full conviction in the minds of men, that the scriptures are the word of God; which leads us to consider the arguments in particular.

I. From the majesty of the style in which it is written. This argument does not equally hold good with respect to all the parts of scripture; for there is, in many places thereof, a great plainness of speech and familiarity of expression adapted to the meanest capacity, and sometimes a bare relation of things, without that majesty of expression, which we find in other places: thus in the historical books we do not observe such a loftiness of style, as there is in Job, Psalms, Isaiah, and some other of the prophets; so that there are arguments of another nature to prove them to be of divine authority. However, we may observe such expressions interspersed throughout almost the whole scripture, which set forth the sovereignty and greatness of God; as when he is represented speaking immediately himself in a majestic way, tending not only to bespeak attention, but to strike those that hear or read with a reverential fear of his divine perfections; thus, when he gives a summons to the whole creation to give ear to his words, *Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken*, Isa. i. 2. or, swears by himself, that *unto him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear*, chap. xiv. 23. or when it is said, *Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool*, chap. lxvi. 1. and elsewhere, *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth before him; his lightnings enlightened the world. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord; at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth*, Psal. xcvi. 1—5. And when he is represented as casting contempt on all the great men of this world, thus he is said to *cut off the spirit of princes, and to be terrible to the kings of the earth*, Psal. lxxvi. 12. and to *charge even his angels with folly*, Job iv. 18. or when the prophet speaks of him, as one who had *measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted the heavens with a span, and com-*

prehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; and that the nations of the earth are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; yea, as nothing, less than nothing and vanity, when compared with him, Isa. xl. 12, 15, 17. It would be almost endless to refer to the many places of scripture, in which God speaks in such a style, as is inimitable by any creature; of this we have several instances in the book of Job, especially in those chapters where he is represented as answering Job out of the whirlwind, and speaking with such a loftiness of style, as, it may be, the like cannot be found in any human composure, Job, chap. xxxviii. to xlii. where such expressions are used, which argue the style to be divine, great and magnificent; so that if it was not immediately from God, it would be the most bold presumption for any creature to speak in such a way: therefore this argument, taken from the majestic style of scripture, is not without its proper weight; however, it may serve to prepare us to receive those other arguments, which, together with this, evince its divine original.

II. From the purity and holiness of its doctrines, and that either, if we consider it absolutely, or compare it with all other writings, whereby it will appear not only to have the preference to them, but to be truly divine, and so is deservedly styled the *holy scripture*, Rom. i. 2. and the words thereof *pure as silver tried in a furnace, purified seven times*, Psal. xlii. 6. and to speak of *right things, in which there is nothing froward or perverse*, Prov. viii. 6, 7, 8. Thus every one that duly weighs the subject matter thereof, may behold therein the displays of the glory of the holiness of God: here let us consider, that the word of God appears to be divine from its purity and holiness,

I. As considered absolutely, or in itself. For,

(1.) It lays open the vile and detestable nature of sin, to render it abhorred by us. Thus the apostle says, Rom. vii. 7. *I had not known sin; that is, I had not so fully understood the abominable nature thereof as I do, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet;* and hereupon he concludes, that *the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*

(2.) It presents to our view the various instances of the divine vengeance, and shews us how the wrath of God is revealed against the unrighteousness of sinners to make them afraid of rebelling against him. Thus it gives us an account how the angels hereby fell from and lost their first habitation, and are thrust down to hell, being *reserved in chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*, Jude 6. And also how man hereby lost his primitive integrity and glory, and exposed

himself to the wrath and curse of God due to sin, and all the miseries of this life consequent thereon; and how it has destroyed flourishing nations, and rendered them desolate. Thus it gives us an account how the Jews were first carried into Babylon for their idolatry, and other abominations, and afterwards cast off and made the sad monument of the divine wrath, as at this day, for crucifying Christ, persecuting his followers, and opposing the Gospel. It also gives an account of the distress and terror of conscience, which wilful and presumptuous sins have exposed particular persons to; such as Cain, Judas and others; this is described in a very pathetic manner, when it is said of the wicked man, who has his portion of the good things of this life, that when he comes to die, *Terrors take hold of him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, and a storm hurleth him out of his place. For God shall cast upon him, and not spare; he would fain flee out of his hand,* Job xxvii. 20, 21, 22.

Moreover, the purity of the Scripture farther appears, in that it warns sinners of that eternal ruin, which they expose themselves to in the other world; *Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,* 2 Thess. i. 9. All these things discover the purity and holiness of the word of God.

(3.) It never gives the least indulgence or dispensation to sin, nor in any of its doctrines, which are pure and holy, doth it lead to licentiousness; it not only reproveth sin in the lives and outward conversations of men, but also discovers its secret recesses in the heart, where its chief seat is; obviates and guards against its first motions, tending thereby to regulate the secret thoughts of men, and the principle of all their actions, which it requires to be pure and holy. In this the Scripture excels all other writings with respect to its holiness.

(4.) All the blessings and benefits which it holds forth, or puts us in mind of, as the peculiar instances of divine favour and love to man, are urged and insisted on as motives to holiness; thus it is said, *The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance,* Rom. ii. 4. and when Moses had been putting the Israelites in mind of God's increasing them, *as the stars of heaven for multitude,* Deut. x. 22. compared with chap. xi. 1. he adds, *therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge and statutes, his judgments and commandments alway.* And when the loving kindness of God has been abused by men, it severely reproveth them for their vile ingratitude; as when it is said, Deut. xxxii. 6. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, oh foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that bought thee? Hath not he made thee, and established thee?*

(5.) All the examples proposed to our imitation therein, are such as savour of, and lead to, holiness; and when it recommends the actions or conversation of men, it is more especially for that holiness which is discovered therein: and, on the other hand, when it gives us the character of wicked men, together with the dreadful consequences thereof, it is that we may avoid and be deterred from committing the same sins that will be their ruin in the end.

(6.) The rules laid down relating to civil affairs in the Old Testament dispensation, and the behaviour of one man towards another, have a vein of holiness running through them all. Thus the government of the Jewish state, as described in the books of Moses, and elsewhere, discovers it to be an holy commonwealth; and they are often called an holy nation, as governed by those laws which God gave them; so the government of the church in the Gospel-dispensation, is a holy government: visible holiness is a term of church-communion, and apostacy and revolt from God excludes from it.

(7.) All the promises contained in Scripture, are, or will be certainly fulfilled, and the blessings it gives us ground to expect, conferred; and therefore it is a faithful word, and consequently pure and holy.

2. If we compare the Scripture with other writings, which are of a human composure, it plainly excels in holiness. For,

(1.) If we compare it with the writings of heathen moralists, such as Plato, Seneca, and others, though they contain a great many good directions for the ordering the conversations of men agreeably to the dictates of nature and right reason, yet most of them allow of, or plead for some sins, which the Scripture mentions with abhorrence, such as revenging injuries, and self-murder; several other instances of moral impurity, were not only practised by those who laid down the best rules to enforce moral virtue, but either countenanced, or, at least, not sufficiently fenced against, by what is contained in their writings; and even their strongest motives to virtue or the government of the passions, or a generous contempt of the world, are taken principally from the tendency which such a course of life will have to free us from those things that tend to debase and afflict the mind, and fill it with uneasiness, when we consider ourselves as acting contrary to the dictates of nature, which we have as intelligent creatures; whereas, on the other hand, the Scripture leads us to the practice of Christian virtues from better motives, and considers us not barely as men, but Christians, under the highest obligations to the blessed Jesus, and constrained hereunto by his condescending love expressed in all that he has done and suffered for our redemption and salvation; and it puts us upon desiring and hoping for com-

munion with God, through him, in the performance of those evangelical duties, which the light of nature knows nothing of, and so discovers a solid foundation for our hope of forgiveness of sin, through his blood, together with peace of conscience and joy resulting from it; it also directs us to look for that life and immortality, which is brought to light through the Gospel; in which respects, it far exceeds the writings of the best heathen moralists, and so contains in it the visible marks and characters of its divine original.

(2.) If we compare the scriptures with other writings among Christians, which pretend not to inspiration, we shall find in these writings a great number of impure and false doctrines, derogatory to the glory of God, in many of the pretended expositions of Scripture. If therefore men, who have the Scripture in their hands, propagate unholy doctrines, they would do so much more were there no Scripture to guide them: thus the doctrine that grace is not necessary to what is spiritually good: the merit of good works, human satisfactions, penances, indulgences, and dispensations for sin, are all impure doctrines, which are directly contrary to Scripture; and, as contraries illustrate each other, so hereby the holiness and purity of Scripture, which maintains the contrary doctrines, will appear to those who impartially study it and understand the sense thereof.

(3.) If we compare the Scriptures with the imposture of Mahomet, in the book called the Alcoran, which the Turks make use of as a rule of faith, and prefer it to Scripture, and reckon it truly divine, that contains a system not only of fabulous, but corrupt and impure notions, accommodated to men's sensual inclinations. Thus it allows of polygamy, and many impurities in this world, and promises to its votaries a sensual paradise in the next, all which is contrary to Scripture; so that composites merely human, whether they pretend to divine inspiration or not, discover themselves not to be the word of God, by their unholiness; as the Scripture manifests itself to be divine, by the purity of its doctrine; and indeed, it cannot be otherwise, considering the corruption of man's nature, as well as the darkness and blindness of his mind, which, if it pretends to frame a rule of faith, it will be like himself, impure and unholy; but that which has such marks of holiness, as the Scripture has, appears to be inspired by a holy God.

Having considered the holiness of Scripture doctrines, we proceed to shew the weight of this argument, or how far it may be insisted on to prove its divine authority. It is to be confessed, that a book's containing holy things or rules for a holy life, doth not of itself prove its divine original; for then other books might be called the word of God besides the Scripture, which is so called, not only as containing some

rules that promote holiness, but as being the fountain of all true religion; and its being adapted above any book of human composure, to answer this end, affords an argument of some weight to prove it to be of God. For,

1. Man, who is prone to sin, naturally blinded and prejudiced against divine truth and holiness, could never compose a book that is so consonant to the divine perfections, and contains such a display of God's glory, and is so adapted to make us holy.

2. If we suppose that man could invent a collection of doctrines, that tended to promote holiness, could he invent doctrines so glorious, and so much adapted to this end, as these are? If he could, he that does this must either be a good or a bad man: if we suppose the former, he would never pretend the Scripture to be of divine authority, when it was his own composure; and if the latter, it is contrary to his character, as such, to endeavour to promote holiness; for then Satan's kingdom must be divided against itself: but of this, more in its proper place, when we come to consider the character of the penmen of Scripture, to give a further proof of its divine authority.

3. It is plain, that the world without Scripture could not arrive to holiness; for the apostle says, 1 Cor. i. 21. *That the world by wisdom knew not God*; and certainly where there is no saving knowledge of God, there is no holiness; and the same apostle, Rom. i. 29, 30, 31. gives an account of the great abominations that were committed by the heathen; being destitute of Scripture light, they were *filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, &c.*

If therefore the doctrines contained in Scriptures are not only pure and holy themselves, but tend to promote holiness in us, this is not without its proper weight to prove their divine original.

III. The scriptures farther manifest themselves to be the word of God from the consent or harmony of all the parts thereof. (a.) This argument will appear more strong and con-

(a.) "The enquiries of learned men, and, above all of the excellent Lardner, who never overstates a point of evidence, and whose fidelity in citing his authorities has in no one instance been impeached, have established, concerning these writings, the following propositions:

1. That in the age immediately posterior to that in which St. Paul lived, his letters were publicly read and acknowledged.

Some of them are quoted or alluded to by almost every Christian writer that followed, by Clement of Rome, by Hermas, by Ignatius, by Polycarp, disciples or cotemporaries of the apostles; by Justin Martyr, by the churches of Gaul, by Irenæus, by Athenagoras, by Theophilus, by Clement of Alexandria, by Hermias, by Tertullian, who occupied the succeeding age. Now when we find a

clusive, if we compare them with other writings, in which there is but little harmony. Thus, if we consult the writings of

book quoted or referred to by an ancient author, we are entitled to conclude, that it was read and received in the age and country in which that author lived. And this conclusion does not, in any degree, rest upon the judgment or character of the author making such reference. Proceeding by this rule, we have, concerning the First Epistle to the Corinthians in particular, within forty years after the epistle was written, evidence, not only of its being extant at Corinth, but of its being known and read at Rome. Clement, bishop of that city, writing to the church of Corinth, uses these words: "Take into your hands the Epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle. What did he at first write unto you in the beginning of the gospel? Verily he did by the Spirit admonish you concerning himself and Cephas, and Apollos, because that even then you did form parties*." This was written at a time when probably some must have been living at Corinth, who remembered St. Paul's ministry there and the receipt of the epistle. The testimony is still more valuable, as it shows that the epistles were preserved in the churches to which they were sent, and that they were spread and propagated from them to the rest of the Christian community. Agreeably to which natural mode and order of their publication, Tertullian, a century afterwards, for proof of the integrity and genuineness of the apostolic writings, bids "any one, who is willing to exercise his curiosity profitably in the business of their salvation, to visit the apostolical churches, in which their very authentic letters are recited, *ipsæ authenticæ literæ eorum recitantur.*" Then he goes on: "Is Achaia near you? You have Corinth. If you are not far from Macedonia, you have Philippi, you have Thessalonica. If you can go to Asia, you have Ephesus; but if you are near to Italy, you have Rome†." I adduce this passage to show, that the distinct churches or Christian societies, to which St. Paul's Epistles were sent, subsisted for some ages afterwards; that his several epistles were all along respectively read in those churches; that Christians at large received them from those churches, and appealed to those churches for their originality and authenticity.

Arguing in like manner from citations and allusions, we have, within the space of a hundred and fifty years from the time that the first of St. Paul's Epistles was written, proofs of almost all of them being read, in Palestine, Syria, the countries of Asia Minor, in Egypt, in that part of Africa which used the Latin tongue, in Greece, Italy, and Gaul‡. I do not mean simply to assert, that, within the space of a hundred and fifty years, St. Paul's Epistles were read in those countries, for I believe that they were read and circulated from the beginning; but that proofs of their being so read occur within that period. And when it is considered how few of the primitive Christians wrote, and of what was written how much is lost, we are to account it extraordinary, or rather as a sure proof of the extensiveness of the reputation of these writings, and of the general respect in which they were held, that so many testimonies, and of such antiquity, are still extant. "In the remaining works of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, there are perhaps more and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament, than of all the works of Cicero, in the writings of all characters for several ages§." We must add, that the Epistles of Paul come in for their full share of this observation; and that all the thirteen epistles, except that to Philemon, which is not quoted by Irenæus or Clement, and which probably escaped notice merely by its brevity, are severally cited, and expressly recognized as St. Paul's by each of these Christian writers. The Ebionites, an early, though inconsiderable Christian sect, rejected St. Paul and his epistles||; that is, they rejected these epistles, not because they were not, but because they were St. Paul's; and because, adhering to the obligation of the Jewish law, they chose to dispute his doctrine and authority. Their suffrage as

* See Lardner, vol. xii. p. 22. † Lardner, vol. ii. p. 598. ‡ See Lardner's Recapitulation, vol. xii. p. 53. § Lardner, vol. ii. p. 808.

most men uninspired, we shall find that their sentiments contained therein often times very widely differ; and if, as his-

to the genuineness of the epistles does not contradict that of other Christians. Marcion, an heretical writer in the former part of the second century, is said by Tertullian to have rejected three of the epistles which we now receive, viz. the two Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus. It appears to me not improbable, that Marcion might make some such distinction as this, that no apostolic epistle was to be admitted which was not read or attested by the church to which it was sent; for it is remarkable that, together with these epistles to private persons, he rejected also the catholic epistles. Now the catholic epistles and the epistles to private persons agree in the circumstance of wanting this particular species of attestation. Marcion, it seems, acknowledged the Epistle to Philemon, and is upbraided for his inconsistency in doing so by Tertullian*, who asks "why, when he received a letter written to a single person, he should refuse two to Timothy and one to Titus composed upon the affairs of the church?" This passage so far favours our account of Marcion's objection, as it shows that the objection was supposed by Tertullian to have been founded in something, which belonged to the nature of a private letter.

Nothing of the works of Marcion remains. Probably he was, after all, a rash, arbitrary, licentious critic (if he deserved indeed the name of critic,) and who offered no reason for his determination. What St. Jerome says of him intimates this, and is beside founded in good sense: speaking of him and Basilides, "If they had assigned any reasons," says he, "why they did not reckon these epistles," viz. the first and second to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus, "to be the apostle's, we would have endeavoured to have answered them, and perhaps might have satisfied the reader: but when they take upon them, by their own authority, to pronounce one epistle to be Paul's, and another not, they can only be replied to in the same manner. Let it be remembered, however, that Marcion received ten of these epistles. His authority therefore, even if his credit had been better than it is, forms a very small exception to the uniformity of the evidence. Of Basilides we know still less than we do of Marcion. The same observation however belongs to him, viz. that his objection, as far as appears from this passage of St. Jerome, was confined to the three private epistles. Yet is this the only opinion which can be said to disturb the consent of the two first centuries of the Christian æra; for as to Tatian, who is reported by Jerome alone to have rejected some of St. Paul's Epistles, the extravagant or rather delirious notions into which he fell, take away all weight and credit from his judgment. If, indeed, Jerome's account of this circumstance be correct; for it appears from much older writers than Jerome, that Tatian owned and used many of these epistles‡.

II. They, who in those ages disputed about so many other points, agreed in acknowledging the Scriptures now before us. Contending sects appealed to them in their controversies with equal and unreserved submission. When they were urged by one side, however they might be interpreted or misinterpreted by the other, their authority was not questioned. "Reliqui omnes," says Irenæus, speaking of Marcion, "falso scientiæ nomine inflati, scripturas quidem confitentur, interpretationes vero convertunt§."

III. When the genuineness of some other writings which were in circulation, and even of a few which are now received into the canon, was contested, these were never called into dispute. Whatever was the objection, or whether, in truth, there ever was any real objection to the authenticity of the Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third of John, the Epistle of James, or that of Jude, or to the book of the Revelations of St. John, the doubts that appear to have been entertained concerning them, exceedingly strengthen the force of the testimony as to those writings, about which there was no doubt; because it shows, that the matter was a subject, amongst the early Christians, of examination and discussion; and that, where there was any room to doubt, they did doubt.

* Lardner, vol. xiv. p. 455.

† Lardner, vol. xiv. p. 458.

‡ Lardner, vol. i. p. 313.

§ Iren. advers. Hæc, quoted by Lardner, vol. xv. p. 425.

torians, they pretend to report matters of fact, their evidence, or report, does not, in all respects, agree together, which shews

What Eusebius hath left upon the subject is directly to the purpose of this observation. Eusebins, it is well known, divided the ecclesiastical writings which were extant in his time into three classes; the “*ἀνυπόκριτα*, uncontradicted,” as he calls them in one chapter; or “scriptures universally acknowledged,” as he calls them in another; the “controverted, yet well known and approved by many; and “the spurious.” What were the shades of difference in the books of the second, or in those of the third class; or what it was precisely that he meant by the term *spurious*, it is not necessary in this place to enquire. It is sufficient for us to find, that the thirteen epistles of St. Paul are placed by him in the first class without any sort of hesitation or doubt.

It is further also to be collected from the chapter in which this distinction is laid down, that the method made use of by Eusebius, and by the Christians of his time, viz. the close of the third century, in judging concerning the sacred authority of any books, was to enquire after and consider the testimony of those who lived near the age of the apostles*.

IV. That no ancient writing, which is attested as these epistles are, hath had its authenticity disproved, or is in fact questioned. The controversies which have been moved concerning suspected writings, as the epistles, for instance, of Phalaris, or the eighteen epistles of Cicero, begin by showing that this attestation is wanting. That being proved, the question is thrown back upon internal marks of spuriousness or authenticity; and in these the dispute is occupied. In which disputes it is to be observed, that the contested writings are commonly attacked by arguments drawn from some opposition which they betray to “authentic history,” to “true epistles,” to “the real sentiments or circumstances of the author whom they personate;” which authentic history, which true epistles, which real sentiments themselves, are no other than ancient documents, whose early existence and reception can be proved, in the manner in which the writings before us are traced up to the age of their reputed author, or to ages near to his. A modern who sits down to compose the history of some ancient period, has no stronger evidence to appeal to for the most confident assertion, or the most undisputed fact, than he delivers, than writings, whose genuineness is proved by the same medium through which we evince the authenticity of ours. Nor, whilst he can have recourse to such authorities as these, does he apprehend any uncertainty in his accounts, from the suspicion of spuriousness or imposture in his materials.

V. It cannot be shown that any forgeries, properly so called †, that is, writings published under the name of the person who did not compose them, made their appearance in the first century of the Christian era, in which century these epistles undoubtedly existed. I shall set down under this proposition the guarded words of Lardner himself: “There are no quotations of any books of them (spurious and apocryphal books) in the apostolical fathers, by whom I mean Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, whose writings reach from the year of our Lord 70 to the year 108. *I say this confidently, because I think it has been proved.*” Lardner, vol. xii. p. 158.

Nor when they did appear were they much used by the primitive Christians. Irenæus quotes not any of these books. He mentions some of them, but he never quotes them. The same may be said of Tertullian: he has mentioned a book called ‘Acts of Paul and Thecla;’ but it is only to condemn it. Clement of Alexandria and Origen have mentioned and quoted several such books, but never as authority, and sometimes with express marks of dislike. Eusebius quotes no such books in any of his works. He has mentioned them indeed, but how? Not by way of approbation, but to show that they were of little or

* Lardner, vol. viii. p. 106. † See the tracts written in the controversy between Tunstall and Middleton upon certain suspected epistles ascribed to Cicero. ‡ I believe that there is a great deal of truth in Dr. Lardner’s observations, that comparatively few of those books, which we call apocryphal, were strictly and originally forgeries. See Lardner, vol. xii. p. 167.

that they are fallible; but the exact and harmonious agreement of scripture proves it divine. That other writings of human

“no value; and that they never were received by the sounder part of Christians.” Now, if with this, which is advanced after the most minute and diligent examination, we compare what the same cautious writer had before said of our received scriptures, “that in the works of three only of the above-mentioned fathers, there are more and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament, than of all the works of Cicero in the writers of all characters for several ages;” and if, with the marks of obscurity or condemnation, which accompanied the mention of the several apocryphal Christian writings, when they happened to be mentioned at all, we contrast what Dr. Lardner’s work completely and in detail makes out concerning the writings which we defend, and what, having so made out, he thought himself authorized in his conclusion to assert, that these books were not only received from the beginning, but received with the greatest respect; have been publicly and solemnly read in the assemblies of Christians throughout the world, in every age from that time to this; early translated into the languages of divers countries and people; commentaries writ to explain and illustrate them; quoted by way of proof in all arguments of a religious nature; recommended to the perusal of unbelievers, as containing the authentic account of the Christian doctrine; when we attend, I say, to this representation, we perceive in it, not only full proof of the early notoriety of these books, but a clear and sensible line of discrimination, which separates these from the pretensions of any others.

The Epistles of St. Paul stand particularly free of any doubt or confusion that might arise from this source. Until the conclusion of the fourth century, no intimation appears of any attempt whatever being made to counterfeit these writings; and then it appears only of a single and obscure instance. Jerome, who flourished in the year 392, has this expression: “Legunt quidam et ad Laodiceenses; sed ab omnibus exploditur;” there is also an Epistle to the Laodiceans, but it is rejected by every body*. Theodoret, who wrote in the year 423, speaks of this epistle in the same terms†. Beside these, I know not whether any ancient writer mentions it. It was certainly unnoticed during the three first centuries of the Church; and when it came afterwards to be mentioned, it was mentioned only to show, that, though such a writing did exist, it obtained no credit. It is probable that the forgery to which Jerome alludes, is the epistle which we now have under that title. If so, as hath been already observed, it is nothing more than a collection of sentences from the genuine Epistles; and was perhaps, at first, rather the exercise of some idle pen, than any serious attempt to impose a forgery upon the public. Of an Epistle to the Corinthians under St. Paul’s name, which was brought into Europe in the present century, antiquity is entirely silent. It was unheard of for sixteen centuries; and at this day, though it be extant, and was first found in the Armenian language, it is not, by the Christians of that country, received into their scriptures. I hope, after this, that there is no reader who will think there is any competition of credit, or of external proof, between these and the received Epistles: or rather, who will not acknowledge the evidence of authenticity to be confirmed by the want of success which attended imposture.

When we take into our hands the letters which the suffrage and consent of antiquity hath thus transmitted to us, the first thing that strikes our attention is the air of reality and business, as well as of seriousness and conviction, which pervades the whole. Let the sceptic read them. If he be not sensible of these qualities in them, the argument can have no weight with him. If he be; if he perceive in almost every page the language of a mind actuated by real occasions, and operating upon real circumstances, I would wish it to be observed, that the proof which arises from this perception is not to be deemed occult or imaginary, because it is incapable of being drawn out in words, or of being conveyed

* Lardner, vol. x. p. 103.

† Lardner, vol. xi. p. 88.

composure agree not among themselves, is very evident; and it is less to be wondered at if we consider,

to the apprehension of the reader in any other way, than by sending him to the books themselves."

"If it be true that we are in possession of the very letters which St. Paul wrote, let us consider what confirmation they afford to the Christian history. In my opinion they substantiate the whole transaction. The great object of modern research is to come at the epistolary correspondence of the times. Amidst the obscurities, the silence, or the contradictions of history, if a letter can be found, we regard it as the discovery of a land mark; as that by which we can correct, adjust, or supply the imperfections and uncertainties of other accounts. One cause of the superior credit which is attributed to letters is this, that the facts which they disclose generally come out *incidentally*, and therefore without design to mislead the public by false or exaggerated accounts. This reason may be applied to St. Paul's Epistles with as much justice as to any letters whatever. Nothing could be further from the intention of the writer than to record any part of his history. That his history was *in fact* made public by these letters, and has by the same means been transmitted to future ages, is a secondary and unthought-of effect. The sincerity therefore of the apostle's declarations cannot reasonably be disputed; at least we are sure that it was not vitiated by any desire of setting himself off to the public at large. But these letters form a part of the monuments of Christianity, as much to be valued for their contents, as for their originality. A more inestimable treasure the care of antiquity could not have sent down to us. Beside the proof they afford of the general reality of St. Paul's history, of the knowledge which the author of the Acts of the Apostles had obtained of that history, and the consequent probability that he was, what he professes himself to have been, a companion of the apostle's; beside the support they lend to these important inferences, they meet specifically some of the principal objections upon which the adversaries of Christianity have thought proper to rely. In particular they show,

I. That Christianity was not a story set on foot amidst the confusions which attended and immediately preceded the destruction of Jerusalem; when many extravagant reports were circulated, when men's minds were broken by terror and distress, when amidst the tumults that surrounded them enquiry was impracticable. These letters show incontestably that the religion had fixed and established itself before this state of things took place.

II. Whereas it hath been insinuated, that our gospels may have been made up of reports and stories, which were current at the time, we may observe that, with respect to the Epistles, this is impossible. A man cannot write the history of his own life from reports; nor, what is the same thing, be led by reports to refer to passages and transactions in which he states himself to have been immediately present and active. I do not allow that this insinuation is applied to the historical part of the New Testament with any colour of justice or probability; but I say, that to the Epistles it is not applicable at all.

III. These letters prove that the converts to Christianity were not drawn from the barbarous, the mean, or the ignorant set of men, which the representations of infidelity would sometimes make them. We learn from letters the character not only of the writer, but, in some measure, of the persons to whom they are written. To suppose that these letters were addressed to a rude tribe, incapable of thought or reflection, is just as reasonable as to suppose Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding to have been written for the instruction of savages. Whatever may be thought of these letters in other respects, either of diction or argument, they are certainly removed as far as possible from the habits and comprehension of a barbarous people.

IV. St. Paul's history, I mean so much of it as may be collected from his letters, is so *implicated* with that of the other apostles, and with the substance indeed of the Christian history itself, that I apprehend it will be found impossible to admit St. Paul's story (I do not speak of the miraculous part of it) to be true,

(1.) That men are naturally blind and unacquainted with the things of God; and therefore their writings will hardly be con-

and yet to reject the rest as fabulous. For instance, can any one believe that there was such a man as Paul, a preacher of Christianity in the age which we assign to him, and *not* believe that there were also at the same time, such men as Peter and James, and other apostles, who had been companions of Christ during his life, and who after his death published and avowed the same things concerning him which Paul taught? Judea, and especially Jerusalem, was the scene of Christ's ministry. The witnesses of his miracles lived there. St. Paul, by his own account, as well as that of his historian, appears to have frequently visited that city; to have carried on a communication with the church there; to have associated with the rulers and elders of that church, who were some of them apostles; to have acted, as occasions offered, in correspondence, and sometimes in conjunction with them. Can it, after this, be doubted, but that the religion and the general facts relating to it, which St. Paul appears by his letters to have delivered to the several churches which he established at a distance, were at the same time taught and published at Jerusalem itself, the place where the business was transacted; and taught and published by those who had attended the founder of the institution in his miraculous, or pretendedly miraculous, ministry?

It is observable, for so it appears both in the Epistles and from the Acts of the Apostles, that Jerusalem, and the society of believers in that city, long continued the centre from which the missionaries of the religion issued with which all other churches maintained a correspondence and connexion, to which they referred their doubts, and to whose relief, in times of public distress, they remitted their charitable assistance. This observation I think material, because it proves that this was not the case of giving our accounts in one country of what is transacted in another, without affording the hearers an opportunity of knowing whether the things related were credited by any, or even published, in the place where they are reported to have passed.

V. St. Paul's letters furnish evidence (and what better evidence than a man's own letters can be desired?) of the soundness and sobriety of his judgment. His caution in distinguishing between the occasional suggestions of inspiration, and the ordinary exercise of his natural understanding, is without example in the history of enthusiasm. His morality is every where calm, pure, and rational: adapted to the condition, the activity, and the business of social life, and of its various relations; free from the over-scrupulousness and austerities of superstition, and from, what was more perhaps to be apprehended, the abstractions of quietism, and the soarings and extravagancies of fanaticism. His judgment concerning a hesitating conscience; his opinion of the moral indifferency of many actions, yet of the prudence and even the duty of compliance, where non-compliance would produce evil effects upon the minds of the persons who observed it, is as correct and just as the most liberal and enlightened moralist could form at this day. The accuracy of modern ethics has found nothing to amend in these determinations."

"Broad, obvious, and explicit agreements prove little; because it may be suggested, that the insertion of such is the ordinary expedient of every forgery; and though they may occur, and probably will occur, in genuine writings, yet it cannot be proved that they are peculiar to these. Thus what St. Paul declares in chap. xi. of 1 Cor. concerning the institution of the eucharist, "For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me," though it be in close and verbal conformity with the account of the same transaction preserved by St. Luke, is yet a conformity of which no use can be made in our argument; for if it should be objected that this was a mere recital from the Gospel, borrowed by the author of the epistle, for the purpose of setting off his composition by an appearance of agreement with the received account of the Lord's supper, I should not know how to repel the insinuation. In like manner, the description which St. Paul gives of him-

sistent with themselves, much less with one another, as they are oftentimes inconsistent with the standard of truth, by which they are to be tried; nothing is more common than for men to betray their weakness, and cast a blemish on their composures, by contradicting themselves, especially if they are long, and consist of various subjects.

(2.) Men are much more liable to contradict one another when any schenre of doctrine is pretended to be laid down by different persons; for when they attempt to represent matters of fact, they often do it in a very different light: this may be more especially observed in those accounts that are given of doctrines that are new, or not well known by the world, or in historical accounts, not only of general occurrences, but of particular circumstances attending them, where trusting to their memory and judgment, they often impose on themselves and others.

(3.) This disagreement of human writings will more evidently appear, when their authors were men of no great natural wisdom, especially if they lived in different ages, or places remote from one another, and so could have no opportunity to consult

self in his epistle to the Philippians (iii. 5).—"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"—is made up of particulars so plainly delivered concerning him, in the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistle to the Romans, and the Epistle to the Galatians, that I cannot deny but that it would be easy for an impostor, who was fabricating a letter in the name of St. Paul, to collect these articles into one view. This, therefore, is a conformity which we do not adduce. But when I read, in the Acts of the Apostles, that "when Paul came to Derbe and Lystra, behold a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman *which was a Jewess*;" and when, in an epistle addressed to Timothy, I find him reminded of his "having known the Holy Scriptures *from a child*," which implies that he must, on one side or both, have been brought up by Jewish parents: I conceive that I remark a coincidence which shews, by its very *obliquity*, that scheme was not employed in its formation."

"An assertion in the Epistle to the Colossians, viz. that "Onesimus was one of them," is verified by the Epistle to Philemon; and is verified, not by any mention of Colosse, any the most distant intimation concerning the place of Philemon's abode, but singly by stating Onesimus to be Philemon's servant, and by joining in the salutation Philemon with Archippus; for this Archippus, when we go back to the Epistle to the Colossians, appears to have been an inhabitant of that city, and, as it should seem, to have held an office of authority in that church. The case stands thus. Take the Epistle to the Colossians alone, and no circumstance is discoverable which makes out the assertion, that Onesimus was "one of them." Take the Epistle to Philemon alone, and nothing at all appears concerning the place to which Philemon or his servant Onesimus belonged. For any thing that is said in the epistle, Philemon might have been a Thessalonian, a Philippian, or an Ephesian, as well as a Colossian. Put the two epistles together and the matter is clear. The reader perceives a *junction* of circumstances, which ascertains the conclusion at once. Now, all that is necessary to be added in this place is, that this correspondency evinces the genuineness of one epistle, as well as of the other. It is like comparing the two parts of a cloven tally. Coincidence proves the authenticity of both."

one another, or compare their writings together ; we shall scarce ever find a perfect harmony or agreement in such writings ; neither should we in scripture, were it not written by divine inspiration.

This will appear, if we consider that the penmen thereof were in themselves as liable to mistake as other men ; and had they been left to themselves herein, they would have betrayed as much weakness, confusion, and self-contradiction, as any other writers have done ; and it may be more, inasmuch as many of them had not the advantage of a liberal education, nor were conversant in human learning, but were taken from mean employments, and made use of by God in this work, that so we may herein see more of the divinity of the writings they were employed to transmit to us : besides, they lived in different ages and places, and so could not consult together what to impart, and yet we find, as we shall endeavour to prove, that they all agree together : therefore the harmony of their writings is an evident proof that they were inspired by the same spirit, and consequently that they are the word of God.

We might here consider the historical parts of scripture, and the account which one inspired writer gives of matters of facts as agreeing with what is related by another ; and also the harmony of all the doctrines contained therein, as not only agreeing in the general scope and design thereof, but in the way and manner in which they are laid down or explained : but we shall more particularly consider the harmony of scripture, as what is foretold in one part thereof, is related as accomplished in another. And,

1. There are various predictions relating to the providential dealings of God with his people, which had their accomplishment in an age or two after. Thus the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, foretold the captivity and the number of years they should be detained in Babylon, and their deliverance by Cyrus, who is expressly mentioned by name. These prophecies, and the accomplishment thereof are so obvious, that there is no one who reads the Old Testament but will see an harmony between them ; so that what in one place is represented as foretold, in another place, is spoken of as accomplished in its proper time, Isa. xlv. 28. and Chap. xlv. 1, 4. compared with Ezra i. 2, 3.

And the revolt and apostacy of Israel, their turning aside from God, to idolatry, which was the occasion of their desolation, was foretold by Moses, Deut. xxxi. 29. and by Joshua, Chap. xxiii. 15, 16. and Chap. xxiv. 19. And every one that reads the book of Judges, will see that this was accomplished ; for when Moses and Joshua were dead, and that generation

who lived with them, they revolted to idolatry and were punished for the same in various instances, Judg. ii. 8, 10, 11, 14.

And the prophecy of the great reformation which Josiah should make, and in particular, that he should *burn the bones of the idolatrous priests on the altar at Bethel*, 1 Kings xiii. 2. was exactly accomplished above three hundred years after, 2 Kings xxii. 15, 16.

2. There are various predictions under the Old Testament relating to our Saviour, and the New Testament church, many of which have had their accomplishment, and others are daily accomplishing. It is said, Acts x. 43. *To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins*; and we shall find, that what is foretold concerning him in the Old Testament, is related as accomplished in the New; particularly,

(1.) That he should come in the flesh, was foretold in the Old Testament, Hag. ii. 7. Mal. iii. 1. Isa. ix. 6. and is mentioned as accomplished in the New, John i. 14. Gal. iv. 4.

(2.) That he should work miracles for the good of mankind, and to confirm his mission, was foretold, Isa. xxxv. 5, 6. and accomplished, Matth. xi. 4, 5.

(3.) That he should live in this world in a low and humbled state, was foretold, Isa. lii. 14. and chap. liii. 3. and the whole account of his life in the gospels bears witness that those predictions were fully accomplished.

(4.) That he should be cut off, and die a violent death, was typified by the brazen serpent in the wilderness, viz. that he should be lifted up upon the cross, Numb. xxi. 9. compared with John iii. 14. and foretold in several other scriptures, Isa. liii. 7. and Dan. ix. 26. and this is largely insisted on, as fulfilled in the New Testament.

(5.) That after he had continued some time in a state of humiliation, he should be exalted, was foretold, Isa. lii. 13. chap. liii. 11, 12. Psal. lxxviii. 18. and fulfilled, Acts i. 9. Phil. ii. 9.

(6.) That his glory should be proclaimed and published in the preaching of the gospel, was foretold, Isa. xi. 10. Psal. cx. 2. Isa. lx. 1, 2, 3. and fulfilled, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Mark xvi. 15. as appears from many scriptures.

(7.) That he should be the spring and fountain of all blessedness to his people, was foretold, Gen. xxii. 18. Psal. lxxii. 17. Isa. xlix. 8, 9. and fulfilled, 2 Cor. vi. 2. Acts iii. 26. In these, and many other instances, we may observe such a beautiful consent of all the parts of scripture, as proves it to be the very word of God.

But since it will not be sufficient, to support the divine authority of scripture, to assert that there is such a harmony, as we have observed, unless we can prove that it doth not contra-

dict itself in any instances ; therefore the next thing we are to consider, is the reproach cast upon it by those who would bring all divine revelation into contempt, as though it contradicted itself in several instances, and contained various absurdities ; which, were they able to make appear, would enervate the force of the argument we are maintaining, to prove the scripture to be the word of God from the consent of the parts thereof : therefore we shall consider some of those contradictions, which many, who pretend to criticise on the words of scripture, charge it with, as so many objections against the harmonious consent, and consequently the divine authority thereof, together with the answers, which may be given to each of them.

Object. 1. If we compare our Saviour's genealogy, as related in the first of Matthew and the third of Luke, they allege that there is a very great inconsistency between them, for one mentions different persons, as his progenitors, from what the other does ; as, for instance, in Matth. i. he is said to be the son of Joseph, and Joseph the son of Jacob, and he the son of Matthan ; but the other evangelist, viz. Luke, says that he was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, which was the son of Matthat : and so we find the names of each genealogy very differing, till we come to David ; therefore they suppose both those genealogies cannot be true, inasmuch as the one contradicts the other.

Ans. It evidently appears, that there is no contradiction between these two genealogies, since Matthew gives an account of Joseph's ancestors, and Luke of Mary's, and so, both together, prove that he was the son of David, by his reputed father's, as well as his mother's side.

And if it be replied, that Luke, as well as Matthew, gives an account of Joseph's genealogy, and therefore this answer is not sufficient : we may observe, that it is said, Luke iii. 23, 24. that *Jesus was, as it is supposed, the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, &c.* the meaning is, he was, indeed, the supposed son of Joseph, but he really descended from Heli, the father of the virgin Mary ; and nothing is more common in scripture than for grandsons to be called sons ; and if we observe the meaning of the Greek words, which we render, *which was the son, &c.* it may better be rendered, who descended from Heli, and then there is not the least absurdity in it, supposing Heli to be his grandfather ; and therefore there is no appearance of contradiction between these two scriptures.

Object. 2. It is pretended, that there is a plain contradiction between these two places, 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. and 1 Chron. xxi. 25. in the former whereof it is said, that David bought the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, to build an altar on, and the oxen for burnt-offerings, that the plague might be stay-

ed, for fifty shekels of silver; but in the other, viz. in Chronicles, it is said, that he gave him for the place six hundred shekels of gold; therefore they pretend that one of these places must be wrong, inasmuch as they plainly contradict one another.

Answ. The answer that may be given to this objection, is, that David paid Araunah (who is otherwise called Ornan) for his threshing-floor, where he built an altar, and for the oxen, which he bought for sacrifice, fifty shekels of silver, as it is expressed in Samuel. But, beside this threshing-floor, he bought the whole place, as it is said in Chronicles, *i. e.* the whole tract of ground, or mountain, on which it stood, whereon he designed that the temple should be built; and therefore he saith concerning it, 1 Chron. xxii. 1. *This is the house of the Lord God, i. e.* this place, or tract of land, which I have bought round about the threshing-floor, is the place where the house of God shall stand; and *this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel*, which was to be built in that particular place, where the threshing-floor was: now, though he gave for the threshing-floor but fifty shekels of silver, (which probably was as much as it was worth) yet the whole place, containing ground enough for the temple, with all its courts, and the places leading to it, was worth a great deal more; or, if there were any houses in the place, these were also purchased to be pulled down, to make room for the building of the temple; and, for all this, he gave six hundred shekels of gold, and we can hardly suppose it to be worth less; so that there is no real contradiction between these two places.

Object. 3. It is pretended, that there is a contradiction between 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. and 1 Chron. xxi. 12. in the former of which Gad came to David, being sent to reprove him for his numbering the people, and said, *Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land?* But, in Chronicles, he speaks of but *three years of famine.*

Answ. To reconcile this seeming contradiction.

1. Some think, that in some ancient copies, it is not seven, but three, (a) years of famine, in Samuel, as it is in Chronicles; the reason of this conjecture is, because the LXX, or Greek translation, have it so; and they think that these translators would hardly have made so bold with scripture, as to put three for seven, if they had not found it so in the copies that they made use of, when they compiled this translation: but probably this answer will not give satisfaction to the objectors; therefore,

2. The best way to account for this seeming contradiction, is this: in Chronicles, Gad bids him chuse if he would have three years of famine, viz. from that time; but in Samuel he

(a) שבע שנים are wanting only in 85 and 112 of Kennicott.

salth, shall seven years of famine come unto thee, that is, as though he should say there hath been three years of famine already, for *Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites*, 2 Sam. xxi. 1. Now, that famine ceased but the year before, and the ground being so chaped and hard for want of rain this year, which was the fourth, it was little better than a year of famine. Now, said Gad, wilt thou have this famine continued three years more (which, in all, makes up seven years) unto thee in the land? And, if we take it in this sense, there is no contradiction between these two scriptures, though one speaks of three years, and the other of seven.

Object. 4. They pretend to find an inconsistency, or absurdity, little better than a contradiction, by comparing 1 Sam. xvi. 21, 22. and chap. xvii. 55. In the former it is said, *David came to Saul, and stood before him, and he loved him greatly; and he sent to Jesse, with the intent that he might give him leave to stand before him, inasmuch as he had found favour in his sight.* Now, say they, how can this be consistent with the other scripture; where Saul seeing David going forth against Goliath the Philistine, asked Abner, *Whose son is this youth?* And Abner replied, *He could not tell;* and, in the next verse, he is ordered to *enquire who he was.* Now how could this be, when he had been his armour-bearer, stood before him, and found favour in his sight; and he had sent to Jesse, to desire that he might live with him?

Answ. I can see no appearance of absurdity, or defect of harmony, between these two scriptures; for supposing Saul's memory had failed him, and he had forgot that David had stood before him as a servant, shall the scripture, that gives an account of this, be reflected on, as containing an inconsistency? It is true, David had stood before Saul, as his armour-bearer; yet he had, for some time, been sent home and dismissed from his service, during which time he kept his father's sheep; and probably he lived not long in Saul's family; therefore it is no wonder if Saul had now forgot him. There is no master of a family but may forget what servants have formerly lived with him, and much more a king, who hardly knows the names of the greatest part of the servants that are about him: besides, at this time, David appeared in the habit of a shepherd, and therefore Saul might well say, *whose son is this youth?* This sufficiently accounts for the difficulty, and vindicates this scripture from the charge of inconsistency; though some account for it thus, by supposing that Saul knew David, (as having been his armour-bearer) but did not know his father, and therefore asks, *whose son is this?* or who is he that hath so bold and daring a son, as this youth appears to be? If these things be considered, there appears not the least absurdity in this scripture.

Object. 5. Another contradiction, which some charge the scripture with, is, that when Israel, pursuant to the advice of Balaam, committed idolatry, and went a-whoring after the daughters of Moab, and God consumed them for it by the plague, it is said, Numb. xxv. 9. *Those that died in the plague were twenty-four thousand*; but the apostle Paul, referring to the same thing, says, 1 Cor. x. 8. *Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.*

Answ. 1. The answer that may be given to this objection, that the apostle Paul, when he says, *three and twenty thousand died*, or fell, *in one day*, speaks of those who died by the immediate hand of God, by the pestilential distemper that was sent among them; but, besides these, there were many more that died by the hand of public justice for this sin; for in that chapter in Numbers, verse 4 and 5. we read of the *heads of the people being hanged up before the Lord, and the judges being ordered to slay every every man his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.* These died by the sword of justice, and it is no great impropriety to say, that such died in a mediate way, by the plague, or sword of God; the sword is one of his plagues, as well as pestilential diseases, and is frequently so stiled in scripture: now we cannot suppose that fewer died of this latter plague, if that be the import of the word, than a thousand; so that Moses gives the number of all that died, whether by God's immediate hand, or by the sword of the magistrate, pursuant to his command: but if it be reckoned too great a strain upon the sense of the word plague, to admit of this solution, let it be farther observed, that, in the 9th verse, where Moses gives the sum total of those that died, it is not said that they were such who died *of* the plague, but *in* the plague; that is, those that died in or soon after the time that the plague raged among them, whose death was occasioned by this sin, were *four and twenty thousand*; so that these two places of scripture are so far from contradicting, that they rather illustrate one another.

Object. 6. Another contradiction is pretended to be between Gal. i. 8. where the apostle says, *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*; 2 Cor. xi. 4. *If he that cometh, preacheth another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.* In one place he speaks against those who preach another gospel; in the other he says, they may be borne with; which seems to be a contradiction.

Answ. For the reconciling and accounting for the sense of these two scriptures, let us consider, that in the former of them

the apostle pronounces them that preached another gospel accursed, and therefore, doubtless, they were not to be borne with, or allowed of; therefore it must be enquired what he means when he says, in the other scripture, that such may be well borne with; now this scripture will, without the least strain or force upon the words, admit of one of these two senses.

1. It may be considered as containing a sarcasm, by which the apostle reproves their being too much inclined to adhere to false teachers: if, says he, these bring you tidings of a better Spirit, a better gospel, then bear with them; but this they cannot do, therefore reject them; or,

2. The words may be rendered, instead of *ye might well bear with him*, *ye might well bear with me*, as is observed in the marginal reference; the word *him* being in an Italic character, as will be elsewhere observed,* is not in the original, and therefore *me* may as well be supplied as *him*, and so the meaning is this; ye bear with false preachers, are very favourable to them, and seem a little cold to us the apostles; so that I am afraid, as is observed in the foregoing verse, lest your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ; you can bear with these false teachers, and will you not bear with me? as he says, ver. 1. *Would to God you could bear with me a little in my folly, and indeed bear with me.* It is a sign religion is at a low ebb, when it is with some difficulty that professors are persuaded to bear with those that preach the pure gospel of Christ, who are too prone to turn aside to another gospel. Take the words in either of these senses, and they exactly harmonize with that text in Galatians, and not, as the objectors pretend, contradict it.

Object. 7. Another charge of contradiction, which is brought against scripture, is, that our Saviour saith, Matth. x. 34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword:* this is contrary to Christ's general character, as a *prince of peace*, Isa. ix. 6. and to the advice he gives his disciples, not to use the sword, because *such shall perish by it*, Mat. xxvi. 52. and what he saith else, *My kingdom is not of this world*, John xviii. 36. and therefore not to be propagated by might or power, by force or civil policy, or those other carnal methods, by which the kingdoms of this world are advanced and promoted.

Answer. For the reconciling this seeming contradiction, let it be considered, that Christ did not come to put a sword into his followers hands, or to put them upon making war with the powers among whom they dwell, for the propagating the Christian religion; his gospel was to be advanced by spiritual methods: in this sense, the design of his coming was not to send a sword,

* See *Ques.* 154.

but to bring spiritual peace to his people ; but when he saith, I came to send a sword, it implies that his coming, his kingdom and gospel, should occasion persecution and war, by reason of the corruption of men ; this the gospel may do, and yet not put men upon disturbing their neighbours, or making war with them ; and this is not contrary to Christ's general character of coming to be the author of spiritual peace to his people.

Object. 8. Another contradiction is pretended to be between 1 Kings viii. 9. and Heb. ix. 4. in the former it is said, *There was nothing in the ark but the two tables, which Moses put there ;* in the latter, that *there was the golden pot, that had manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.*

Ansiv. This seeming contradiction may easily be reconciled : for we suppose it true that there was nothing in the ark but the two tables, as it is said in the former of these scriptures ; therefore to explain the latter agreeably to it, two senses may be given of it.

1. It is not necessary to suppose, that the apostle means, in the ark was the golden pot, &c. but in the holiest of all, which he mentions in the foregoing verse ; therefore the meaning is, as in the holiest of all, there was the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant, so in it was the golden pot and Aaron's rod : but because there may be an objection against this sense, from its being said in the words immediately following, that over it were the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat, where it refers to the ark, and not to the tabernacle, or holiest of all ; if therefore the cherubims were over the ark, then the other things must be supposed to be in it, which objection, indeed, is not without its force, unless we suppose that the words* may be rendered *in the higher parts of it, to wit, of the holiest of all, were the cherubims of glory above the mercy seat,* and accordingly the meaning is this ; that within this second veil was not only the ark, the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod, &c. but also the cherubims of glory, which were above them all : but since the grammatical construction, seems rather to favour the objection, there is another sense given of the words, which sufficiently reconciles the seeming contradiction, *viz.*

2. When it is said, † that therein, or in it, to wit, the ark, was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, the meaning is, they were near it, or beside it, or some way or other fastened, or adjoining to it, in some inclosure, in the outside of the ark, whereas nothing was in it but the two tables : so that there is no real contradiction between these two scriptures.

* Ἰσχυρὰ αὐτῆς.

† [εἰς] ἢ ἐπ' ἑστῆτες σὺν αὐτῇ, Cum, ad. prope, juxta, es, well as in

Many more instances of the like nature might have been given, but, instead thereof, we shall rather chuse to lay down some general rules for the reconciling seeming contradictions in scripture, which may be applied by us in other cases, where we meet with the like difficulties. As,

1. When two scriptures seem to contradict each other, we sometimes find that this arises from the inadvertency of some who have transcribed the copies of scripture, putting one word for another; though it may be observed,

(1.) That this is not often found; for as great care has been taken in transcribing the manuscripts of scripture, as in any manuscripts whatever, if not greater.

(2.) If there have been mistakes in transcribing, it is only in a few instances, where there is a likeness between two words, so that one might easily be mistaken for the other; and this ought not to prejudice any against the scripture, for it only argues, that though the inspired penmen were infallible, the scribes that took copies of scripture for common use were not so.

(3.) When there is any such mistake, it may generally be rectified by some other copy, that has the word as it really should be: it is so in our printed Bibles, in some editions of them we find mistakes, as to some words, that may be rectified by others, which are more correct; and if so, why may not this be supposed to be in some written copies thereof, that were used before printing, which is but a late invention, was known in the world, from which all our printed copies are taken?

2. When the same action in scripture seems to be ascribed to different persons, or the same thing said to be done in different places, there is no contradiction, for the same person, or place, is sometimes called by various names: thus Moses's father-in-law, who met him in the wilderness, and advised him in the settling the government of the people, is called, in one place, Jethro, Exod. xviii. 1. and in another Hobab, Numb. x. 29. So the mountain, from which God gave the law to Israel, is sometimes called mount Sinai, Exod. xix. 20. and at other times Horeb, Deut. i. 6.

3. Chronological difficulties, or seeming contradictions, arising from a differing number of years, in which the same thing is said to be done, may be reconciled, by computing them from the different epocha's, or beginnings of computation: as it is said, Exod. xii. 40. *The sojournings of the Children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years; but, when God foretels this sojournings, it is said, Gen. xv. 13. Thy seed shall be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and shall afflict them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years:* now the four hundred and thirty years takes its beginning of computation from Abraham's being called to leave his country, and

sojourn in the land of promise, as in a strange land; this was four hundred and thirty years before Israel went out of Egypt; but the four hundred years mentioned in Genesis, during which time his seed should sojourn, takes its beginning of computation from his having the promised seed, or from the birth of Isaac, which was twenty-five years after his leaving his country; from that time to the children of Israel's going out of Egypt was four hundred and five years; and the five years above four hundred are left out, as being an inconsiderable number, which is very agreeable to our common way of computing time, when a large even number is mentioned, to leave out a small one of four or five years, more or less, as in the instance here mentioned, especially when time is expressed by centuries, as it is here; for it is said, in ver. 16. *in the fourth generation, that is, after the fourth century of years, they shall come hither again.*

4. When, by comparing the years of the reign of several of the kings of Judah and Israel, mentioned in the books of Kings and Chronicles, we find that some are said, in one of them, to have reigned three or four years longer than the account of the years of their reign, mentioned by the other, the seeming contradiction may be reconciled, by considering him as beginning to reign before his father's death, as Solomon did before David died; or from his being nominated as his father's successor, and owned as such by the people, which was sometimes done to prevent disputes that might arise about the matter afterwards; and sometimes, when a king was engaged in foreign wars, in which he was obliged to be absent from his people, and the event hereof was uncertain, he appointed his son to reign in his absence, from which time he had the title of a king, though his father was living; or when a king was superannuated, or unfit to reign, as Uzziah was when smote with leprosy; or when he was weary of the fatigue and burden of government, he would settle his son, as his viceroy, in his life-time, on which account the son is sometimes said to reign with his father: thus many account for that difficulty, in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9. where it is said, *Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign*; but in 2 Kings xxiv. 8. he is said to have been *eighteen years old when he began to reign*: the meaning is, that when he was eight years old, he was nominated as his father's successor; but when he was eighteen years old, he began to reign alone, his father being then dead.

5. Scriptures that seem to contradict one another may not treat of the same, but different subjects, as to the general design thereof: thus, that seeming contradiction between the apostles Paul and James is to be accounted for; the former says, Gal. ii. 16. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of*

the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; but the other says, Jam. ii. 24. That by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. The apostle Paul speaks of a sinner's justification, or freedom from the condemning sentence of the law in the sight of God, which gives him a right to eternal life, in which respect he looks for it out of himself, and, by faith, depends alone on Christ's righteousness; in this sense, works do not justify: whereas the apostle James, when he asserts, that *a man is justified by works, and not by faith only*, intends that our profession and sincerity therein is justified; that is evidenced, not by our having just notions of things, or an historical faith, such as the devils themselves have, but by those works of holiness, which are the fruits of it; this is the only justification he treats of, and therefore doth not in the least contradict the apostle Paul, who treats of another kind of justification, in which works are excluded.

6. When two scriptures seem to contradict one another, they may sometimes be reconciled, by considering the same thing absolutely in one place, and comparatively in the other: thus, in many scriptures, we are commanded to extend that love to every one in their several relations, which is due; and yet our Saviour says, Luke xiv. 26. *If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, he cannot be my disciple*: this is to be understood comparatively, that is, our love to the creature ought to bear no proportion to that which is due to God.

7. Scriptures that seem to contradict one another, often speak of different persons, or persons of different characters: thus it is said, Luke vi. 36. *Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful*; or, *judge not, that ye be not judged*, Matt. vii. 2. This respects persons in a private capacity, and therefore doth not contradict those other scriptures that are applied to magistrates in the execution of public justice; to such it is said, Deut. xix. 21. *Thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*

8. Two contrary assertions may be both true in differing respects; thus our Saviour says in one place, *The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always*, Matt. xxvi. 11. and in another, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world*, chap. xxviii. 20. these are both true, one respecting Christ's bodily presence, as man, in which respect he is not now with us; the other his spiritual and powerful influences, whereby he is always present with his people as God.

9. We must take notice of different times or dispensations, in which respect those laws or ordinances, which were to be received and observed as a rule of faith and duty at one time, may not be so at another; thus circumcision is recommended

as a duty, and a privilege to the Jews before Christ's time, in which respect the apostle reckons it among the advantages which they formerly had above all other nations, Rom. iii. 1, 2. but when the gospel dispensation was erected, and the Jewish œconomy abolished, it was so far from being an advantage, that the observance of it was deemed no less than a subversion of the gospel, as the apostle says, Gal. v. 2. *If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing*; and the same apostle gives a very diminutive character of those institutes of the ceremonial law, which he calls, in his time, *weak and beggarly elements*, such as had a tendency to bring them again *into bondage*, and blames them for observing the Jewish festivals, such as days, months, times, and years; to wit, the new moons, feasts of weeks, or of years, such as the seventh year, or the jubilees, and tells them, on this occasion, *I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labour in vain*, chap. iv. 9, 10, 11. so that what was a duty and a privilege in one age of the church, and enjoined with the greatest strictness, and severest punishments on those that neglected it, is forbid, as a sin in another age thereof, without the least shadow of contradiction between those scriptures, which either enjoin or forbid it: thus, when our Saviour first sent his twelve disciples to preach the gospel, he commanded them, *Not to go in the way of the Gentiles*, Matt. x. 5. to wit, so long as he was here upon earth, or till they had finished their ministry among the Jews, to whom the word was first to be preached; but afterwards, when the gospel was to be spread throughout the world, he gave them a commission to *preach the gospel to all nations*, chap. xxviii. 19. which accordingly they did, as apprehending there was no contradiction between the former prohibition and the present command. (a)

(a) "The most ancient tradition among all nations, is exactly agreeable to the relation of *Moses*. For his description of the original of the world is almost the very same as in the ancient *Phœnician* histories, which are translated by *Philo Biblius* from *Sanchoniathon's* Collection; and a good part of it is to be found among the *Indians* and *Egyptians*; whence it is that in *Linus*, *Hesiod*, and many other *Greek* writers, mention is made of a *Chaos*, (signified by some under the name of an *Egg*) and of the framing of animals, and also of man's formation after the divine image, and the dominion given him over all living creatures; which are to be seen in many writers, particularly in *Ovid*, who transcribed them from the *Greek*. That all things were made by the Word of God, is asserted by *Epicurmus*, and the *Platonists*; and before them, by the most ancient writer (I do not mean of those Hymns which go under his name, but) of those Verses which were of old called *Orpheus's*; not because *Orpheus* composed them, but because they contained his doctrines. And *Empedocles* acknowledged, that the sun was not the original light, but the receptacle of light, (the storehouse and vehicle of fire, as the ancient Christians express it.) *Aratus*, and *Catullus*, thought the divine residence was above the starry orb; in which *Homer* says, there is a continual light. *Thales* taught from the ancient schools, that God was the oldest of beings, because not begotten; that the world was most beautiful, because the workmanship of God; that darkness was before light, which latter we find in *Orpheus's* Verses, and *Hesiod*,

IV. The divine authority of scripture may be further proved from the scope and design of the whole, which is to give all glory to God.

whence it was, that the nations, who were most tenacious of ancient customs, reckoned the time by nights. *Anaxagorus* affirmed, that all things were regulated by the supreme mind: *Aratus*, that the stars were made by God; *Virgil*, from the *Greeks*, that Life was infused into things by the Spirit of God; *Hesiod*, *Homer*, and *Cullimachus*, that man was formed of clay: lastly, *Maximus Tyrius* asserts, that it was a constant tradition received by all nations, that there was one supreme God, the cause of all things. And we learn from *Josephus*, *Philo*, *Tibullius*, *Clement*, *Alexandrinus*, and *Lucian*, (for I need not mention the *Hebrews*) that the memory of the seven days' work was preserved, not only among the *Greeks* and *Italians*, by honouring the seventh day; but also amongst the *Celte* and *Indians*, who all measured the time by weeks; as we learn from *Philostratus*, *Dion Cassius*, and *Justin Martyr*; and also the most ancient names of the day. The *Egyptians* tell us, that at first men led their lives in great simplicity, their bodies being naked, whence arose the poet's fiction of the Golden Age, famous among the *Indians*, as *Strabo* remarks. *Maimonides* takes notice, that the history of *Adam*, of *Eve*, of the tree, and of the serpent, was extant among the idolatrous *Indians* in his time: and there are many witnesses in our age, who testify that the same is still to be found amongst the heathen dwelling in *Peru*, and the *Philippine* islands, people belonging to the same *India*; the name of *Adam* amongst the *Brachmans*; and that it was reckoned six thousand years since the creation of the world, by those of *Siam*. *Berosus* in his history of *Chaldea*, *Manetho* in his of *Egypt*, *Hierom* in his of *Phanicia*, *Histecus*, *Hevtaus*, *Hillanicus* in theirs of *Greece*, and *Hesiod* among the Poets; all assert that the lives of those who descended from the first men, were almost a thousand years in length; which is the less incredible, because the historians of many nations (particularly *Pausanias* and *Philostratus* amongst the *Greeks*, and *Pliny* amongst the *Romans*) relate, that men's bodies, upon opening their sepulchres, were found to be much larger in old time. And *Catullus*, after many of the *Greeks*, relates, that divine visions were made to men before their great and manifold crimes did, as it were, hinder God, and these Spirits that attend him, from holding any correspondence with men: We almost every where, in the *Greek* and *Latin* historians, meet with the savage life of the Giants, mentioned by *Moses*. And it is very remarkable concerning the deluge, that the memory of almost all nations ends in the history of it, even those nations which were unknown till our forefathers discovered them: so that *Favro* calls all that the unknown time. And all those things which we read in the poets, wrapped up in fables (a Liberty they allow themselves) are delivered by the ancient writers according to truth and reality; that is, agreeable to *Moses*; as you may see in *Berosus's* History of *Chaldea*, *Hydems's* of *Assyria*, who mentions the dove that was sent out of the ark; and in *Plutarch* from the *Greeks*; and in *Lucian*, who says, that in *Hierapolis* of *Syria*, there was remaining a most ancient history of the ark, and of the preserving a few not only of mankind, but also of other living creatures. The same history was extant also in *Molo* and in *Nicolaus Damascenus*: which latter names the ark, which we also find in the history of *Deucalion* in *Apollodorus*. and many *Spaniards* affirm, that in several parts of *America*, as *Cuba*, *Mechoauana*, *Newaragu*, is preserved the memory of the deluge, the saving alive of animals, especially the raven and dove; and the deluge itself in that part called *Golden Castle*. That remark of *Pliny's*, that *Joppa* was built before the Flood, discovers what part of the earth men inhabited before the Flood. The place where the ark rested after the deluge on the *Gordyean* mountains, is evident from the constant tradition of the *Armenians* from all passages, down to this very day. *Japhet*, the father of the *Europeans*, and from him *Jon*, or, as they formerly pronounced it, *Janson* of the *Greeks*, and *Hannan* of the *Africans*, are names to be seen in *Moses*, and *Josephus* and others observe the like footsteps in the names of other places and nations. And which of the poets is it, in which we do not find mention made of the attempt to climb the heavens? *Diodorus Siculus*.

It may be observed, concerning the scripture, that the advancing the divine perfections, and debasing the creature, is the great end designed by God in giving it; and we find that whatever doctrine is laid down therein, this end is still pursued. Now scripture-doctrines are designed to advance the glory of God, either directly or by consequence.

Strabo, Tacitus, Pliny, Solinus, speak of the burning of *Sodom*. *Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, Philo Biblius*, testify the ancient custom of Circumcision, which is confirmed by those nations descended from *Abraham*, not only *Hebrews*, but also *Idumeans, Ismaelites*, and others. The history of *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph*, agreeable with *Moses*, was extant of old in *Philo Biblius* out of *Sanchoniaton*, in *Berosus, Hecateus, Damascenus, Artapanus, Eupolemus, Demetrius*, and partly in the ancient writers of the Orphic Verses; and something of it is still extant in *Justin*, out of *Trogus Pompeius*. By almost all which, is related also the history of *Moses*, and his principal acts. The Orphic Verses expressly mention his being taken out of the water, and the two tables that were given him by God. To these we may add *Polemon*; and several things about his coming out of *Egypt*, from the *Egyptian* writers, *Menetho, Lysimachus, Cherevon*. Neither can any prudent man think it at all credible, that *Moses*, who had so many enemies, not only of the *Egyptians*, but also of many other nations, as the *Idumeans, Arabians*, and *Phœnicians*, would venture to relate any thing concerning the creation of the world, or the original of things, which could be confuted by more ancient writings, or was contradictory to the ancient and received opinions: or that he would relate any thing of matters in his own time, that could be confuted by the testimony of many persons then alive, *Diodorus Siculus, Strabo*, and *Pliny, Tacitus*, and after them *Bionysius Longinus* (concerning loftiness of Speech) make mention of *Moses*. Besides the *Talmudists, Pliny* and *Apuleius*, speak of *Jannes* and *Mambres*, who resisted *Moses* in *Egypt*. Some things there are in other writings, and many things amongst the *Pythagoreans*, about the Law and Rites given by *Moses, Strabo* and *Justin*, out of *Trogus*, remarkably testify concerning the religion and righteousness of the ancient *Jews*: so that there seems to be no need of mentioning what is found, or has formerly been found of *Josua* and others, agreeable to the *Hebrew* books; seeing, that whoever gives credit to *Moses* (which it is a shame for any one to refuse) cannot but believe those famous miracles done by the hand of God; which is the principal thing here aimed at. Now that the miracles of late date, such as those of *Elija, Elisha*, and others, should not be counterfeited, there is this further argument; that in those times *Judea* was become more known, and because of the difference of religion was hated by the neighbours, who could very easily confute the first rise of a lie. The history of *Jonah's* being three days in the whale's belly is in *Lycophron* and *Aeneas Gazeus*, only under the name of *Hercules*; to advance whose fame, every thing that was great and noble used to be related of him, as *Tacitus* observes. Certainly nothing but the manifest evidence of the history could compel *Julian* (who was as great an enemy to the *Jews* as to the *Christians*) to confess that there were some men inspired by the divine Spirit amongst the *Jews*, and that fire descended from heaven, and consumed the sacrifices of *Moses* and *Elias*. And here it is worthy of observation, that there was not only very severe punishments threatened amongst the *Hebrews*, to any who should falsely assume the gift of prophecy, but very many kings, who by that means might have procured great authority to themselves, and many learned men, such as *Esdra*s and others, dared not to assume this honour to themselves; nay, some ages before Christ's time, nobody dared to do it. Much less could so many thousand people be imposed upon, in avouching a constant and public miracle, I mean that of the oracle, which shined on the High Priest's breast, which is so firmly believed by all the *Jews*, to have remained till the destruction of the first temple, that their ancestors must of necessity be well assured of the truth of it."

1. As to the former of these, the scripture abounds with instances, in which God is adored or set forth, as the object of adoration, that is, as having all divine perfections, and as doing every thing becoming himself as a God of glory: thus he is described herein, as the *Lord most high and terrible, a great King over all the earth*, Psal. xlvii. 2. and *glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders*, Exod. xv. 11. and as *the true God, the living God, and an everlasting King*, Jer. x. 10. and as *the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments*, Dan. ix. 4. and it is also said, *Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven, and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head over all*, 1 Chron. xxix. 11. These, and such-like adorable perfections, are not only occasionally ascribed to God in scripture, but every part thereof displays his glory in a manner so illustrious, as gives ground to conclude, that the great design of it is to raise in us becoming apprehensions of him, and to put us upon adoring and worshipping him as God.

2. It may, by a just consequence, be said to give all the glory to him, as it represents the emptiness, and even nothingness of all creatures, when compared with him, and hereby recommends him, as all in all: when it speaks of the best of creatures, as veiling their faces before him, as acknowledging themselves unworthy to behold his glory, and as deriving all their happiness from him; and when it speaks of man as a sinful guilty creature, expecting all from him, and depending upon him for grace sufficient for him; and when it speaks of God, as the author and finisher of faith, in whom alone there is hope of obtaining mercy and forgiveness, grace here, and glory hereafter, and lays down this as the sum of all religion; we must certainly conclude that its design is to give all glory to God.

Now let us consider the force of this argument, or how the general scope and design of scripture, to give all glory to God, proves its divine authority. Had it been the invention and contrivance of men, or if the writers thereof had pretended they had received it by inspiration from God, and it had not been so, then the great design thereof would have been to advance themselves; and they would certainly have laid down such a scheme of religion therein, as is agreeable to the corrupt appetites and inclinations of men, or would tend to indulge and dispense with sin, and not such an one as sets forth the holiness of God, and his infinite displeasure against it.

And as for salvation, the penmen of scripture, had they not been inspired, would certainly have represented it as very easy

to be attained, and not as a work of such difficulty as it really is ; and they would also have propagated such a religion, as supposes the creature not dependent on, or beholden to God for this salvation, and then the scripture would have detracted from his glory ; but since, on the other hand, its general design is to give him the glory due to his name, this is a convincing evidence of its divine original.

From the general design of scripture, as being to give all glory to God, we may infer,

(1.) That whenever we read the word of God, we ought to have this great design in view, and so not consider it barely as an historical narrative of things done, but should observe how the glory of the divine perfections is set forth, that hereby we may be induced to ascribe greatness to God, and admire him for all the discoveries which he makes of himself therein.

(2.) The scriptures' general design should be a rule to us in the whole of our conversation, wherein we ought to give all glory to God : whatever we receive or expect from him, or whatever duty we engage in, let us act as those, that not only take the scripture for our rule, but its general scope and design for our example.

(3.) Whatsoever doctrines are pretended to be deduced from, or to contain the sense of scripture, which, notwithstanding, tend to depreciate the divine perfections, these are to be rejected, as contrary to its general scope and design.

V. Another argument may be taken from the character of the penmen of scripture ; and here let them be supposed to be either good men, or bad : if good men, then they could not give themselves such a liberty to impose upon the world, and pretend that they received that from God, which they did not ; and if they were bad men, they neither could nor would have laid down such doctrines, as centre in, lead the soul to God, and tend to promote self-denial, and advance his glory in all things ; since this is to suppose the worst of men to have the best ends, which we can never do ; for, as our Saviour says, *Matt. vii. 16. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ?* He is speaking of false prophets, who were to be known by their fruits ; wicked men will have bad designs, or are like the corrupt tree, which bringeth forth evil fruit. But, on the other hand, if persons deliver that which carries in it such internal evidence of divine truth, and have such a noble design in view, as the securing the honour of God, and promoting his interest in the world, these must certainly be approved of by him, and concluded to be good men ; and if so, then they would not impose a fallacy on the world, or say that the scripture was given by divine inspiration, when they knew it to be otherwise.

If the scriptures are not the word of God, then the penmen thereof have miserably deceived, not a small number of credulous people, but the whole Christian world, among whom we must allow that many were judicious, and such as would not easily suffer themselves to be imposed on; to which we may add, that others to whom the gospel was preached, were exasperated enemies to those that preached it, and particularly to these inspired penmen of scripture, and greatly prejudiced against their doctrine, and therefore would use all possible endeavours to detect the fallacy, if there had been any; so that it was morally impossible for them to deceive the world in this instance, or make them believe that the scriptures were the word of God, if there had not been the strongest evidence to convince them of it, which they could not withstand or gainsay.

But, that we may enter a little further into the character of the penmen of scripture, let it be observed,

1. That they could not be charged by their enemies with immoral practices, or notorious crimes, which might weaken the credit of the truths they delivered: they were, indeed, compassed about with like infirmities with other men; for it is not to be supposed, that, because they were inspired, therefore they were perfectly free from sin; since that does not necessarily follow from their having this privilege conferred upon them; yet their enemies themselves could find no great blemishes in their character, which might justly prejudice them against their writings, or that might render them unfit to be employed in this great work of transmitting the mind of God to the world.

2. They appear to be men of great integrity, not declining to discover and aggravate their own faults, as well as the sins of others. Thus Moses, though a man of great meekness, as to his general character, discovers his own failing, in repining, and being uneasy, because of the untoward and turbulent spirit of the people, over whom he was appointed a governor, when he represents himself as complaining to God; *Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? I am not able to bear this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see mine own wretchedness,* Numb. xi. 11—15. This was certainly a very great blemish in the character of this excellent man; but he does not attempt to conceal it; nor does he omit to mention his backwardness to comply with the call of God, to deliver

his brethren out of their bondage in Egypt, but tells us what poor trifling excuses he made; as when he says, Exod. iv. 10, 13, 19. *O Lord, I am not eloquent*; and when God answers him, by promising to supply this defect, he obstinately persists in declining this service, and says, *O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send*; that is, by any one but myself; so that he who expressed such courage and resolution forty years before in defending the oppressed Israelites, and supposed that his brethren would have understood that God, by his hand, would deliver them, but they understood it not, Acts vii. 24, 25. when God really called him to deliver them, he obstinately refused to obey; and, indeed, whatever excuses he might make, the main thing that lay at the bottom was fear, and therefore, as a further inducement to it, God tells him, *The men were dead that sought his life*. All this he says concerning himself; and elsewhere he tells us, Deut. xxxii. 51, 52. compared with Numb. xx. 10, 11, 12. and Deut. iii. 25—27. that he did not sanctify the name of God in the eyes of the people, but spake unadvisedly with his lips; and that, for this, God would not let him go into the land of Canaan, though he earnestly desired it.

And the prophet Jeremiah tells us, how he was ready to faint, and, in a murmuring way, curses the day of his birth, Jer. xx. 7, 8, 14, 15, 16. and seems almost determined *not to make mention of God, nor speak any more in his name*, because he had been put in the stocks by Pashur, and was derided and mocked by others, who were, indeed, below his notice.

And David discovered his own sin, though it was a very scandalous one, in the matter of Uriah, Psal. li. the title, compared with ver. 14. and prays, *Deliver me from blood guiltiness*; which is a confession of his being guilty of murder.

The apostles also discover their infirmities. Thus Paul discovers his furious temper, in persecuting the church, before his conversion, and ranks himself amongst the chief of sinners, 1 Tim. i. 13, 15. And how willing is Matthew to let the world know, that, before his conversion, he was a publican: thus he characterises himself, Matt. x. 5. and says, chap. ix. 9. that when Christ called him, he sat *at the receipt of custom*, though the publicans were reckoned among the vilest of men for extortion, and other crimes, and were universally hated by the Jews.

Moreover as the penmen of scripture expose their own crimes, so they do those of their nearest and dearest friends and relatives, which carnal policy would have inclined them to conceal. Thus Moses tells us how Aaron his brother made the golden calf, and so was the encourager and promoter of the people's idolatry; that it was he that *bid them break off the golden ear-rings, which he received at their hand, wherewith he*

made a molten calf, and then built an altar before it, Exod. xxxii. 2—5. Though the Jewish historian * was so politic, as to conceal this thing, for the honour of his own nation; and therefore when he tells us, that Moses went up into the mount to receive the law, he says nothing of the scandalous crime, which the people were guilty of at the foot of the mountain at the same time.

Moreover, as they do not conceal their sins, so they sometimes declare the meanness of their extraction, which shewed that they did not design to have honour from men. Thus Amos tells us, Amos i. 1. *He was among the herdmen of Tekoa*: and that he was not bred up in the schools of the prophets, which he intends, when he styles himself, *no prophet, neither a prophet's son*, chap. vii. 14.

And the evangelists occasionally tell the world how they were fisher-men, when called to be Christ's disciples, and so not bred up in the schools of learning among the Jews. (a)

* Vid. Joseph Antiq.

(a) Reason will affirm that every effect speaks a cause; then we ask how it should happen that a dozen illiterate fishermen and mechanics of Galilee, after the wisdom of the philosophers had left the world in darkness, should have introduced so much light of knowledge, that our children and servants are wiser than the ancient philosophers? Let no one say, that they only began, what the wisdom of after ages have carried on towards perfection. The writings of the apostles are the same to this day; as is proved by the earliest versions, quotations, and manuscripts. So perfect was the system of morals they left, that no error has been detected in it, and all attempts to build upon or add to it, have only exposed the ignorance of the individuals who have essayed to do so.

How has it happened that whilst learned men have ever been at discord about the nature, and true foundation of the obligation of virtue, these despised fishermen, have shown the true foundation and nature of duty, and have erred in no particular? Is it not strange that whilst the wisdom of the philosophers made their purest virtue but a more refined pride, these poor men laid the ax to the root of that pride, and taught the world that even their virtues brought them under additional obligations to Divine grace? Is it not remarkable that the system taught by these unlearned men should so perfectly coincide with what is discovered in the works of God, that whilst it aims to eradicate sin, it represents it as in every instance eventually productive of the glory of that God, who brings good out of the evil, and light out of the darkness?

How is it to be accounted for, that when the most learned rabbies perverted the law, and knew not its meaning, that a few crude and uninstructed fishermen should remove their false constructions of that law, explain the types, shadows, promises and prophecies, show how the truth and justice of God might be clear in the pardon of sin, and set the labouring conscience at rest? How came the fishermen of Galilee to discover to the wise and learned what they had never conjectured, and truths, which only attentive minds at the present time can acquiesce in, that all things are certain, because foreknown, and foreknown because Divine knowledge must be infinite and eternal, and yet that rational creatures may be capable of choosing and refusing, though they must be wholly dependent? Is it not passing strange that the wisdom of Philosophers, the learning of Rabbies, the power of Kings and Emperors, the influence of thousands of priests, the prejudices of the world, and the malice of the wicked should be overcome by twelve poor fishermen? How is it to be accounted for that these twelve poor illiterate men should

3. They were very far from being crafty or designing men ; neither did they appear to be men that were able to manage an imposture of this nature, or frame a new scheme of religion, and, at the same time, make the world believe that it was from God. For,

(1.) None that read the scriptures can find any appearance of design in the penmen thereof, to advance themselves or families. Moses, indeed, had the burden of government, but he did not affect the pomp and splendor of a king ; neither did he make any provision for his family, so as to advance them to great honours in the world, which it was in his power to have done : the laws he gave, rendered those of his own tribe, to wit, that of Levi, incapable of, and not designed for kingly government ; and the highest honour of the priesthood, which was fixed in that tribe, was conferred on his brother's children, not his own.

(2.) The prophets were very few of them great men in the world, not advanced to great places in the government ; the esteem and reputation they had among the people at any time, was only for their integrity, and the honour conferred on them by God ; and the apostles were plain men, who drove on no design to gain riches and honours from those to whom they preached the gospel ; but, on the other hand, they expected nothing but poverty, reproach, imprisonment, and, at last, to die a violent death : therefore, how can it be supposed that they were subtle designing men, who had some worldly advantage in view ? It is plain that they had no design but to do what God commanded, and to communicate what they had received from him, and shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, whatever it cost them. The apostle Paul was so far from endeavouring to enrich himself by preaching the gospel, that he tells the church, *I seek not your's, but you*, 2 Cor. xii. 14. and how he was fortified against the afflictions, which he foresaw would attend his ministry, when he says, Philip. iv. 11, 12. *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound, to be full, and to be hungry, to abound and to suffer want* : and he was not only content to bear afflictions, but, when called to it, he profes-

have effected such surprising changes, that modern infidels are ashamed of the evidence of their ancient predecessors, and are obliged to borrow from the fishermen of Galilee a portion of the knowledge they have introduced, without which the opposers of the Gospel must fall into contempt ? Is any man so credulous as to imagine men of no better education and opportunities, possessed of themselves all this knowledge ? when or where has the natural world produced such a phenomenon ? they declared that it was not of themselves, but, that such feeble instruments were chosen, that the power might appear to be what it really was, from God. This testimony they confirmed by miracles, and sealed with their blood.

ses himself to take pleasure in reproach, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake, 2 Cor. xii. 10.

Hitherto we have proved, that the penmen of scripture were men of such a character, that they would not designedly impose on mankind. But some will say, might they not be imposed on themselves, and think they were divinely inspired, when they were not?

To this it may be answered, that if they were deceived or imposed on themselves, when they thought they received the scripture by divine inspiration, this must proceed from one of these two causes: either,

1. They took what was the result of a heated fancy, a strong imagination, or raised affections for inspiration, as some of our modern enthusiasts have done, who have prefaced their warnings, as they call them, with, *Thus saith the Lord*, &c. when the Lord did not speak by them. And the deists have the same notion of the prophets and inspired penmen of scripture, and esteem their writings no farther than as they contain the law of nature, or those doctrines that are self-evident, or might have been invented by the reason of man; and as such they receive them, without any regard to divine inspiration. Or,

2. If the inspired penmen of scripture were otherwise imposed on, it must be by a diabolic inspiration, of which, in other cases, the world has had various instances, when Satan is said (to use the apostle's words) to *transform himself into an angel of light*, 2 Cor. xi. 14. or has been suffered to deceive his followers, not only by putting forth signs and lying wonders, but impressing their minds with strong delusions, whereby they have believed a lie, 2 Thess. ii. 9, 11. as supposing it to proceed from divine inspiration; and, to give countenance thereto, has produced such violent agitations, tremblings, or distortions in their bodies, as have seemed preternatural, not much unlike those with which the heathen oracles were delivered of old, which were called by some, a divine fury; but this cannot, with any shadow of reason, be applied to the inspired writers, therefore they were not imposed on.

1. They did not mistake their own fancies for divine revelation.

To suppose that they did so, is not only to conclude that all revealed religion is a delusion; but that the church in all ages, and amongst them the wisest and best of men, have been enthusiasts, and all their hope, founded on this revelation, has been no better than a vain dream. But it is one thing to assert, and another thing to prove; and because they who take this liberty to reproach the scriptures, pretend not to support their charge by argument, it might seem less necessary to make a reply: however, that our faith may be established, we shall briefly consider this objection. Therefore,

(1.) This charge is either brought against all that ever spake or wrote by divine inspiration, or only against some of them; if only some of them have been thus deluded, we might demand particular instances of any of the inspired writers, who are liable to this charge, together with the reasons thereof. If it be said that some of them were men of less wisdom, or had not those advantages to improve their natural abilities, as others have had; this will not be sufficient to support their cause, since God can make use of what instruments he pleases, and endow them with wisdom in an extraordinary way, to qualify them for the service he calls them to, whereby the glory of his sovereignty more appears. If he pleases to chuse the *foolish things of the world, to confound the wise, that no flesh shall glory in his presence*, 1 Cor. i. 27, 29. shall he for this be called to an account by vain man? And it is certain, that some who have had this gift, have, as the consequence thereof, been endowed with such wisdom, as has tended to confound their most malicious enemies. But we will suppose that they, who bring this charge against the inspired writers, will not pretend to single out any among them, but accuse them all in general of enthusiasm; and if this charge be grounded on the vain pretensions of some to inspiration in this age, in which we have no ground to expect this divine gift, will it follow, that, because some are deluded, therefore divine revelation, supported by incontestable evidence, was a delusion? Or if it be said, that some of old, whom we conclude to have been inspired, were called enthusiasts, as Jehu, and his fellow-soldiers concluded the prophet to be, who was sent to anoint him king, 2 Kings ix. 11. nothing can be inferred from thence, but that there were, in all ages, some Deists, who have treated things sacred with reproach and ridicule.

(2.) But if this charge be pretended to be supported by any thing that has the least appearance of an argument, it will be alleged, in defence thereof, that it is impossible for a person certainly to know himself to be inspired at any time; if that could be proved indeed, it would be something to the purpose: and inasmuch as we are obliged to assert the contrary, it will be demanded, how it might be known that a person was under inspiration, or what are the certain marks by which we may conclude that the inspired writers were not mistaken in this matter? I confess, it is somewhat difficult to determine this question, especially since inspiration has so long ceased in the world; but we shall endeavour to answer it, by laying down the following propositions.

1. If some powerful and impressive influences of the Spirit of God on the souls of men, in the more common and ordinary methods of divine providence and grace, have been not only

experienced, but their truth and reality discerned by them, who have been favoured therewith, so that without pretending to inspiration, they had sufficient reason to conclude that they were divine ; certainly when God was pleased to converse with men in such a way, as that which we call inspiration, it was not impossible for them to conclude that they were inspired ; which is an argument taken from the less to the greater.

2. There were some particular instances, in which it seemed absolutely necessary, that they who received intimations from God in such a way, should have infallible evidence that they were not mistaken, especially when some great duty was to be performed by them, pursuant to a divine command, in which it would be a dangerous thing for them to be deceived ; as in the case of Abraham's offering up his son ; and Jacob's going with his family into Egypt, which was a forsaking the promised land, an exposing them to the loss of their religion, through the influence or example of those with whom they went to sojourn ; and it might be uncertain whether they should ever return or no ; therefore he needed a divine warrant, enquired of God with respect to this matter, and doubtless had some way to be infallibly assured concerning the divine will relating hereunto, Gen. xlvi. 2, 3, 4. Moreover, our Saviour's disciples, leaving their families, going into the most remote parts of the world to propagate the gospel, which they had received in this way, evinces the necessity of their knowing themselves to be under a divine inspiration : and if they had been deceived in this matter, would they not have been reprov'd for it by him, whose intimations they are supposed to have followed in the simplicity of their hearts ?

3. As to the way by which God might convince them, beyond all manner of doubt, that he spake to them who were under divine inspiration, there are various ways, that might have been taken, and probably were. As,

(1.) Sometimes extraordinary impressions were made on the soul of the prophet, arising from the immediate access of God to it : of this we have frequent instances in scripture ; as in that particular vision which Daniel saw, which occasioned his *comeliness to be turned into corruption, and his having no strength*, Dan. x. 8. and the vision of our Saviour, which John saw, the effect whereof was his falling at his feet as dead, Rev. i. 17. and many other instances of the like nature might be referred to, which were, at least, antecedent to inspiration, and the result of the access of God to the soul, which occasioned such a change in nature, as could not but be discerned after the person had a little recovered himself. But if it be said, that such an effect as this might be produced by an infernal spirit, the answer I would give to that is, that supposing this possible, yet

it must be proved that God would suffer it, especially in such an instance, in which his own cause was so much concerned; and besides, it is not improbable that the soul of the prophet was sometimes brought into such a frame of spirit, as resembled the heavenly state, as much as it is possible for any one to attain to in this world; such an intercourse as this made Jacob say, *This is no other but the house of God, and this the gate of heaven.* Gen. xxviii. 17.

(2.) As this converse with God contained in it something supernatural and very extraordinary in the effects thereof, so it is not improbable that God might work miracles, of various kinds, to confirm the prophet's belief as to this matter, though they are not particularly recorded in all the instances in which we read of inspiration; and this would be as full an evidence as could be desired.

If it be objected, that it is not probable that miracles were always wrought to give this conviction: I would not be too peremptory in pretending to determine this matter, it is sufficient to say they were sometimes wrought; but, however, there were, doubtless, some other concurring circumstances, which put the thing out of all dispute; for not to suppose this, is to reflect on the wisdom and goodness of God, as well as to depreciate one of the greatest honours which he has been pleased to confer upon men. Thus we have considered the unreasonableness of the charge brought against the inspired penmen of scripture, as though they were imposed on, by mistaking their enthusiastic fancies for divine revelation. We proceed to consider,

2. That they were not imposed upon by the devil, as mistaking some impressions made by him on their minds, for divine revelation: this is evident; for

1. Divine inspiration was not only occasional, or conferred in some particular instances, with a design to amuse the world, or confirm some doctrines which were altogether new, impure, and subversive of the divine glory in some ages thereof, when men were universally degenerate, and had cast off God and religion; but it was continued in the church for many ages, when they evidently appeared to be the peculiar objects of the divine regard; and therefore,

2. God would never have suffered the devil, in such circumstances of time and things, to have deluded the world, and that in such a degree, as that he should be the author of that rule of faith, which he designed to make use of to propagate his interest therein; so that his people should be beholden to their grand enemy for those doctrines which were transmitted by inspiration.

3. Satan would have acted against his own interest, should he have inspired men to propagate a religion, which has a direct tendency to overthrow his own kingdom; in which instance,

as our Saviour observes, *His kingdom would be divided against itself*, Matth. xii. 25, 26. As it is contrary to the wisdom and holiness of God to suffer it, so Satan could never have done it out of choice, and he has too much subtilty to do it through mistake; therefore the inspired writers could not be imposed on by any infernal spirit.

And to this we may add, that this could not be done by a good angel; for if such a one had pretended herein to have imitated, or as it were, usurped the throne of God, he would not have deserved the character of a good angel; therefore it follows, that they could not have been inspired by any but God himself.

Having considered that the penmen of scripture have faithfully transmitted to us what they received by divine inspiration, we must now take notice of some things which are alleged by those who endeavour not only to depreciate, but overthrow the divine authority of the sacred writings, when they allege that they were only inspired, as to the substance or general idea of what they committed to writing, and were left to express the things contained therein in their own words, which, as they suppose, hath occasioned some contradictions, which they pretend to be found therein, arising from the treachery of their memories, or the unfitness of their style, to express what had been communicated to them. This they found on the difference of style observed in the various books thereof; as some are written in an elegant and lofty style, others clouded with mystical and dark expressions; some are more plain, others are laid down in an argumentative way; all which differing ways of speaking they suppose agreeable to the character of the inspired writers thereof: so that, though the matter contains in it something divine, the words and phrases, in which it is delivered can hardly be reckoned so.

And as for some books of scripture, especially those that are historical, they suppose that these might be written without inspiration, and that some of them were taken from the histories which were then in being, or some occurrences which were observed in the days in which the writers lived, and were generally known and believed in those times, to which they more immediately relate.

And as for those books of scripture, which are more especially doctrinal, they suppose that there are many mistakes in them, but that these respect only doctrines of less importance; whereas the providence of God has prevented them from making any gross or notorious blunders, subversive of natural religion; so that the scripture may be deemed sufficient to answer the general design thereof, in propagating religion in the world, though we are not obliged to conclude that it is altogether free

from those imperfections that will necessarily attend such a kind of inspiration.

Ans. If this account of scripture be true, it would hardly deserve to be called the word of God; therefore, that we may vindicate it from this aspersion, let it be considered,

1. As to the different styles observed in the various books thereof, it does not follow from hence, that the penmen were left to deliver what they received, in their own words; for certainly it was no difficult matter for the Spirit of God to furnish the writers thereof with words, as well as matter, and to inspire them to write in a style agreeable to what they used in other cases, whereby they might better understand and communicate the sense thereof to those to whom it was first given; as if a person should send a message by a child, it is an easy matter to put such words into his mouth as are agreeable to his common way of speaking, without leaving the matter to him to express it in his own words: thus the inspired writers might be furnished with words by the Holy Ghost, adapted to that style which they commonly used, without supposing they were left to themselves to clothe the general ideas with their own words.^(a)

2. As to what is said concerning the historical parts of scripture, that it is not necessary for them to have been transmitted to us by divine inspiration, it may be replied, that these, as well as other parts thereof, *were written for our learning*, Rom. xv. 4. so that what is excellent in the character of persons, is designed for our imitation; their blemishes and defects, to humble us under a sense of the universal corruption of human nature; and the evil consequences thereof, to awaken our fears, and dehort us from exposing ourselves to the same judgments which were inflicted as the punishment of sin: and the account we have of the providential dealing of God with his church, in the various ages thereof, is of use to put us upon admiring and adoring the divine perfections, as much as the doctrinal parts of scripture; and therefore it is necessary that we have the greatest certainty that the inspired writers have given us a true narration of things, and consequently that the words, as well as the matter, are truly divine.

3. When, that they may a little palliate the matter, they allow that the inspired writers, though left to the weakness of their memory, and the impropriety of their style, were, notwithstanding, preserved, by the interposure of divine providence, from committing mistakes in matters of the highest importance; it may be replied, That it will be very difficult for them to assign what doctrines are of greater, and what of less importance, in all the instances thereof, or wherein providence has interposed, to prevent their running into mistakes, and when it has

(a) Vide Dodd. Expos. 3 vol. app.—Dick on Insp.—Parry's Enq.—Hawker, &c.

not; so that we are still in an uncertainty what doctrines are delivered to us, as they were received by inspiration, and what are misrepresented by the penmen of scripture; and we shall be ready to conclude, that in every section or paragraph thereof, some things may be true, and others false; some doctrines divine and others human, while we are left without any certain rule to distinguish one from the other, and accordingly we cannot be sure that any part of it is the word of God; so that such a revelation as this would be of no real service to the church, and our faith would be founded in the wisdom, or rather weakness of men, and our religion, depending on it, could not be truly divine; so that this method of reasoning is, to use the word inspiration, but to destroy all the valuable ends thereof.

VI. Another argument, to prove the scriptures to be the word of God, may be taken from their antiquity and wonderful preservation for so many ages; this appears more remarkable, if we consider,

1. That many other writings, of much later date, have been lost, and nothing more is known of them, but that there were once such books in the world; and books might more easily be lost, when there were no other but written copies of them, and these procured with much expense and difficulty, and consequently their number proportionably small.

2. That the scripture should be preserved, notwithstanding all the malice of its avowed enemies, as prompted hereunto by Satan, whose kingdom is overthrown by it. Had it been in his power, he would certainly have utterly abolished and destroyed it; but yet it has been preserved unto this day, which discovers a wonderful hand of providence; and would God so remarkably have taken care of a book, that pretends to advance itself by bearing the character of a divinely inspired writing, if it had not been really so? Which leads us to the next argument, containing an advice, which is more convincing than any other; or, at least, if this be added to those arguments which have been already given, I hope it will more abundantly appear that the scriptures are the word of God; since,

VII. The divine authority thereof is attested by God himself; and if, in other cases, *we receive the witness of men*, surely, as the apostle observes, *the witness of God is greater*, 1 John v. 9,

Now the testimony of God to the authority of scripture is twofold; *First*, Extraordinary; *Secondly*, Ordinary; the extraordinary testimony of God is that of miracles; the ordinary is taken from the use which he makes of it, in convincing and converting sinners, and building up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.

1. As to the former of these, God has attested the truth hereof by miracles. A miracle is an extraordinary divine

work, whereby something is produced, contrary to the common course and laws of nature: thus the magicians confessed, that one of the miracles which Moses wrought was the *finger of God*, Exod. viii. 19. Of these there are many undeniable instances recorded in scripture, both in the Old and New Testament; and these being above the power of a creature, and works peculiar to God, they contain a divine testimony to the truth that is confirmed thereby, for the confirmation whereof an appeal was made to them. Now when we say that the divine authority of scripture was confirmed by miracles, we mean,

(1.) That God has wrought miracles to testify his approbation of most of the prophets and apostles, who were the inspired writers thereof, whereby their mission was declared to be divine; and we cannot think that God, who knows the hearts and secret designs of men, would employ or send any to perform so great and important a work, if he knew them to be disposed to deceive and impose on the world; or that they would in any instance, call that his word which they did not receive from him. The reason why men sometimes employ unfaithful servants about their work is, because they do not know them; they never do it out of choice; and therefore we cannot suppose that God, who perfectly knows the hearts of men, would do so; therefore, having not only employed the penmen of scripture as his servants, but confirmed their mission, and testified his approbation of them, by miracles, this is a ground of conviction to us that they would not have pretended the scriptures to be the word of God, if they were not so.

Now that miracles have been wrought for this end, I think, needs no proof; for we are assured hereof, not barely by the report of those prophets, whose mission is supposed to have been confirmed thereby, but it was universally known and received in the church, in those times, in which they were wrought, and it is not pretended to be denied, by its most inveterate enemies: the truth hereof, *viz.* that Moses, and several other of the prophets, and our Saviour, and his apostles, wrought miracles, can hardly be reckoned a matter in controversy; for it is a kind of scepticism to deny it: and it is certain, that herein they appealed to God for the confirmation of their mission; as Elijah is said explicitly to have done, when he prays to this effect; *Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant; and that I have done all these things at thy word*, 1 Kings xviii. 36. and we read, that God answered him accordingly, *By the fire from heaven consuming the burnt-sacrifice*, &c. ver. 38.

(2.) Such appeals to God, and answers from him, have attained their end, by giving conviction to those who were more immediately concerned; this is evident from what is said; in

that the same prophet, having had his request granted him, when God wrought a miracle, in raising the dead child to life, the woman of Zarephath confessed, that by this she knew *that he was a man of God, and that the word of the Lord, in his mouth, was truth*, 1 Kings xvii. 21,—24. And it is not denied by the Jews, the most irreconcilable enemies to Christianity, that what is related in the New Testament, concerning our Saviour's, and his apostles, working miracles, was true in fact; but the only thing denied by them is, that this was a divine testimony, or that they were wrought by the hand of God; and therefore the common reproach which is cast on them is, that they were wrought by magic art, as the Jews of old objected to our Saviour, *that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils*, Matth. xii. 24. and his reply to them was unanswerable, when he said, that this objection would argue *Satan divided against himself*; intimating, that he would never take such a method as this to overthrow the Christian religion, which he could not but know was more conducive to the establishment of it, than any other that could be used.

Object. 1. But if it be objected, that though miracles were wrought to confirm the mission of several of the prophets, yet none were wrought to confirm the divine authority of the subject matter of the scriptures:

Ans. w. To this it may be easily answered; that it is sufficient, if we can prove that God has given his testimony, that he made choice of those prophets to declare his mind and will to the world; and that he has accordingly deemed them fit to be credited, and that they were not men liable to any suspicion of carrying on a design to deceive the world; so that if God himself not only styles them holy men, as he does all the inspired writers in general, when he says, 2 Pet. i. 21. *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, but also wrought miracles to prove that they were his servants and messengers, employed in this work; this is as convincing a testimony, as though every part of scripture wrote by them had been confirmed by a miracle. Besides, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that the church lived in those ages, in which the various parts of scripture were written, had some extraordinary proofs of their divine authority; since, in many of them, miracles were very common, and, at the same time that the penmen of scripture had the gift of inspiration, others had, what the apostle calls, a *discerning of spirits*, 1 Cor. xii. 10. so that they were enabled, by this means, to know whether the prophet, that pretended to inspiration, was really inspired: this, to me seems very probably, the sense of the apostle, when he says, 1 Cor. xiv. 32. *The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets*; for he is discoursing before of prophets speaking by divine re-

velation, and others judging thereof: now if there was this extraordinary gift of discerning of spirits in the ages, in which particular books of scripture were written, they who were favoured herewith, had a convincing testimony of the inspiration of the prophets and apostles, from the same Spirit by whom they were inspired, by which means the divine authority of scripture was infallibly known to them, and so imparted to others for their farther confirmation as to this matter.

Object. 2. We are not now to expect miracles to confirm our faith, as to the divine original of scripture; therefore how can we be said to have a divine testimony.

Answer. As miracles are now ceased, so such a method of confirming divine revelation is not necessary in all succeeding ages: God did not design to make that dispensation too common, nor to continue the evidence it affords, when there was no necessity thereof. Thus when the scribes and Pharisees came to our Saviour, desiring to *see a sign* from him, Matt. xii. 38. he would not comply with their unreasonable demand; and the apostle Paul takes notice of humour prevailing among the Jews in his time, who then *required a sign*, 1 Cor. i. 22. but, instead of complying with them herein, he refers them to the success of the gospel, which is *the power of God to salvation*, as the only testimony to the truth thereof that was then needful; and our Saviour, in the parable, intimates, that *the truth of divine revelation has been so well attested, that they who believe not Moses and the prophets, would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*, Luke xvi. 31. Therefore, since we have such a convincing evidence hereof, it is an unreasonable degree of obstinacy to refuse to believe the divine authority of scripture, merely because miracles are not now wrought; since, to demand a farther proof of it, is no other than a tempting God, or disowning that what he has done is sufficient for our conviction; and to say, that for want of this evidence, our faith is not founded on a divine testimony, is nothing to the purpose, unless it could be proved that it is not founded on such a testimony formerly given, the contrary to which is undeniably evident, since we have this truth confirmed by the confession of the church in all the ages thereof, and therefore we have as much ground to believe this matter, as though miracles were wrought every day for its confirmation. This will farther appear, if we consider the abundant ground we have to conclude that God has formerly given such a testimony to his word; which leads us to enquire how far the testimony of the church, in all the ages thereof, is to be regarded.

The church has given its suffrage, throughout all the ages thereof, to the divine original of scripture, how much soever it has perverted the sense of it. That this argument may be set

in a true light, let us consider what the Papists say to this matter, when they appeal to the church, to establish the divine authority of scripture; and wherein we differ from them; and how far its testimony is to be regarded, as a means for our farther conviction. We are far from asserting, with them, that the church's testimony alone is to be regarded, without the internal evidence of the divine authority of scripture, as though that were the principal, if not the only foundation on which our faith is built. If, indeed, they could prove the infallibility of the church, we should more readily conclude the infallibility of its testimony; but all their attempts of this nature are vain and trifling.

Moreover, we do not mean altogether the same thing by the church as they do, when they intend by it a council convened together, to decree and establish matters of faith, by him whom they pretend to be the visible head thereof; and so a majority of votes of a body of men, every one of whom are liable to error, must determine, and, according to them, give a divine sanction to our faith. Nor do we think that those, whom they call the fathers of the church, are to be any farther regarded, than as they prove what they assert, since there is scarce any error or absurdity, but what some or other of them have given into. We also distinguish between the churches testimony, that the scripture was given by divine inspiration, and the sense they give of many of its doctrines; as to the latter of these, it has given us ground enough to conclude, that its judgment is not much to be depended upon; however, we find that, in all ages, it has given sufficient testimony to this truth, that the scriptures are the word of God, and that they have been proved to be so, by the seal which God has set thereunto, to wit, by the miracles that have been wrought to confirm it. If therefore God has had a church in the world, or a remnant whom he has preserved faithful; and if their faith, and all their religion, and hope of salvation, has been founded, without the least exception, on this truth, that the scriptures are the word of God, we cannot altogether set aside this argument. But there is yet another, which we lay more stress on, namely, the use which God has made of it, which is the second thing to be considered, *viz.*

2. His ordinary method of attesting this truth; it appears therefore, as is farther observed in this answer, that the scriptures are the word of God, from their light and power to convince and convert sinners, and to comfort and build up believers to salvation. Here let us consider,

1. That the work of conviction and conversion is, and has been at all times, experienced by those who have had any right or claim to salvation; of which there have not only been various instances, in all ages, but the very being of the church,

which supposes and depends thereon, is an undeniable proof of it.

2. As this work is truly divine, so the scriptures have been the principal, if not the only direct means, by which it has been brought about; so that we have never had any other rule, or standard of faith, or revealed religion; nor has the work of grace been ever begun, or carried on, in the souls of any, without it; from whence it evidently appears, that God makes use of it to propagate and advance his interest in the world, and has given his church ground to expect his presence with it, in all his ordinances, in which they are obliged to pay a due regard to scripture; and, in so doing, they have found that their expectation has not been in vain, since God has, by this means, manifested himself to them, and made them partakers of spiritual privileges, which have been the beginning of their salvation.

3. It cannot be supposed that God would make this use of his word, and thereby put such an honour upon it, had it been an imposture, or borne the specious pretence of being instamped with his authority, if it had not been so; for that would be to give countenance to a lie, which is contrary to the holiness of his nature.

Thus we have considered the several arguments, whereby the scripture appears to be the word of God; but since multitudes are not convinced hereby, we have, in the close of this answer, an account of the means whereby Christians come to a full persuasion as to this matter, and that is the testimony of the Spirit in the heart of man, which is the next thing to be considered. By this we do not understand that extraordinary impression which some of old have been favoured with, who are said to have been moved by the Holy Ghost, or to have had an extraordinary unction from the Holy One, whereby they were led into the knowledge of divine truths, in a way of supernatural illumination. This we pretend not to, since extraordinary gifts are ceased; yet it does not follow from hence, that the Spirit does not now influence the minds of believers in an ordinary way, whereby they are led into, and their faith confirmed in all necessary truths, and this in particular, that the scriptures are the word of God; for we may observe, that no privilege referring to salvation, was ever taken away, but some other, subservient to the same end, has been substituted in the room thereof; especially, unless a notorious forfeiture has been made of it, and the church, by apostacy, has excluded itself from an interest in the divine regard; but this cannot be said of the gospel-church in all the ages thereof, since extraordinary gifts have ceased; therefore we must conclude, that being destitute of that way, by which this truth was once confirmed, believers have,

instead of it, an inward conviction wrought by the Spirit of God, agreeable to his present method of acting; otherwise this present gospel-dispensation is, in a very material circumstance, much inferior to that in which God discovered his mind and will to man in an extraordinary way.

But that we may explain what we mean by this inward testimony of the Spirit in the hearts of men, whereby they are fully persuaded that the scriptures are the word of God, let it be considered,

(1.) That it is something more than barely a power, or faculty of reasoning, to prove the scriptures to be divine, since that is common to all; but this is a special privilege, given to those who are hereby fully persuaded of this truth. Moreover, there may be a power of reasoning, and yet we may be mistaken in the exercise thereof; and therefore this is not sufficient, fully to persuade us that they are the word of God, and consequently something more than this is intended in this answer.

(2.) It is something short of inspiration; therefore, though the scripture was known to be the word of God, by the Spirit of inspiration, so long as that dispensation continued in the church, yet that privilege being now ceased, the internal testimony of the Spirit contains a lower degree of illumination, which has nothing miraculous attending it, and therefore falls short of inspiration.

(3.) It is not an enthusiastic impulse, or strong impression upon our minds, whereby we conclude a thing to be true, because we think it is so; this we by no means allow of, since our own fancies are not the standard of truth, how strong soever our ideas of things may be; therefore,

(4.) This inward testimony of the Spirit contains in it a satisfying and establishing persuasion, that the scriptures are the word of God, not altogether destitute of other evidences, or convincing arguments: and that which is more especially convincing to weak Christians, is taken from the use which God makes of the scripture, in beginning and carrying on the work of grace in their souls, who are thus convinced; and this firm persuasion we find sometimes so deeply rooted in their hearts, that they would sooner die ten thousand deaths than part with scripture, or entertain the least slight thought of it, as though it were not divine; and certainly there is a special hand of God in this persuasion, which we can call no other than the inward testimony of the Spirit, whereby they are established in this important truth.(a)

(a) This description of the Spirit's witness resembles sensible assurance; that there may be such an immediate suggestion, or impression is possible; but the Spirit's witness is the image of God, and is of adoption.—Vide Edwards's works, vol. 4. p. 161.

QUEST. V. *What do the scriptures principally teach?*

ANSW. The scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.(a)

HAVING, in the foregoing answer, proved the scriptures to be the word of God, there is in this a general account of the contents thereof; there are many great doctrines contained therein, all which may be reduced to two heads, to wit, what we are to believe, and what we are to do. All religion is contained in these two things, and so we may apply the words of the apostle to this case, *Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum*, Heb. viii. 1. and accordingly, as this Catechism is deduced from scripture, it contains two parts, *viz.* what we are to believe, and in what instances we are to yield obedience to the law of God. And that the scriptures principally teach these two things, appears from the apostle's advice to Timothy, *Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love*, 2 Tim. i. 13.

From the scriptures' principally teaching us matters of faith and practice, we infer, that *faith without works is dead*; or that he is not a true Christian who yields an assent to divine revelation, without a practical subjection to God, in all ways of holy obedience, as the apostle observes, and gives a challenge, to this effect, to those who separate faith from works; *Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works*, James ii. 17, 18. and, on the other hand, works without faith are unacceptable. A blind obedience, or ignorant performance of some of the external parts of religion, without the knowledge of divine truth, is no better than what the apostle calls *bodily exercise which profiteth little*, 1 Tim. iv. 18. therefore we ought to examine ourselves, whether our faith be founded on, or truly deduced from scripture? and whether it be a practical faith, or, as the apostle says, such as *worketh by love*? Gal. v. 6. whether we grow in knowledge, as well as in zeal and diligence, in performing many duties of religion, if we would approve ourselves sincere Christians?

QUEST. VI. *What do the scriptures make known of God?*

ANSW. The scriptures make known what God is, the persons in the Godhead, the decrees, and the execution of his decrees.

IT is an amazing instance of condescension, and an inexpressible favour which God bestows on man, that he should manifest himself to him, and that not only in such a way as he does to all mankind, by the light of nature, which discovers

(a) What we are to believe reaches to Qu. 91. the rest is of practice.

that he is; but that he should, in so glorious a way, declare what he is, as he does in his word: this is a distinguishing privilege, as the Psalmist observes, when speaking of God's *showing his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel*, Psal. cxlvii. he mentions it, as an instance of discriminating grace, in that he *has not dealt so with any other nation*. This raised the admiration of one of Christ's disciples, when he said, *Lord how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world!* John xiv. 22. And it is still more wonderful, that he should discover to man what he does, or rather what he has decreed or purposed to do, and so should impart his secrets to him; how familiarly does God herein deal with man! Thus he says concerning the holy patriarch of old, *Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?* Gen. xvi. 17. However, it is one thing to know the secret purposes of God, and another thing to know the various properties thereof; the former of these, however known of old, by extraordinary intimation, are now known to us only by the execution of them; the latter is what we may attain to the knowledge of, by studying the scriptures.

Now as the scriptures make known, *First*, What God is; *Secondly*, The persons in the Godhead; *Thirdly*, His decrees: *And Fourthly*, The execution thereof; so we are directed hereby in the method to be observed in treating of the great doctrines of our religion; and accordingly the first part of this Catechism, (a) which treats of doctrinal subjects, contains an enlargement on these four general heads; the first whereof we proceed to consider.

QUEST. VII. *What is God?*

ANSW. God is a Spirit, in and of himself, infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection, all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, every where present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful, and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

BEFORE we proceed to consider the divine perfections, as contained in this answer, let it be premised,

1. That it is impossible for any one to give a perfect description of God, since he is incomprehensible, therefore no words can fully express, or set forth, his perfections; when the wisest men on earth speak of him, they soon betray their own weakness, or discover, as Elihu says, that they *cannot order their speech by reason of darkness*, Job xxxviii. 19. or, *that they are but of yesterday, and know, comparatively, nothing*.

(a) That is unto the 91st Quest.

chap. viii. 9. We are but like children, talking of matters above them, which their tender age can take in but little of, when we speak of the infinite perfections of the divine nature; *This knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain to it,* Psal. cxxxix. 5. *How little a portion is heard of him?* Job. xxvi. 14.

2. Though God cannot be perfectly described; yet there is something of him that we may know, and ought to make the matter of our study and diligent enquiries. When his glory is set forth in scripture, we are not to look upon the expressions there made use of, as words without any manner of ideas affixed to them; for it is one thing to have adequate ideas of an infinitely perfect being, and another thing to have no ideas at all of him; neither are our ideas of God to be reckoned, for this reason, altogether false, though they are imperfect; for it is one thing to think of him in an unbecoming way, not agreeable to his perfections, or to attribute the weakness and imperfection to him which do not belong to his nature, and another thing to think of him, with the highest and best conceptions we are able to entertain of his infinite perfections, while, at the same time, we have a due sense of our own weakness, and the shallowness of our capacities. When we thus order our thoughts concerning the great God, though we are far from comprehending his infinite perfections, yet our conceptions are not to be concluded erroneous, when directed by his word; which leads us to consider how we may conceive aright of the divine perfections, that we may not think or speak of God, that which is not right, though at best we know but little of his glory; and in order thereunto,

(1.) We must first take an estimate of finite perfections, which we have some ideas of, though not perfect ones in all respects; such as power, wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, &c.

(2.) Then we must conceive that these are eminently, though not formally in God; that is, there is no perfection in the creature, but we must ascribe the same to God, though not in the same way; or thus, whatever perfection is in the creature, the same is in God, and infinitely more; or it is in God, but not in such a finite, limited, or imperfect way, as it is in the creature; *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?* Psal. xciv. 9, 10. Therefore,

(3.) When the same words are used that import a perfection in God, and in the creature, viz. wisdom, power, &c. we must not suppose that these words import the same thing in their different application; for when they are applied to the creature, though we call them perfections, yet they are, at best, but finite, and have many imperfections attending them, all

which we must separate or abstract in our thoughts, when the same words are used to set forth any divine perfection: thus knowledge is a perfection of the human nature, and the same word is used to denote a divine perfection; yet we must consider, at the same time; that *the Lord seeth not as man seeth*, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. The same may be said of all his other perfections; he worketh not as man worketh; whatever perfections are ascribed to the creature, they are to be considered as agreeable to the subject in which they are; so when the same words are used to set forth any of the divine perfections, they are to be understood in a way becoming a God of infinite perfection.

This has given occasion to divines to distinguish the perfections of God, into those that are communicable, and incommunicable.

1. The communicable perfections of God are such, whereof we find some faint resemblance in intelligent creatures, though, at the same time, there is an infinite disproportion; as when we speak of God as holy, wise, just, powerful, or faithful, we find something like these perfections in the creature; though we are not to suppose them, in all respects, the same as they are in God; they are in him, in his own, that is, an infinite way; they are in us, in our own, that is, a finite and limited way.

2. The incommunicable perfections of God are such, of which there is not the least shadow, or similitude in creatures, but they rather represent him as opposed to them. Thus when we speak of him as infinite, incomprehensible, unchangeable, without beginning, independent, &c. these perfections contain in them an account of the vast distance that there is between God and the creature, or how infinitely he exceeds all other beings, and is opposed to every thing that argues imperfection in them.

From this general account we have given of the divine perfections, we may infer,

1. That there is nothing common between God and the creature; that is, there is nothing which belongs to the divine nature that can be attributed to the creature; and nothing proper to the creature is to be applied to God: yet there are some rays of the divine glory, which may be beheld as shining forth, or displayed in the creature, especially in the intelligent part of the creation, angels and men, who are, for that reason, represented as made after the divine image.

2. Let us never think or speak of the divine perfections but with the highest reverence, lest we take his name in vain, or debase him in our thoughts; *Shall not his excellency make you afraid, and his dread fall upon you?* Job xiii. 11. And whenever we compare God with the creatures, viz. angels and men, that bear somewhat of his image, let us, at the same time, ab-

stract in our thoughts, all their imperfections, whether natural or moral, from him, and consider the infinite disproportion that there is between him and them. We now come to consider the perfections of the divine nature, in the order in which they are laid down in this answer.

I. God is a Spirit; that is, an immaterial substance, without body or bodily parts; this he is said to be in John iv. 24. But if it be enquired what we mean by a Spirit, let it be premised, that we cannot fully understand what our own spirits, or souls are; we know less of the nature of angels, a higher kind of spirits, and least of all of the spirituality of the divine nature; however, our ideas first begin at what is finite, in considering the nature and properties of spirits; and from thence we are led to conceive of God as infinitely more perfect than any finite spirit. Here we shall consider the word spirit, as applied more especially to angels, and the souls of men; and let it be observed,

1. That a spirit is the most perfect and excellent being; the soul is more excellent than the body, or indeed than any thing that is purely material; so angels are the most perfect and glorious part of the creation, as they are spiritual beings, in some things excelling the souls of men.

2. A spirit is, in its own nature, immortal; it has nothing in its frame and constitution that tends to corruption, as there is in material things, which consist of various parts, that may be dissolved or separated, and their form altered, which is what we call corruption; but this belongs not to spirits, which are liable to no change in their nature, but by the immediate hand of God, who can, if he pleases, reduce them again to their first nothing.

3. A spirit is capable of understanding, and willing, and putting forth actions agreeable thereunto, which no other being can do: thus, though the sun is a glorious and useful being; yet, because it is material, it is not capable of thought, or any moral action, such as angels, and the souls of men, can put forth.

Now these conceptions of the nature and properties of finite spirits, lead us to conceive of God as a spirit. And,

(1.) As spirits excel all other creatures, we must conclude God to be the most excellent and perfect of all beings, and also that he is *incorruptible*, *immortal*, and *invisible*, as he is said to be in scripture, Rom. i. 23. and 1 Tim. i, 17.

Moreover, it follows from hence, that he has an understanding and will, and so we may conceive of him as the Creator and governor of all things; this he could not be, if he were not an intelligent and sovereign being, and particularly a spirit. (a)

(2.) The difference between other spiritual substances and

(a) His ideas are not the effects, but causes of things. Vide post p. 124, 125.

God, is, that all their excellency is only comparative, viz. as they excel the best of all material beings in their nature and properties; but God, as a spirit, is infinitely more excellent, not only than all material beings, but than all created spirits. Their perfections are derived from him, and therefore he is called, *The Father of spirits*, Heb. xii. 9. and *the God of the spirits of all flesh*, Numb. xvi. 22. and his perfections are underived: other spirits are, as we have observed, in their own nature, immortal, yet God can reduce them to nothing; but God is independently immortal, and therefore it is said of him, that *he only hath immortality*, 1 Tim. vi. 16.

Finite spirits, indeed, have understanding and will, but these powers are contained within certain limits whereas God is an infinite spirit, and therefore it can be said of none but him, that *his understanding is infinite*, Psal. cxlviii. 5.

From God's being a spirit, we may infer,

1. That he is the most suitable good to the nature of our souls, which are spirits; he can communicate himself, and apply those things to them, which tend to make them happy, as the God and Father of spirits.

2. He is to be worshipped in a spiritual manner, John iv. 24. that is, with our whole souls, and in a way becoming his spiritual nature; therefore,

3. We are to frame no similitude or resemblance of him in our thoughts, as though he were a corporeal or material being; neither are we to make any pictures of him. This God forbids Israel to do, Deut. iv. 12, 15, 16. and tells them, that they had not the least pretence for so doing, inasmuch as they *saw no similitude of him, when he spake to them in Horeb*; and to make an image of him would be to corrupt themselves.

II. God is said to be in, and of, himself, not as though he gave being to, or was the cause of himself, for that implies a contradiction; therefore divines generally say, that God is in, and of himself, not positively, but negatively, that is, his being and perfections are underived, and not communicated to him, as all finite perfections are, by him, to the creature; therefore he is self-existent, or independent, which is one of the highest glories of the divine nature, by which he is distinguished from all creatures, who live, move, and have their being in and from him.

This attribute of independency belongs to all his perfections; thus his wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, &c. are all independent. And,

1. With respect to his knowledge or wisdom, he doth not receive ideas from any object out of himself, as all intelligent creatures do, and, in that respect, are said to depend on the object; so that if there were not such objects, they could not

have the knowledge or idea of them in their minds; therefore the object known must first exist, before we can apprehend what it is. But this must not be said of God's knowledge, for that would be to suppose the things that he knows antecedent to his knowing them. The independency of his knowledge is elegantly described in scripture; *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, has taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?* Isa. xl. 13, 14.

2. He is independent in power, therefore as he receives strength from no one, so he doth not act dependently on the will of the creature; *Who hath enjoined him his way;* Job xxxvi. 23. and accordingly, as he received the power of acting from no one, so none can hinder, turn aside, or controul his power, or put a stop to his methods of acting.

3. He is independent as to his holiness, hating sin necessarily, and not barely depending on some reasons out of himself, which induce him thereunto; for it is essential to the divine nature to be infinitely opposite to all sin, and therefore to be independently holy.

4. He is independent as to his bounty and goodness, and so he communicates blessings not by constraint, but according to his sovereign will. Thus he gave being to the world, and all things therein, which was the first instance of bounty and goodness, and a very great one it was, not by constraint, but by his free will, *for his pleasure they are and were created.* In like manner, whatever instances of mercy he extends to miserable creatures, he still acts independently, in the display thereof; nothing out of himself moves or lays a constraint upon him, but he shews mercy because it is his pleasure so to do.

But, to evince the truth of this doctrine, that God is independent as to his being, and all his perfections, let it be farther considered,

(1.) That all things depend on his power, which brought them into, and preserves them in being; therefore they exist by his will, as their creator and preserver, and consequently are not necessary, but dependent beings. If therefore all things depend on God, it is the greatest absurdity to say that God depends on any thing, for this would be to suppose the cause and the effect to be mutually dependent on, and derived from each other, which infers a contradiction.

(2.) If God be infinitely above the highest creatures, he cannot depend on any of them; for dependence argues inferiority. Now that God is above all things is certain: this is represented in a very beautiful manner by the prophet, when he says, Isa. xl. 15, 17. *Behold the nations are as the drop of the bucket,*

and are counted as the small dust of the balance; all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity; therefore he cannot be said to be inferior to them, and, by consequence, to depend on them.

(3.) If God depends on any creature, he does not exist necessarily: and if so, then he might not have been; for the same will, by which he is supposed to exist, might have determined that he should not have existed. If therefore God be not independent, he might not have been, and, according to the same method of reasoning, he might cease to be; for the same will, that gave being to him, might take it away at pleasure, which is altogether inconsistent with the idea of a God.

From God's being independent, or in and of himself, we infer,

1. That we ought to conclude that the creature cannot lay any obligation on him, or do any thing that may tend to make him more happy than he is in himself; the apostle gives a challenge to this effect, *Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again*, Rom. xi. 35. and Eliphaz says to Job, Job xxii. 2, 3. *Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?*

2. If independency be a divine perfection, then let it not, in any instance, or by any consequence, be attributed to the creature; let us conclude, that all our springs are in him, and that all we enjoy and hope for is from him, who is the author and finisher of our faith, and the fountain of all our blessedness.

III. God is infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection. To be infinite, is to be without all bounds or limits, either actual or possible: now that God is so, is evident, from his being independent and uncreated; and because his will fixes the bounds of all the excellencies, perfections, and powers of the creature. If therefore he doth not exist by the will of another, he is infinite in being, and consequently in all perfection: thus it is said, Psal. cxlvii. 5. *his understanding is infinite*, which will farther appear, when we consider him as omniscient; his will determines what shall come to pass, with an infinite sovereignty, that cannot be controuled, or rendered ineffectual; his power is infinite, and therefore all things are equally possible, and easy to it, nor can it be resisted by any contrary force or power; and he is infinite in blessedness, as being self-sufficient, or not standing in need of any thing to make him more happy than he was in himself, from all eternity. The Psalmist is supposed by many, to speak in the person of Christ, when he says, Psal. xvi. 2. *My goodness extendeth not to thee*, q. d. "How much soever thy relative glory may be illustrated, by

“ what I have engaged to perform in the covenant of redemption, yet this can make no addition to thine essential glory.” And if so, then certainly nothing can be done by us which may in the least contribute thereunto.

IV. God is all-sufficient, by which we understand that he hath enough in himself to satisfy the most enlarged desires of his creatures, and to make them completely blessed. As his self-sufficiency is that whereby he has enough in himself to denominate him completely blessed, as a God of infinite perfection; so his all-sufficiency is that, whereby he is able to communicate as much blessedness to his creatures, as he is pleased to make them capable of receiving; and therefore he is able not only to *supply all their wants, but to do exceedingly above all that they ask or think*, Phil. iv. 19. and Eph. iii. 20. This he can do, either in an immediate way; or, if he thinks fit to make use of creatures as instruments, to fulfil his pleasure, and communicate what he designs to impart to us, he is never at a loss; for as they they are the work of his hands, so he has a right to use them at his will; upon which account, they are said, all of them to be his servants, Psal. cxix. 91.

This doctrine of God's all-sufficiency should be improved by us,

1. To induce us to seek happiness in him alone: creatures are no more than the stream, but he is the fountain; we may, in a mediate, way, receive some small drops from them, but he is the ocean, of all blessedness.

2. Let us take heed that we do not reflect on, or in effect, deny this perfection; which we may be said to do in various instances. As,

(1.) When we are discontented with our present condition, and desire more than God has allotted for us. This seems to have been the sin of the angels, who left their first habitation through pride, seeking more than God designed they should have; and this was the sin by which our first parents fell, desiring a greater degree of knowledge than what they thought themselves possessed of: thus they fancied, that by eating the forbidden fruit, they should be *as gods, knowing good and evil*, Gen. iii. 5.

(2.) We practically deny the all-sufficiency of God, when we seek blessings of what kind soever they are, in an indirect way, as though God were not able to bestow them upon us in his own way, or in the use of lawful means: thus Rebecca and Jacob did, when they contrived a lie to obtain the blessing, chap. xxvii. as though there had not been an all-sufficiency in providence to bring it about, without their having recourse to those methods that were in themselves sinful.

(3.) When we use unlawful means to escape imminent dangers.

Thus David did *when he feigned himself mad*, supposing, without ground, that he should have been slain by Achish, king of Gath; and that there was no other way to escape but this, 1 Sam. xxi. 13. and Abraham and Isaac, Gen. chapters xx. and xxvi. when they denied their wives, concluding this to have been an expedient to save their lives, as though God were not able to save them in a better and more honourable way.

(4.) When we distrust his providence, though we have had large experience of its appearing for us in various instances: thus David did, when he said, in his heart, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul*, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. and the Israelites, when they said, *Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* Psal. lxxviii. 19. though he had provided for them in an extraordinary way ever since they had been there: yea, Moses himself was faulty in this matter, when he said, *Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me*, Numb. xi. 13, 14. and Asa, when he tempted Benhadad to break his league with Baasha, who made war against him; as though God were not able to deliver him without this indirect practice, though he had in an eminent manner, appeared for him, in giving him a signal victory over Zerah the Ethiopian, when he came against him with an army of a million of men, 2 Chron. xvi. 3. compared with chap. xiv. 9, 13. and likewise Joshua, when Israel had suffered a small defeat, occasioned by Achan's sin, when they fled before the men of Ai, though there were but thirty-six of them slain; yet, on that occasion, he is ready to wish that God had not brought them over Jordan, and meditates nothing but ruin and destruction from the Amorites, forgetting God's former deliverances, and distrusting his faithfulness, and care of his people, and, as it were, calling in question his all-sufficiency, as though he were not able to accomplish the promises he had made to them, Josh. vii. 7, 8, 9.

(5.) When we doubt of the truth, or certain accomplishment of his promises, and so are ready to say, *Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Doth his truth fail for ever?* This we are apt to do, when there are great difficulties in the way of the accomplishment thereof: thus Sarah, when it was told her that she should have a child, in her old age, laughed, through unbelief, Gen. xviii. 12. and God intimates, that this was an affront to his all-sufficiency, when he says, *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* ver. 14. and Gideon, though he was told that God was with him, and had an express command to go in his might, with a promise that he should deliver Israel from the Midianites, yet he says, *O Lord wherewith shall I save them? for my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house*, Judg. vi. 15. God tells him again, *I will be with thee*,

and smite the Midianites, ver. 16. yet, afterwards, he desires that he would give him a sign in the wet and dry fleece. What is this but questioning his all-sufficiency?

(6.) When we decline great services, though called to them by God, under pretence of our unfitness for them: thus when the prophet Jeremiah was called to deliver the Lord's message to the rebellious house of Israel, he desires to be excused, and says, *Behold I cannot speak, for I am a child*; whereas the main discouragement was the difficulty of the work, and the hazards he was like to run; but God encourages him to it, by putting him in mind of his all-sufficiency, when he tells him, that *he would be with him, and deliver him*, Jer. i. 6. compared with ver. 8.

This divine perfection affords matter of support and encouragement to believers, under the greatest straits and difficulties they are exposed to in this world; and we have many instances in scripture of those who have had recourse to it in the like cases. Thus, when David was in the greatest straits that ever he met with, upon the Amalekites' spoiling of Ziklag, and carrying away the women captives, the people talked of stoning him, and all things seemed to make against him; yet it is said, that *he encouraged himself in the Lord his God*, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. so Mordecai was confident that the *enlargement and deliverance of the Jews should come some other way*, if not by Esther's intercession for them, when she was afraid to go in to the king, Esth. iv. 14. and this confidence he could never have obtained, considering the present posture of their affairs, without a due regard to God's all-sufficiency. Moreover, it was this divine perfection that encouraged Abraham to obey the difficult command of offering his son: as the apostle observes, he did this as knowing that *God was able to raise him from the dead*, Heb. xi. 19. and when believers are under the greatest distress, from the assaults of their spiritual enemies, they have a warrant from God, as the apostle had, to encourage themselves, that they shall come off victorious, because *his grace is sufficient for them*, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

V. God is eternal: this respects his duration, to wit, as he was without beginning, as well as shall be without end; or as his duration is unchangeable, or without succession, the same from everlasting to everlasting: thus the Psalmist says, *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world; even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God*, Psal. xc. 2.

1. That God is from everlasting, appears,

(1.) From his being a necessary, self-existent being, or, as was before observed, in and of himself, therefore he must be from everlasting; for whatever is not produced is from eternity.

Now that God did not derive his being from any one, is evident, because he gave being to all things, which is implied in their being creatures; therefore nothing gave being to him, and consequently he was from eternity.

(2.) If he is an infinitely perfect being, as has been observed before, then his duration is infinitely perfect, and consequently it is boundless, that is to say, eternal: it is an imperfection, in all created beings, that they began to exist, and therefore they are said, in a comparative sense, to be but of yesterday; we must therefore, when we conceive of God, separate this imperfection from him, and so conclude that he was from all eternity.

(3.) If he created all things in the beginning, then he was before the beginning of time, that is, from eternity: thus it is said, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*, Gen. i. 1. this is very evident, for time is a successive duration, taking its rise from a certain point, or moment, which we call the beginning: now that duration, which was before this, must be from eternity, unless we suppose time before time began, or, which is all one, that there was a successive duration before successive duration began, which is a contradiction. Therefore, if God fixed that beginning to all things, as their Creator, and particularly to time, which is the measure of the duration of all created beings, then it is evident that he was before time, and consequently from eternity.

(4.) This also appears from scripture; as when it is said, *The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms*, Deut. xxxiii. 27. and when we read of his *eternal power and Godhead*, Rom. i. 20. and elsewhere, *Art not thou from everlasting, O Lord, my God?* Hab. i. 12. *Thy throne is established of old; thou art from everlasting*, Psal. xciii. 2. so his attributes and perfections are said to have been from everlasting, *The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting*, Psal. ciii. 17.

And this may be argued from many scripture-consequences: thus, there was an election of persons to holiness and happiness, *before the foundation of the world*, Eph. i. 4. and Christ, in particular, was fore-ordained to be our Mediator, *before the foundation of the world*, 1 Pet. i. 20. and *set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was*, Prov. viii. 23. From hence it follows, that there was a sovereign will that fore-ordained it, and therefore God, whose decree or purpose it was, existed before the foundation of the world, that is, from everlasting.

Moreover, there were grants of grace given in Christ, or put into his hand, from all eternity: thus we read of *eternal life, which God promised before the world began*, Tit. i. 2. and of our

being saved, according to his purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began, 2 Tim. i. 9. It hence follows, that there was an eternal giver, and consequently that God was from everlasting.

2. God shall be to everlasting; thus it is said, *The Lord shall endure forever*, Psal. ix. 7. and that he *liveth for ever and ever*, Rev. iv. 9, 10. and that his *years shall have no end*, Psal. cii. 27. and *the Lord shall reign for ever*, Psal. cxlvi. 10. therefore he must endure for ever. Again, it is said, that *the Lord keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him*, to a thousand generations, Deut. vii. 9. and *he will ever be mindful of his covenant*, Psal. cxi. 5. that is, will fulfil what he has promised therein: if his truth shall not fail for ever, then he, who will accomplish what he has spoken, must endure to everlasting.

But this may be farther evinced from the perfections of his nature.

(1.) From his necessary existence, which not only argues, as has been before observed, that he could not begin to be, but equally proves, that he cannot cease to be, or that he shall be to everlasting.

(2.) He is void of all composition, and therefore must be to everlasting; none but compounded beings, viz. such as have parts, are subject to dissolution, which arises from the contrariety of these parts, and their tendency to destroy one another, which occasions the dissolution of the whole; but God having no parts, as he is the most simple uncompounded being, there can be nothing in him that tends to dissolution, therefore he can never have an end from any necessity of nature. And,

(3.) He must be to eternity, because there is no one superior to him, at whose will he exists, that can deprive him of his being and glory.

(4.) He cannot will his own destruction, or non-existence, for that is contrary to the universal nature of things; since no being can desire to be less perfect than it is, much less can any one will or desire his own annihilation; especially no one, who is possessed of blessedness, can will the loss thereof, for that is incongruous with the nature of it, as being a desirable good, therefore God cannot will the loss of his own blessedness; and since his blessedness is inseparably connected with his being, he cannot cease to be, from an act of his own will: if therefore he cannot cease to be, from any necessity of nature, or from the will of another, or from an act of his own will, he must be to eternity.

Moreover, the eternity of God may be proved from his other perfections, since one of the divine perfections infers the other.
As,

1. From his immutability; he is unchangeable in his being, therefore he is so in all his perfections, and consequently must be always the same, from everlasting to everlasting, and not proceed from a state of non-existence to that of being, which he would have done, had he not been from everlasting, nor decline from a state of being to that of non-existence, which he would be supposed to do, were he not to everlasting: either of these is the greatest change that can be supposed, and therefore inconsistent with the divine immutability.

2. He is the first cause, and the ultimate end of all things, therefore he must be from eternity, and remain the fountain of all blessedness to eternity.

3. He could not be almighty, or infinite in power, if he were not eternal; for that being, which did not always exist, once could not act, to wit, when it did not exist; or he that may cease to be, may, for the same reason, be disabled from acting; both which are inconsistent with Almighty power.

4. If he were not eternal, he could not, by way of eminency be called *the living God*, as he is, Jer. x. 10. or said *to have life in himself*, John v. 26. for both these expressions imply his necessary existence, and that argues his eternity.

3. God's eternal duration is without succession, as well as without beginning and end, that it is so, appears,

(1.) Because, as was hinted but now, it is unchangeable, since all successive duration infers a change. Thus the duration of creatures, which is successive, is not the same one moment as it will be the next; every moment adds something to it; now this cannot be said of God's duration. Besides, successive duration implies a being, what we were not, in all respects before, and a ceasing to be what we were, and so it is a kind of continual passing from not being to being, which is inconsistent with the divine perfections, and, in particular, with his unchangeable duration. The Psalmist, speaking of God's eternal duration, expresses it by the immutability thereof, *Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end*, Psal. cii. 27.; and the apostle, speaking concerning this matter, says, *He is the same yesterday, to day, and forever*, Heb. xiii. 8.

(2.) Successive duration is applicable to time; and the duration of all creatures is measured, and therefore cannot be termed infinite; it is measured by its successive parts: thus a day, a year, an age, a million of ages, are measured by the number of moments, of which they consist; but God's duration is unmeasured, that is, infinite, therefore it is without succession, or without those parts of which time consists. (a)

4. Eternity is an attribute peculiar to God, and therefore we call it an incommunicable perfection. There are, indeed, other

(a) There is not succession in His ideas, but he exists in every point of time.

things that shall endure to everlasting, as angels, and the souls of men ; as also those heavenly bodies that shall remain after the creature is delivered from the bondage of corruption, to which it is now subject : the heavenly places, designed for the seat of the blessed, as well as their happy inhabitants, shall be everlasting ; but yet the everlasting duration of these things infinitely differs from the eternity of God ; for as all finite things began to be, and their duration is successive, so their everlasting existence depends entirely on the power and will of God, and therefore cannot be called necessary, or independent, as his eternal existence is.

Object. Since the various parts of time, as days, years, &c. and the various changes, or flux of time ; such as past, present, and to come, are sometimes attributed to God ; this seems inconsistent with the account that has been given of his eternity.

Answer. It is true, we often find such expressions used in scripture : thus he is called, the ancient of days, Dan. vii. 9. and his eternity is expressed, by *his years having no end*, Psal. cii. 27. and it is said, *He was, is, and is to come*, Rev. i. 4. and chap. iv. 8. But, for the understanding of such-like expressions, we must consider, that herein God is pleased to speak according to our weak capacity, who cannot comprehend the manner of his infinite duration ; we cannot conceive of any duration but that which is successive ; therefore God speaks to us, as he does in many other instances, in condescension to our capacities ; but yet we may observe, that though he thus condescends to speak concerning himself, yet there is oftentimes something added, which distinguishes his duration from that of creatures ; as when it is said, *Behold God is great, and we know him not ; neither can the number of his years be searched out*, Job xxxvi. 26. so that though we read of the years of his duration, yet they are such as are unsearchable, or incomprehensible years, infinitely different from years, as applied to created beings ; and it is said, *A thousand years in thy sight, are but as yesterday, when it is past*, Psal. xc. 4. *One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*, 2 Pet. iii. 8. and, by the same method of reasoning, it may be said, one moment is with the Lord as a thousand millions of ages, or a thousand millions of ages as one moment ; such is his duration, and therefore not properly successive, like that of creatures.

2. When any thing past, present, or to come, is attributed to God, it either signifies that he is so, as to his works, which are finite, and measured by successive duration ; or else it signifies, that he, whose duration is not measured by succession, notwithstanding, exists unchangeably, through all the various ages of time. As he is omnipresent with all the parts of matter, yet has no parts himself, so he exists in all the successive ages of time,

but without that succession, which is peculiar to time and creatures.

Several things may be inferred, of a practical nature, from the eternity of God. As,

1. Since God's duration is eternal, that is, without succession, so that there is no such thing as past, or to come, with him; or if ten thousand millions of ages are but like a moment to him; then it follows, that those sins which we have committed long ago, and perhaps are forgotten by us, are present to his view; he knows what we have done against him ever since we had a being in this world, as much as though we were at present committing them.

2. If God was from eternity, then how contemptible is all created glory, when compared with his; look but a few ages backward, and it was nothing: this should humble the pride of the creature, who is but of yesterday, and whose duration is nothing, and less than nothing, if compared with God's.

3. The eternity of God, as being to everlasting, affords matter of terror to his enemies, and comfort to his people, and, as such, should be improved for the preventing of sin.

(1.) It affords matter of terror to his enemies. For,

1st. He ever lives to see his threatenings executed, and to pour forth the vials of his fury on them: thus the prophet speaking of God, as *the everlasting King*, adds, that *at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation*, Jer. x. 10. Therefore the eternity of God argues the eternity of the punishment of sin, since this great Judge, who is a consuming fire to impenitent sinners, will live for ever to see his threatenings executed upon them. This appears, if we consider,

2dly, That since he is eternal in his being, he must be so in his power, holiness, justice, and all his other perfections, which are terrible to his enemies: thus the Psalmist says, *Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath*, Psal. xc. 11. and the apostle says, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, Heb. x. 31.

(2.) It affords matter of comfort to believers, as opposed to the fluctuating and uncertain state of all creature-enjoyments; it is an encouragement to them in the loss of friends and relations, or under all the other losses or disappointments they meet with as to their outward estate in this world. These are, at best, but short-lived comforts, but God is the *eternal portion* and happiness of his people, Psal. lxxiii. 26. and, from his eternity, they may certainly conclude, that the happiness of the heavenly state will be eternal, for it consists in the enjoyment of him, who is so; which is a very delightful thought to all who are enabled by faith to lay claim to it.

VI. God is immutable: thus it is said, that *with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*, James i. 17. This is sometimes set forth in a metaphorical way, in which respect he is compared to *a rock*, Deut. xxxii. 4. which remains immovable, when the whole ocean, that surrounds it, is continually in a fluctuating state; even so, though all creatures are subject to change, God alone is unchangeable in his being, and all his perfections.

Here we shall consider,

1. How immutability is a perfection; and how it is a divine perfection peculiar to God.

(1.) It must be allowed that immutability cannot be said to be an excellency or perfection, unless it be applied to, or spoken of what is good; an immutable state of sin, or misery, is far from being an excellency, when it is applied to fallen angels, or wicked men: but unchangeable holiness and happiness, as applied to holy angels, or saints in heaven, is a perfection conferred upon them; and when we speak of God's immutability, we suppose him infinitely blessed, which is included in the notion of a God; and so we farther say, that he is unchangeable in all those perfections in which it consists.

(2.) Immutability belongs, in the most proper sense, to God alone; so that *as he only is said to have immortality*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. that is, such as is underyived and independent, he alone is unchangeable; other things are rendered immutable by an act of his will and power, but immutability is an essential perfection of the divine nature; creatures are dependently immutable, God is independently so.

(3.) The most perfect creatures, such as angels and glorified saints, are capable of new additions to their blessedness; new objects may be presented as occasions of praise, which tend perpetually to increase their happiness: the angels know more than they did before Christ's incarnation; for they are said to know *by the church*, that is, by the dealings of God with his church, *the manifold wisdom of God*, Eph. iii. 10. and to *desire to look into the account the gospel gives of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*, 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. and they shall have farther additions to their blessedness, when all the elect are joined to their assembly in the great day; so that the happiness of the best creatures is communicated in various degrees; but God's perfections and blessedness can have no additions made to them, therefore he is immutable in a sense as no creature is.

2. We shall now prove that God is immutable in his being and all his perfections.

(1.) That he is immutable in his being; this belongs to him as God, and, consequently to him alone. All other beings once

were not; there has been, if I may so express it, a change from a state of non-existence, to that of being; and the same power that brought them into being, could reduce them again to their first nothing. To be dependent, is to be subject to change at the will of another; this is applicable to all finite things; for it is said, *As a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed*: but God being opposed to them as independent, is said to be *the same*, Psal. cii. 26, 27.

1st, He did not change from a state of non-existence to being, inasmuch as he was from everlasting, and therefore necessarily existent; and consequently he cannot change from a state of being to that of non-existence, or cease to be; and because his perfections are essential to him, and underived, in the same sense as his being is, therefore there can be no change therein.

2dly, He cannot change from a state of greater to a state of less perfection, or be subject to the least diminution of his divine perfections. To suppose this possible, is to suppose he may cease to be infinitely perfect; that is, to be God: nor can he change from a state of less perfection to a state of greater; for that is to suppose him not to be infinitely perfect before this change, or that there are degrees of infinite perfection. Nor,

3dly, Can he pass from that state, in which he is, to another of equal perfection; for, as such a change implies an equal proportion of loss and gain, so it would argue a plurality of infinite beings; or since he, who was God before this change, was distinct from what he arrives to after it, this would be contrary to the unity of the divine essence.

Moreover, this may be farther proved from hence, that if there be any change in God, this must arise either from himself, or some other: it cannot be from himself, inasmuch as he exists necessarily, and not as the result of his own will: therefore he cannot will any alteration, or change in himself; this is also contrary to the nature of infinite blessedness, which cannot desire the least diminution, as it cannot apprehend any necessity thereof: and then he cannot be changed by any other: for he that changes any other, must be greater than him whom he changes; nor can he be subject to the will of another, who is superior to him; since there is none equal, much less superior, to God: therefore there is no being that can add to, or take from, his perfections; which leads us,

(2.) To consider the immutability of God's perfections. And,

First, Of his knowledge; he seeth not as man seeth; this is obvious. For,

1st, His knowledge is independent upon the objects known; therefore whatever changes there are in them, there is none in him. Things known, are considered either as past, present, or to come; and these are not known by us in the same way; for

concerning things past, it must be said, that we shall know them hereafter; whereas God, with one view, comprehends all things, past and future, as though they were present.

2dly, If God's knowledge were not unchangeable, he might be said to have different thoughts, or apprehensions of things at one time, from what he has at another, which would argue a defect of wisdom. And indeed a change of sentiments implies ignorance, or weakness of understanding; for to make advances in knowledge, supposes a degree of ignorance; and to decline therein, is to be reduced to a state of ignorance: now it is certain, that both these are inconsistent with the infinite perfection of the divine mind; nor can any such defect be applied to him, who is called, *The only wise God*, 1 Tim. i. 17.

3dly, If it were possible for God's knowledge to be changed, this would infer a change of his will, since having changed his sentiments, he must be supposed to alter his resolutions and purposes; but his will is unchangeable, therefore his understanding or knowledge is so; which leads us to prove,

Secondly, That God is unchangeable in his will: thus it is said of him, *He is of one mind, and who can turn him?* Job xxiii. 13. This is agreeable to his infinite perfection, and therefore he does not purpose to do a thing at one time, and determine not to do it at another; though it is true, the revelation of his will may be changed, whereby that may be rendered a duty at one time, which was not at another: thus the ordinances of the ceremonial law were prescribed, from Moses's time to Christ; but after that were abolished, and ceased to be ordinances; so that there may be a change in the things willed, or in external revelation of God's will, and in our duty founded thereon, when there is, at the same time, no change in his purpose; for he determines all changes in the external dispensation of his providence and grace, without the least shadow of change in his own will: this may farther appear, if we consider,

1st, That if the will of God were not unchangeable, he could not be the object of trust; for how could we depend on his promises, were it possible for him to change his purpose? Neither would his threatenings be so much regarded, if there were any ground to expect, from the mutability of his nature, that he would not execute them; and by this means, all religion would be banished out of the world.

2dly, This would render the condition of the best men, in some respects, very uncomfortable; for they might be one day the object of his love, and the next, of his hatred, and those blessings which accompany salvation might be bestowed at one time, and taken away at another, which is directly contrary to scripture, which asserts, that *the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*, Rom. xi. 29.

3dly, None of those things that occasion a change in the purposes of men, can be applied to God; and therefore there is nothing in him, that in the least degree can lead him to change his will, or determination, with respect to the event of things. For,

1st, Men change their purpose, from a natural fickleness and inconstancy, as there is mutability in their very nature; but God being unchangeable in his nature, he must be so in his purpose or will.

2dly, Men change their purposes in promising, and not fulfilling their promise, or, as we say, in being worse than their word, oftentimes from the viciousness and depravity of their nature; but God is infinitely holy, and therefore, in this respect, cannot change.

3dly, Men change their mind or purposes, for want of power, to bring about what they designed; this has hindered many well concerted projects from taking effect in some, and many threatenings from being executed in others; but God's will cannot be frustrated for want of power, to do what he designed, inasmuch as he is Almighty.

4thly, Men change their minds many times, for want of foresight; something unexpected occurs that renders it expedient for them to alter their purpose, which argues a defect of wisdom: but God is infinitely wise; therefore nothing unforeseen can intervene to induce him to change his purpose.

5thly, Men are sometimes obliged to change their purpose by the influence, threatenings, or other methods, used by some superior; but there is none equal, much less superior, to God; and consequently none can lay any obligation on him to change his purpose.

VII. God is incomprehensible: this implies that his perfections cannot be fully known by any creature; thus it is said, *Canst thou by searching, find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? Job xi. 7.*

When we consider God as incomprehensible, we do not only mean that man in this imperfect state, cannot fully comprehend his glory; for it is but very little, comparatively, that we can comprehend of finite things, and we know much less of that which is infinite; but when we say that God is incomprehensible, we mean that the best of creatures, in the most perfect state, cannot fully conceive of, or describe his glory; and the reason is, because they are finite, and his perfections are infinite; and there is no proportion between an infinite God, and a finite mind: the water of the ocean might as well be contained in the hollow of the hand, or the dust of the earth weighed in a balance, as that the best of creatures should have a perfect and adequate idea of the divine perfections. In this case, we generally distinguish between apprehending, and comprehending; the former denotes our having some imperfect, or inade-

quate ideas of what surpasses our understanding; the latter, our knowing every thing that is contained in it, which is called our having an adequate idea thereof: now we apprehend something of the divine perfections, in proportion to the limits of our capacities, and our present state; but we cannot, nor ever shall, be able to comprehend the divine glory, since God is incomprehensible to every one but himself. Again, we farther distinguish between our having a full conviction that God hath those infinite perfections, which no creature can comprehend, and our being able fully to describe them: thus we firmly believe that God exists throughout all the changes of time, and yet that his duration is not measured thereby, or that he fills all places without being co-extended with matter; we apprehend, as having an undeniable demonstration thereof, that he does so, though we cannot comprehend how he does it.

VIII. God is omnipresent: this is elegantly set forth by the Psalmist, *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right-hand shall hold me,* Psal. cxxxix. 7—10. This perfection of the Godhead doth not consist merely, as some suppose, in his knowing what is done in heaven and earth, which is only a metaphorical sense of omnipresence; as when Elisha tells Gehazi, *Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?* 2 Kings v. 6. Or, as the apostle says to the church at Corinth, that though he was *absent in body*, yet he was *present with them in spirit*, 1 Cor. v. 3. Or, as we say, that our souls are with our friends in distant places, as often as we think of them: nor doth it consist in God's being omnipresent by his authority, as a king is said, by a figurative way of speaking, to be present in all parts of his dominions, where persons are deputed to act under him, or by his authority: but we must take it in a proper sense, as he fills all places with his presence, Jer. xxiii. 24. so that he is not confined to, or excluded from any place; and this he does, not by parts, as the world or the universe is said to be omnipresent, for that is only agreeable to things corporeal, and compounded of parts, and therefore by no means applicable to the divine omnipresence. This is a doctrine which it is impossible for us to comprehend, yet we are bound to believe it, because the contrary hereunto is inconsistent with infinite perfection; and it is sometimes called his essential presence, (a) to distinguish it from his

(a) Effects spring from *power*, not *laws*, and prove a *virtual*, or influential, relation, an *essential* ubiquity.

influential presence, whereby he is said to be where he acts in the method of his providence, which is either common or special; by the former of these he upholds and governs all things; by the latter he exerts his power in a way of grace, which is called his special presence with his people: and as his omnipresence, or immensity, is necessary, and not the result of his will, so his influential presence is arbitrary, and an instance of infinite condescension, in which respect he is said to be, or not to be, in particular places; to come to, or depart from his people; sometimes to dwell in heaven, as he displays his glory there agreeably to the heavenly state; at other times to dwell with his church on earth, when he communicates to them those blessings which they stand in need of; which leads us to consider the next divine perfection mentioned in this answer.

IX. God is almighty, Rev. i. 18. ch. iv. 8. this will evidently appear, in that if he be infinite in all his other perfections, he must be so in power: thus if he be omniscient, he knows what is possible or expedient to be done; and, if he be an infinite sovereign, he wills whatever shall come to pass: now this knowledge would be insignificant, and his will inefficacious, were he not infinite in power, or almighty. Again, this might be argued from his justice, either in rewarding or punishing; for if he were not infinite in power, he could do neither of these, at least so far as to render him the object of that desire, or fear, which is agreeable to the nature of these perfections; neither could infinite faithfulness accomplish all the promises which he hath made, so as to excite that trust and dependence, which is a part of religious worship; nor could he say, without limitation, as he does, *I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it*, Isa. xlvi. 11.

But since power is visible in, and demonstrated by its effects, and infinite power, by those effects which cannot be produced by a creature, we may observe the almighty power of God in all his works, both of nature and grace: thus his eternal power is understood, as the apostle says, *By the things that are made*, Rom. i. 20. not that there was an eternal production of things, but the exerting this power in time proves it to be infinite and truly divine; for no creature can produce the smallest particle of matter out of nothing, much less furnish the various species of creatures with those endowments, in which they excel one another, and set forth their Creator's glory. And the glory of his power is no less visible in the works of providence, whereby he upholds all things, disposes of them according to his pleasure, and brings about events, which only he who has an almighty arm can effect. These things might have been enlarged on, as evident proofs of this divine perfection; but since the works of creation and providence will be particularly considered

in their proper place,* we shall proceed to consider the power of God, as appearing in his works of grace; particularly,

1. In some things subservient to our redemption, as in the formation of the human nature of Christ, which is ascribed to the *power of the Highest*, Luke i. 35. and in preserving it from being crushed, overcome, and trampled on, by all the united powers of hell, and earth: it is said, *the arm of God strengthened him*, so that *the enemy should not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him*, Psal. lxxxix. 21, 22. It was the power of God that bore him up under all the terrible views he had of sufferings and death, which had many ingredients in it, that rendered it, beyond expression, formidable, and would have sunk a mere creature, unassisted thereby, into destruction. It was by the divine power, which he calls *the finger of God*, Luke ix. 20. that he cast out devils, and wrought many other miracles, to confirm his mission: so, when he *rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child*, it is said, *they were all amazed at the mighty power of God*, chap. ix. 42, 43. and it was hereby that *he was raised from the dead*, which the apostle calls *the exceeding greatness of the power of God*, Eph. i. 19. and accordingly he was *declared to be the Son of God, with power, by this extraordinary event*, Rom. i. 4. Moreover, the power of God will be glorified, in the highest degree, in his second coming, when, as he says, he will appear *in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory*. Matt. xxiv. 30.

2. The power of God eminently appears in the propagation and success of the gospel.

(1.) In the propagation thereof; that a doctrine, so contrary to the corrupt inclinations of mankind, which had so little to recommend it, but what was divine, should be spread throughout the greatest part of the known world, by a small number of men, raised up and spirited to that end; and, in order thereunto, acted above themselves, and furnished with extraordinary qualifications, such as the gift of tongues, and a power to work miracles, is a convincing proof, that the power by which all this was done, is infinite. It was hereby that they were not only inspired with wisdom, by which they silenced and confounded their malicious enemies, but persuaded others to believe what they were sent to impart to them. It was hereby that they were inflamed with zeal, in proportion to the greatness of the occasion, fortified with courage to despise the threats, and patiently to bear the persecuting rage of those who pursued them unto bonds and death. It was hereby that they were enabled to finish their course with joy, and seal the doctrines they delivered with their blood. And the power of God was herein the more remarkable, inasmuch as they were not men of the greatest natural sagacity, or resolution; and they

* Quest. xv. and xviii.

always confessed whatever there was extraordinary in the course of their ministry, was from the hand of God.

(2.) The power of God appears in the success of the gospel, the report whereof would never have been believed, had not *the arm of the Lord been revealed*, Isa. liii. 1. The great multitude that was converted to Christianity in one age, is an eminent instance hereof: and the rather, because the profession they made was contrary to their secular interests, and exposed them to the same persecution, though in a less degree, which the apostles themselves met with; notwithstanding which, they willingly parted with their worldly substance, when the necessity of affairs required it, and were content to have all things common, that so the work might proceed with more success.

It was the power of God that touched their hearts; so that this internal influence contributed more to the work of grace, than all the rhetorick of man could have done. It was this that carried them through all the opposition of cruel mocking, bonds, and imprisonment, and at the same time compensated all their losses and sufferings, by those extraordinary joys and supports which they had, both in life and death.

And to this we may add, that the daily success of the gospel, in all the instances of converting grace, is an evident effect and proof of the divine power, as will farther appear, when, under a following head, we consider effectual calling, as being the work of God's almighty power and grace.*

Object. It will be objected, that there are some things which God cannot do, and therefore he is not almighty.

Ansiv. It is true, there are some things that God cannot do; but the reason is, either because it would be contrary to his divine perfections to do them, or they are not the objects of power; therefore it is not an imperfection in him that he cannot do them, but rather a branch of his glory. As,

1. There are some things which he cannot do, not because he has not power to do them, had he pleased; but the only reason is, because he has willed or determined not to do them. Thus if we should say, that he cannot make more worlds, it is not for want of infinite power, but because we suppose he has determined not to make them; he cannot save the reprobate, or fallen angels, not through a defect of power, but because he has willed not to do it. In this the power of God is distinguished from that of the creature; for we never say that a person cannot do a thing, merely because he will not, but because he wants power, if he would: (a) but this is by no means to be said of God in any instance. Therefore we must distinguish between his absolute and ordinate power; by the former he

* Quest. lxvii.

(a) Vide Edwards on Free-will, part I. sect. IV.

could do many things, which by the latter he will not; and consequently, to say he cannot do those things, which he has determined not to do, does not in the least overthrow this attribute of almighty power.

2. He cannot do that which is contrary to the nature of things, where there is an impossibility in the things themselves to be done: thus he cannot make a creature to be independent, for that is contrary to the idea of a creature; nor can he make a creature equal to himself, for then it would not be a creature; it is also impossible that he should make a creature to be, and not to be, at the same time; or render that not done, which is done, since that is contrary to the nature and truth of things; to which we may add, that he cannot make a creature the object of religious worship; or, by his power, advance him to such a dignity, as shall warrant any one's ascribing divine perfections to him.

3. He cannot deny himself, *It is impossible for God to lie*, Heb. vi. 18. and it is equally impossible for him to act contrary to any of his perfections; for which reason he cannot do any thing that argues weakness: as, for instance, he cannot repent, or change his mind, or eternal purpose; nor can he do any thing that would argue him, not to be a holy God: now, though it may be truly said that God can do none of these things, this is no defect in him, but rather a glory, since they are not the objects of power, but would argue weakness and imperfection in him, should he do them.

We shall now consider, what practical improvement we ought to make of this divine attribute.

(1.) The almighty power of God affords great support and relief to believers, when they are assaulted, and afraid of being overcome, by their spiritual enemies: thus when they wrestle, as the apostle says, not only *against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places*, Eph. vi. 12. and when they consider what numbers have been overcome and ruined by them, and are discouraged very much, under a sense of their own weakness or inability to maintain their ground against them; let them consider that God is able to bruise Satan under their feet, and to make them more than conquerors, and to cause all grace to abound in them, and to work in them that which is pleasing in his sight.

(2.) The consideration of God's almighty power gives us the greatest ground to conclude, that whatever difficulties seem to lie in the way of the accomplishment of his promises, relating to our future blessedness, shall be removed or surmounted; so that those things which seem impossible, if we look no farther than second causes, or the little appearance there is, at present,

of their being brought about, are not only possible, but very easy for the power of God to effect.

Thus, with respect to what concerns the case of those who are sinking into despair, under a sense of the guilt or power of sin, by reason whereof they are ready to conclude that this burden is so great, that no finite power can remove it; let such consider, that to God all things are possible; he can, by his powerful word, raise the most dejected spirits, and turn the shadow of death into a bright morning of peace and joy.

Moreover, if we consider the declining state of religion in the world, the apostacy of some professors, the degeneracy of others, and what reason the best of them have to say, that it is not with them as in times past; or when we consider what little hope there is, from the present view we have of things, that the work of God will be revived in his church; yea, if the state thereof were, in all appearance, as hopeless as it was when God, in a vision, represented it to the prophet Ezekiel, when he shewed him the valley full of dry bones, and asked him, *Can these bones live?* Ezek. xxxvii. 3. or if the question be put, can the despised, declining, sinking, and dying interest of Christ be revived? or how can those prophecies, that relate to the church's future happiness and glory, ever have their accomplishment in this world, when all things seem to make against it? this difficulty will be removed, and our hope encouraged, when we consider the power of God, to which nothing is difficult, much less insuperable.

And to this we may add, that the power of God will remove all the difficulties that lie in our way, with respect to the resurrection of the dead: this is a doctrine which seems contrary to the course of nature; and, if we look no farther than the power of the creature, we should be inclined to say, *How can this be?* But when we consider the almighty power of God, that will sufficiently remove all objections that can be brought against it: thus, when our Saviour proves this doctrine, he opposes the absurd notions which some had relating thereunto, by saying, *Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God,* Matth. xxii. 19.

(3.) Let us have a due regard to this attribute, and take encouragement from it, when we are engaging in holy duties, and are sensible of our inability to perform them in a right manner, and have too much reason to complain of an unbecoming frame of spirit therein, of the hardness and impenitency of our hearts, the obstinacy and perverseness of our wills, the earthliness and carnality of our affections, and that all the endeavours we can use to bring ourselves into a better frame, have not their desired success; let us encourage ourselves with this consideration, that God can make us *willing in the day of his power,* Psal. cx.

3. and *do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think*, Eph. iii. 20.

(4.) Let us take heed that we do not abuse, or practically deny, or cast contempt on this divine perfection, by presuming that we may obtain spiritual blessings, without dependence on him for them, or expecting divine influences, while we continue in the neglect of his instituted means of grace: it is true, God can work without means, but he has not given us ground to expect that he will do so; therefore when we seek help from him, it must be in his own way.

Again, let us take heed that we do not abuse this divine perfection, by a distrust of God, or by dependence on an arm of flesh; let us not, on the one hand, limit the Holy One of Israel, by saying, Can God do this or that for me, either with respect to spiritual or temporal concerns? nor, on the other hand, rest in any thing short of him, as though omnipotency were not an attribute peculiar to himself. As he is able to do great things for us that we looked not for; so he is much displeased when we expect these blessings from any one short of himself; *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man, that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth?* Isa. li. 12.

X. God knows all things: it has been before considered, that his being a Spirit, implies his having an understanding, as a spirit is an intelligent being; therefore his being an infinite Spirit, must argue that *his understanding is infinite*, Psal. cxlvii. 5.

This may be farther proved,

1. From his having given being to all things at first, and continually upholding them; he must necessarily know his own workmanship, the effects of his power; and this is yet more evident, if we consider the creation of all things, as a work of infinite wisdom, which is plainly discernible therein, as well as almighty power; therefore he must know all things, for wisdom supposes knowledge. Moreover, his being the proprietor of all things, results from his having created them, and certainly he must know his own.

2. This farther appears, from his governing all things, or his ordering the subserviency thereof, to answer some valuable ends, and that all should redound to his glory; therefore both the ends and means must be known by him. And as for the governing of intelligent creatures, this supposes knowledge: as the Judge of all, he must be able to discern the cause, or else he cannot determine it, and perfectly to know the rules of justice, or else he cannot exercise it in the government of the world.

3. If God knows himself, he must know all other things, for

he that knows the greatest object, must know things of a lesser nature; besides, if he knows himself, he knows what he can do, will do, or has done, which is as much as to say that he knows all things. And that God knows himself, must be granted; for if it be the privilege of an intelligent creature to know himself, though this knowledge in him be but imperfect, surely God must know himself; and because his knowledge cannot have any defect, which would be inconsistent with infinite perfection, therefore he must have a perfect, that is to say, an infinite knowledge of himself, and consequently of all other things.

This knowledge of God, which has the creature for its object, is distinguished, in scripture, into his comprehending, seeing, or having a perfect intuition of all things, and his approving of things, or it is either intuitive or approbative; the former of these is what we principally understand by this attribute; as when it is said, *Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world*, Acts xv. 18. and, *thou knowest my down-sitting and up-rising, and art acquainted with all my ways; for there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether*, Psal. cxxxix. 2, 3, 4. and, *the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. And as for the other sense of God's knowledge, to wit, of approbation, which is less properly called knowledge, because it is rather seated in the will than in the understanding; of this we read in several scriptures; as when God tells Moses, *I know thee by name*, Exod. xxxiii. 12. which is explained by the following words, *And thou hast found grace in my sight*; so when our Saviour says, concerning his enemies, *I will profess unto you I never knew you*, Matth. vii. 23. it is not meant of a knowledge of intuition, but approbation. In the former sense, he knows all things, bad as well as good, that which he hates and will punish, as well as what he delights in; in the latter, he only knows that which is good, or agreeable to his will.

Moreover, God is said to know what he can do, and what he has done, or will do.

(1.) God knows what he can do, even many things that he will not do; for as his power is unlimited, so that he can do infinitely more than he will, so he knows more than he will do. This is very obvious; for we ourselves, as free agents, can do more than we will, and, as intelligent, we know in many instances, what we can do, though we will never do them: much more must this be said of the great God, who *calleth things that be not as though they were*, Rom. iv. 17. so David enquires of God, *Will Saul come down? and will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand?* And God answers him, *He will*

come down, and the men of Keilah will deliver thee up, 1 Sam. xxiii. 12. which implies, that God knew what they would have done, had not his providence prevented it. In this respect, things known by him are said to be possible, by reason of his power, whereas the future existence thereof depends on his will.

(2.) God knows whatever he has done, does, or will do, *viz.* things past, present, or to come. That he knows all things present, has been proved, from the dependence of things on his providence; and his knowledge being inseparably connected with his power: and that he knows all things that are past, is no less evident, for they were once present, and consequently known by him; and to suppose that he does not know them, is to charge him with forgetfulness, or to suppose that his knowledge at present is less perfect than it was, which is inconsistent with infinite perfection. Moreover, if God did not know all things past, he could not be the Judge of the world; and particularly, he could neither reward nor punish; both which acts respect only things that are past; therefore such things are perfectly known by him. Thus, when Job considered his present afflictions, as the punishment of past sins, he says, Job xiv. 17. *My transgression is sealed up in a bag; thou sewest up mine iniquity;* which metaphorical way of speaking, implies his remembering it: so when God threatens to punish his adversaries for their iniquity, he speaks of it, as remembered by him, *laid up in store with him, and sealed up among his treasures,* Deut. xxxii. 34, 35. So, on the other hand, when he designed to reward, or encourage, the religious duties, performed by his people, who feared his name, it is said, *a book of remembrance was written before him, for them,* Mal. iii. 16.

But that which we shall principally consider, is, God's knowing all things future, *viz.* not only such as are the effects of necessary causes, where the effect is known in or by the cause, but such as are contingent, with respect to us; which is the most difficult of all knowledge whatsoever, and argues it to be truly divine.

By future contingences, we understand things that are accidental, or, as we commonly say, happen by chance, without any fore-thought, or design of men. Now that many things happen so, with respect to us, and therefore we cannot certainly fore-know them, is very obvious; but even these are foreknown by God(a) For,

(a) The Divine knowledge is as undeniable as the Divine existence, and as certain as human knowledge. "He that formed the eye doth he not see? He that planted the ear doth he not hear? He that teacheth man knowledge doth he not know?" But though human knowledge proves the Divine, as the effect does its cause, it by no means follows, that they are similar. Our knowledge principally consists of the images of things in the mind, or springs from them; but if the

1. Things that happen without our design, or fore-thought, and therefore are not certainly foreknown by us, are the objects of his providence, and therefore known unto him from the beginning: thus *the fall of a sparrow to the ground* is a casual thing, yet our Saviour says, that this is not without his providence, *Math. x. 29.* Therefore,

2. That which is casual, or accidental to us, is not so to him; so that though we cannot have a certain or determinate foreknowledge thereof, it does not follow that he has not; since,

3. He has foretold many such future events, as appears by the following instances.

Divine knowledge were such, it would result that things were prior to his knowledge, and so that he is not the Creator of them; all things must therefore be the representations of his ideas, as an edifice represents the plan of the skilful architect. On this account our knowledge is superficial, extending only to the external appearances of things; but their intimate natures are known to him, who made them conformed to his original ideas. Our knowledge is circumscribed, extending only to the things which are the objects of our senses, or which have been described to us; but the universe, with all its parts, the greatest and the smallest things, are all known to him, who called them into existence, and moulded them according to his own plan. Our knowledge embraces only the things which are, or have been; with respect to the future, we can know nothing, except as he, upon whom it depends, shall reveal it to us; or as we may draw inferences from his course of action in former instances. But the Creator knows not only the past and the present, but the future. He knows the future, because it wholly depends on him; and nothing can take place without him, otherwise it is independent of God, but this is incompatible with his supremacy. If he know not the future, his knowledge is imperfect; if he is to know hereafter what he does not now know, he is increasing in knowledge, this would argue imperfection; if his knowledge be imperfect, he is imperfect; and if he be imperfect, he is not God.—But all things to come are to be what he designs they shall be; there accompanies his knowledge of the future, also a purpose, that the thing designed shall be effectuated; and his wisdom and power being infinite guarantee the accomplishment of his purposes.

To be the subjects of foreknowledge, such as has been mentioned, implies the absolute certainty of the things, or occurrences, thus foreknown. A failure in their production, would not less prove imperfection, than a defect of the foreknowledge of them. Contingency belongs not to the things in futurity, but to the defective knowledge of imperfect beings, and is always proportional to our ignorance.

That the future is categorically certain with God, appears by the invariable succession of effects to their causes in the natural world; miracles themselves may not be exceptions, but would always, it is probable, flow from the same causes, which are occult from us. The voluntary actions of moral agents, how uncertain soever to themselves, are also not exceptions from the Divine knowledge and purposes; “He doth his will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth”; “The wrath of man praises him, and the remainder he doth restrain.” Every prophecy, which has been fulfilled, so far as it was accomplished by the voluntary actions of men, proves the certainty of the divine foreknowledge, the absolute certainty of the then future event, and that the will of man is among the various means, which God is pleased to make use of to accomplish his purposes.

If there be such certainty in God’s foreknowledge, and in the events themselves in the Kingdom of Providence, we may reasonably expect his conduct will be similar in the Kingdom of Grace; and the more especially if man’s salvation from first to last springs from, and is carried on, and accomplished by him.

(1.) Ahab's death by an arrow, shot at random, may be reckoned a contingent event; yet this was foretold before he went into the battie, 1 Kings xxii. 17, 18, 34. and accomplished accordingly.

(2.) That Israel should be afflicted and oppressed in Egypt, and afterwards should be delivered, was foretold four hundred years before it came to pass, Gen. xv. 13, 14. And when Moses was sent to deliver them out of the Egyptian bondage, God tells him, before-hand, how obstinate Pharaoh would be, and with how much difficulty he would be brought to let them go, Exod. iii. 19, 20.

(3.) Joseph's advancement in Egypt was a contingent and very unlikely event, yet it was made known several years before, by his prophetic dream, Gen. xxxvii. 5, &c. and afterwards, that which tended more immediately to it, was his foretelling what happened to the chief butler and baker, and the seven years of plenty and famine in Egypt, signified by Pharaoh's dream; all which were contingent events, and were foretold by divine inspiration, and therefore foreknown by God.

(4.) Hazael's coming to the crown of Syria, and the cruelty that he would exercise, was foretold to him, when he thought he could never be such a monster of a man, as he afterwards appeared to be, 2 Kings viii. 12, 13.

(5.) Judas's betraying our Lord was foretold by him, John vi. 70, 71. though, at that time, he seemed as little disposed to commit so vile a crime as any of his disciples.

Thus having considered God's knowledge, with respect to the object, either as past, or future, we shall conclude this head, by observing some properties, whereby it appears to be superior to all finite knowledge, and truly divine, *viz.*

1. It is perfect, intimate, and distinct, and not superficial, or confused, or only respecting things in general, as ours often is: thus it is said concerning him, that *he bringeth out his host by number, and calleth them all by names*, Isa. xl. 26. which denotes his exquisite knowledge of all things, as well as propriety in, and using them at his pleasure. And since all creatures *live and move*, or act, *in him*, Acts xvii. 28. or by his powerful influence, it follows from hence, that his knowledge is as distinct and particular, as the actions themselves, yea, the most indifferent actions, that are hardly taken notice of by ourselves, such as *our down-sitting and up-rising*, Psal. cxxxix. 2. and every transient thought that is no sooner formed in our minds, but forgotten by us, is known by him afar off, at the greatest distance of time, when it is irrecoverably lost with respect to us. That God knows all things thus distinctly, is evident not only from their dependence upon him; but it is said, that when he had brought his whole work of creation to perfection, *He*

saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good. that is, agreeable to his eternal design, or, if we may so express it, to the idea, or plat-form, laid in his own mind; and this he pronounced concerning every individual thing, which is as much the object of his omniscience, as the effect of his power: what can be more expressive of the perfection and distinctness of his knowledge than this? Therefore the apostle might well say, that *there is not any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,* Heb. iv. 13.

2. He knows every thing, even future contingencies, with a certain and infallible knowledge, without the least hesitation, or possibility of mistake; and therefore, as opinion, or conjecture, is opposed to certainty, it is not in the least applicable to him. In this his knowledge differs from that of the best of creatures, who can only guess at some things that may happen, according to the probable fore-views they have thereof.

3. As to the manner of his knowing all things, it is not in a discursive way, agreeable to our common method of reasoning, by inferring one thing from another, or by comparing things together, and observing their connexion, dependence, and various powers and manner of acting, and thereby discerning what will follow; for such a knowledge as this is acquired, and presupposes a degree of ignorance: conclusions can hardly be said to be known, till the premises, from whence they are deduced, be duly weighed; but this is inconsistent with the knowledge of God, who sees all things in himself; things possible in his own power, and things future in his will, without inferring, abstracting, or deducing conclusions from premises, which to do is unbecoming him, who is perfect in knowledge.

4. He knows all things at once, not successively, as we do; for if successive duration be an imperfection, (as was before observed, when we considered the eternity of God) his knowing all things after this manner, is equally so; and, indeed, this would argue an increase of the divine knowledge, or a making advances in wisdom, by experience, and daily observation of things, which, though applicable to all intelligent creatures, can, by no means, be said of him, whose *understanding is infinite,* Psal. cxlvii. 5.

We shall now consider what improvement we ought to make of God's omniscience, as to what respects our conduct in this world.

First, Let us take heed that we do not practically deny this attribute.

1. By acting as though we thought that we could hide ourselves from the all-seeing eye of God; let us not say, to use the words of Eliphaz, *How doth God know? Can he judge*

through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven, Job xxii. 13, 14. How vain a supposition is this! since there is no darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves, chap. xxxiv. 22. Hypocrisy is, as it were, an attempt to hide ourselves from God, an acting as though we thought that we could deceive or impose on him, which is called, in scripture, a *lying to him*, Psal. lxxviii. 36. or, a *compassing him about with lies and deceit*, Hos. xi. 12. This all are chargeable with, who rest in a form of godliness, as though God saw only the outward actions, but not the heart.

2. By being more afraid of man than God, and venturing to commit the vilest abominations, without considering his all-seeing eye, which we would be afraid and ashamed to do, were we under the eye of man, as the apostle saith, *It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret*, Eph. v. 12. Thus God says, concerning an apostatizing people of old, speaking to the prophet Ezekiel, *Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth*, Ezek. viii. 12.

Secondly, The consideration of God's omniscience should be improved, to humble us under a sense of sin, but especially of secret sins, which are all known to him: thus it is said, *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee; our secret sins in the light of thy countenance*, Psal. xc. 8. and *his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings*, Job xxxiv. 21. There are many things which we know concerning ourselves, that no creature is privy to, which occasions self-conviction, and might fill us with shame and confusion of face. But this falls infinitely short of God's omniscience: *for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things*, 1 John iii. 20. And this should make sinners tremble at the thoughts of a future judgment; for if sins be not pardoned, he is able to bring them to remembrance, and, as he threatens he will do, *set them in order before their eyes*, Psal. l. 21.

Thirdly, The due consideration of this divine perfection, will, on the other hand, tend very much to the comfort of believers: he seeth their secret wants, the breathings of their souls after him, and as our Saviour saith, *Their Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward them openly*, Matt. vi. 4. With what pleasure may they appeal to God, as the searcher of hearts, concerning their sincerity, when it is called in question by men. And when they are afraid of contracting guilt and defilement, by secret faults, which they earnestly desire, with the Psalmist, to be cleansed from, Psal. xix. 12. it is some relief to them to consider that God knows them, and therefore is able to give

them repentance for them; so that they may pray with David; *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting;* Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. Moreover, it is a quickning thought, to all who are affected with the church's troubles, and the deep laid designs of its enemies against it, to consider that God knows them, and therefore can easily defeat, and turn them into foolishness.

Fourthly, The due consideration of God's omniscience will be of great use to all Christians, to promote a right frame of spirit in holy duties; it will make them careful how they behave themselves as being in his sight; and tend to fill them with a holy reverence, as those that are under his immediate inspection, that they may approve themselves to him.

XI. God is most wise, or infinite in wisdom; or, as the apostle expresses it, he is *the only wise God*, Rom. xvi. 27. This perfection considered as absolute, underived, and truly divine, belongs only to him; so that the angels themselves, the most excellent order of created beings, are said to be destitute of it, or *charged with folly*, Job iv. 18. For our understanding what this divine perfection is, let us consider; that wisdom contains in it more than knowledge, for there may be a great degree of knowledge, where there is but little wisdom, though there can be no wisdom without knowledge: knowledge is, as it were, the eye of the soul, whereby it apprehends, or sees, things in a true light, and so it is opposed to ignorance, or not knowing things; but wisdom is that whereby the soul is directed in the skilful management of things, or in ordering them for the best; and this is opposed, not so much to ignorance, or error of judgment, as to folly, or error in conduct, which is a defect of wisdom; and it consists more especially in designing the best and most valuable end in what we are about to do, in using the most proper means to effect it, and in observing the fittest season to act, and every circumstance attending it, that is most expedient and conducive thereunto; also in foreseeing and guarding against every occurrence that may frustrate our design, or give us an occasion to blame ourselves for doing what we have done, or repent of it, or to wish we had taken other measures. Now, that we may from hence take an estimate of the wisdom of God, it appears,

1. In the reference, or tendency of all things to his own glory, which is the highest and most excellent end that can be proposed; as he is the highest and best of beings, and his glory, to which all things are referred, is infinitely excellent.

Here let us consider,

(1.) That God is, by reason of his infinite perfection, naturally and necessarily the object of adoration.

(2.) He cannot be adored, unless his glory be set forth and demonstrated, or made visible.

(3.) There must be an intelligent creature to behold his glory, and adore his perfections, that are thus demonstrated and displayed.

(4.) Every thing that he does is fit and designed to lead this creature into the knowledge of his glory; and that it is so ordered, is an eminent instance of divine wisdom. We need not travel far to know this, for wherever we look, we may behold how excellent his name is in all the earth: and because some are so stupid, that they cannot, or will not, in a way of reasoning, infer his divine perfections from things that are without us, therefore he has instamped the knowledge thereof on the souls and consciences of men; so that, at sometimes, they are obliged, whether they will or no, to acknowledge them. There is something which *may be known of God*, that is said to be *manifest in, and shewn to all*; so that *the Gentiles who have not the law*, that is, the written word of God, *do, by nature the things*, that is, some things, *contained therein*, and so are *a law unto themselves*, and *shew the work of the law written in their hearts*, Rom. i. 19. chap. ii. 14, 15. And, besides this, he has led us farther into the knowledge of his divine perfections by his word, which he is said to have magnified above all his name, Psal. cxxxvii. 2. therefore having thus adapted his works and word, to set forth his glory, he discovers himself to be infinite in wisdom. (a)

(a) As knowledge is a faculty of which wisdom is the due exercise, the proofs of divine wisdom are so many evidences of the knowledge of God. Wisdom consists in the choice of the best ends, and the selection of means most suitable to attain them. The testimonies of the wisdom of God must therefore be as numerous and various, as the works of his creation. The mutual relations and subserviency of one thing to another; as the heat of the sun, to produce rain; both, to produce vegetation; and all, to sustain life; ensation, respiration, digestion, muscular motion, the circulation of the fluids, and, still more, intelligence, and above all, the moral faculty, or power of distinguishing good and evil, are unequivocal proofs of the wisdom, and consequently of the knowledge, of God.—*He that formed the eye, doth he not see: he that planted the ear, &c.*

Mortal artificers are deemed to understand their own work, though ignorant of the formation of the materials and instruments they use: but the Creator uses no mean or material which he has not formed. He therefore knows, from the globe to the particle of dust or fluid, and from the largest living creature to the smallest insect. He has knowledge equally of the other worlds of this system, and every system; of all things in heaven, earth, and hell.

Our knowledge is conversant about his works; he knows all things which are known to us, and those things which have not come to our knowledge.

He formed and sustains the human mind, and knows the thoughts: this is necessary to him as our Judge. He knows equally all spiritual creatures, and sustains his holy spirits in holiness.

Our knowledge springs from things; but things spring from his purposes: they are, because he knows them; otherwise they existed before his knowledge, and so independently of him

2. The wisdom of God appears, in that whatever he does, is in the fittest season, and all the circumstances thereof tend to set forth his own honour, and argue his foresight to be infinitely perfect; so that he can see no reason to wish it had been otherwise ordered, or to repent thereof. *For all his ways are judgment, Deut. xxxii. 4. to every thing there is a season and a time, to every purpose under the heaven; and he hath made every thing beautiful in his time, Eccl. iii. 1, 11.*

For the farther illustrating of this, since wisdom is known by its effects, we shall observe some of the traces, or footsteps thereof in his works. And,

(1.) In the work of creation. As it requires infinite power to produce something out of nothing; so the wisdom of God appears in that excellent order, beauty, and harmony, that we observe in all the parts of the creation; and in the subserviency of one thing to another, and the tendency thereof to promote the moral government of God in the world, and the good of man, for whose sake this lower world was formed, that so it might be a convenient habitation for him, and a glorious object, in which he might contemplate, and thereby be led to advance the divine perfections, which shine forth therein, as in a glass; so that we have the highest reason to say, *Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all, Psal. civ. 24. He hath made the earth by his power; he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion, Jer. x. 12.* But since this argument hath been insisted on, with great ingenuity, and strength of reason by others,* we shall add no more on that subject, but proceed to consider,

* See *Ray's Wisdom of God in the Works of Creation, and Derham's Physico-Theology.* See also Fenelon, Newenllyle, Paley, and Adams's Philosophy.

We know but the external appearances, he the intimate nature of things. We inquire into the properties of things by our senses, by comparing them, by analyzing, &c: but nothing possesses a property which he did not purpose and give; otherwise his hands have wrought more than he intended. We look up through effects unto their causes: he looks down through intermediate causes, and sees them all to be effects from him.

We are furnished with memories to bring up ideas, being only able to contemplate a part at a time; but his comprehension embraces all things.

He never changes; his purposes of the future embrace eternity: all things that are really future are certain, because his purposes cannot fail of accomplishment. But all future things to us are contingent, except as he has revealed their certainty. That the future is known to him, also appears by the accomplishment of every prophecy.

But man's sin receives hereby no apology. He gives the brutal creation the capacity of deriving pleasure from gratification of sense, and provides for such appetites. He offers to man, pleasures which are intellectual: he has tendered him the means, and requires man to seek his spiritual happiness in God. When he refuses and withholds his return of service from God, man is alone to blame. And the more numerous and powerful the motives which he resists, the guilt is the

(2.) The wisdom of God, as appearing in the works of providence, in bringing about unexpected events for the good of mankind, and that by means that seem to have no tendency thereto, but rather the contrary; this will appear in the following instances. As,

1st, Jacob's flying from his father's house, was wisely ordered, as a means not only for his escaping the fury of his brother, and the trial of his faith, and to humble him for the sinful method he took to obtain the blessing; but also for the building up his family, and encreasing his substance in the world, under a very unjust father-in-law and master, such as Laban was.

2dly, Joseph's being sold into Egypt, was ordered, as a means of his preserving not only that land, but his father's house, from perishing by famine; his imprisonment was the occasion of his advancement. And all this led the way to the accomplishment of what God had foretold relating to his people's dwelling in Egypt, and their wonderful deliverance from the bondage they were to endure therein.

3dly, The wisdom of God was seen in the manner of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, in that he first laid them under the greatest discouragements, by suffering the Egyptians to increase their tasks and burdens; hardening Pharaoh's heart, that he might try his people's faith, and make their deliverance appear more remarkable; and then plaguing the Egyptians, that he might punish their pride, injustice, and cruelty; and, at last, giving them up to such an infatuation, as effectually procured their final overthrow, and his people's safety.

4thly, In leading Israel forty years in the wilderness, before he brought them into the promised land, that he might give them statutes and ordinances, and that they might experience various instances of his presence among them, by judgments and mercies, and so be prepared for all the privileges he designed for them, as his peculiar people, in the land of Canaan.

5thly, We have a very wonderful instance of the wisdom of providence in the book of Esther; when Haman, the enemy of the Jews, had obtained a decree for their destruction, and Mordecai was first to be sacrificed to his pride and revenge, providence turned whatever he intended against him, upon himself. There was something very remarkable in all the circumstances that led to it, by which the church's deliverance and advancement was brought about; when, to an eye of reason, it seemed almost impossible.

(3.) The wisdom of God appears yet more eminently, in the

greater. The divine foreknowledge of this is no excuse for man. When the Lord overpowers man's evil with good, the glory of man's salvation belongs to God

work of our redemption ; this is that which *the angels desire to look into*, and cannot behold without the greatest admiration ; for herein God's manifold wisdom is displayed, 1 Pet. i. 12. Eph. iii. 10. This solves the difficulty, contained in a former dispensation of providence, respecting God's suffering sin to enter into the world, which he could have prevented, and probably would have done, had he not designed to over-rule it, for the bringing about the work of our redemption by Christ ; so that what we lost in our first head, should be recovered with great advantage in our second, the Lord from heaven.

But though this matter was determined in the eternal covenant, between the Father and the Son, and the necessity of man seemed to require that Christ should be immediately incarnate, as soon as man fell, yet it was deferred till many ages after ; and herein the wisdom of God eminently appeared. For,

1st, God hereby tried the faith and patience of his church, and put them upon waiting for, and depending on him, who was to come ; so that though they had not received this promised blessing, yet they *saw it afar off ; were persuaded of, and embraced it*, and, with *Abraham, rejoiced to see his day*, though at a great distance, Heb. xi. 13. John viii. 56. and hereby they glorified the faithfulness of God, and depended on his word, that the work of redemption should be brought about, as certainly, as though it had been actually accomplished.

2dly, Our Saviour, in the mean time took occasion to display his own glory, as the Lord, and Governor of his church, even before his incarnation, to whom he often appeared in a human form, assumed for that purpose, as a prelibation thereof ; so that they had the greatest reason, from hence, to expect his coming in our nature.

3rdly, The time of Christ's coming in the flesh, was such as appeared most seasonable ; when the state of the church was very low, religion almost lost among them, and the darkness they were under, exceeding great ; which made it very necessary that the Messiah should come : when iniquity almost universally prevailed among them, then *the deliverer must come out of Sion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, Rom. xi. 26. and when the darkness of the night was greatest, it was the most proper time for *the Sun of Righteousness to arise with healing in his wings*, Mal. iv. 2. compared with Matt. iv. 16.

(4.) The wisdom of God farther appears in the various methods he has taken in the government of his church, before and since the coming of Christ. For,

1st, God at first, as has been before observed, † left his church without a written word, till Moses's time, that he might take occasion to converse with them more immediately, as an in-

† See Page 46.

stance of infinite condescension; and to shew them, that though they had no such method of knowing his revealed will as we have, yet that he could communicate his mind to them another way; and, when the necessity of affairs required it, then his wisdom was seen in taking this method to propagate religion in the world.

2dly, When God designed to govern his church by those rules, which he hath laid down in scripture, he revealed the great doctrines contained therein, in a gradual way; so that the dispensation of his providence towards them, was like the light of the morning, increasing to a perfect day: he first instructed them by various types and shadows, leading them into the knowledge of the gospel, which was afterwards to be more clearly revealed: he taught them, as they were able to bear it, like children growing in knowledge, till they arrive to a perfect manhood: he first gave them grounds to expect the blessings which he would bestow in after-ages, by the manifold predictions thereof; and afterwards glorified his faithfulness in their accomplishment.

3dly, He sometimes governed them in a more immediate way, and confirmed their faith, as was then necessary, by miracles; and also raised up prophets, as occasion served, whom he furnished, in an extraordinary way, for the service to which he called them, to lead his church into the knowledge of those truths, on which their faith was built.

And, to this we may add, that he gave them various other helps for their faith, by those common and ordinary means of grace, which they were favoured with, and which the gospel church now enjoys, and has ground to conclude that they will be continued until Christ's second coming. Here we might take occasion to consider how the wisdom of God appears in furnishing his church with a gospel-ministry, and how the management thereof is adapted to the necessities of his people; in employing such about this work, who are duly qualified for it, assisting them in the discharge thereof, and succeeding their humble endeavours; and all this in such a way, as that the praise shall redound to himself, who builds his house, and bears the glory; but this we may have occasion to insist on in a following part of this work.*

(5.) The wisdom of God appears in the method he takes to preserve, propagate, and build up his church in the world. Therefore,

1st, As his kingdom is not of this world, but of a spiritual nature, so he hath ordered that it shall not be promoted by those methods of violence, or carnal policy, by which the secular interests of men are oft-times advanced. He has no where ap-

* See Quest. clvi. and clvii.

pointed that wars should be proclaimed to propagate the faith, or that persons should be forced to embrace it against their wills, or be listed under Christ's banner, by bribery, or a prospect of worldly advantage; therefore all the success the gospel has had, which is worthy to be called success, has been such as is agreeable to the spirituality of Christ's kingdom; thus his house is to be built, *not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit*, Zech. iv. 6.

2dly, That the church should flourish under persecution, and those methods which its enemies take to ruin it, should be overruled, to its greater advantage; and that hereby shame and disappointment should attend every weapon that is formed against Zion, as being without success; and that the church should appear more eminently to be the care of God, when it meets with the most injurious treatment from men, is a plain proof of the glory of this attribute: and, on the other hand, that its flourishing state, as to outward things, should not be always attended with the like marks or evidences of the divine favour, in what more immediately respects salvation, is an instance of the divine wisdom, as God hereby puts his people on setting the highest value on those things that are most excellent; and not to reckon themselves most happy in the enjoyment of the good things of this life, when they are destitute of his special presence with them.

3dly, The preserving the rising generation from the vile abominations that there are in the world, especially the seed of believers, and calling many of them by his grace, that so there may be a constant reserve of those, who may be added to his church, as others, who have served their generation, are called out of it, which is a necessary expedient for the preserving his interest in the world: in this the wisdom of God is eminently glorified, as well as his other perfections.

From what has been said concerning the wisdom of God, we may infer,

1. That none can be said to meditate aright on the works of God, such as creation, providence, or redemption, who do not behold and admire his manifold wisdom displayed therein, as well as his other perfections. As we conclude him a very unskilful observer of a curious picture or statue, who only takes notice of its dimensions in general, or the matter of which it is composed, without considering the symmetry and proportion of all the parts thereof, and those other excellencies, by which the artist has signalized his skill; so it is below a Christian to be able only to say, that there are such works done in the world, or to have a general idea of its being governed by providence, without having his thoughts suitably affected with the

harmonious subserviency of things, and the design of all to set forth the glory of him, who is a God of infinite wisdom.

2. If we cannot understand the meaning of some particular dispensations of providence, so as to admire the wisdom of God therein, let us compare all the parts of providence together, and one will illustrate and add a beauty to another, as our Saviour says to Peter, *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*, John xiii. 7. therefore let us compare the various dark dispensations, which the church of God is under at one time, with the glory that shall be put upon it at another.

3. From the displays of the wisdom of God in all his works, let us learn humility, under a sense of our own folly: thus the Psalmist takes occasion to express his low thoughts of mankind in general, and says, *What is man, that thou art mindful of him?* when he had been meditating on the glory of some other parts of his creation, which he calls, *The work of his fingers*, Psal. viii. 3, 4. that is, creatures, in which his wisdom is displayed in a very eminent degree. But, besides this, we may take occasion to have a humble sense of our own folly; that is, our defect of wisdom; since it is but a little of God that is known by us, and the wonderful effects of divine wisdom are known but in part by us, who dwell in houses of clay.

4. Let us subject our understandings to God, and have a high veneration for his word, in which his wisdom is displayed, which he has ordained, as the means whereby we may be made wise unto salvation; and whatever incomprehensible mysteries we find contained therein, let us not reject or despise them because we cannot comprehend them.

5. Since God is infinite in wisdom, let us seek wisdom of him, according to the apostle's advice, *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*, James i. 5.

XII. God is most holy, or infinite in holiness, which is essential to him: thus he is often styled, *The Holy One of Israel*, Isa. i. 4. and this attribute is thrice repeated by the seraphim, who, with the utmost reverence and adoration, *cried, one unto another, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts*, chap. vi. 3. And he is said to be holy, exclusively of all others, as this is a divine perfection, and as he is infinitely and independently so, *O Lord, thou only art holy*, Rev. xv. 4. and the reason of this is assigned, to wit, because he is the only God; holiness is his very nature and essence; *There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none besides him*, 1 Sam. ii. 2. In considering this divine perfection, we shall enquire,

1. What we are to understand by it. Holiness is that whereby he is infinitely opposite to every thing that tends to reflect

dishonour, or reproach, on his divine perfections; and especially as he is infinitely opposite in his nature, will, and works, to all moral impurity; as his power is opposed to all natural weakness, his wisdom to the least defect of understanding or folly, so his holiness is opposed to all moral blemishes, or imperfections, which we call sin; so that it is not so much one single perfection, as the harmony of all his perfections, as they are opposed to sin; and therefore it is called, *The beauty of the Lord*, Psal. xxvii. 4. and when the Psalmist prays that the church may be made and dealt with as an holy people, he says, *Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us*, Psal. xc. 17. It is that which, if we may so express it, adds a lustre to all his other perfections; so that if he were not glorious in holiness, whatever else might be said of him, would tend rather to his dishonour than his glory, and the beauty of his perfections would be so sullied that they could not be called divine: as holiness is the brightest part of the image of God in man, without which nothing could be mentioned concerning him, but what turns to his reproach, his wisdom would deserve no better a name than that of subtilty, his power destructive and injurious, his zeal furious madness; so if we separate holiness from the divine nature, all other excellencies would be inglorious, because impure.

2. We proceed to consider the holiness of God, as glorified or demonstrated in various instances.

(1.) In his works. This perfection was as eminently displayed in the work of creation, especially that of angels and men, as his power, wisdom, and goodness; for he made them with a perfect rectitude of nature, without the least spot or propensity to sin, and with a power to retain it; so that there was no natural necessity laid on them to sin, which might infer God to be the author of it: and furthermore, as a moral expedient to prevent it, as well as to assert his own sovereignty, he gave them a law, which was holy, as well as just and good, and warned them of those dreadful consequences that would ensue on the violation thereof; as it would render them unholy, deprive them of his image, and consequently separate them from him, and render them the objects of his abhorrence; and, to this we may add, that his end in making all other things was, that his intelligent creatures might actively glorify him, and be induced to holiness.

(2.) This divine perfection appears likewise in the government of the world, and of the church, in all the dispensations of his providence, either in a way of judgment, or of mercy; therefore he shews his displeasure against nothing but sin, which is the only thing that renders creatures the objects of punishment, and all the blessings he bestows are a motive to

holiness. As for his people, whom he hath the greatest regard to, they are described, as *called to be saints*, 1 Cor. i. 2. and it is said of the church of Israel, that it was *holiness unto the Lord*, Jer. ii. 3. and all his ordinances are holy, and to be engaged in with such a frame of spirit, as is agreeable thereunto: thus he says, *I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me*, Lev. x. 3. and *holiness becometh his house for ever*, Psal. xciii. 5. In like manner, we are to take an estimate of the success thereof, when, through the divine blessing accompanying them, they tend to promote internal holiness in those who are engaged therein, whereby they are distinguished from the rest of the world, and *sanctified by his truth*, John xvii. 17.

Object. It may be objected by some, that God's suffering sin to enter into the world, which he might have prevented, was a reflection cast on his holiness.

Answer. It must be allowed, that God might have prevented the first entrance of sin into the world, by his immediate interposure, and so have kept man upright, as well as made him so; yet let it be considered, that he was not obliged to do this; and therefore might, without any reflection on his holiness, leave an innocent creature to the conduct of his own free-will, which might be tempted, but not forced, to sin, especially since he designed to over-rule the event hereof, for the setting forth the glory of all his perfections, and, in an eminent degree, that of his holiness; but this will more particularly be considered under some following answers.*

From what has been said concerning the holiness of God, let us take occasion to behold and admire the beauty and glory thereof, in all the divine dispensations, as he can neither do, nor enjoin any thing but what sets forth his infinite purity; therefore,

1. As he cannot be the author of sin, so we must take heed that we do not advance any doctrines from whence this consequence may be inferred; this ought to be the standard by which they are to be tried, as we shall take occasion to observe in several instances, and think ourselves as much concerned to advance the glory of this perfection, as of any other: notwithstanding it is one thing for persons to militate against what appears to be a truth, by alleging this popular objection, that it is contrary to the holiness of God, and another thing to support the charge; this will be particularly considered, when such-like objections, brought against the doctrine of predestination, and several other doctrines, are answered in their proper place.

2. It is an excellency, beauty, and glory, in the Christian religion, which should make us more in love with it, that it leads

* *Quest. xvi. xvii. xxi. and xxx.*

to holiness, which was the image of God in man. All other religions have indulged, led to, or dispensed with many impurities, as may be observed in those of the Mahometans and Pagans; and the different religions, professed by them who are called Christians, are to be judged more or less valuable, and accordingly to be embraced or rejected, as they tend more or less to promote holiness. And here I cannot but observe, that it is a singular excellency of the Protestant religion above the Popish, that all its doctrines and precepts have a tendency thereunto; whereas the other admits of, dispenses with, and gives countenance to manifold impurities; as will appear, if we consider some of the doctrines held by them, which lead to licentiousness. As,

(1.) That some sins are, in their own nature, so small, that they do not deserve eternal punishment, and therefore that satisfaction is to be made for them, by undergoing some penances enjoined them by the priest; upon which condition, he gives them absolution, and so discharges them from any farther concern about them; which is certainly subversive of holiness, as well as contrary to scripture, which says, *The wages of sin is death*, Rom. vi. 23. the word of God knows no distinction between mortal and venial sins, especially in the sense which they give thereof.

(2.) The doctrine of indulgences and dispensations to sin, given forth at a certain rate. This was a great matter of offence to those who took occasion, for it, among other reasons, to separate from them in the beginning of the reformation, whereby they gave glory to the holiness of God, in expressing a just indignation against such vile practices. It is true the Papists allege, in defence thereof, that it is done in compassion to those, whose natural temper leads them, with impetuous violence, to those sins, which they dispense with; and that this is, in some respects, necessary, in as much as the temptations of some, arising from their condition in the world, are greater than what others are liable to. But none of these things will exempt a person from the guilt of sin, much less warrant the practice of those, who hereby encourage them to commit it.

(3.) Another doctrine maintained by them is, that the law of God, as conformed to human laws, respects only outward, or overt-acts, as they are generally called, and not the heart, or principle, from whence they proceed; and therefore that concupiscence, or the corruption of nature, which is the impure fountain, from whence all sins proceed, comes not under the cognisance of the divine law, nor exposes us to any degree of punishment; and that either because they suppose it unavoidable, or else because every sin is an act, and not a habit, the off-spring, or effect of lust, which, when (as they pervert the

words of the apostle) *it has conceived, brings forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*, James i. 15. whereas the spring of defiled actions is, in reality, more corrupt and abominable than the actions themselves, how much soever actual sins may be supposed to be more scandalous and pernicious to the world, as they are more visible; if the fruit be corrupt, the tree that brings forth must be much more so; and though this is not so discernible by others, yet it is abhorred and punished by a jealous God, who searches the heart and the reins; therefore this doctrine is contrary to his holiness.

(4.) The merit of good works, and our justification thereby, is a reflection on this divine perfection; as it makes way for boasting, and is inconsistent with that humility, which is the main ingredient in holiness; and casts the highest reflection on Christ's satisfaction, which is the greatest expedient for the setting forth the holiness of God, as it argues it not to have been absolutely necessary, and substitutes our imperfect works in the room thereof.

(5.) Another doctrine, which is contrary to the holiness of God, is that of purgatory, and prayers for the dead, which they are as tenacious of, as Demetrius, and his fellow-craftsmen, were of the image of Diana, at Ephesus, the destruction whereof would endanger their craft, Acts xix. 25, 27. so, if this doctrine should be disregarded, it would bring no small detriment to them. But that which renders it most abominable, is, that it extenuates the demerit of sin, and supposes it possible for others to do that for them by their prayers, which they neglected to do whilst they were alive, who, from this presumptuous supposition, did not see an absolute necessity of holiness to salvation. These, and many other doctrines, which might have been mentioned, cast the highest reflection on the holiness of God, and not only evince the justice and necessity of the reformation, but oblige, us to maintain the contrary doctrines.

If it be objected, by way of reprisal, that there are many doctrines, which we maintain, that lead to licentiousness, I hope we shall be able to exculpate ourselves; but this we reserve for its proper place, that we may avoid the repetition of things, which we shall be obliged to insist on elsewhere.

3. Let us not practically deny, or cast contempt on this divine perfection; which we may be said to do.

(1.) When we live without God in the world, as though we were under no obligation to holiness. The purity of the divine nature is proposed in scripture, not only as a motive, but, so far as conformity to it is possible, as an exemplar of holiness: and therefore we are exhorted to be holy, not only *because he is holy*, but *as he is holy*, 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. or so far as the image of God in man consists therein: therefore they who live with-

out God in the world, being *alienated from his life*, viz. *his holiness, and giving themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*, regard not the holiness of his nature or law. These sin presumptuously, and accordingly, are said to *reproach the Lord*, Numb. xv. 30. as though he was a God that had pleasure in wickedness; or if they conclude him to be infinitely offended with it, they regard not the consequence of being the objects of his displeasure, and fiery indignation.

(2.) Men reflect on the holiness of God when they complain of religion, as though it were too strict and severe a thing; a yoke that sits very uneasy upon them, which they resolve to keep at the greatest distance from, especially unless they may have some abatements made, or indulgence given, to live in the commission of some beloved lusts. These cannot bear a faithful reprover: thus Ahab hated Micaiah, *because he did not prophesy good concerning him, but evil*; and the people did not like to hear of the holiness of God; therefore they desire that the prophets would *cause the Holy One of Israel to cease before them*, Isa. xxx. 11. and to this we may add,

(3.) They do, in effect, deny or despise this attribute, who entertain an enmity or prejudice against holiness in others, whose conversation is not only blameless, but exemplary; such make use of the word saint, as a term of reproach, as though holiness were not only a worthless thing, but a blemish or disparagement to the nature of man, a stain on his character, and to be avoided by all who have any regard to their reputation, or, at least as though religion were no other than hypocrisy, and much more so, when it shines brightest in the conversation of those who esteem it their greatest ornament. What is this, but to spurn at the holiness of God, by endeavouring to bring that into contempt, which is his image and delight?

XIII. God is most just. This attribute differs but little from that of holiness, though sometimes they are thus distinguished; as holiness is the contrariety, or opposition of his nature to sin, justice is an eternal and visible display thereof; and, in particular, when God is said to be just, he is considered as the governor of the world; and therefore when he appears in the glory of his justice, he bears the character of a judge; accordingly it is said concerning him, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Gen. xviii. 25. and he is said, *without respect of persons, to judge according to every man's work*, 1 Pet. i. 17. Now the justice of God is sometimes taken for his faithfulness, which is a doing justice to his word; but this will be more particularly considered, when we speak of him as abundant in truth. But, according to the most common and known sense of the word, it is taken either for his disposing, or his dis-

tributive justice ; the former is that whereby his holiness shines forth in all the dispensations of his providence, as all his ways are equal, of what kind soever they be ; the latter, to wit, his distributive justice, consists either in rewarding or punishing, and so is styled either remunerative or vindictive ; in these two respects, we shall more particularly consider this attribute.

1. The justice of God, as giving rewards to his creatures ; this he may be said to do, without supposing the persons, who are the subjects thereof, to have done any thing by which they have merited them : we often find, in scripture, that the heavenly glory is set forth as a reward, Mat. x. 41, 42. and 1 Cor. iii. 14. and it is called, *a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give at that day*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. to wit, when he appears, in the glory of his justice, to judge the world in righteousness ; and it is also said, that it is *a righteous thing with God to recompense to his people who are troubled, rest, when the Lord shall be revealed from heaven*, 2 Thess. i. 6. 7. But, for the understanding such like expressions, I humbly conceive, that they import the necessary and inseparable connexion that there is between grace wrought in us, and glory conferred upon us : it is called, indeed, a reward, or a crown of righteousness, to encourage us to duty ; but, without supposing that, what we do has any thing meritorious in it. If we ourselves are less than the least of all God's mercies, then the best actions put forth by us must be so, for the action cannot have more honour ascribed to it than the agent ; or if, as our Saviour says, when *we have done all, we must say, we are unprofitable servants*, Luke xvii. 10. and that sincerely, and not in a way of compliment, as some Popish writers understand it, consistently with their doctrine of the merit of good works, we must conclude that it is a reward not of debt, but of grace ; and therefore the word is taken in a less proper sense. It is not a bestowing a blessing purchased by us, but for us ; Christ is the purchaser, we are the receivers ; it is strictly and properly the reward of his merit, but, in its application, the gift of his grace.

2. There is his vindictive justice, whereby he punishes sin, as an injury offered to his divine perfections, an affront to his sovereignty, a reflection on his holiness, and a violation of his law, for which he demands satisfaction, and inflicts punishment, proportioned to the nature of the crime, which he continues to do, till satisfaction be given : this is called, *his visiting iniquity*, Deut. v. 9. or *visiting for it*, Jer. v. 9. and it is also called, *his setting his face against a person, and cutting him off from amongst his people*, Lev. xvii. 10. and when he does this, his wrath is compared to flames of fire ; it is called, *The fire of his jealousy*, Zeph. i. 18. and they, who are the objects hereof, are

said to *fall into the hands of the living God*, who is a *consuming fire*, Heb. x. 31. compared with chap. xii. 29.

But that we may farther consider how God glorifies this perfection, and thereby shews his infinite hatred of sin, we may observe,

(1.) An eminent instance thereof in his inflicting that punishment that was due to our sins, on the person of Christ our Surety. It was, indeed, the highest act of condescending grace that he was willing to be charged with, or to have the iniquity of his people laid upon him; but it was the greatest display of vindictive justice, that he was accordingly punished for it, as *he is said to be made sin for us, who knew no sin*, 2 Cor. v. 21. and accordingly God gives a commission to the sword of his justice, to awake and exert itself, in an uncommon manner, against him, *the man his fellow*, Zech. xiii. 7. In this instance, satisfaction is not only demanded, but fully given, in which it differs from all the other displays of vindictive justice; but of this, more will be considered under some following answers.*

(2.) The vindictive justice of God punishes sin in the persons of finally impenitent sinners in hell, where a demand of satisfaction is perpetually made, but can never be given, which is the reason of the eternity of the punishment inflicted, which is called, *everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*, 2 Thes. i. 9. this we shall also have occasion to insist on more largely, under a following answer.†

In these two instances, punishment is taken in a strict and proper sense: but there is, indeed, another sense, in which many evils are inflicted for sins committed, which, though frequently called punishments, yet the word is taken in a less proper sense, to wit, when believers, who are justified upon the account of the satisfaction which Christ has given for their sins, are said to be punished for them; as when it is said, *Thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve*, Ezra ix. 13. and *if his children forsake my law, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him*, Psal. lxxxix. 30,—31. and the prophet, speaking of some, for whom God would execute judgment, and be favourable to them in the end, so that they should behold his righteousness; yet he represents them, as *bearing the indignation of the Lord, because they had sinned against him*, Micah vii. 9. And, as these evils are exceedingly afflictive, being oftentimes attended with a sad apprehension and fear of the wrath of God; so they are called

* *The Quest. xlv. and lvi.*

† *Quest. xxiv. and lxxiv.*

punishments, because sin is the cause of them : yet they differ from punishment in its most proper sense, as but now mentioned, in that, though justice inflicts evils on them for sin, yet it doth not herein demand satisfaction, for that is supposed to have been given, inasmuch as they are considered as justified ; and, to speak with reverence, it is not agreeable to the nature of justice to demand satisfaction twice. Nevertheless, it is one thing for God really to demand it, and another thing for believers to apprehend or conclude that such a demand is made ; this they may often do, as questioning whether they are believers, or in a justified state : however, God's design, in these afflictive dispensations, is to humble them greatly, and shew them the demerit of sin, whatever he determines shall be the consequence thereof.

Moreover, the persons, who are the subjects of this punishment, are considered not as enemies, but as children, and therefore the objects of his love, at the same time that his hand is heavy upon them ; for which reason some have called them castigatory punishments, agreeably to what the apostle saith, *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth* ; and that herein *he dealth with them as with sons*, Heb. xii. 6, 7.

From what has been said, concerning the justice of God in rewarding or punishing, we may infer,

1. Since the heavenly blessedness is called a reward, to denote its connexion with grace and duty, let no one presumptuously expect one without the other : the crown is not to be put upon the head of any one, but him that runs the Christian race ; and it is a certain truth, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, chap. xii. 14.

And, on the other hand, as this is a reward of grace, founded on Christ's purchase, let us take heed that we do not ascribe that to our performances, which is wholly founded on Christ's merit. Let every thing that may be reckoned a spur to diligence, in the idea of a reward, be apprehended and improved by us, to quicken and excite us to duty ; but whatever there is of praise and glory therein, let that be ascribed to Christ ; so that when we consider the heavenly blessedness in this view, let us say, as the angels, together with that blessed company who are joined with them, are represented, speaking, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, riches, wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing*, Rev. v. 12. It is the price that he paid which gives it the character of a reward and therefore the glory of it is to be ascribed to him.

2. From what has been said concerning the vindictive justice of God inflicting punishments on his enemies, let us learn

the evil and heinous nature of sin, and so take warning thereby, that we may not expose ourselves to the same or like judgments. How deplorable is the condition of those, who have contracted a debt for which they can never satisfy ! who are said, *to drink of the wrath of the Almighty, which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation*, Job xxi. 20. compared with Rev. xiv. 10. This should induce us to fly from the wrath to come, and to make a right improvement of the price of redemption which was given by Christ, to deliver his people from it.

3. Believers, who are delivered from the vindictive justice of God, have the highest reason for thankfulness ; and it is a very great encouragement to them, under all the afflictive evils, which they endure, that the most bitter ingredients are taken out of them. It is true, they are not in themselves *joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless, afterwards they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them, who are exercised thereby*, Heb. xii. 11. and let us not presume without ground, but give diligence, that we may conclude that these are the dispensations of a reconciled Father, who *corrects with judgment not in anger, lest he should bring us to nothing*, Jer. x. 24. It will afford great matter of comfort, if we can say, that he is, at the same time, *a just God, and a Saviour*, Isa. xlv. 21. and, as one observes, though he punishes for sin, yet it is not with the punishment of sin.

XIV. God is most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness, all which perfections are mentioned together in Exod. xxxiv. 7. and we shall first consider his goodness, which, in some respects, includes the other, though in others it is distinguished from them, as will be more particularly observed. This being one of his communicable perfections, we may conceive of it, by comparing it with that goodness which is in the creature, while we separate from it all the imperfections thereof, by which means we may arrive to some idea of it.

Therefore persons are denominated good, as having all those perfections that belong to their nature, which is the most large and extensive sense of goodness ; or else it is taken in a moral sense, and so it consists in the rectitude of their nature, as we call a holy man a good man ; or lastly, it is taken for one who is beneficent, or communicatively good, and so it is the same with benignity. Now to apply this to the goodness of God, it either includes in it all his perfections, or his holiness in particular, or else his being disposed to impart or communicate those blessings to his creatures, that they stand in need of, in

which sense we are here to understand it as distinguished from his other perfections.

This goodness of God supposes that he has, in himself, an infinite and inexhaustible treasure of all blessedness, enough to fill all things, and to make his creatures completely happy. This he had from all eternity, before there was any object in which it might be displayed, or any act of power put forth to produce one. It is this the Psalmist intends, when he says, *Psal. cxix. 68. Thou art good*, and when he adds, *thou doest good*; as the former implies his being good in himself, the latter denotes his being so to his creatures.

Before we treat of this perfection in particular, we shall observe the difference that there is between goodness, mercy, grace, and patience, which, though they all are included in the divine benignity, and imply in them the communication of some favours that tend to the creatures advantage, as well as the glory of God, yet they may be distinguished with respect to the objects thereof: thus goodness considers its object, as indigent and destitute of all things, and so it communicates those blessings that it stands in need of. Mercy considers its object as miserable, therefore, though an innocent creature be the object of the divine bounty and goodness, it is only a fallen, miserable, and undone creature, that is an object of compassion. And grace is mercy displayed freely, therefore its object is considered not only as miserable, but unworthy; however, though the sinner's misery, and worthiness of pity, may be distinguished, these two ideas cannot be separated, inasmuch as that which renders him miserable, denominates him at the same time guilty, since misery is inseparably connected with guilt, and no one is miserable as a creature, but as a sinner; therefore we are considered as unworthy of mercy, and so the objects of divine grace, which is mercy extended freely, to those who have rendered themselves unworthy of it. And patience, or long-suffering, is the suspending deserved fury, or the continuing to bestow underserved favours, a lengthening out of our tranquillity; these attributes are to be considered in particular. And,

1. Of the goodness of God. As God was infinite in power from all eternity, before there was any display thereof, or act of omnipotency put forth; he was eternally good, before there was any communication of his bounty, or any creature, to which it might be imparted; so that the first display of this perfection was in giving being to all things, which were the objects of his bounty and goodness, as well as the effects of his power; and all the excellencies, or advantages, which one creature hath above another, are as so many streams flowing from

this fountain, *He giveth to all, life and breath, and all things,* Acts xvii. 25. (a)

2. The mercy of God, which considers its object as miserable, is illustrated by all those distressing circumstances, that render sinners the objects of compassion. Are all, by nature, bond-slaves to sin and Satan? It is mercy that sets them free, *delivers them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage,* Heb. ii. 15. Are we all, by nature, dead in sin, unable to do what is spiritually good, alienated from the life of God? Was our condition miserable, as being without God in the world, and without hope: like the poor infant, mentioned by the prophet, *cast out in the open field, to*

(a) All the good which we behold in Creation, Providence, and redemption, flows from goodness in God, and are the proofs of this attribute. If all the evil, which we discover, springs from the liberty given to creatures to conform, or not, to the revealed will; or if all moral evil be productive of good, *the remainder being restrained;* then the evil, which exists, is no exception to the proofs of Divine goodness. What Deity now is, he always was; he has not derived his goodness; he is not a compounded being; his goodness therefore belongs to his essence. His goodness has been distinguished into *immanent and communicative.* The latter discovers to us the former, but his communicative goodness, though flowing in ten thousand streams, and incalculable, is less than his immanent, which is an eternal fountain of excellency.

Infinite knowledge discerns things as they are, and a perfect being will esteem that to be best, which is so; God therefore discerns, and esteems his own immanent goodness as infinitely exceeding all the good, which appears in his works, for the excellency in these is but an imperfect representation of himself. The happiness of Deity must consist consequently in his own self-complacency; *he made all things for his pleasure, or glory,* but they are only so far pleasing, as they reflect his own picture to himself. Yet when we suppose Deity to be the subject of motives, we are ever in danger of erring.

Divine communicative goodness has been termed *benevolence* when in intention, *beneficence* when carried into effect. This is nearly the same as *moral rectitude*, because the government of the Universe must, that it may produce the good of the whole, be administered in righteousness. The correct administration of justice in rewarding every good, if there be merit in a creature, and punishing every evil is no less an effect of benevolence, than the conferring of benefits, which are purely gratuitous. In like manner the punishment of offenders in civil society has for its object general utility, whether we imagine the power which judges and inflicts, to spring from the social compact, or to have been ordained of God.

The cutting off of flagrant offenders, as by the deluge, the destruction of Sodom, &c. has been obviously designed to prevent the spreading contagion of sin. But there is a time appointed, unto which all things are tending, and unto which men generally refer the wrongs they sustain, in which perfect justice shall be administered. Some attributes of Deity seem to be ground of terror, and others of love; but God is one; he is subject to no perturbation of mind; his wrath and indignation are but other terms for his steady and unchangeable goodness, bearing down the evil, which sinful creatures oppose to his purposes of general advantage. Those acts of justice which are accounted by the guilty to be unnecessary severity, are deemed, by glorified saints and angels, the effects of that goodness, which they make the subject of their Hallelujahs. Thus the highest proof of God's goodness consisted in his not sparing his own Son, nor abating any thing from the demands of his law. After this all hopes that Divine goodness shall favour the finally impenitent must be utterly vain.

the loathing of our persons, whom no eye pitied? it was mercy that said to us, *live*, Ezek. xvi. 4, 5, 6. accordingly God is said to have remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever, Psal. cxxxvi. 23.

The mercy of God is either common or special; common mercy gives all the outward conveniencies of this life, which are bestowed without distinction; as he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, Matth. v. 45. so it is said, *his tender mercies are over all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 9. but his special mercy is that which he bestows on, or has reserved for the heirs of salvation, which he communicates to them in a covenant way, in and through a Mediator; so the apostle speaks of God, *as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort*, 2 Cor. i. 3.

3. As God is said to be merciful, or to extend compassion to the miserable, so he doth this freely, and accordingly is said to be gracious; and as grace is free, so it is sovereign, and bestowed in a discriminating way; that is given to one which he denies to another, and only because it is his pleasure: thus says one of Christ's disciples, *Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?* John xiv. 22. And our Saviour himself glorifies God for the display of his grace, in such a way, when he says, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*; and considers this as the result of his sovereign will, when he adds, *even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*, Matth. xi. 25, 26. Now the discriminating grace of God appears in several instances; as,

(1.) In that he should extend salvation to men, rather than to fallen angels; so our Saviour *took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham*, because he designed to save the one, and to reserve the other, *in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*, Heb. ii. 16. compared with Jude ver. 6. And among men, only some are made partakers of this invaluable blessing, which all were equally unworthy of; and their number is comparatively very small, therefore they are called a *little flock*, and *the gate*, through which they enter, *is strait, and the way narrow that leads to life, and few there be that find it*, Luke xii. 32. compared with Matth. vii. 13, 14. And there are many who make a considerable figure in the world, for riches, honours, great natural abilities, bestowed by common providence, that are destitute of special grace, while others, who are poor, and despised in the world, are called, and saved; the apostle observed it to be so in his day, when he says, *not many mighty, not many noble, are call-*

ed; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28.

(2.) In several things relating to the internal means, whereby he fits and disposes men for salvation: thus the work of conversion is an eminent instance of discriminating grace, for herein he breaks through, and overcomes, that reluctancy and opposition, which corrupt nature makes against it; subdues the enmity and rebellion that was in the heart of man, works a powerful change in the will, whereby he subjects it to himself, which work is contrary to the natural bias and inclination thereof; and that which renders this grace more illustrious, is, that many of those who are thus converted, were, before this, notorious sinners; some have been *blasphemers, persecutors, and injurious*, as the apostle says concerning himself before his conversion, and concludes himself to have been *the chief of sinners*; and tells us, how he *shut up many of the saints in prison*, and, when they were put to death, *he gave his voice against them; punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and, being exceedingly against them, persecuted them unto strange cities*, 1 Tim. i. 13, 15. compared with Acts xxvi. 10, 11. But you will say, he was, in other respects, a moral man; therefore he gives an instance elsewhere of some who were far otherwise, whom he puts in mind of their having been *fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners*; such, says he, *were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified*. Moreover, the change wrought in the soul is unasked for, and so it may truly be said, God is found of them that sought him not; and undesired; for though unregenerate sinners desire to be delivered from misery, they are far from desiring to be delivered from sin, or to have repentance, faith, and holiness: if they pray for these blessings, it is in such a manner, that the Spirit of God hardly calls it prayer; for the Spirit of grace, and of supplications, by which alone we are enabled to pray in a right manner, is what accompanies or flows from conversion; if therefore God bestows this privilege on persons so unworthy of it, and so averse to it, it must certainly be an instance of sovereign and discriminating grace.

(3.) This will farther appear, if we consider how much they, who are the objects thereof, differ from what they were; or if we compare their present, with their former state. Once they were blind and ignorant of the ways of God, and going astray in crooked paths; the apostle speaks of this in the ab-

stract, *Ye were sometimes darkness*, Eph. v. 8. and that *the god of this world, had blinded the minds of some, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. but now they are made *light in the Lord*, and brought into the way of truth and peace. Their hearts were once impenitent, unrelenting, and inclined to sin, without remorse, or self-reflection; nothing could make an impression on them, as being *past feeling, and giving themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*, Eph. iv. 19. but now they are penitent, humble, relenting, and broken under a sense of sin, afraid of every thing that may be an occasion thereof, willing to be reprov'd for it, and desirous to be set at a greater distance from it. Once they were destitute of hope, or solid peace of conscience; but now they have hope and joy in believing, and are delivered from that bondage, which they were, before this, exposed to; such a happy turn is given to the frame of their spirits: and as to the external and relative change which is made in their state, there is no condemnation to them, as justified persons; and therefore they who, before this, were in the utmost distress, expecting nothing but hell and destruction, are enabled to lift up their heads with joy, experiencing the blessed fruits and effects of this grace in their own souls.

(4.) The discriminating grace of God farther appears, in that he bestows these saving blessings on his people, at such seasons, when they appear most suitable, and adapted to their condition; as he is a very present help in a time of trouble, when their straits and difficulties are greatest, then is his time to send relief; when sinners sometimes have wearied themselves in the greatness of their way, while seeking rest and happiness in other things below himself, and have met with nothing but disappointment therein; when they are brought to the utmost extremity, then he appears in their behalf. And so with respect to believers, when their comforts are at the lowest ebb, their hope almost degenerated into despair, their temptations most prevalent and afflicting, and they ready to sink under the weight that lies on their spirits, when, as the Psalmist says, *their hearts are overwhelmed within them; then he leads them to the rock that is higher than they*, Psal. lxi. 2. when they are even *desolate and afflicted, and the troubles of their hearts are enlarged, then he brings them out of their distresses*, Psal. xxv. 16, 17.

Thus the grace of God eminently appears, in what he bestows on his people; but if we look forward, and consider what he has prepared for them, or the hope that is laid up in heaven, then we may behold the most amazing displays of grace, in which they who shall be the happy objects thereof, will be a

wonder to themselves, and will see more of the glory of it than can be now expressed in words; as the Psalmist says, in a way of admiration, *Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!* Psal. xxx. 19.

Object. 1. If it be objected, that the afflictions, which God's people are exposed to in this life, are inconsistent with the glory of his grace and mercy.

Answ. To this it may be replied, that afflictive providences are so far from being inconsistent with the glory of these perfections, that they tend to illustrate them the more. For since sin has rendered afflictions needful, as an expedient, to humble us for it, and also to prevent it for the future, so God designs our advantage thereby; and however grievous they are, yet since they are so over-ruled by him, as the apostle says, that they *yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them, who are exercised thereby,* Heb. xii. 11. they are far from being inconsistent with the mercy and grace of God.

And this will farther appear, if we consider that these outward afflictions are often attended with inward supports, and spiritual comforts; so that, as the apostle says concerning himself, *as the sufferings of Christ abound in them, their consolations abound by him,* 2 Cor. i. 5. or *as the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day,* chap. iv. 16. it was nothing but this could make him say, *I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong;* chap. xii. 10.

Object. 2. It is farther objected, that the doctrine of free grace leads men to licentiousness; and therefore that what we have said concerning it, is either not true and warrantable, or, at least, should not be much insisted on, for fear this consequence should ensue.

Answ. The grace of God doth not lead to licentiousness, though it be often abused, and presumptuous sinners take occasion from thence to go on, as they apprehend, securely therein, because God is merciful and gracious, and ready to forgive, which vile and disingenuous temper the apostle observed in some that lived in his days, and expresses himself with the greatest abhorrence thereof, *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid,* Rom. vi. 1, 2. But does it follow, that because it is abused by some, as an occasion of licentiousness, through the corruption of their natures, that therefore it leads to it? The greatest blessings may be the occasion of the greatest evils: but yet they do not lead to them. That which leads to licentiousness, must have some motive or inducement in it, which will warrant an ingenuous mind, acting according

to the rules of equity and justice, to take those liberties; but this nothing can do, much less the grace of God. His great clemency, indeed, may sometimes give occasion to those who hate him, and have ingratitude and rebellion rooted in their nature, to take up arms against him; and an act of grace may be abused, so as to make the worst of criminals more bold in their wickedness, who presume that they may commit it with impunity: but this is not the natural tendency, or genuine effect thereof; nor will it be thus abused by any, but those who are abandoned to every thing that is vile and ungrateful. As the law of God prohibits all sin, and his holiness is opposite to it, so his grace affords the strongest motive to holiness; it is therefore the neglect or contempt of this grace, and a corrupt disposition to act contrary to the design thereof, that leads to licentiousness. Grace and duty are inseparably connected, so that where God bestows the one, he expects the other; yea, duty, which is our act, is God's gift, as the power to perform it is from him: thus when he promises to give his people *a new heart, and put his Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his statutes*, he tells them, that they should *remember their evil ways and doings, and loathe themselves in their own sight for their iniquities*: which is not only a prediction, respecting the event, but a promise of what he would incline them to do; and when he adds, that *for this he would be enquired of by them*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27, 31, 37. or that they should seek them by fervent prayer, he secures to them, by promise, a disposition and grace to perform this great duty, which is inseparably connected with expected blessings. God himself therefore will take care that, however others abuse his grace, it shall not lead those who are in a distinguishing way, the objects thereof, to licentiousness.

And to this we may add, that it is a disparagement to this divine perfection to say, that, because some take occasion from it to continue in sin, therefore its glory is to be, as it were, concealed, and not published to the world. As some of old did not care to hear of the holiness of God, and therefore, if the prophets would render their doctrine acceptable to them, they must not insist on that perfection, but *cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them*, Isa. xxx. 11. so there are many who are as little desirous to hear of the free and discriminating grace of God, which contains the very sum and substance of the gospel, lest it should be abused, whereas the glory thereof cannot be enough admired; and therefore it ought often to be recommended, as what leads to holiness, and lies at the very root of all religion.

And that it may be so improved, let it be farther considered, that it is the greatest inducement to humility, as well as one of the greatest ornaments and evidences of a true Christian.

This appears from the nature of the thing, for grace supposes its object unworthy, as has been but now observed ; and it argues him a debtor to God for all that he enjoys or expects, which, if it be duly considered, will make him appear vile and worthless in his own eyes, and excite in him a degree of thankfulness in proportion to the ground he has to claim an interest therein, and the extensiveness of the blessed fruits and effects thereof.

4. We proceed to speak of God as long-suffering, or as he is styled by the apostle, *The God of patience*, Rom. xv. 5. sometimes this attribute is set forth in a metaphorical way, and called a *restraining his wrath*, Psal. lxxvi. 10. and a *refraining himself*, and *holding his peace*, or *keeping silence*, Isa. xlii. 14. and Psal. l. 21. and, while he does this, he is represented, speaking after the manner of men, as one that is *wearied with forbearing*, Isa. i. 13. chap. vii. 13. Mal. ii. 17. and he is said to be pressed, under a provoking people, *as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves*, Amos ii. 13. By all which expressions, this perfection is set forth in a familiar style, according to our common way of speaking: but that we may briefly explain the nature thereof, let us consider, in general; that it is a branch of his goodness and mercy, manifested in suspending the exercise of his vindictive justice, and in his not punishing in such a degree as sin deserves. But that we may consider this more particularly, we shall observe something concerning the objects thereof, and the various instances in which it is displayed; how it is glorified; and how the glory thereof is consistent with that of vindictive justice; and lastly, how it is to be improved by us.

(1.) Concerning the objects of God's patience. Since it is the deferring of deserved wrath, it follows from hence, that an innocent creature cannot be the object of it, inasmuch as vindictive justice makes no demand upon him; nor has it any reserves of punishment laid up in store for him; such an one is, indeed the object of goodness, but not of forbearance; for punishment cannot be said to be deferred where it is not due: and, on the other hand, they cannot be said to be the objects thereof, in whom the vindictive justice of God is displayed to the utmost, when all the vials of his wrath are poured forth. Whether the devils are, in some sense, the objects of God's forbearance, as having ground to expect a greater degree of punishment after the final judgment, is disputed by some, who contend about the sense of the word *forbearance*; they are said, indeed, *to be reserved in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day*, Jude, ver. 6. that is, though their state be hopeless, and their misery great, beyond expression, yet there is a greater degree of punishment, which they bring upon themselves, by all the hostilities they commit against God in this world: this farther appears.

from what they are represented, as saying to our Saviour, *Art thou come to torment us before the time?* Matth. viii. 29. (a) By which it is sufficiently evident that their misery shall be greater than now it is. However, this less degree of punishment, inflicted on them, is never called in scripture, an instance of God's patience, or long-suffering, towards them; therefore we must conclude that they are not, properly speaking, the objects of the glory of this attribute. Patience then is only extended to sinful men, while in this world; for it is called, in scripture, *The riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering*, Rom. ii. 4. and it is said to *lead* those, who are the objects of it, *to repentance*; therefore there must be, together with the exercise of this perfection, a day or season of grace granted, which is called, in scripture, with a peculiar emphasis, the *sinner's day, or the time of his visitation*, in which it ought to be his highest concern *to know the things of his peace*, Luke xix. 42, 44. and the gospel that is preached, in this season of God's forbearance, is called, *The word of his patience*, Rev. iii. 10. so that there is something more in this attribute than barely a deferring of punishment. Accordingly God is said, to *wait that he may be gracious*, Isa. xxx. 18. and the effects and consequences thereof are various, (as may be said of all the other means of grace) so that sinners, who neglect to improve it, have not only thereby a reprieve from deserved punishment, but all those advantages of common grace, which attend it: but, with respect to believers, it may be said, as the apostle expresses it, *The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation*, 2 Pet. iii. 15. It is evidently so to them, and therefore God doth not spare them,

a "Mark iii. 11, v. 7; Luke viii. 28; and Mat. viii. 29. These extraordinary personages in the New Testament, are not called *devils*, *δαιμόνια*, in the original; that word never occurring in the Christian scriptures, but in the singular number, and as applied to one Being alone. They are called *dæmons*, *δαίμονες* or *δαίμονια*. Yet they are plainly devils in fact; being called Unclean Spirits, though sometimes only Spirits (Mark ix. 20; and Luke x. 20;) and showing themselves to be devils, by their whole history. In Mat. xii. 24 and 26 particularly, the Pharisees say "our Saviour casts out devils, (dæmons) by Beelzebub the prince of the devils (dæmons);" and our Saviour replies, that then "Satan casts out Satan." See also Luke x. 17—18; where the apostles rejoicing declare, "even the devils (dæmons) are subject unto us;" and our Saviour says unto them, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." So very false in itself, and directly contradicted by the very words of our Saviour, is that hypothesis of Dr. Campbell's in his new translation of the Gospels; which asserts these possessions of the New Testament to be nowhere attributed to the devil, and which avers the dominion or authority of the devil to be nowhere ascribed to the dæmons! Beelzebub is expressly called the *prince of the dæmons*, the dæmons are expressly denominated *Satan* with him, and these are only inferior devils subordinate to the great one. And though the word *dæmons* (as Dr. Campbell urges) might critically be more exact in a translation; yet the word *devils* better accords, with the usages of our language and the course of our ideas. Exactness therefore has been properly sacrificed to utility."

that he may take a more fit opportunity to punish them ; but he waits till the set time to favour them is come, that he may extend salvation to them ; and, in this respect more especially, the exercise of this perfection is founded in the death of Christ. And inasmuch as the elect, who are purchased thereby, were, by the divine appointment, to live throughout all the ages of time, and to have the saving effects of his redemption applied to them, one after another, it was necessary that the patience of God should be so long continued, which is therefore glorified more immediately with respect to them, as the result thereof ; and, in subserviency thereunto, it is extended to all the world.

(2.) The patience of God has been displayed in various instances.

1st, It was owing hereto that God did not immediately destroy our first parents as soon as they fell ; he might then, without the least impeachment of his justice, have banished them for ever from his presence, and left their whole posterity destitute of the means of grace, and have punished them all in proportion to the guilt contracted ; therefore that the world is continued to this day, is a very great instance of God's long-suffering.

2dly, When mankind was universally degenerate, and all flesh had corrupted their way, before the flood, and God determined to destroy them, yet he would not do this, till his patience had spared them, after he had given an intimation of this desolating judgment, an hundred and twenty years before it came, Gen. vi. 2, 3. and Noah was, during this time, a preacher of righteousness, while the long-suffering of God is said to have waited on them, 2 Pet. ii. 5. compared with 1 Pet. iii. 20.

3dly, The Gentiles, who not only worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, but committed other vile abominations, contrary to the dictates of nature, and thereby filled up the measure of their iniquity, are, notwithstanding, said to be the objects of God's patience, though in a lower sense, than that in which believers are said to be so ; accordingly the apostle observes, *that in times past, God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*, that is, God did not draw forth his sword out of its sheath, by which metaphor the prophet sets forth the patience of God ; he did not stir up all his wrath, *but gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness*, Acts xiv. 16, 17. Ezek. xxi. 3.

4thly, The church of the Jews, before the coming of Christ, had long experience of the forbearance of God. It is said, *that he suffered their manners forty years in the wilderness*, Acts xiii. 18. and afterwards, when they often revolted to idolatry, following the customs of the nations round about them, yet he did not utterly destroy them, but, in their distress, raised them up

deliverers ; and when their iniquity was grown to such a height that none but a God of infinite patience, could have borne with them, he, notwithstanding, spared them many years before he suffered them to be carried away captive into Babylon ; and afterwards, when their rebellion against him was arrived to the highest pitch, when they had crucified the Lord of glory, yet he spared them some time, till the gospel was first preached to them, and they had rejected it, and thereby *judged themselves unworthy of eternal life*, Acts xiii. 46.

5thly, After this, the patience of God was extended to those who endeavoured to pervert the gospel of Christ, namely, to false teachers and backsliding churches, to whom he gave *space to repent, but repented not*, Rev. ii. 21. And to this we may add, that he has not yet poured forth the vials of his wrath on the Antichristian powers, though he has threatened, that *their plagues shall come in one day*, chap. xviii. 1.

(3.) We are next to consider the method which God takes in glorifying this attribute. We have already observed that, with respect to believers, the patience of God is glorified in subserviency to their salvation ; but, with respect to others, by whom it is abused, the patience of God discovers itself,

1st, In giving them warning of his judgments before he sends them. *He speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man*, Job xxxiii. 14, 17. and, indeed, all the prophets were sent to the church of the Jews, not only to instruct them, but to warn them of approaching judgments, and they were faithful in the delivery of their message. In what moving terms doth the prophet Jeremias lament the miseries, which were ready to befall them ! And with what zeal doth he endeavour, in the whole course of his ministry, to bring them to repentance, that so the storm might blow over, or, if not, that their ruin might not come upon them altogether unexpected !

2dly When the divine warnings are not regarded, but wrath must be poured forth on an obstinate and impenitent people, this is done by degrees. God first sends lesser judgments before greater, or inflicts his plagues, as he did upon Egypt, one after another, not all at once ; and so he did upon Israel of old, as the prophet Joel observes, *first the palmer-worm, then the locust ; after that, the canker-worm, and then the caterpillar, devoured the fruits of the earth, one after another*, Joel i. 4. So the prophet Amos observes, that God first sent a famine among them, which he calls *cleanness of teeth in all their cities*, and afterwards *some of them were overthrown, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah*, Amos iv. 8, 18. Some think, that the gradual approach of divine judgments is intended by what the prophet Hosea says, when the judgments of God are compared to the

light that goeth forth, Hos. vi. 5. which implies more than is generally understood by it, as though the judgments of God should be rendered visible, as the light of the sun is; whereas the prophet seems hereby to intimate, that the judgments of God should proceed, like the light of the morning, that still increases unto a perfect day. And it is more than probable that this is intended by the same prophet, when he represents God as speaking concerning Ephraim, that he would be to them as a moth, which doth not consume the garment all at once, as when it is cast into the fire, but frets it by degrees, or like rottenness, which is of a spreading nature, chap. v. 12. Thus the judgments of God are poured forth by degrees, that, at the same time, there may be comparatively, at least, a display of divine patience.

3dly, When God sends his judgments abroad in the world, he often moderates them; none are proportionate to the demerit of sin; as it is said of him, that being full of compassion, he forgave the iniquity of a very rebellious people, that is, he did not punish them as their iniquity deserved, and therefore he destroyed them not, and did not stir up all his wrath, Psal. lxxviii. 38. so the prophet Isaiah says concerning Israel, that *God hath not smitten him, as he had smote those that smote him; nor is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him; but that he would debate with them in measure, who stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind*, Isa. xxvii. 7, 8.

4thly, When God cannot, in honour, defer his judgments any longer, he pours them forth, as it were, with reluctance; as a judge, when he passeth sentence on a criminal, doth it with a kind of regret, not insulting, but rather pitying his misery, which is unavoidable, because the course of justice must not be stopped. Thus the prophet says, that *God doth not afflict willingly*, that is, with delight or pleasure, *nor grieve the children of men*, Lam. iii. 35. that is, he doth not punish them, because he delights to see them miserable; but to secure the rights of his own justice in the government of the world: so when Israel had been guilty of vile ingratitude and rebellion against him, and he threatens to turn his hand upon them, and destroy them, he expresseth himself in such terms, speaking after the manner of men, as imply a kind of uneasiness, when he says, *Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies*, Isa. i. 24. and before God gave up Israel into the hands of the Assyrians, he seems, again speaking after the manner of men, to have an hesitation or debate in his own mind, whether he should do this or no, when he says, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together*, Hos. xi. 8. and

when our Saviour could not prevail upon Jerusalem to repent of their sins, and embrace his doctrine, when he was obliged to pass a sentence upon them, and to tell them, that the things of their peace were hid from their eyes, and that *their enemies should cast a trench about the city, and should lay it even with the ground*, he could not speak of it without tears; *when he beheld the city, he wept over it*, Luke xix. 41, &c.

(4.) The next thing to be considered, concerning the patience of God, is, that the glory of it is consistent with that of his vindictive justice; or how he may be said to defer the punishment of sin, and yet appear to be a sin-hating God.

It is certain that the glory of one divine perfection cannot interfere with that of another; as justice and mercy meet together in the work of redemption, so justice and patience do not oppose each other, in any of the divine dispensations. It is true, their demands seem to be various; justice requires that the stroke should be immediately given; but patience insists on a delay hereof, inasmuch as without this it does not appear to be a divine perfection; if therefore patience be a divine attribute, and its glory as necessary to be displayed, as that of any of his other perfections, it must be glorified in this world, and that by delaying the present exercise of vindictive justice in the highest degree, or it cannot be glorified at all: justice will be glorified, throughout all the ages of eternity, in those who are the objects thereof; but patience can then have no glory, since (as has been observed) the greatest degree, either of happiness or misery, is inconsistent with the exercise thereof; therefore this being a perfection, which redounds so much to the divine honour, we must not suppose that there is no expedient for its being glorified, or that the glory of vindictive justice is inconsistent with it.

Now this harmony of these two perfections must be a little considered. Justice, it is true, obliges God to punish sin, yet it does not oblige him to do it immediately; but the time, as well as the way, is to be resolved into his sovereign will. In order to make this appear, let us consider, that the design of vindictive justice, in all the punishment it inflicts, is either to secure the glory of the holiness of God; or to assert his rights, as the governor of the world; now if the deferring of punishment doth not interfere with either of these, then the glory of God's patience is not inconsistent with that of his vindictive justice. But more particularly,

First, The glory of his holiness is, notwithstanding this, sufficiently secured; for though he delays to punish sin, in the highest degree, yet, at the same time, he appears to hate it, by the threatenings which he hath denounced against sinners, which shall certainly have their accomplishment, if he says, that *he is*

angry with the wicked every day, and that his soul hateth them, is there any reason to suppose the contrary? or if he has threatened that *he will rain upon them snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest,* which shall be the *portion of their cup,* and that because, as *the righteous Lord, he loveth righteousness,* Psal. vii. 11. and xi. 6, 7. is not this a sufficient security, for the glory of his holiness, to fence against any thing that might be alleged to detract from it? If threatened judgments be not sufficient, for the present, to evince the glory of this divine perfection; then it will follow, on the other hand, that the promises he has made of blessings not yet bestowed, are to be as little regarded for the encouraging our hope, and securing the glory of his other perfections; and then his holiness would be as much blemished in delaying to reward, as it can be supposed to be in delaying to punish.

If therefore the truth of God, which will certainly accomplish his threatenings, be a present security for the glory of his holiness, it is not absolutely necessary that vindictive justice should be immediately exercised in the destruction of sinners, and so exclude the exercise of God's forbearance and long-suffering.

And to this it may be added, that there are many terrible displays of God's vindictive justice in his present dealing with sinners; as it is said, *The Lord is known by the judgments which he executes,* as well as by those he designs to pour forth on his enemies; the wicked are now *snares in the work of their own hands,* but in the end they shall be *turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God,* Psal. ix. 16, 17. If vindictive justice takes occasion to inflict many temporal and spiritual judgments upon sinners in this world, then the glory of God's holiness is illustrated at the same time that his patience is prolonged. This may be observed in God's dealing with his murmuring and rebellious people in the wilderness which gave him occasion to take notice of the abuse of his patience, and to say, Numb. xiv. 11, 18—21. *How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?* Upon this, justice is ready to strike the fatal blow: *I will,* says God, *smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them;* which gives Moses occasion to intercede for them, and plead the glory of God's patience, *The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy;* Pardon, says he, *I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt, even until now;* by which he means, as I humbly conceive, spare thy people, as thou hast often done, when, by reason of their provocations, thou mightest justly have destroyed them; and God answers him in the following words, *I have pardoned, according to thy word;* but he adds, *As truly*

as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, that is, with the report of the glory of his vindictive justice, which should be spread far and near; and then he threatens them that they should not see the land of Canaan, *viz.* those who murmured against him; so that vindictive justice had its demands fulfilled in one respect, while patience was glorified in the other; on which occasion the Psalmist says, Psal. xcix. 8. *Thou answeredst them, O Lord,* namely, Moses's prayer for them, but now mentioned, *Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.*

Secondly, Consider the vindictive justice of God, as tending to secure his rights, as the governor of the world, and being ready to take vengeance for sin, which attempts to controul his sovereign authority, and disturb the order of his government: now the stroke of justice may be suspended for a time, that it may make way for the exercise of patience, provided there be no just occasion given hereby for men to trample on the sovereignty of God, despise his authority, or rebel against him, without fear: but these consequences will not necessarily result from his extending forbearance to sinners; for we do not find that the delaying to inflict punishment among men is any prejudice to their government, therefore why should we suppose that the divine government should suffer any injury thereby; when a prince, for some reasons of state, puts off the trial of a malefactor for a time, to the end that the indictment may be more fully proved, and the equity of his proceedings more evidently appear, this is always reckoned a greater excellency in his administration, than if he should proceed too hastily therein; and we never find that it tends to embolden the criminal to that degree as impunity would do; for he is punished, in part, by the loss of his liberty, and if he be convicted, then he loses the privilege of an innocent subject; his life is forfeited, and he is in daily expectation of having it taken away. If such a method as this tends to secure the rights of a government, when a prince thinks fit to allow a reprieve to some for a time; may not God stop the immediate proceedings of vindictive justice for a time, without the least infringement made, either on his holiness, or his rectoral justice? Which leads us to consider,

(5.) How the patience of God is to be improved by us; and,

1st, Since it is a divine perfection, and there is a revenue of glory due to God for the display thereof, this should put us upon the exercise of those graces, which it engages us to. Some of the divine attributes tend to excite our fear, but this should draw forth our admiration and praise: and we have more reason to adore and admire the divine forbearance, when we consider,

First, How justly he might destroy us. The best man on

earth may say, with the Psalmist, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Psal. cxxx. 3. He need not watch for occasions, or diligently search out some of the inadvertencies of life, to find matter for our conviction and condemnation, since the multitude and heinous aggravation of our sins, proclaim our desert of punishment, which might provoke, and immediately draw down, his vengeance upon us; and that which farther enhances our guilt is, that we provoke him, though laid under the highest obligations to the contrary.

Secondly, How easily might he bring ruin and destruction upon us? He does not forbear to punish us for want of power, as earthly kings often do; or because the exercise of justice may be apprehended, as a means to weaken their government, or occasion some rebellions, which they could not easily put a stop to. Thus David says concerning himself, that he was *weak, though anointed king*, and that *the sons of Zeruah were too hard for him*, on the occasion of Joab's having forfeited his life, when the necessity of affairs required the suspending his punishment, 2 Sam. iii. 39. but this cannot be said of God, who is represented as *slow to anger, and great in power*, Nah. i. 3. that is, he does not punish, though he easily could: it would be no difficulty for him immediately to destroy an ungodly world, any more than it is for us to crush a moth or a worm, or break a leaf: finite power can make no resistance against that which is infinite: what are briars and thorns before the consuming fire?

2dly, Let us take heed that we do not abuse this divine perfection; it is a crime to abuse the mercy of God in the smallest instances thereof, but much more to slight and contemn the riches of his forbearance, or mercy, extended to so great a length, as it has been to most of us; and this is done,

1. By those who infer, from his forbearing to pour forth his fury on sinners, that he neglects the government of the world; or take occasion from thence to deny a providence, and because his threatenings are not executed at present, therefore they do, as it were, defy him to do his worst against them; this some are represented as doing, with an uncommon degree of presumption, and that with a scoff; for they are termed *scoffers, walking after their own lusts; saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*, 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

2. By those who take occasion from hence to sin presumptuously; and because he not only delays to punish, but, at the same time, expresses his willingness to receive returning sinners, at what time soever they truly repent, take occasion to persist in their rebellion, concluding that it is time enough to submit to him; which is not only to abuse, but, as it were, to

wear out his patience, and provoke his indignation, like them, of whom it is said, that *because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil*, Eccl. viii. 11. But you will say, these are uncommon degrees of wickedness, which only the vilest part of mankind are chargeable with; therefore let us add,

3. That a bare neglect to improve our present season, and day of grace, or to embrace the great salvation offered in the gospel, is an abuse of God's patience; and this will certainly affect the greatest number of those who are favoured with the gospel dispensation; and, indeed, who are there that improve it as they ought? and therefore all are said more or less, to abuse the patience of God, which affords matter of great humiliation in his sight.

Now that we may be duly sensible of this sin, together with the consequences thereof, let us consider; that this argues the highest ingratitude, and that more especially, in a professing people; therefore the apostle, reproving the Jews for this sin, puts a very great emphasis on every word, when he says, *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering?* Rom. ii. 4. Let us also consider, that the consequence thereof is very destructive, inasmuch as this is the only opportunity that will be afforded to seek after those things that relate to our eternal welfare. What stress does the apostle lay on the word *now*, which is twice repeated, as well as the word *behold*, which is a note of attention, implying, that he had something remarkable to communicate, when he says, *Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. And to this we may add, which is a very awakening consideration, that the abuse of God's patience will expose finally impenitent sinners to a greater degree of his vengeance. Thus when the forbearance of God had been extended to Israel for many years, from his bringing them up out of the land of Egypt; and this had been attended all that time with the means of grace, and many warnings of approaching judgments, he tells them; *You only have I known, of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you*, that is, my wrath shall fall more heavily upon you, *for all your iniquities*, Amos iii. 2. and when God is represented, as coming to reckon with Babylon, the cup of his wrath must be *filled double; how much she hath glorified herself, saith God, and lived deliciously, so much sorrow and torment give her; for she saith in her heart, I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow*, Rev. xviii. 6, 7.

3dly, Let us, on the other hand, improve God's patience, by duly considering the great end and design thereof, and what encouragement it affords to universal holiness: it is a great re-

lief to those who are at the very brink of despair; for if they cannot say that it has hitherto led them to repentance, as apprehending themselves to be yet in a state of unregeneracy, let us consider, that, notwithstanding this, a door of hope is still opened, the golden sceptre held forth, and the invitation given to come to Christ; therefore let this excite us to a diligent attendance on the means of grace, for though forbearance is not to be mistaken, as it is by many, for forgiveness, yet we are encouraged to wait and hope for it, in all God's holy institutions, according to the tenor of the gospel.

And they who are not only spared, but pardoned, to whom grace has not only been offered, but savingly applied, may be encouraged to hope for farther displays thereof, as well as to improve what they have received, with the greatest diligence and thankfulness.

4thly, Let us consider the great obligation we are laid under, by the patience of God, to a constant exercise of the grace of patience, in our behaviour towards God and man.

1. In our behaviour towards God; we are hereby laid under the highest engagements to submit to his disposing will, and, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content, without murmuring, or repining, when under afflictive providences, *Shall we receive good at his hand, and shall we not receive evil?* Job ii. 10. Has he exercised so long forbearance towards us, not only before we were converted, when our life was a constant course of rebellion, against him; but he has since, not only passed by, but forgiven innumerable offences? And shall we think it strange when he testifies his displeasure against us in any instances? Shall we be froward and uneasy, because he does not immediately give us what we desire, or deliver us from those evils we groan under?

2. Let us exercise patience, in our behaviour towards men. Shall we give way to, or express, unbecoming resentment against those whom we converse with, for injuries done us, which are often rather imaginary than real? Or if they are very great, as well as undeserved, let not our passions exceed their due bounds; especially let us not meditate revenge, but consider how many injuries the great God has passed over in us, and how long his patience has been extended towards us.

XV. God is abundant in truth. That we may understand what is meant by this perfection, we may observe the difference between his being called a true God, and a God of truth; though they seem to import the same thing, and are not always distinguished in scripture: thus he that receiveth Christ's testimony, is said to *set to his seal that God is true*, that is, in accomplishing what he has promised, respecting the salvation of his people, or that he is a God of truth; and elsewhere it is

said, *Let God be true, but every man a liar*, that is, a God of truth: yet they are, for the most part, distinguished; so that when he is called the true God, or the only true God, it does not denote one distinct perfection of the divine nature, but the Godhead, in which respect it includes all his divine perfections, and is opposed to all others, who are called gods, but are not so by nature: but this will be more particularly considered in the next answer.

But when, on the other hand, we speak of him, as the God of truth, we intend hereby that he is true to his word, or a God that cannot lie, whose faithfulness is unblemished, because he is a God of infinite holiness; and therefore whatever he has spoken, he will certainly bring it to pass. This respects either his threatenings, or his promises: as, to the former of these, it is said, that *the judgments of God*, that is, the sentence he has passed against sinners, is *according to truth*, Rom. ii. 2. and the display of his vindictive justice is called, his *accomplishing his fury*, Ezek. vi. 12. This renders him the object of fear, and it is, as it were, a wall of fire round about his law, to secure the glory thereof from the insults of his enemies.

There is also his faithfulness to his promises, in which respect he is said to be the *faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments, unto a thousand generations*, Deut. vii. 9. This is that which encourages his people to hope and trust in him, and to expect that blessedness, which none of his perfections would give them a sufficient ground to lay claim to, were it not promised, and this promise secured by his infinite faithfulness. Almighty power is able to make us, happy, and mercy and goodness can communicate every thing that may contribute thereunto; but it does not from hence follow that they will, since God is under no natural obligation to glorify these perfections: but when he is pleased to give forth a promise relating hereunto, and the accomplishment thereof ascertained to us by his infinite faithfulness; this renders these blessings not only possible, but certain, and so affords, to the heirs of salvation, strong consolation. It is this that renders things future as certain as though they were present, and so lays a foundation for our rejoicing in hope of eternal life, whatever difficulties may seem to lie in the way of it.

Here we may take occasion to consider the blessings which are secured by the faithfulness of God, of which some respect mankind in general, and the blessings of common providence, *viz.* that the world should be preserved, and all flesh not perish out of it, from the deluge to Christ's second coming; and that, during this time, the regular course of nature should not be altered, but *that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and*

winter, day and night, should not cease, Gen. ix. 11. compared with chap. viii. 22.

There are also promises made to the church in general, that it should have a being in the world, notwithstanding all the shocks of persecution, which it is exposed to ; and, together with these, God has given the greatest security, that the ordinances of divine worship should be continued, and that, *in all places where he records his name, he will come to his people and bless them*, Exod. xx. 24. And to this we may add, that he has promised to increase and build up his church ; and that to Shiloh, the great Redeemer, should the *gathering of the people be*, and that he would *multiply them, that they should not be few*, and also, *glorify them, that they should not be small*, Gen. xlix. 10. compared with Jer. xxx. 19. and that the glory should be of an increasing nature, especially that which it should arrive to in the latter ages of time, immediately before its exchanging this militant for a triumphant state in heaven.

Moreover, there are many great and precious promises made to particular believers, which every one of them have a right to lay claim to, and are oftentimes enabled so to do, by faith, which depends entirely on this perfection : and these promises are such as respect the increase of grace ; that they shall *go from strength to strength*, or that *they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength*, Psal. lxxxiv. 7. and Isa. xl. 31. and that they shall be recovered, after great backslidings, Psal. xxxvii. 14. Psal. lxxxix. 30,—33. and be enabled to persevere in that grace, which is begun in them, till it is crowned with compleat victory, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Rom. xvi. 20. Job xvii. 9. 1 Cor. xv. 57. and also that they shall be made partakers of that inward peace and joy, which accompanies or flows from the truth of grace, Isa. xi. 1. chap. lvii. 19. chap. xxxii. 17. and that all this shall be attended with perfect blessedness in heaven at last, Psal. lxxiii. 24. 2 Tim. iv. 8. The scripture abounds with promises of the like nature, which are suited to every condition, and afford relief to God's people, under all the difficulties they meet with in the world ; the accomplishment whereof is made sure to them by this divine perfection.

Object. 1. It is objected against this divine attribute ; that God has not, in some instances, fulfilled his threatenings, which has tended to embolden some in a course of obstinacy and rebellion against him ; particularly that the first threatening was not executed as soon as man fell ; for though God told our first parents, that in the very *day they should eat of the forbidden fruit, they should surely die* : yet Adam lived after this, nine hundred and thirty years, Gen. ii. 17. compared with chap. v. 5.

It is also objected, that God threatened to destroy Nineveh, within forty days after Jonah was sent to publish this message

to them, *Jonah* iii. 4. nevertheless they continued in a flourishing state many years after.

Answ. 1. As to what respects the first threatening, that death should immediately ensue upon sin's being committed, we shall have occasion to speak to this in its proper place,* and therefore all that need be replied to it at present is, that the threatening was in some respect, executed the day, yea, the moment in which our first parents sinned: If we take it in a legal sense, they were immediately brought into a state of condemnation, which, in a forensic sense, is often called death; they were immediately separated from God, the fountain of blessedness, and plunged into all those depths of misery, which were the consequence of their fall; or if we take death, the punishment threatened, for that which is, indeed, one ingredient in it, to wit, the separation of soul and body; or for the greatest degree of punishment, consisting in everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power; then it is sufficient to say, that man's being liable hereunto was the principal thing intended in the threatening. Certainly God did not hereby design to tie up his own hands, so as to render it impossible for him to remit the offence, or to recover the fallen creature out of this deplorable state; and therefore if you take death for that which is natural, which was not inflicted till nine hundred and thirty years after, then we may say, that his being exposed to, or brought under an unavoidable necessity of dying the very day that he sinned, might be called his dying from that time; and the scripture will warrant our using the word in that sense, since the apostle, speaking to those who were, by sin, liable to death, says, *The body is dead, because of sin*, *Rom.* viii. 10. that is, it is exposed to death, as the consequence thereof, though it was not actually dead; and if we take death for a liability to eternal death, then the threatening must be supposed to contain a tacit condition, which implies, that man was to expect nothing but eternal death, unless some expedient were found out, which the miserable creature then knew nothing of, to recover him out of that state into which he was fallen.

2. As to what concerns the sparing of Nineveh; we have sufficient ground to conclude that there was a condition annexed to this threatening, and so the meaning is; that they should be destroyed in forty days, if they did not repent: this condition was designed to be made known to them, otherwise *Jonah's* preaching would have been to no purpose, and the warning given would have answered no valuable end; and it is plain, that the *Ninevites* understood it in this sense, otherwise there would have been no room for repentance; so that God connected the condition with the threatening: and as, on the one hand,

* See *Quest.* xx.

he designed to give them repentance, so that the event was not dubious and undetermined by him, as depending on their conduct, abstracted from his providence; so, on the other hand, there was no reflection cast on his truth, because this provisional expedient, for their deliverance, was as much known by them as the threatening itself.

Object. 2. It is objected that several promises have not had their accomplishment. Thus there are several promises of spiritual blessings, which many believers do not experience the accomplishment of in this life; which has given occasion to some to say, with the Psalmist, *Doth his promise fail for evermore?* Psal. lxxvii. 8.

Answ. It is true, that all the promises of God are not literally fulfilled in this world to every particular believer; the promise of increase of grace is not actually fulfilled, while God suffers his people to backslide from him, and the work of grace is rather declining than sensibly advancing; neither are the promises, respecting the assurance and joy of faith, fulfilled unto one that is sinking into the depths of despair; nor those that respect the presence of God in ordinances, to such as are destitute of the influences of his grace therein; nor are the promises of victory over temptation fulfilled, to those who are not only assaulted, but frequently overcome by Satan, when it is as much as they can do to stand their ground against him; and there are many other instances of the like nature: notwithstanding, the truth of God may be vindicated, if we consider,

1. That there is no promise made, whereof there are not some instances of their accomplishment in kind; this therefore is a sufficient conviction to the world, that there are such blessings bestowed as God has promised.

2. Those who are denied these blessings, may possibly be mistaken when they conclude themselves to be believers; and then it is no wonder that they are destitute of them, for God has promised to give joy and peace only in a way of believing; or first to give the truth of grace, and then the comfortable fruits and effects thereof. But we will suppose that they are not mistaken, but have experienced the grace of God in truth; yet their graces are so defective, that they know but little of their own imperfections, if they do not take occasion from thence, to justify God, who withholdeth those blessings from them, and to adore, rather than call in question, the equity of his proceeding therein. And if remunerative justice be not laid under obligations to bestow these blessings by any thing performed by us, then certainly the faithfulness of God is not to be impeached, because he is pleased to deny them.

3. In denying these blessings, he oftentimes takes occasion to advance his own glory some other way, by trying the faith and

patience of his people, correcting them for their miscarriages, humbling them by his dealings with them, and over-ruling all for their good in the end; which is an equivalent for those joys and comforts which they are deprived of. And, indeed, God has never promised these blessings to any, but with this reserve, that if he thinks it necessary, for his own glory, and their good, to bring about their salvation some other way, he will do it, without the least occasion given hereby to detract from the glory of his faithfulness.

4. All these promises, which have not had their accomplishment in kind, in this world, shall be accomplished in the next, with the greatest advantage; so that then they will have no reason to complain of the least unfaithfulness in the divine administration. If rivers of pleasures at God's right hand for ever, will not compensate for the want of some comforts, while we are in this world, or silence all objections against his present dealings with men, nothing can do it; or if the full accomplishment of all the promises hereafter, will not secure the glory of this perfection, it is a sign that men are disposed to contend with the Almighty, who deny it; therefore to such we may justly apply God's own words to Job, *He that reproveth God, let him answer it*; or, as he farther says, *Wilt thou disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?* Job xl. 2. compared with ver. 8.

We shall now consider how the faithfulness of God ought to be improved by us. And,

(1.) The consideration thereof may be a preservative against presumption on the one hand, or despair on the other. Let no one harden himself in his iniquity; or think that because the threatenings are not yet fully accomplished, therefore they never shall; it is one thing for God to delay to execute them, and another thing to resolve not to do it. We may vainly conclude, that the bitterness of death is past, because *our houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them*; but let it be considered, that *the wicked are reserved for the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath*, Job xxi. 9. compared with ver. 30. the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. His threatenings lay him under an obligation to punish finally impenitent sinners, because he is a God of truth; therefore let none harden themselves against him, or expect impunity in a course of open rebellion against him. And, on the other hand, let not believers give way to despair of obtaining mercy, or conclude, that, because God is withdrawn, and hides his face from them, therefore he will never return; or, because his promises are not immediately fulfilled, therefore they never shall, since his faithfulness is their great security; *he will ever be mindful of his covenant*, Psal. cxi. 5.

(2.) Let us compare the providences of God with his word, and see how every thing tends to set forth his faithfulness. We are very stupid, if we take notice of the great things that are doing in the world; and we behold them to little purpose, if we do not observe how this divine perfection is glorified therein. The world continues to this day, because God has several things yet to do in it, in pursuance of his promises; the whole number of the elect are to be gathered, and brought in to Christ; their graces must be tried, and their faith built up in the same way, as it has been in former ages; therefore the church is preserved, and *the gates of hell have not prevailed against it*, according to his word, Matth. xvi. 18. and as it was of old, so we now observe that the various changes which are made in civil affairs, are all rendered subservient to its welfare; *the earth helps the woman*, Rev. xii. 16. not so much from its own design, as by the appointment of providence; and why does God order it so, but that his promises might be fulfilled? And that the same ordinances should be continued, and that believers should have the same experience of the efficacy and success thereof, as the consequence of his presence with them, which he has given them ground to expect *unto the end of the world*, Matth. xxviii. 20. are blessings in which his faithfulness is eminently glorified.

(2.) This divine perfection is a sure foundation for our faith. As his truth, with respect to what he has revealed, is an infallible ground for our faith of assent, so his faithfulness, in fulfilling his promises, affords the highest encouragement for our trust and dependence on him: thus we are said to *commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*, 1 Pet. iv. 19. and, when we lay the whole stress of our salvation upon him, we have no reason to entertain any doubt about the issue thereof. Moreover, are we exposed to evils in this world? we may conclude, that as *he has delivered, and does deliver*, so we have reason to *trust in him, that he will deliver us*, 2 Cor. i. 10. and is there much to be done for us, to make us meet for heaven? we may be *confident of this very thing, that he that has begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*, Phil. i. 6.

(4.) The faithfulness of God should be improved by us, as a remedy against that uneasiness and anxiety of mind, which we often have about the event of things, especially when they seem to run counter to our expectation. Thus when there is but a very melancholy prospect before us, as to what concerns the glory of God in the world, and the flourishing state of his church in it, upon which we are ready to say with Joshua, *Lord, what wilt thou do unto thy great name?* Josh. vii. 9. or when we have many sad thoughts of heart about the rising

generation, and are in doubt whether they will adhere to, or abandon, the interest of Christ; when we are ready to fear whether there will be a reserve of faithful men, who will stand up for his gospel, and fill the places of those who are called off the stage, after having served their generation by the will of God; or when we are too much oppressed with carking cares about our outward condition in the world, when, like Christ's disciples, we are immoderately thoughtful *what we shall eat, what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed*, Matth. vi. 31. or how we shall be able to conflict with the difficulties that lie before us: our great relief against all this solicitude is to be derived from the faithfulness of God; for since godliness has the promise annexed to it, of *the life that now is*, as well as of *that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 18. this promise shall have its accomplishment, so far as shall most redound to God's glory, and our real advantage.

(5.) The consideration of the faithfulness of God should be improved, to humble, and fill us with shame and confusion of face, when we consider how treacherously we have dealt with him, how unsteadfast we have been in his covenant, how often we have broke our own promises and resolutions that we would walk more closely with him, how frequently we have backslidden from him, contrary to all the engagements which we have been laid under. Have we found any unfaithfulness in him? Has he, in the least instance, been worse than his word? as God says, when he reproveth his people, *What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?* Jer. ii. 5.

QUEST. VIII. *Are there more Gods than one?*

ANSW. There is but one only, the living and true God.

I. **I**N this answer, God is described as the living and true God. As life is the greatest excellency belonging to the nature of any finite being, upon which account some have concluded that the lowest degree thereof renders a creature more excellent in itself, than the most glorious creatures that are without it; and inasmuch as intelligent creatures have a superior excellency to all others, because that which gives life to them, or the principle by which they act as such, is most excellent; so the life of God is that whereby he infinitely excels all finite beings; therefore, when he is called the living God, this is not one single perfection of the divine nature, but it is expressive of all his divine perfections. Thus when God represents himself, in scripture, as giving his people the highest assurance of any thing which he designs to do, he useth the form

of an oath, and sweareth by his life, *As I live*; or, *as truly as I live*, Isa. xlix. 18. and Numb. xiv. 21. which imports the same thing, as when he says, *I have sworn by myself*, Gen. xxii. 16. so that when he is called the living God, his glory is set forth, as a God of infinite perfection: but this has been considered under the last answer.

Therefore we may farther observe, that when God is styled the living God, it connotes the display of all his perfections, as life is a principle of action; and hereby he is distinguished from lifeless idols, who were reputed gods by their stupid and profane worshippers. Thus the apostle lays down both the terms of opposition, when he speaks to some, as having *turned from idols*, or false gods, *to serve the living and true God*, 1 Thess. i. 9. Here we might consider the origin and progress of idolatry, as men were inclined to *worship the creature more than the Creator*, Rom. i. 25. or *to do service to them, who, by nature, are no gods*, Gal. iv. 8. and shew how some seemed to have been destitute of common sense, as they were of true religion, when they not only worshipped God by idols, of their own making, but prayed to them, and said, *Deliver us, for ye are our gods*; this the prophet takes notice of, Isa. xlii. 17. and exposes their unaccountable stupidity, by observing to them that these gods were first growing among the trees of the forest, then cut down with their own hands, and fashioned into their designed form, and part thereof cast into the fire, as destined for common uses. These were lifeless gods, without a metaphor, and their senseless worshippers but one remove from them, as the Psalmist says, *They that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusteth in them*, Psal. cxv. 8. But this we shall have occasion to insist on in a following part of this work *, and therefore shall pass it over at present, and consider,

II. The unity of the Godhead. Scripture is very express in asserting this: thus it is said, *The Lord our God is one Lord*, Deut. vi. 4. and, *I, even I, am he; and there is no God with me*, chap. xxxii. 39. and, *The Lord he is God; there is none else besides him*, chap. iv. 35. and elsewhere, *Thou art God alone*, Psal. lxxxvi. 10. And this is a truth, not barely founded on a few places of scripture that expressly assert it, but it may be deduced from every part thereof; yea, it is instamped on the very nature of man, and may be as plainly proved, from the light of nature, as that there is a God; and every one of the divine perfections, which were particularly considered under the last answer, will supply us with arguments to confirm our faith therein: but that this may farther appear, let it be considered,

* See Quest. cv.

1. That the idea of a God implies that he is the first cause of all things, in which respect he is opposed to the creature ; it follows, therefore, that he was from all eternity. Now there can be no more than one being, who is without beginning, and who gave being to all other things, which appears from the very nature of the thing ; for if there are more Gods, then they must derive their being from him, and then they are a part of his creation, and consequently not gods, for God and the creature are infinitely opposed to each other : and since there is but one independent being, who is in and of himself, and derives his perfections from no other, therefore there can be but one God.

2. There is but one being, who is the ultimate end of all things, which necessarily follows from his being their Creator ; for he that produced them out of nothing must be supposed to have designed some valuable end hereby, which, ultimately considered, cannot be any thing short of himself, for that is inconsistent with the wisdom and sovereignty that is contained in the idea of a Creator ; therefore he is said to have *made all things for himself*, Prov. xvi. 4. and consequently the glory that results from thence is unalienable, and so cannot be ascribed to any other God ; therefore to suppose that there are other gods, is to ascribe a divine nature to them, divested of that glory which is essential to it. And to this we may add, that if God be the ultimate end of all things, he is to be glorified as such, and all worship is to terminate in him ; and we must proclaim him to be our chief good, and only portion and happiness, which is plainly inconsistent with a plurality of gods. Besides, he that is the object of adoration must be worshipped, and *loved with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind*, Luke x. 27. our affections must not be divided between him and any other. Therefore since man is under a natural obligation to give supreme worship to him, it follows that there is no other God that has a right to it, and therefore that he is the only true God.

3. Infinite perfection being implied in the idea of a God, as has been proved under the last answer, it is certain that it cannot belong to more than one ; for as it implies that this perfection is boundless, so it denotes that he sets bounds to the perfections of all others ; therefore, if there are more Gods than one, their perfections must be limited, and consequently that which is not infinite is not God. And as infinite perfection implies in it all perfection, so it cannot be divided among many, for then no being, that has only a part thereof, could be said to be thus perfect ; therefore, since there is but one that is so, it follows that there is no other God besides him.

4. Since omnipotency is a divine attribute, there can be but one almighty being, and therefore but one God ; which will farther appear, if we consider, that if there were more Gods

than one, all of them must be said to be able to do all things, and then the same individual power, that is exerted by one, must be exerted by another, than which nothing is more absurd. And it will also follow, that he, who cannot do that which is said to be done by another, is not almighty, or able to do all things, and consequently that he is not God.

5. There is but one being, who has an absolute sovereign will, who, though he can controul all others, is himself subject to no controul; who has a natural right to give laws to all who are his subjects, but is subject to none himself; for absolute dominion and subjection are as opposite as light and darkness. Two persons may as well be said to give being to each other, as to have a right to give laws to each other. Moreover, if there were more Gods than one, then there would be a confusion in the government of the world; for whatever one decrees, another may reverse; or whatever is done by one, the contrary might be done by the other, for that is the consequence from a sovereignty of will. And as there might be opposite things commanded, or forbidden, pursuant to the different wills of a plurality of gods, so the same thing, with respect to those who are under an obligation to yield obedience, would be both a sin and a duty, and the same persons would be both condemned and justified for the same action.

6. There is but one being, who is, as God is often said to be, the best and the greatest; therefore, if there were more Gods than one, either one must be supposed to be more excellent than another, or both equally excellent. If we suppose the former of these, then he, who is not the most excellent, is not God; and if the latter, that their excellencies are equal, then infinite perfection would be divided, which is contrary to the idea thereof, as was before hinted; as well as to what is expressly said by God, *To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One, Isa. xl. 25.* From these, and several other arguments to the same purpose, which might have been taken from every one of the divine attributes, and from all essential and relative glory which belongs to him, the unity of the divine essence appears, even to a demonstration. And indeed to assert that there are more Gods than one is, in effect, to say that there is no God; so the apostle deems it, when he tells the church at Ephesus, that, before their conversion, when they worshipped other gods, *they were without God in the world*, which implies as much as that they were atheists therein, as the words *αθεστὴν ἢ ἄθεον* may, with equal propriety, be rendered. (a)

a "As gravity is the common quality of all bodies, arising not from the nature and properties of matter, nor to be explained without the agency of a foreign cause, yet producing numberless uniform effects in the corporeal system, it is in all rea

Having considered the unity of the Godhead, not only as evinced from scripture, but as it may be demonstrated by the

son to be attributed to one contrivance, rather than the different designs of two or more partial independent causes. What a vast variety of appearances in nature depend on this one? The self-balanced earth hangs upon its centre; the mountains are set fast; there is a perpetual flux and reflux of the sea; vapours continually arise; the clouds are balanced till by their own weight they descend in rain; animals breathe and move; the heavenly bodies hold their stations, and go on in their constant course, by the force of gravity, after the ordinance of that wisdom which appointed them this law. Now when we see a multitude of effects proceeding from one Cause, effects so various in their kind and so important, a Cause simple and unvaried in all the diversity produced by it, can we avoid ascribing this to an unity of intelligence, if there be intelligence in it all? For could we suppose different independent beings, acting with different designs, and by distinct operations to have formed the several parts of the world, and the several species of creatures which are in it, what reason can be imagined why they should all be governed by, and all necessarily depend upon, one law? The Maker of the sun, or, if a partial cause of nature could be supposed to have an understanding large enough for it, the Contriver of the whole visible heavens, must, one would think, have finished his scheme independently on any other, without borrowing aid from the work of another God. In like manner the Gods of the seas and of the dry land, and the Creator of animals, would have completed their several systems, each by itself, not depending on any other for its order and preservation. Whereas, on the contrary, we see in fact they are none of them independent, but all held together by the common bond of gravity. The heavens and the earth continue in their situations at a proper distance from each other by the force of this law; the sea keeps within its channels; and animals live and move by it. All which lead us to acknowledge one directing Counsel in the whole frame. For what but an understanding which comprehends the whole extent of nature, reaching from the utmost circuit of heaven to the centre of the earth, could have fixed such a common law, so necessary to all its parts, that without it not one of them could subsist, nor the harmony of the whole be preserved? The strict cohesion of the parts which constitute particular bodies requires a peculiar cement, different from that of the gravitating force; and as it can never be explained by the nature and properties of matter itself, and is absolutely necessary to the forms and the uses of bodies in the several far distant regions of the world, it must in like manner be attributed to the contrivance of an understanding, and the agency of a power, which takes in the whole corporeal system, not to a partial cause, limited in its intelligence and operation.

2dly, The beautiful order and harmony of the universe, since it must be acknowledged to be the work of understanding, has all the appearance which is necessary to satisfy any fair inquirer, of its being formed under the direction of one governing wisdom. Disconcerted counsel can never produce harmony. If a plurality of intelligent causes pursue each his separate design, disunion will continually cleave to their works; but when we see an intire piece made up of many parts, all corresponding to each other, and conspiring together so as to answer one common end, we naturally conclude unity of design. As a work of art is formed according to the preconceived idea of a designing artificer, without which it has not its necessary intireness and uniformity, the same may be observed in the works of nature. A tree is as much one as a house; an animal as complete a system in itself, (only much more curiously framed,) as a clock. If we carry our views farther into nature, and take in whole regions of the universe, with all their contents, the same characters of unity are still visible. The earth itself is not a confused mass, or a medley of incoherent and unrelated parts, but a well contrived fabric, fitted and plainly designed for use. If we consider what a multitude of living creatures are in it, of different kinds and degrees of perfection, each sort having proper apartments assigned them, where they dwell conveniently together, with suitable provision made for them, and instincts directing them to the use of it; if we

light of nature, it will be necessary that we obviate an objection that may be brought against this latter method of proving it, *viz.*

consider the interests of the several kinds, not interfering in the main, but rather serviceable to each other, furnished with necessary defences against the inconveniences to which they are liable, either by the preventing care of nature, which without any thought of their own has provided for their safety, by the appointed advantages of their situation, or by an implanted wisdom directing them to find out the means of it; and if we consider the constant interposition of the same liberal intelligent nature, appearing by the daily new productions from the same fertile womb of the earth, whereby the returning wants of animals are relieved with fresh supplies, all the species of living things having the common benefit of the air, without which they could not subsist, and the light of the sun, which cannot at once illuminate the whole globe, being dispensed among them with so good œconomy, that they have every one what is sufficient to guide them in the exercise of their proper functions, that they may fulfil the purposes of their beings;—when we consider all this, can we doubt but the earth is disposed and governed by one intending Cause? If in a large house, wherein are many mansions, and a vast variety of inhabitants, there appears exact order, all from the highest to the lowest continually attending their proper business, and all lodged and constantly provided for suitably to their several conditions, we find ourselves obliged to acknowledge one wise œconomy. And if in a great city or commonwealth there be a perfectly regular administration, so that not only the whole society enjoys an undisturbed peace, but every member has the station assigned him which he is best qualified to fill; the unenvied chiefs constantly attend their more important cares, served by the busy inferiors, who have all a suitable accommodation, and food convenient for them, the very meanest ministering to the public utility and protected by the public care; if, I say, in such a community we must conclude there is a ruling Counsel, which if not naturally, yet is politically one, and, unless united, could not produce such harmony and order, much more have we reason to recognize one governing Intelligence in the earth, in which there are so many ranks of beings disposed of in the most convenient manner, having all their several provinces appointed to them, and their several kinds and degrees of enjoyment liberally provided for, without encroaching upon, but rather being mutually useful to each other, according to a settled and obvious subordination. What else can account for this but a sovereign Wisdom, a common provident nature, presiding over, and caring for the whole?

But the earth, as great as it appears to us, complicated in its frame, and having such a variety in its constitution, sustaining and nourishing so many tribes of animals, yet is not an intire system by itself, but has a relation to, and dependence on, other parts of the universe, as well as the beings it contains have upon it. It owes its stability to the common law of gravitation; it derives its light and its heat from the sun, by which it is rendered fruitful and commodious to its inhabitants. In short, a bond of union runs through the whole circle of being, as far as human knowledge reaches; and we have reason to make the same judgment concerning the parts of the world which we do not know, and to conclude that they all together compose one great whole, which naturally leads us to acknowledge one supreme uniting Intelligence. To object against this the possibility of wild confusion reigning in worlds unknown is to feign, and not to argue; and to suppose disorder prevalent in an infinity of being which we are unacquainted with, which is the *Atheistic* hypothesis, is to take away all rational foundation for regularity any where, though we see it actually obtains every where, as far as our observation can reach. But confining our speculations on this subject within the compass of known existence, as we ought to do in a fair inquiry, the apparent order of the effects is a strong evidence of unity in the Cause. For if different independent causes produced, each, a part, why are there no footsteps of this in the whole extent of nature? Why does not so much as one piece appear, as the separate monument of its author's power and wisdom? From divided counsels one would naturally expect interfering schemes; but, on the contrary, we see an uni-

Object. If the unity of the Godhead might be known by the dictates of nature, or demonstrated by other arguments, besides

versal harmony. Men indeed from a sense of their indigence, and by the direction of instincts, which must be attributed to the designing author of their constitution, join in societies; which, though composed of many, are governed by one counsel: but that is only an artificial union, a submission to the majority, or to those who have the supreme power delegated to them, rather than an agreement in design. But this cannot be the case of independent beings, self-existent, and each complete in itself, without relation to any other. And yet we see in nature a perfect harmony, from whence it is plain there must be an agreement at least in counsel and design, if we could suppose a plurality of independent causes. But whence comes this agreement? To say by chance, is *atheistically*, and very unreasonably, to attribute the most perfect of all effects, universal order, to no cause at all. If we say by design, it must be one comprehensive design forming the whole scheme of nature and providence, which directly brings us to what we are looking for, one sovereign commanding Intelligence in the universe, or one God. This was the argument by which some of the ancient philosophers proved that there is one only eternal and independent Principle, the Fountain of being and the Author of all things. *Pythagoras* called it a *Monad*; and *Aristotle* argued from the phenomena that all things are plainly co-ordered, to one, the whole world conspiring into agreeing harmony: Whereas, if there were many independent principles, the system of the world must needs have been incoherent and inconspiring; like an ill-agreeing *drama*, botched up of many impertinent *intersertions*. And he concludes that things are well administered, which they could not be the government of many, alluding to the verse in *Homer*, Οὐκ ἄρ' ἔθεν Πολυκράτην, εἰς Κορυθαίης ἔσθ'.

Silly, The condition and order of inferior, derived, and evidently dependent intelligent agents shew not only intelligence, but unity of intelligence, in the Cause of them. Every man, a single active conscious self, is the image of his Maker. There is in him one undivided animating principle, which in its perceptions and operations runs through the whole system of matter that it inhabits; it perceives for all the most distant parts of the body; it cares for all, and governs all, leading us, as a resemblance, to form an idea of the one great quickening Spirit, which presides over the whole frame of nature, the spring of motion and all operation in it, understanding and active in all the parts of the universe, not as its soul indeed, but as its Lord, by whose vital directing influence it is, though so vast a bulk, and consisting of so many parts, united into one regular fabric. Again, the general apparent likeness which there is among all the individuals of the human kind is a strong evidence of their being the children of one Father. I do not mean principally the similitude of the exterior form, (though even that, in reason, should be attributed to the direction of one intelligent Cause,) but that whereby we are especially God's offspring, our intellectual capacities, which as far as we can judge are very nearly alike. A great difference there may be, no doubt there is, in the improvement of them; but the powers themselves, and all the original modes of perception, in the different individuals of mankind, seem to resemble each other, as much as any real distinct things in nature. Now from a multitude, or a constant series of similar effects which do not arise from necessity, we infer unity of design in the Cause. So great a number of rational beings as the whole human race, disposed of in the same manner, endued with like faculties and affections, having many, and those principal things in their condition, common, provided for out of the same fund, and made for the same purposes, may reasonably be supposed to belong to one family, to be derived from the same origin, and still under the same paternal care.

Above all, the moral capacity of mankind, which is a most important part of their constitution, tending to the highest perfection of their nature, and the principal bond of regular society among them, as it proceeds from a wise intending Cause, shews unity of wisdom in the Cause; and the government over the moral, as well as the natural, world evidently appears to be a monarchy."

those which are matter of pure revelation, how comes it to pass that the heathen owned, and worshipped, a plurality of gods? and as it was not one particular sect among them that did so, but this abominable practice universally obtained, where revealed religion was not known, therefore, though this be an undoubted truth, yet it is not founded in the light of nature.

Ans. That they did so is beyond dispute, especially after idolatry had continued a few ages in the world, and so had extinguished those principles of revealed religion, which mankind, before this, were favoured with; yet it must be considered, that though the ignorant and unthinking multitude, among them, believed every thing to be a God, which the custom of the countries where they lived had induced them to pay divine adoration to, yet the wiser sort of them, however guilty of idolatry, by paying a lower kind of worship to them, have, notwithstanding, maintained the unity of the Godhead, or that there is one God superior to them all, whom they often call the father of gods and men; to whom probably the Athenians erected that altar, as the apostle Paul observes, with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD; because he says, in the words immediately following, *Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you*, Acts xvii: 23.

This appears from what they assert to the same purpose, whereby they plainly discover their belief of but one supreme God, who has all the incommunicable perfections of the divine nature, however, in other instances, their conduct seemed to run counter to their method of reasoning: thus it appears, by their writings, that many of them assert that there is a God, who is the first cause, or beginning, of all things; and that he was from eternity, or in the beginning, and that time took its rise from him; that he is the living God, the fountain of life, and the best of all beings*: Also, that this God is self-sufficient, and therefore it is absurd to suppose that he stands in need of, or can receive advantage from, any one†; and that he is the chief good, or contains in himself whatever is good, and that by him all things consist; and that no one hath enough in himself to secure his own safety and happiness, which is to be derived from him‡.

And there are others also, who plainly assert the unity of God in as strong terms, as though they had learned it from divine revelation, calling him, the beginning, the end, and author of all things; who was before, and is above all things, the Lord of all, the fountain of life, light, and all good, yea, goodness itself; the most excellent being; and many other expres-

* See *Arist. Metaphys. Lib. I. Cap. 2. & Lib. XII. Cap. 7.* † *Vid. ejus. Mag. Moral. Lib. II. Cap. 15.* ‡ *Vid. ejus. De Moribus, Lib. IX. Cap. 4. & De Mundo, Cap. 6.*

sions to the like purpose. I could multiply quotations for the proof of this, from Proclus, Porphyry, Iamblicus, Plotinus, Plutarch, Epictetus, and several others; but this has been already done by other hands*; by which it appears, that though they mention other gods, they suppose them to be little more than titular or honorary gods; or at least persons, who were the peculiar favourites of God, and admitted to the participation of divine honours, as well as employed in some part of the government of the world. They frequently speak of them as having derived their being from God, whom they call the cause of causes, the God of gods. Some of them speak of God in the singular number, throughout the greatest part of their writings, and only make mention of the gods occasionally, especially when they treat of those works that become a God, or the greatest honours that are due to him; thus Seneca and Plato, and, in particular, the latter of them says, concerning himself †, that when he wrote any thing in a grave and serious manner, his custom was, to preface his epistles with the mention of one God; though, it is true, when he wrote otherwise, he used the common mode of speaking, and talked of other gods; and it is observed, in his writings, that he sometimes uses this phrase; If it please God, or by the help of God, not the gods.

But, notwithstanding this, they were all idolaters, for they joined in the rites of worship performed to the false gods of their respective countries; yea, Socrates himself, who fell under the displeasure of the Athenians, for asserting the unity of the Godhead, which cost him his life, did not refuse to pay some religious honour to the heathen gods. So that it is plain they paid some religious worship to them, but it was of an inferior and subordinate nature, not much unlike to that which the Papists give to saints and angels: but they are far from setting them upon a level with God; for they confess they were but men, who formerly lived in this world; they give an account of their birth and parentage; where they lived and died; write the history of their lives, and what procured them the honour they suppose them after death advanced to ‡; how some of them obtained it, as the reward of virtue, or in commemoration of the good they had done to the world in their life: as some were advanced to this honour, who were the inventors of arts, beneficial to mankind, or were successful in wars, or a public blessing to the country where they lived, others had this honour conferred upon them. especially among the Romans, at the request of their surviving friends; and this was done after Julius Cæsar's time, by the decree of the senate,

* *Vid. Mornæi de Verit. Relig. Christ. cap. 3.* † *Epist. XIII. ad Dionys.*

‡ *See Cicero de Natura Deorum.*

who, at the same time, when they ranked them among the number of their gods, appointed also the rites of worship that should be paid to them; and some of the Roman emperors obliged the senate to deify them while they were alive. These things are very largely insisted on, by many ancient and modern writers*; so that, upon the whole, it plainly appears, that, whatever they say of a plurality of gods, the wiser sort among the heathen did not deny the unity of the divine essence, in the highest and most proper sense; and, inasmuch as they received the knowledge hereof from the light of nature, we may from hence conclude that this truth might be known that way, as well as by divine revelation.

We shall conclude with some practical inferences from the doctrine contained in this answer.

1. Since he, who is the object of our worship, is the living God; this reproves that lifeless formal way, in which many address themselves to him, in the performance of religious duties, without that reverence and due regard to the divine perfections, which are contained in this character of the Godhead. It is also a very great aggravation, not only of apostacy, but of any degree of backsliding, in those who have made a profession of religion; that it is a *departure from the living God*, Heb. iii. 12. Is he the God and giver of life, and shall we forsake him, who *has the words of eternal life*, John vi. 68. whose sovereign will has the sole disposal thereof?

Again, this consideration, of his being the living God, renders his judgments most terrible, and his wrath insupportable; as the apostle says, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, Heb. x. 31.

2. From his being the true God, we infer, that all hypocrisy, both in heart and life, is to be avoided; and we should draw nigh to him with a true heart and faith unfeigned; and not like those whom the prophet reproves, when he says, *God was near in their mouth, and far from their reins*, Jer. xii. 2.

Moreover, let us take heed that we do not set up an idol in our hearts, in opposition to him as the true God: whatever has a greater share in our affections than God, or is set up in competition with him, that is, to us, a god, and is therefore inconsistent with our paying that regard which is due to him; as our Saviour says, *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*, Mat. vi. 24. and, upon this account, covetousness is styled idolatry, Col. iii. 5. as the world is loved more than him; and we read of some *whose God is their belly*, Phil. iii. 19. who make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, as though this was their chief good. And when we confide in any thing be-

* See Tertull. *Apel. Lactant. de falsa Relig. Arnob. contra Gentes; Minut. Fel. Herodian. Hist. Lib. IV. See also Mede's apostasy of the latter times, chap. 3, 4*

low him, in a religious way, or expect that from the creature which is only to be found in him; or when we esteem men as lords of our faith; or when his sovereignty, or right to govern us, is called in question, while we presumptuously, or wilfully, rebel against him; this is, in effect, a dethroning, or denying him to be the true God; but more of this when we consider the sins forbidden in the first commandment*.

3. From the unity of the Godhead, we may infer, that we ought to take heed that we do not entertain any conceptions of the divine Being, which are inconsistent herewith; therefore, as we are not to assert a plurality of gods, so we are not to think or speak of God in such a way as tends to overthrow the simplicity of the divine nature; therefore we must not conceive that it is compounded of various parts, all which, being taken together, tend to constitute the divine essence; which gives occasion to that known aphorism, generally laid down by those who treat of this subject, that *whatever is in God, is God*; which we must reckon as one of the incomprehensibles of the divine Being, which when we attempt to speak of, we only give an evident proof of the imperfection of our finite understandings, and that we cannot order our words, by reason of darkness: however, it is necessary, when we lay down this proposition, that we signify what we intend hereby, that so we may not be supposed to use words without ideas; and especially that we may, in some measure, account for those modes of speaking, which are agreeable to scripture, which so often describes God as having a plurality of perfections, and those, in some respects, distinct; and yet, at the same time, that we may not hereby be led to infer a plurality of gods. Here let it be considered,

(1.) That we have not the least similitude, or resemblance, of this in any finite being. Every thing below God is composed of parts, some of which we call integral, as all the parts of matter taken together constitute the whole; others are called essential, as when we say an intelligent being has various powers or properties which are essential to it; so that it would not be complete without every one of them; and that these are all of them distinct, so that we cannot say whatever is in the soul of man is the soul, but every one of those powers, or properties, taken together, constitute the man; but this is by no means to be applied to the divine Being; therefore,

(2.) When we conceive of God, as holy, powerful, just, good, &c. we must not suppose that these perfections are so many ingredients in the divine Being, or that, when taken together, they constitute it, as the whole is constituted of its parts; for then every one of them would have no other than

* *Quest. cv.*

a partial perfection, and consequently the essential glory of one of those attributes would not be equal to the glory of the divine Being, which is supposed to consist of them all; and therefore there would be something in God less than God, or a divine perfection less than all the divine perfections taken together, which we are not to suppose. These are the properties of composition; and therefore, when we speak of God as a simple or uncompounded Being, we cannot forbear to mention them as what are inconsistent with his perfection as such.

Neither are the divine perfections distinct or different from one another, as the various parts of which the whole is constituted are said to be distinct; which follows from the former, since the divine essence has no parts; therefore we are not to suppose, that the divine attributes, considered as they are in God, are so distinguished, as one thing, or being, is from another; or as wisdom, power, justice, mercy, &c. are in men; for that would be to suppose the divine Being as having several distinct, infinitely perfect beings contained in it, which is contrary to its simplicity or unity; or, at least, if we call it one, it would be only so by participation and dependence, as a general or complex idea is said to be one, which partakes of, and depends on, all those particular or simple ideas that are contained in it; or, to illustrate it by numbers, as one hundred is one, as it contains such a number of units in it, as are, all taken together, equal to a hundred; this is not what we mean, when we say God is one.

Moreover, when we speak of the divine perfections, as being in God, we suppose them all essential to him, as opposed to what is accidental. Now an accident is generally described, as what belongs, or is superadded, to a being or subject, which it might have existed without, or have been destitute of, and yet sustained no loss of that perfection, which is essential to it: thus, wisdom, holiness, justice, faithfulness, are accidents in men; so that they who have them not, do not cease to be men, or to have the essential perfection of the human nature: but this is by no means to be applied to the divine Being and attributes; for to suppose God to be destitute of any of them, is as much as to say that he is not infinitely perfect, or that he is not God. This, I think, is generally intended, when it is said, *whatever is in God, is God*; which, because it may be reckoned by some to be a metaphysical speculation, I should have avoided to mention, had it not been, in some respects, necessary, since the unity of God cannot well be conceived of, unless his simplicity be defended; and I do not see how that can be maintained, if this proposition be not duly considered. If I have used more words than are needful, or repeated the same ideas too often, in attempting to explain it, I have done

it to avoid some scholastic modes of speaking, or with a design to render what has been said more intelligible ; but to this we may add,

(3.) That when we speak of the divine perfections as many, or distinct from one another, as we often do, and have scripture warrant to justify us therein, namely, when we speak of the justice of God, as different from his mercy, or these, from his power, wisdom, faithfulness, &c. this must not be deemed inconsistent with what has been said concerning the divine simplicity : and therefore let it be considered, that the nature and perfections of God are incomprehensible ; and therefore all the ideas which we have of them are taken from our comparing them with some small resemblance that there is thereof in intelligent creatures, and, at the same time, separating from them whatever argues imperfection.

And from hence it follows, that we are not supposed to know, or be able to describe, what God is in himself, and, as I humbly conceive, never shall : such knowledge as this is too great for any but a divine person ; therefore our conceptions of him are taken from and conformed to those various ways, by which he condescends to make himself visible, or known to us, namely, by various acts conversant about certain objects, in which he is said to manifest his perfections : thus, when an effect is produced, we call that perfection that produces it his power ; or as the divine acts are otherwise distinguished with respect to the objects, or the manner of his glorifying himself therein, these we call his wisdom, justice, goodness, &c. And this is what we mean, when we speak of various perfections in God ; though some suppose that they express themselves more agreeably to the nature of the subject, or to the simplicity of God, in that, whenever they speak of any of the divine perfections, they speak of them in such a way, as that they are denominated from the effect thereof ; as when they take occasion to mention the power of God, they call it God acting powerfully ; or of his justice or faithfulness, they express those perfections by, God acting justly or faithfully *. But however we express ourselves, when we speak of the distinct perfections of the divine nature, this is what we principally intend thereby : and here our thoughts must stop, and make what is too great for a finite mind to conceive of the subject of our admiration, and adore what we cannot comprehend : such knowledge is too wonderful for us ; it is high, we cannot attain to it.

* See de Fries *Essevitat. Rational.*

QUEST. IX. *How many persons are there in the Godhead?*

ANSW. There be three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one, true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties.

QUEST. X. *What are the personal properties of the three Persons in the Godhead?*

ANSW. It is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son from all eternity.

QUEST. XI. *How doth it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father?*

ANSW. The scriptures manifest, that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father; ascribing unto them such names, attributes, works, and worship, as are proper to God only.

IN these three answers is contained the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity, which is a subject of pure revelation; (a) and, because it is so much contested in the age in which we live, we are obliged to be more large and particular, in laying down

(a) "God is One: a most pure, most simple, and most perfect Being.

The absolute unity and simplicity of this glorious Being is strictly exclusive of any division of perfections. Yet, as human knowledge is not intuitive but discursive, we find it necessary to form and communicate our conceptions, by referring them to distinct and infinite attributes. Such are independence, spirituality, eternity, immutability, power, knowledge, rectitude, and benevolence.

It is absurd to say, that either the abstract essence, or any of the infinite perfections of God, in themselves, or in their exercise, can be grasped, included, or comprehended (or whatever equivalent term be used) by a limited intellect. "A part of His ways, a little portion of Him," we know; for He has unveiled it. The knowledge of the best and greatest finite mind can only be, to immortality, an approximation; and therefore must for ever be infinitely small. God alone is CAPABLE OF COMPREHENDING His own nature, mode of existence, and perfections.

The only questions, therefore, that we have to ask, are, Has Deity, in fact, communicated to man *any* information concerning HIMSELF? And *what* has He communicated? Whatever such revelation may be, it is impossible that it should be self-contradictory, or any other than most becoming to infinite wisdom and purity.

This revelation authorizes us, by a variety of inductive proofs, to conclude, that, with regard to the mode of existence of the ONE Divine Essence, the Unity of the Godhead includes a Trinity of Persons (so denominated for want of any better terms) who are scripturally styled the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: Distinct, not in essence or in perfections, but only personally: One, not personally, but in the common possession of the same identical nature and attributes.

No contradiction or absurdity is involved in this doctrine, because the unity refers to one respect, and the trinity to another. But we make no difficulty in professing our incapacity to include in our knowledge, or express by any possible terms, *the respect* in which the Trinity of persons subsists in the perfect Oneness of the Deity. Such pretension would imply a contradiction."

SMITH'S LETTERS TO BELSHAM

the reasons of our belief of it, and in our defence thereof, against those that deny it. It is a doctrine that has been defended by some of the most judicious writers, both in our own and other nations; whereof some have proved that it was maintained by the church in the purest ages thereof, which therefore renders it less necessary for us to enter into that part of the controversy; but we shall principally insist on it as founded on the sacred writings: and whereas others have rendered some parts of this doctrine more obscure, by confining themselves to the scholastic ways of speaking, we shall endeavour to avoid them, that so it may be better understood by private Christians; and the method we shall pursue in treating of it shall be,

I. To premise some things which are necessary to be considered, with relation to it in general.

II. We shall consider in what sense we are to understand the words *Trinity*, and *Persons in the Godhead*, and in what respect the divine Persons are said to be One.

III. We shall prove that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have distinct personal properties, and therefore that we have sufficient reason to call them Persons, in the Godhead, as they are in the first of these answers; and under this head shall consider what is generally understood by what is contained in the second of them, which respects the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost; and what cautions we are to use, lest, by mistaking the sense thereof, we be led into any error, derogatory to, or subversive of the doctrine of the Trinity; and also shall endeavour to explain those scriptures, which are generally brought to establish that doctrine.

IV. We shall endeavour to prove that these three Persons, especially the Son and Holy Ghost, are truly divine, or that they have all the perfections of the divine nature; and therefore that they are, in the most proper sense, the one only living and true God. (a)

(a) "That which is taught in the scriptures concerning the incomprehensible and spiritual essence of God ought to suffice, not only to overthrow the foolish errors of the common people, but also to confute the fine subtilties of profane philosophy. One of the old writers seemed to have said very well, 'That God is all that we do see, and all that we do not see.' But by this means he hath imagined the Godhead to be diffused into all the parts of the world. Although God, to the intent to keep men in sober mind, speak but sparingly of his own essence, yet, by those two names of addition that I have rehearsed, he doth both take away all gross imaginations, and also repress the presumptuous boldness of man's mind. For surely his immeasurable greatness ought to make us afraid, that we attempt not to measure him with our sense: and his spiritual nature forbiddeth us to imagine any thing earthly or fleshly of him. For the same cause he often assigneth his dwelling place to be in heaven. For though, as he is incomprehensible, he filleth the earth also: yet because he seeth our minds by reason of their dulness to lie still in the earth, for good cause he lifteth us up above the world, to shake off our sloth and sluggishness. And here filleth to ground the error of the Manichees,

I. We shall premise some things which are necessary to be considered, with relation to the doctrine of the Trinity in general. And,

which, in appointing two original beginnings, have made the devil in a manner equal with God. Surely, this was as much as to break the unity of God, and restrain his unmeasurableness. For where they have presumed to abuse certain testimonies, that sheweth a foul ignorance, as their error itself sheweth a detestable madness. And the Anthropomorphites are also easily confuted, who have imagined God to consist of a body, because oftentimes the scripture ascribeth unto him a mouth, ears, eyes, hands, and feet. For what man, yea, though he be slenderly witted, doth not understand that God doth so with us speak as it were childishly, as nurses do with their babes? therefore such manner of speeches do not so plainly express what God is, as they do apply the understanding of him to our slender capacities. Which to do, it behoved of necessity that he descended a great way beneath his own height.

2. But he also setteth out himself by another special mark, whereby he may be more nearly known. For he so declareth himself to be but one, that he yet giveth himself distinctly to be considered in three persons: which, except we learn, a bare and empty name of God without any true God fleeth in our brain. And that no man should think that he is a threefold God, or that the one essence of God is divided in three persons, we must here seek a short and easy definition, to deliver us from all error. But because many do make much about this word Person, as a thing invented by man, how justly they do so, it is best first to see. The apostle naming the Son the engraved form of the hypostasis of his Father, he undoubtedly meaneth, that the Father hath some being, wherein he differeth from the Son. For to take it for essence (as some expositors have done, as if Christ like a piece of wax printed with a seal did represent the substance of the Father) were not only hard, but also an absurdity. For since the essence of God is single or one, and indivisible, he that in himself containeth it all, and not by picce-meal, or by derivation, but in whole perfection, should very improperly, yea, foolishly, be called the engraved form of him. But because the Father, although he be in his own property distinct, hath expressed himself wholly in his Son, it is for good cause said, that he hath given his hypostasis to be seen in him. Wherewith aptly agreeth that which by and by followeth, that he is the brightness of his glory. Surely by the apostle's words we gather, that there is a certain proper hypostasis in the Father, that shineth in the Son: whereby also again is easily perceived the hypostasis of the Son, that distinguisheth him from the Father. The like order is in the holy Ghost. For we shall by and by prove him to be God, and yet he must needs be other than the Father. Yet this distinction is not of the essence, which it is unlawful to make manifold. Therefore, if the apostle's testimony be credited, it followeth that there be in God three hypostasis. This term seeing the Latins have expressed by the name of Person, it were too much pride and frowardness to wrangle about so clear a matter. But if we list word for word to translate, we may call it subsistence. Many in the same sense have called it substance. And the name of Person hath not been in use among the Latins only, but also the Grecians, perhaps to declare a consent, have taught that there are three *Prosopa*, that is to say Persons, in God. But they, whether they be Greeks or Latins that differ one from another in the word, do very well agree in the sum of the matter.

3. Now howsoever the hereticks cry out against the name of Person, or some overmuch precise men do carp that they like not the word feigned by the device of men; since they cannot get of us to say, that there be three, whereof every one is wholly God, nor yet that there be many gods: what unreasonableness is this, to dislike words, which express none other thing but that which is testified and approved by the scriptures? It were better (say they) to restrain not only our meanings but also our words within the bounds of scripture, than to devise strange terms, that may be the beginnings of disagreement and brawling: so do we tire ourselves with strife about words: so the truth is lost in contending: so

1. It is a doctrine of the highest importance, and necessary to be believed by all Christians, who pay a just deference to

charity is broken by odiously brawling together. If they call that a strange word, which cannot be shewed in scripture, as it is written in number of syllables; then they bind us to a hard law, whereby is condemned all exposition that is not pieced together, with bare laying together of texts of scripture. But if they mean that to be strange, which, being curiously devised, is superstitiously defended, which maketh more for contention than edification, which is either improperly, or to no profit, used, which withdraweth from the simplicity of the word of God, then with all my heart I embrace their sober mind. For I judge that we ought with no less devout reverence to talk of God than to think of him, for as much as whatsoever we do of ourselves think of him is foolish, and whatsoever we speak is unsavoury. But there is a certain measure to be kept. We ought to learn out of the scriptures a rule both to think and speak, whereby to examine all the thoughts of our mind, and words of our mouth. But what hindereth us, but that such as in scripture are to our capacity doubtful and entangled, we may in plainer words express them, being yet such words as do reverently and faithfully serve the truth of the scripture, and be used sparingly, modestly, and not without occasion? Of which sort there are examples enough. And whereas it shall by proof appear that the church of great necessity was forced to use the names of Trinity, and Persons, if any shall then find fault with the newness of words, shall he not be justly thought to be grieved at the light of the truth, as he that blameth only this, that the truth is made so plain and clear to discern?

4. Such newness of words, if it be so called, cometh then chiefly in use, when the truth is to be defended against wranglers that do mock it out with cavils. Which thing we have at this day too much in experience, who have great business in vanquishing the enemies of true and sound doctrine. With such folding and crooked winding, these slippery snakes do slide away, unless they be strongly gripped and holden hard when they be taken. So the old fathers, being troubled with contending against false doctrines, were compelled to shew their meanings in exquisite plainness, lest they should leave any crooked byways to the wicked, to whom the doubtful constructions of words were hiding-holes of errors. Arius confessed Christ to be God; and the Son of God, because he could not gainsay the evident words of God, and, as if he had been so sufficiently discharged, did feign a certain consent with the rest. But in the meanwhile he ceased not to scatter abroad that Christ was created, and had a beginning, as other creatures. But to the end that they might draw forth his winding subtilty out of his den, the ancient fathers went further, pronouncing Christ to be the eternal Son of the Father, and consubstantial with the Father. Hereat wickedness began to boil, when the Arians began to hate and detest the name *Omnoession*, consubstantial. But if in the beginning they had sincerely and with plain meaning confessed Christ to be God, they would not now have denied him to be consubstantial with the Father. Who dare now blame these good men as brawlers and contentious, because, for one little word's sake, they were so keen in disputation, and disturbed the peace of the church? But that little word shewed the difference between the true believing Christians, and the Arians, who were robbers of God. Afterwards rose up Sabellius, who accounted in a manner for nothing the names of the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost, saying in disputation that they were not made to shew any manner of distinction, but only were several additions of God, of which sort there are many. If he came to disputation, he confessed that he believed the Father God, the Son God, the Holy Ghost God. But afterwards he would readily slip away with saying, that he had in no otherwise spoken than as if he had named God, a powerful God, just God, and wise God: and so he sung another song, that the Father is the Son, and the Holy Ghost is the Father, without any order, without any distinction. The good doctors who then had care of godliness, to subdue his wickedness, cried out on the other side, that there ought to be acknowledged in one God three properties: and to the end to fence themselves against the crooked winding subtilties with plain and simple truth, they affirmed, that

revealed religion. It may probably be reckoned an error in method to speak of the importance of this doctrine, before we

there did truly subsist in one God, or (which is the same thing) that there did subsist in the unity of God, a Trinity of Persons.

5. If then the names have not been without cause invented, we ought to take heed, that in rejecting them we be not justly blamed of proud presumptuousness. I would to God they were buried indeed, so that this faith were agreed of all men, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be one God: and yet that the Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Ghost the Son, but distinctly, by certain property. Yet I am not so precise, that I can find in my heart to strive for bare words. For I observe, that the ancient fathers, who otherwise spake very religiously of such matters, did not every where agree one with another, nor every one with himself. For what forms of speech used by the councils doth Hillary excuse? To how great liberty doth Augustine sometimes break forth? How unlike are the Greeks to the Latins? But of this disagreement one example shall suffice for this time. When the Latins wanted to express the word *Omnouston*, they called it *Consubstantial*, declaring the substance of the Father and the Son to be one, thus using the word substance for essence. Whereupon Hierom to Damasus saith, it is sacrilege to say, that there are three substances in God: and yet above a hundred times you shall find in Hillary, that there are three substances in God. In the word *hypostasis*, how is Hierom difficulted? for he suspecteth that there lieth poison in naming three hypostasis in God. And if a man do use this word in a godly sense, yet he plainly saith that it is an improper speech, if he spake unfeignedly, and did not rather wittingly and willingly seek to charge the bishops of the East, whom he sought to charge with an unjust slander. Sure this one thing he speaketh not very truly, that in all profane schools, *Ousia*, essence, is nothing else but hypostasis, which is proved false by the common and accustomed use. Augustine is more modest and gentle, who, although he says, *De trinit. li. 5. cap. 8, 9.* that the word hypostasis in that sense is strange to Latin ears, yet so far is it off, that he taketh from the Greeks their usual manner of speaking, that he also gently beareth with the Latins who had followed the Greek phrase. And that which Socrates writeth in the fifth book of the Tripartite history tendeth to this end, as though he meant that he had by unskillful men been wrongfully applied unto this matter. Yea, and the same Hillary himself layeth it as a great fault to the heretics charge, *De trinit. li. 2.* that by their frowardness he is compelled to put those things in peril of the speech of men, which ought to have been kept in religiousness of minds, plainly confessing that this is to do things unlawful, to speak what ought not to be spoken, to attempt things not licensed. A little after, he excuseth himself with many words, for that he was so bold to utter new names. For after he had used the natural names, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, he addeth, that whatsoever is sought further is beyond the compass of speech, beyond the reach of sense, and beyond the capacity of understanding. And in another place he saith, that happy are the bishops of Gallia, who had not received, nor knew any other confession but that old and simple one, which from the time of the apostles was received in all churches. And much like is the excuse of Augustine, that this word was wrung out of necessity, by reason of the imperfection of men's language in so great a matter: not to express that which is, but that it should not be unspoken, how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are three. This modesty of the holy men ought to warn us, that we do not forthwith so severely, like censors, brand them with infamy, who refuse to subscribe and swear to such words as we propound them: so that they do not of pride, or frowardness, or of malicious craft. But let them again consider, by how great necessity we are driven to speak so, that by little and little they may be enured with that profitable manner of speech. Let them also learn to beware, lest since we must meet on the one side with the Arians, on the other side with the Sabellians, while they be offended that we cut off occasion from them both to cavil, they bring themselves in suspicion, that they be the disciples either of Arius or of Sabellius. Arius saith that Christ is God, but he muttereth that he was created, and had a beginning. He saith

attempt to prove the truth thereof: however, it is not altogether unjustifiable, since we address ourselves to those who believe it, hoping thereby to offer some farther conviction, or establishment, to their faith therein, as well as to others who deny it; we may therefore be allowed to consider it as an important doctrine, that we may be excited to a more diligent enquiry into the force of some of those arguments, which are generally brought in its defence.

Now to determine a doctrine to be of the highest importance, we must consider the belief thereof as connected with salvation, or subservient to that true religion, which is ordained by God, as a necessary means leading to it, without which we have no warrant to expect it: and such doctrines are sometimes called fundamental, as being the basis and foundation on which our hope is built. Here, I think, it will be allowed, by all whose sentiments do not savour of scepticism, that there are some doctrines of religion necessary to be believed to salvation. There are some, it is true, who plead for the innocency of error, or, at least, of those who are sincere enquirers after truth, who, in the end, will appear to have been very remote from it, as though their endeavours would entitle them to salvation, without the knowledge of those things, which others conclude to be necessarily subservient to it. All that we shall say concerning this is, that it is not the sincerity of our enquiries after important truths, but the success thereof, that is to be regarded in this, as well as other means, that are to be used to obtain so valuable an end. We may as well suppose that our sincere endeavours to obtain many of those graces that accompany salvation, such as faith, love to God, and evangelical obedience, will supply, or atone for, the want of them; as assert that our unsuccessful enquiries after the great doctrines of religion will excuse our ignorance thereof; especially when we

Christ is one with the Father, but secretly he whispereth in the ears of his disciples, that he was made one as the other faithful be, although by singular prerogative. Say once that Christ is consubstantial with his Father, then pluck you off his visor from the dissembler, and yet you add nothing to the scripture. Sabellius saith, that the several names, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, signify nothing in God severally distinct. Say that they are three, and he will cry out that you name three gods. Say that there is in one essence a Trinity of persons, then shall you in one word both say what the scripture speaketh, and stop their vain babbling. Now if any be holden with so curious superstition, that they cannot abide these names, yet is there no man, though he would never so fain, that can deny but that when we hear of one, we must understand an unity of substance: when we hear of three in one essence, that it is meant of the persons of the Trinity. Which thing being without fraud confessed, we stay no longer upon words. But I have long ago found, and that often, that whosoever do obstinately quarrel about words, do keep within them a secret poison: so that it is better willingly to provoke them, than for their pleasure to speak darkly.

consider, that blindness of mind, as well as hardness of heart, is included among those spiritual judgments, which are the consequence of our fallen state; and also that God displays the sovereignty of his grace as much, in leading the soul into all necessary truth, as he does in any other things that relate to salvation. However, it is not our business to determine the final state of men; or how far they make advances to, or recede from, the knowledge of such important doctrines; or what will be the issue thereof; but rather to desire of God, that so far as we, or others, are destitute of this privilege, he would grant us and them *repentance, to the acknowledgment of the truth*, 1 Tim. ii. 25. And here we cannot but observe, that the question relating to important or fundamental articles of faith is not whether any doctrines may be so called? but what those doctrines are: in determining of which, many make provision for their own particular scheme of doctrine: and accordingly some, as the Papists in particular, assert several doctrines to be fundamental, without scripture warrant; yea, such as are directly contrary thereunto; and others allow no doctrine to be so, but what will, if adhered to, open a door of salvation to all mankind, and these set aside the necessity of divine revelation; and others, who desire not to run such lengths, will allow, that some scripture-doctrines are necessary to be believed to salvation: but these are only such as may include those who are in their way of thinking; thus they who deny the doctrine of the Trinity, are obliged in conformity to their own sentiments, to deny also that it is an important article of faith. These may justly demand a convincing proof of the truth thereof, before they believe it to be of any importance, especially to themselves; and therefore it would be a vain thing to tell them, that the belief thereof is connected with salvation; or that it is necessary, inasmuch as divine worship is so, which supposes the belief of the divinity of the Persons, whom we adore; without first proving that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are divine Persons: and it would be as little to their edification to say that there are several doctrines necessary to be believed; such as that of Christ's satisfaction, and our justification, depending thereon, and that of regeneration and sanctification, as the effects of the divine power of the Holy Ghost; all which suppose the belief of their being divine Persons: unless we first give some convincing proof of the truth of these doctrines, which are supposed to stand or fall with it; for it would be immediately replied, that one is false, and consequently far from being of any importance; therefore so is the other.

But inasmuch as we reserve the consideration of these things to their proper place: we shall only observe at present, that there are some who do not appear to deny the doctrine of the

Trinity, but rather the importance of it; and express themselves with very great indifference about it, and blame all attempts to defend it, as needless, or litigious, as though it were only a contest about words: thus they say, though we hold it ourselves, others who deny it, may have as much to say in defence of their own cause as we have, and therefore that these disputes ought to be wholly laid aside. Now, with respect to these, what we have hinted, concerning the importance of this doctrine, may not be altogether misapplied; therefore we have taken occasion to mention it in this place, that we may not be supposed to plead a cause which is not worth defending, as though the doctrine of the Trinity were no other than an empty speculation; but as that which we are bound to esteem a doctrine of the highest importance.

2. We are next to consider what degree of knowledge of this doctrine is necessary to, or connected with salvation. It cannot be supposed that this includes in it the knowledge of every thing that is commonly laid down in those writings, wherein it is attempted to be explained; for when we speak of this, as a doctrine of the highest importance, we mean the scripture-doctrine of the Trinity. This is what we are to assent to, and to use our utmost endeavours to defend; but as for those explanations, which are merely human, they are not to be reckoned of equal importance; especially every private Christian is not to be censured as a stranger to this doctrine, who cannot define personality in a scholastic way, or understand all the terms used in explaining it, or several modes of speaking, which some writers tenaciously adhere to; such as hypostasis, subsistence, consubstantiality, the modal distinction of the Persons in the Godhead, filiation, or the communication of the divine essence by generation, or its being farther communicated by procession; some of which rather embarrass the minds of men, than add any farther light to the sense of those scriptures, in which this doctrine is contained.

But when we consider how far the doctrine of the Trinity is to be known, and believed to salvation, we must not exclude the weakest Christian from a possibility of knowing it, by supposing it necessary for him to understand some hard words, which he doth not find in his Bible; and if he meets with them elsewhere, will not be much edified by them. That knowledge, therefore, which is necessary to salvation, is more plain and easy, and to be found in every part of scripture: accordingly, every Christian knows, that the word *God* signifies a being that has all those divine perfections, which are so frequently attributed to him therein, and are displayed and glorified in all his works of common providence and grace; and that this God is one. To which we may also add, that he learns from

his Bible, and therefore firmly believes that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are possessed of these divine perfections, and consequently that they are this one God; and that they are distinguished, as we often find in scripture, by such characters and properties, which we generally call personal, and so apply the word *Person* to each of them, and conclude that the divine glory attributed to them is the same, though their personal properties, or characters, are distinct; which is the substance of what is contained in the first of those answers, under our present consideration. And he that believes this, need not entertain any doubt as though he wanted some ideas of this sacred doctrine, which are necessary to salvation; since such a degree of knowledge, attended with a firm belief thereof, is sufficient to warrant all those acts of divine worship, which we are obliged to ascribe to the Father, Son, and Spirit, and is consistent with all those other doctrines, which are founded on, or suppose the belief thereof, as was before observed under our last head.

3. We shall consider this doctrine as a great mystery, such as cannot be comprehended by a finite mind; and therefore we shall first enquire what we are to understand by the word *Mystery*, as it is used in scripture. This word sometimes denotes a doctrine's having been kept secret, or, at least, revealed more obscurely, upon which account it was not so clearly known before; in which sense, the gospel is called, *The mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints*, Col. i. 26. It was covered with the ceremonial law, as with a vail, which many of the people, through the blindness of their minds, did not so fully understand; and accordingly, when persons are led into a farther degree of knowledge thereof, it is said, as our Saviour tells his disciples, that to them it is given *to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xiii. 11. or when something is revealed in scripture, which the world was not in the least apprised of before; this is, by way of eminence, called a mystery, as the apostle says, speaking concerning the change that shall be passed on those that shall be found alive at the last day; *Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

But to this we may add, that there is also another idea affixed to the word *Mystery*, namely, that though it be revealed, yet it cannot be fully comprehended; and it is in this sense that we call the doctrine of the Trinity a *Mystery*. Both these ideas seem to be contained in the word, in some scriptures, particularly where the apostle says, *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all*

men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which, from the beginning of the world, hath been hid in God, Eph. iii. 8, 9. where he speaks of the gospel, not only as hid, but unsearchable; and he speaks of *the mystery of God, even the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. ii. 3.* where the word mystery seems to contain both these ideas; for few will deny, that the glory of the Father, who is here spoken of, as well as Christ, is incomprehensible by a finite mind; and if it be said, that the gospel is hereby intended, and so that the words ought to be rendered, *in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; this must be supposed to be incomprehensible, as well as formerly less known, otherwise this character of it would be too great.

But suppose the word *Mystery* were always used to signify a doctrine, not before revealed, without the other idea of its being incomprehensible contained in it; this would not overthrow our argument in general, since we can prove it to be incomprehensible from other arguments, which we shall endeavour to do.

And that we may prepare our way for this, let it be considered, that there are some finite things, which we cannot now comprehend, by reason of the imperfection of our present state, which are not incomprehensible in themselves. How little do we know of some things, which may be called mysteries in nature; such as the reason of the growth and variety of colours and shapes of plants; the various instinct of brute creatures; yea, how little do we know comparatively of ourselves, the nature of our souls, any otherwise, than as it is observed by their actions, and the effects they produce; the reason of their union with our bodies, or of their acting by them, as the inspired writer observes; so that it may well be said, *Thou knowest not the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all things, Eccles. xi. 5.* and Elihu, together with some of the other wonderful works of nature, which he challengeth Job to give an account of, speaks of this in particular, *Dost thou know how thy garments are warm, when he quieteth the earth, by the south wind? Job xxxvii. 17, &c.* which not only signifies that we cannot account for the winds producing heat or cold, as blowing from various quarters of heaven; but that we know not the reason of the vital heat, which is preserved for so many years, in the bodies of men, the inseparable concomitant and sign of life; or what gives the first motion to the blood and spirits, or fits the organized body to perform its various functions. These things cannot be comprehended by us.

But if we speak of that which is infinite, we must conclude it to be incomprehensible, not only because of the imperfection of

our present state, but because, as has been before observed, of the infinite disproportion that there is between the object and our finite capacities. In this respect we have before shewn that the perfections of the divine nature cannot be comprehended, such as the immensity, eternity, omnipresence, and simplicity of God ; yet we are to believe that he is thus infinitely perfect. And it seems equally reasonable to suppose the doctrine of the Trinity to be incomprehensible ; for the mutual relation of the Father, Son, and Spirit, to each other, and their distinct personality, are not the result of the divine will ; these are personal perfections, and therefore they are necessary, and their glory infinite, as well as that of his essential perfections ; and if we are bound to believe one to be incomprehensible, why should we not as well suppose the other to be so ? or if there are some things which the light of nature gives us some ideas of, concerning which we are notwithstanding bound to confess that we know but little of them, for the reason but now mentioned, why should it be thought strange, that this doctrine, though the subject of pure revelation, should be equally incomprehensible ? This consequence appears so evident, that some of them, who deny the doctrine of the Trinity to be incomprehensible, do not stick to deny the perfections of the divine nature to be so, when they maintain that there is nothing which is the object of faith but what may be comprehended by us, which is to run such lengths in the defence of their cause, as no one who hath the least degree of that humility, which becomes a finite creature, should venture to do. But they proceed yet farther, as the cause they defend seems to require it, and say, that every doctrine which we cannot comprehend is to be rejected by us, as though our understandings were to set bounds to the truth and credibility of all things.

This, I think, is the true state of the question about mysteries in Christianity : it is not whether the word *Mystery* is never used in scripture to signify what is incomprehensible ; for if that could be sufficiently proved, which I think hath not yet been done, we would assert the doctrine of the Trinity to be more than a mystery, namely, an incomprehensible doctrine ; and the proof thereof seems absolutely necessary, since the Antitrinitarians, and some of them with an air of insult, conclude this to be our last resort, which we betake ourselves to when they have beaten us out of all our other strong holds ; and therefore we may suppose, that this would be opposed with the greatest warmth, but I do not find that it has hitherto been overthrown : and indeed when they call it one of our most plausible pretences, as though we laid the whole stress of the controversy upon it, it might be expected that it should be attacked with stronger arguments than it generally is. Some-

times they bend their force principally against the sense of the word *Mystery*; and here they talk not only with an air of insult, but profaneness, when they compare it with the abominable mysteries of the heathen, which were not to be divulged to any but those of them who were in the secret; and the doctrine of the Trinity, and that of transubstantiation, are compared together, so that they are to be reckoned equally mysterious, that is, according to their application of the word, absurd and nonsensical. And this way of arguing has so far prevailed among them, that no one must apply the word to any doctrines of religion without exposing himself to scorn and ridicule; but this will do no service to their cause, nor prejudice to our doctrine, in the opinion of those who enquire into the truth thereof, with that seriousness and impartiality, that the importance of the doctrine calls for. (a)

(a) "There are some doctrines in the gospel the understanding could not discover; but when they are revealed, it hath a clear apprehension of them upon a rational account, and sees the characters of truth visibly stampt on their forehead: as the doctrine of satisfaction to divine justice, that pardon might be dispensed to repenting sinners. For our natural conception of God includes his infinite purity and justice; and when the design of the gospel is made known, whereby he hath provided abundantly for the honour of those attributes, so that He doth the greatest good without encouraging the least evil, reason acquiesces, and acknowledges, This I sought, but could not find. Now, although the primary obligation to believe such doctrines ariseth from revelation, yet being ratified by reason, they are embraced with more clearness by the mind.

2. There are some doctrines, which as reason by its light could not discover; so when they are made known, it cannot comprehend; but they are by a clear and necessary connexion joined with the other that reason approves: as the mystery of the Trinity, and the Incarnation of the Son of God, which are the foundations of the whole work of our redemption. The nature of God is repugnant to plurality, there can be but one essence; and the nature of satisfaction requires a distinction of persons: For he that suffers as guilty, must be distinguished from the person of the judge that exacts satisfaction; and no mere creature is able by his obedient sufferings to repair the honour of God: So that a divine person, assuming the nature of man, was alone capable to make that satisfaction, which the gospel propounds, and reason consents to. Now, according to the distinction of capacities in the Trinity, the Father required an honourable reparation for the breach of the divine law, and the Son bore the punishment in the sufferings of the human nature; that is peculiarly his own. Besides, 'tis clear that the doctrine of the Trinity, that is, of three glorious relations in the Godhead, and of the Incarnation, are most firmly connected with all the parts of the christian religion, left in the writings of the apostles, which as they were confirmed by miracles, the divine signatures of their certainty, so they contain such authentic marks of their divinity, that right reason cannot reject them.

3. Whereas there are three principles by which we apprehend things, Sense, Reason and Faith; these lights have their different objects that must not be confounded. Sense is confined to things material; Reason considers things abstracted from matter; Faith regards the mysteries revealed from heaven: and these must not transgress their order. Sense is an incompetent judge of things about which reason is only conversant. It can only make a report of those objects, which by their natural characters are exposed to it. And reason can only discourse of things, within its sphere: supernatural things which derive from revelation, and are purely the objects of faith, are not within its territories and jurisdiction. Those superlative mysteries exceed all our intellectual abilities.

The question therefore in controversy is; whether any doctrines of religion may be deemed incomprehensible, that is, such

'Tis true, the understanding is a rational faculty, and every act of it is really or in appearance grounded on reason. But there is a wide difference between the proving a doctrine by reason, and the giving a reason why we believe the truth of it. For instance, we cannot prove the Trinity by natural reason; and the subtilty of the schoolmen, who affect to give some reason of all things, is here more prejudicial than advantageous to the truth: For he that pretends to maintain a point by reason, and is unsuccessful, doth weaken the credit which the authority of revelation gives. And 'tis considerable, that the scripture, in delivering supernatural truths, produces God's authority as their only proof, without using any other way of arguing: But although we cannot demonstrate these mysteries by reason, yet we may give a rational account why we believe them.

Is it not the highest reason to believe the discovery that God hath made of himself, and his decrees? For he perfectly knows his own nature and will; and 'tis impossible he should deceive us: this natural principle is the foundation of faith. When God speaks, it becomes man to hear with silence and submission. His naked word is as certain as a demonstration.

And is it not most reasonable to believe that the Deity cannot be fully understood by us? The sun may more easily be included in a spark of fire, than the infinite perfections of God be comprehended by a finite mind. The angels, who dwell so near the fountain of light, *cover their faces* in a holy confusion, not being able to comprehend Him. How much less can man in this earthly state, distant from God, and opprest with a burthen of flesh? Now from hence it follows;

1. That ignorance of the manner how divine mysteries exist is no sufficient plea for infidelity, when the scripture reveals that they are. For reason that is limited and restrained cannot frame a conception that is commensurate to the essence and power of God. This will appear more clearly by considering the mysterious excellencies of the divine nature, the certainty of which we believe, but the manner we cannot understand: As that his essence and attributes are the same, without the least shadow of composition; yet his wisdom and power are to our apprehensions distinct, and his mercy and justice in some manner opposite.* That his essence is intire in all places, yet not terminated in any. That he is above the heavens, and beneath the earth, yet hath no relation of high or low, distant or near. That he penetrates all substances, but is mixed with none. That he understands, yet receives no ideas within himself: That he wills, yet hath no motion that carries him out of himself. That in him time hath no succession; that which is past is not gone, and that which is future is not to come. That he loves without passion, is angry without disturbance, repents without change. These perfections are above the capacity of reason fully to understand; yet essential to the deity. Here we must exalt faith, and abase reason. Thus in the mystery of the incarnation, (1 *Tim.* iii. 16.) that two such distant natures should compose one person, without the confusion of properties, reason cannot reach unto; but it is clearly revealed in the word: (*John* i. 14.) Here therefore we must obey, not enquire.

The obedience of faith is, to embrace an obscure truth with a firm assent, upon the account of a divine testimony. If reason will not assent to revelation, till it understands the manner how divine things are, it doth not obey it at all. The understanding then sincerely submits, when it is inclined by those motives, which demonstrate that such a belief is due to the authority of the revealer, and to the quality of the object. To believe only in proportion to our narrow conceptions is to disparage the divine truth, and debase the divine power. We can't know what God can do; he is omnipotent, though we are not omniscient: 'Tis just we should humble our ignorance to his wisdom, and that every lofty imagination, and high thing, that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, should be cast down, and every thought captivated into the obedience of Christ; 2 *Cor.* x. 5. 'Tis our wisdom

* Infinitus, immensus & soli sibi tantus, quantus est notus, nobis vero ad intellectum pectus angustum est, & ideo sic cum dignè estimamus, cum inestimabilem dicimus. *Min. Fel.*

as we can have no adequate ideas of, because of the disproportion between them and our finite minds? and whether the in-

to receive the great mysteries of the gospel in their simplicity: for in attempting to give an exact and curious explication of them, the understanding, as in a hedge of thorns, the more it strives, the more 'tis wounded and entangled. *God's ways are far above ours, and his thoughts above ours as heaven is above the earth.* To reject what we can't comprehend, is not only to sin against faith, but against reason, which acknowledges itself finite, and unable *to search out the Almighty to perfection*; Job xi. 7.

2. We are obliged to believe those mysteries that are plainly delivered in scripture, notwithstanding those seeming contradictions wherewith they may be charged. In the objects of sense, the contrariety of appearances doth not lessen the certainty of things. The stars to our sight seem but glittering sparks, yet they are immense bodies. And it is one thing to be assured of a truth, another to answer to all the difficulties that encounter it: a mean understanding is capable of the first; the second is so difficult, that in clear things the profoundest philosophers may not be able to untie all the intricate and knotty objections which may be urged against them. 'Tis sufficient the belief of supernatural mysteries is built on the veracity and power of God; this makes them prudently credible: this resolves all doubts, and produces such a stability of spirit, as nothing can shake. A sincere believer is assured, that all opposition against revealed truths is fallacious, though he cannot discover the fallacy. Now the transcendent mysteries of the Christian religion, the Trinity of persons in the divine nature, the incarnation of the Son of God, are clearly set down in the scripture. And although subtle and obstinate opponents have used many guilty arts to dispirit and enervate those texts by an inferior sense, and have racked them with violence to make them speak according to their prejudices, yet all is vain, the evidence of truth is victorious. A heathen, who considers not the gospel as a divine revelation, but merely as a doctrine delivered in writings, and judges of its sense by natural light, will acknowledge that those things are delivered in it. And notwithstanding those who usurp a sovereign authority to themselves, to judge of divine mysteries according to their own apprehensions, deny them as mere contradictions, yet they can never conclude them impossible: for no certain argument can be alledged against the being of a thing without a clear knowledge of its nature: Now, although we may understand the nature of man, we do not the nature of God, the economy of the persons, and his power to unite himself to a nature below him.

It is true, no article of faith is really repugnant to reason: for God is the author of natural, as well as of supernatural, light, and he cannot contradict himself: They are emanations from him, and though different, yet not destructive of each other. But we must distinguish between those things that are above reason and incomprehensible, and things that are against reason and utterly inconceivable: Some things are above reason in regard of their transcendent excellency, or distance from us; the divine essence, the eternal decrees, the hypostatical union, are such high and glorious objects, that it is an impossible enterprise to comprehend them: the intellectual eye is dazzled with their overpowering light. We can have but an imperfect knowledge of them; and there is no just cause of wonder that supernatural revelation should speak incomprehensible things of God. For he is a singular and admirable Being, infinitely above the ordinary course of nature. The maxims of philosophy are not to be extended to him. We must adore what we cannot fully understand. But those things are against reason, and utterly inconceivable, that involve a contradiction, and have a natural repugnancy to our understandings, which cannot conceive any thing that is formally impossible: and there is no such doctrine in the christian religion.

3. We must distinguish between reason corrupted, and right reason. Since the fall, the clearness of the human understanding is lost, and the light that remains is eclipsed by the interposition of sensual lust. The carnal mind cannot,

communicable perfections of God are not to be reckoned among these incomprehensible doctrines? if they are not, then it will be reasonable to demand that every thing relating to them be particularly accounted for, and reduced to the standard of a finite capacity; and if this cannot be done, but some things must be allowed to be incomprehensible in religion, then it will be farther enquired, Why should the doctrine of the Trinity be rejected, because we cannot account for every thing that relates to the personal glory of God, any more than we can for those things that respect his essential glory? or may not some things, that are matter of pure revelation, be supposed to exceed our capacities, and yet we be bound to believe them, as well as other things which appear to be true, and at the same time, incomprehensible, by the light of nature? But, that we may enter a little more particularly into this argument, we shall consider the most material objections that are brought against it, and what may be replied to them.

Object. 1. It is objected that we take up with the bare sound of words, without any manner of ideas affixed to them. And,

2. That it is unbecoming the divine wisdom and goodness to suppose that God should give a revelation, and demand our belief thereof, as necessary to salvation, when, at the same time, it is impossible for our understandings to yield an assent to it, since nothing that is unintelligible can be the object of faith.

3. That practical religion is designed to be promoted in the world hereby, and therefore the will of man must follow the dictates of the understanding, and not blindly embrace, and be conversant about we know not what, which is to act unbecoming our own character as intelligent creatures.

4. That the design of divine revelation is to improve our understandings, and render our ideas of things more clear, and not to entangle and perplex them.

Answer. 1. As to our using words without ideas, there is no

out of ignorance, and will not from pride and other malignant habits, receive things spiritual. And from hence arises many suspicions and doubts, (concerning supernatural verities) the shadows of darkened reason, and of dying faith. If any divine mystery seems incredible, it is from the corruption of our reason, not from reason itself; from its darkness, not its light. And as reason is obliged to correct the errors of sense, when it is deceived either by some vicious quality in the organ, or by the distance of the object, or by the falseness of the medium, that corrupts the image in conveying of it. So it is the office of faith to reform the judgment of reason, when either from its own weakness, or the height of things spiritual, it is mistaken about them. For this end supernatural revelation was given, not to extinguish reason, but to redress it, and enrich it with the discovery of heavenly things. Faith is called wisdom and knowledge: it doth not quench the vigour of the faculty wherein it is seated, but elevates it, and gives it a spiritual perception of those things that are most distant from its commerce. It doth not lead us through a mist to the inheritance of the saints in light."

Christian, that I know of, who thinks there is any religion in the sound of words, or that it is sufficient for us to take up with the word Trinity, or Persons in the Godhead, without determining, in some measure, what we understand thereby. We will therefore allow that faith supposes some ideas of the object, namely, that we have some knowledge of what we believe it to be: now our knowledge of things admits of various degrees; some of which we only know that they are what they are determined, or proved to be; if we proceed farther in our enquiries, and would know how every thing is to be accounted for, that may justly be affirmed concerning them, here our ideas are at a stand; yet this is not in the least inconsistent with the belief of what we conclude them to be. For the illustrating of which, let it be considered that we believe that God's eternity is without succession, his immensity without extension; this we know and believe, because to assert the contrary would be to ascribe imperfection to him. In this respect, our faith extends as far as our ideas: but as for what exceeds them, we are bound to believe that there is something in God, which exceeds the reach of a finite mind, though we cannot comprehend, or fully describe it, as though it was not infinite. And to apply this to the doctrine of the Trinity; it is one thing, to say that the Father, Son, and Spirit, have the perfections of the divine nature attributed to them in scripture, as well as distinct personal characters and properties, and because the Godhead is but one, that therefore these three are one, which we firmly believe, inasmuch as it is so clearly revealed in scripture; and another thing, to say, that we can fully describe all the properties of their divine personality, which, though we cannot do, yet we believe that they subsist in an incomprehensible manner. And while we compare them with finite persons, as we do the perfections of God with those of the creature, we separate from the one, as well as the other, whatever savours of imperfection.

2. As to the unintelligibleness of divine revelation, and its being unbecoming the wisdom and goodness of God to communicate those doctrines that are so, it may be replied, that we must distinguish between the rendering a doctrine, which would be otherwise easy to be understood, unintelligible, by the perplexity or difficulty of the style in which it is delivered, and the imparting a doctrine which none can comprehend; the former of these cannot be charged on any part of scripture, and it is only a revelation, which is liable to such a charge, that could be reckoned inconsistent with the wisdom and goodness of God. As to the latter, the design of revelation is not to make us comprehend what is in itself incomprehensible: as, for instance, God did not design, when he made known his perfec-

tions in his word, to give us such a perfect discovery of himself, that we might be said hereby to find him out unto perfection, or that we should know as much of his glory as is possible to be known, or as much as he knows of it himself; for that is to suppose the understanding of man infinitely more perfect than it is. Whatever is received, is received in proportion to the measure of that which contains it; the whole ocean can communicate no more water than what will fill the vessel, that is to contain it. Thus the infinite perfections of God being such as cannot be contained in a finite mind, we are not to suppose that our comprehending them was the design of divine revelation; God, indeed, designed hereby that we should apprehend some things of himself, namely, as much as should be subservient to the great ends of religion; but not so much as might be inconsistent with our humble confession, that *we are but of yesterday, and know, comparatively, nothing*, Job viii. 9.

And this is applicable, not only to the essential, but the personal, glory of God, *Who hath ascended into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?* Prov. xxx. 4. Our Saviour, indeed, speaks of his having *ascended into heaven*, John iii. 13. as having a comprehensive knowledge of all divine truths; but this he affirms concerning himself as a divine person, exclusively of all creatures.

Moreover, when it is said, in this objection, that God makes the comprehensive knowledge of these things a term of salvation, this we must take leave to deny; and we need not add any more as to that head, since we have already considered what degree of knowledge is necessary thereunto, namely, such as is subservient to religion, which teaches us to adore what we apprehend to be the object thereof, though we cannot comprehend it.

As to that part of the objection, that which is unintelligible, is not the object of faith, we must distinguish before we grant or deny it; therefore, since the object of faith is some proposition laid down, it is one thing to say that a proposition cannot be assented to, when we have no ideas of what is affirmed or denied in it; and another thing to say that it is not believed, when we have ideas of several things contained therein, of which some are affirmed, and others denied; as, for instance, when we say God is an infinite Spirit, there is a positive idea contained in that proposition, or some things affirmed therein, *viz.* that he is able to put forth actions suitable to an intelligent being; and there is something denied concerning him, to wit, his being corporeal; and in concluding him to be an infinite

Spirit, we deny that they are limits of his understanding; all this we may truly be said to understand and believe: but if we proceed farther, and enquire what it is to have such an understanding, or will? this is not a proposition, and consequently not the object of faith, as well as exceeds the reach of our understanding. So as to the doctrine of the Trinity, when we affirm that there is one God, and that the Father, Son, and Spirit, have all the perfections of the Godhead; and that these perfections, and the personality of each of them, are infinitely greater than what can be found in the creature, this we yield our assent to; but if it be enquired how far does God herein exceed all the ideas which we have of finite perfections, or personality, here our understandings are at a loss; but so far as this does not contain the form of a proposition, it cannot, according to our common acceptance of the word, be said to be the object of faith.

3. As to what concerns practical religion, the ideas we have of things subservient to it are of two sorts; either such as engage our obedience, or excite our adoration and admiration: as to the former of these, we know what we are commanded to do; what it is to act, as becomes those who are subject to a divine person, though we cannot comprehend those infinite perfections, which lay us under the highest obligation to obey him: as to the latter, the incomprehensibility of the divine personality, or perfections, has a direct tendency to excite our admiration, and the infiniteness thereof our adoration. And, since all religion may be reduced to these two heads, the subject matter of divine revelation is so far from being inconsistent with it, that it tends to promote it. Things commanded are not, as such, incomprehensible, as was but now observed, and therefore not inconsistent with that obedience, or subjection, which is contained in one branch thereof; and things incomprehensible do not contain the form of a command, but rather excite our admiration, and therefore they are not only consistent with, but adapted to promote the other branch thereof. Is it not an instance of religion to adore and magnify God, when we behold the display of his perfections in his works? And is he less to be adored, or admired, because we cannot comprehend them? Or should we not rather look upon them with a greater degree of astonishment, than if they did not exceed the reach of a finite mind? Must a person be able to measure the water of the ocean, or number all the particles of matter that are contained in the world; or can our ideas be no ways directed to shew forth the Creator's praise? Or must we be able to account for every thing that is a mystery in nature; or can we not improve it to promote some of the ends of practical religion, that we are

engaged to thereby? May we not say, with wonder, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches?* Psal. civ. 24. So when we behold the personal glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit, as displayed in the work of redemption, or as contained in scripture, which is therein said to be an instance of his *manifold wisdom*, Eph. iii. 10. should we not admire it the more, inasmuch as it is, as the apostle calls it, unsearchable? Therefore practical religion, as founded on divine revelation, is not, in all the branches thereof, inconsistent with the incomprehensibility of those things, which are, some in one respect, and others in another, the objects thereof.

And as to what is farther contained in this objection, concerning the will's following the dictates of the understanding, and practical religion's being seated therein, I own, that we must first know what we are to do in matters of religion, before we can act; thus we must first know what it is to worship, love, and obey, the Father, Son, and Spirit, as also that these three divine persons are the object of worship, love, and obedience, and then the will follows the dictates of the understanding; but it is one thing to know these things, and another thing to be able to comprehend the divine, essential, or personal glory, which belongs to them, and is the foundation of these acts of religious worship.

4. As to what is farther objected, concerning the design of divine revelation's being to improve our understanding; or, as it is sometimes expressed, that it is an improvement upon the light of nature; this seems to have a double aspect, or tendency, *viz.* to advance, or depreciate, divine revelation.

1. If we take it in the former view, we freely own,

(1.) That it is a very great improvement upon the light of nature, and that, either as we are led hereby, not only into the knowledge of many things which could not be discovered by it, namely, the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, and that infinite satisfaction which was given by him to the justice of God, in order to our discharge from condemnation, as also that communion which believers have with the Father, Son, and Spirit; and therefore, since the light of nature gives us no discovery of these doctrines, divine revelation, and particularly the gospel, makes a very great addition to those ideas which we are led into by the light of nature. It is true, they both take their rise from God, yet one excels the other, as much as the light of the sun does that of a star; and is, as the Psalmist says, when comparing them together, *perfect, converting the soul; and sure, making wise the simple.* Psal. xix. 7.

(2.) That when the same truths are discovered by the light of nature, and by divine revelation, the latter tends very much to improve our ideas: thus when the light of nature leads us into the knowledge of the being and perfections of God, his wisdom, power, and goodness, as illustrated in the works of nature and providence, we have not so clear ideas thereof, as we receive from the additional discoveries of them in divine revelation; and in this respect one does not cloud or darken those ideas which the other gives. But neither of these are designed by those who bring this objection against the doctrine of the Trinity: therefore we must suppose,

2. That they intend hereby to depreciate divine revelation, and then the sense thereof is this; that though the light of nature leads mankind into such a degree of the knowledge of divine truths, as is sufficient, in its kind to salvation; so that they, who are destitute of divine revelation, may thereby understand the terms of acceptance with God, and the way which, if duly improved, would lead to heaven; yet God was pleased to give some farther discovery of the same things by his word, and, in this sense, the one is only an improvement upon the other, as it makes the same truths, which were known, in some degree, without it more clear, and frees them from those corruptions, or false glosses, which the perverse reasonings of men have set upon them; whereas we, by insisting on inexplicable mysteries, which we pretend to be founded on divine revelation, though, in reality, they are not contained in it, cloud and darken that light, and so make the way of salvation more difficult, than it would otherwise be; and this certainly tends to depreciate divine revelation, how plausible soever the words, at first view, may appear to be; for it supposes those doctrines but now mentioned, and many others of the like nature, not necessary to salvation; so that this objection takes its first rise from the Deists, however it may be applied, by the Antitrinitarians, in militating against the doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, since it is principally designed to overthrow this doctrine, by supposing it to be unintelligible, and consequently, according to their method of reasoning, in no sense the object of faith, the only reply which need be made to it is, that the discoveries of the glory of God, by the light of nature, are, in some respects, as incomprehensible as the doctrine of the Trinity; which we are not, for that reason, obliged to disbelieve, or reject; and therefore there is no advantage gained against our argument, by supposing that the light of nature contains a discovery of truths, plain, easy, and intelligible by all, in the full extent thereof, and that the doctrine of the

Trinity is otherwise, and consequently must not be contained in divine revelation, and, as such, cannot be defended by us.

4. Another thing that may be premised, before we enter on the proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, is, that it is not contrary to reason, though it be above it; neither are our reasoning powers, when directed by scripture-revelation, altogether useless, in order to our attaining such a degree of the knowledge thereof, as is necessary, and ought to be endeavoured after. When a doctrine may be said to be above reason, has been already considered, as well as that the doctrine of the Trinity is so; and now we are obliged to obviate an objection, which is the most popular one of any that is brought against it, namely, that it is an absurd and irrational doctrine; and that they who maintain it must first lay aside their reason, before they can be induced to believe it, for it is as much as to say that three are equal to one; which is contrary to the common sense of all mankind, or else, that we maintain a plurality of gods, which is contrary to the very first principles of the light of nature. And here we are reflected on, as though we demanded that our antagonists should lay aside their reason, before we argue with them, and then it is easy to determine on which side the argument will turn; therefore, to make way for what might be said in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, we shall, under this head, consider,

(1.) When a doctrine may be said to be contrary to reason.

(2.) Shew that the doctrine of the Trinity is not so.

(3.) What is the use of reason, in establishing it, or or any other doctrines, which are the subject of pure revelation.

(1.) When we may conclude, that a doctrine is contrary to reason. This it may be said to be, when it is contrary to the methods of reasoning made use of by particular persons, which are not always just, and therefore it does not follow, from hence, that it is false or absurd, because our reasoning about it is so, but rather the contrary; so that when they, on the other side of the question, tell us, with an air of boasting, that if the doctrine we are maintaining could have been accounted for, how comes it to pass that so many men of sense and learning, as are to be found among the Anti-trinitarians, have not been able to do it? But this is nothing to our present argument; therefore we suppose that a doctrine is contrary to reason, when it contradicts some of the first principles, which the mind of man cannot but yield its assent to, as soon as ever it takes in the sense of the words which contain them, without demanding any proof thereof; as that the whole is greater than the part; and that a thing can be, and not be, at the same time; or that two is more than one, &c. or when we can prove a thing to be true to a demonstration, and yet suppose that a

contradictory proposition, in which the words are taken in the same sense, may be equally true. (a)

(2.) That the doctrine of the Trinity is not contrary to reason. This appears, inasmuch as we do not say that the three Persons in the Godhead are one Person, or that the one divine Being is three divine Beings.

Object. But it is objected, that it is contrary to reason, which establishes and proves the unity of the Godhead, to say that the divine nature may be predicated of more than one, inasmuch as that infers a plurality of Gods, and every distinct Person must be concluded to be a distinct God; therefore the Trinitarian doctrine is down-right Tritheism, and consequently contrary to reason; and here those words of the Athanasian Creed are produced, as an instance hereof, namely, that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God,

(a) He who has marked the differences between truth and error, good and evil, made them discoverable, and formed human minds susceptible of their impressions, thereby discovers his will that we should attend to them, and has made it our duty to do so. With this sentiment sacred revelation is expressly accordant; "prove all things, hold fast that which is good." The Gospel requires not faith without evidence, it demands no more assent than is proportioned to the weight of probability, and charges as a crime only our refusing to attend to the evidence, or our coming to it with hearts prejudiced against, and therefore insensible to, its evidence. The exercise of reason is essential to faith, for how sudden soever our convictions, still it is the judgment which is convinced.

Yet reason has her due province; she may and ought to ascertain the genuineness, authenticity, and divine authority of the scriptures. When this is done, she cannot correctly delay her assent, because she may not fully comprehend the promises or works of God, for this would require wisdom no less than Divine. But suppose she should presume to try them, by what balances shall she weigh them? To what shall she compare them? To the reasons and fitness of things? what are these but circumstances and relations springing from the works of God? His creation originated from his wisdom and power, and is ever dependent on them. This is therefore to circumscribe infinite wisdom by what has been already discovered of it; it is to limit infinite power from effecting any thing which it has not hitherto accomplished. Such judgment is not the work of reason, it is irrational. Reason can only make an induction, where there exists premises from which a conclusion can be drawn; but here her limits are exceeded, she has no standard by which she can measure infinity. By reasoning we justly infer from the works of God, many of his glorious moral, as well as natural, perfections; we gather that he is holy, just, true, and good, and we may fairly say that he will never depart from such rectitude, but that all his works will be conformed to such principles. We can go no farther than unto generals, we have no right to question any word or act of his, and say it is not conformed to such perfections, because this would suppose that we possess infinite wisdom. He may have ways of solving our difficulties and objections, with which we are not acquainted. Such judgment is not only irrational, but arrogant, as it is an extension of the claims of reason beyond her just limits. Our duty in such case is exemplified in the father of the faithful. At God's command we must, like him, sacrifice our Isaacs, and leave to him both to accomplish his promises and to justify the action. It is evident that the doctrine of the Trinity is but partially revealed to man, but sufficiently to let him into a competent knowledge of the plan of redemption.

yet there are not three Gods, but one God; so, that the Father is Eternal, the Son is Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal, yet there are not three Eternals, but one Eternal: and the Father Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty, yet are there not three Almighties, but one Almighty. This they suppose, though without ground, to be a plain contradiction.

Answer. But to this it may be replied, that when we say the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are God, we do not say they are distinct Gods, for the distinction between them respects their personality, not their deity: and when we assert that they are all Eternal, or Almighty, we do not suppose that their duration, or power, are distinct; and the same may be said of all other divine perfections that are attributed to them, the perfections are the same in all of them, though the persons are distinct. So that the charge of Tritheism lies in a narrow compass: they say that there is one divine Being, so do we; and to this they add, that this divine Being is a divine person, since existence and personality are the same; therefore, if there are more divine Persons, there must be more Gods; this consequence they maintain, but we deny. But how do they prove it? The proof amounts to no more than this; that there is no instance in finite things, when we speak of angels or men, to whom alone personality can be applied, of any distinct persons, but at the same time their beings are distinct; therefore it must be so with respect to the divine persons. This we are bound to deny, since our ideas of personality and existence are not the same; therefore, how inseparable soever they may be in what respects creatures, we may have distinct ideas of them, when we speak of the divine being and personality of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Here it will, doubtless, be demanded, that we determine wherein the difference consists; or, in particular, since every distinct finite person is a distinct being, what there is in the divine personality, that should exclude the Father, Son, and Spirit, from being distinct beings, because distinct persons; so that when we conclude that there is a small or faint resemblance between divine and human personality, we must be able to comprehend, and fully to describe, that infinite disproportion that is between them, or else must be charged with using words without any manner of ideas annexed to them, and so our cause must fall to the ground. If, indeed, the divine personality were finite, like that of the creature, then it might be required that a finite mind should account for it: but since it is not so, but incomprehensible, we are bound to believe what we cannot comprehend.

But have we no ideas at all of the distinct personality of the Father, Son, and Spirit? To this we may answer; that we

have finite ideas thereof, and more than these we have not of any of the divine perfections. We are taught, by scripture, to say that they are distinct persons; and we know what those personal characters, or properties, from whence our ideas take their rise, signify, when applied to men; but, at the same time, abstract, in our thoughts, every thing from them that argues imperfection; or, in short, our conceptions hereof proceed in the same way, as when we think of any of the perfections of the divine nature: these, as well as the divine personality, are equally incomprehensible; yet, while we say they are infinitely more than can be in any creature, we, notwithstanding, retain such ideas of them, as tend to answer those ends of religion, which suppose that we apprehend something of them that is conducive hereunto. We are now to consider,

(3.) The use of reason in proving or defending the doctrine of the Trinity, or any other doctrines of pure revelation. They could not, indeed, have been at first discovered by reason, nor can every thing that is revealed be comprehended by it, yet our reason is not to be laid aside as useless; therefore some call it a servant to faith. Thus revelation discovers what doctrines we are to believe, demands our assent to them, and reason offers a convincing proof that we are under an indispensable obligation to give it: it proves the doctrine to be true, and such as is worthy of God, as it is derived from him, the fountain of truth and wisdom; and this office of reason, or the subserviency thereof to our faith, is certainly necessary, since what is false cannot be the object of faith in general; and nothing unworthy of God can be the matter of divine revelation, nor consequently the object of a divine faith.

Now, in order to reason's judging of the truth of things, it first considers the sense of words; what ideas are designed to be conveyed thereby, and whether they are contrary to the common sense of mankind; and if it appears that they are not, it proceeds to enquire into those evidences that may give conviction, and enforce our belief thereof; and leads us into the nature of the truths revealed, receives them as instamped with the authority of God, and considers them as agreeable to his perfections, and farther leads us into his design of revealing them, and what we are to infer from them; and in doing this it connects things together, observes the dependence of one thing on another, what is the importance thereof, and how they are to be improved to answer the best purposes.

Now this may be applied particularly to the doctrine of the Trinity; for it contains in it no absurdity contradictory to reason, as has been already proved; and the evidences on which our faith herein is founded will be farther considered, when we

prove it to be a scripture doctrine, by the express words thereof, agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost, or by just consequences deduced from it; by which it will farther appear, that it is necessary for us to use our reason in stating those doctrines, which are neither founded on, nor can be comprehended by it.

5. We are now to consider from whence the doctrine of the Trinity is to be deduced, or where we are to search for that knowledge thereof, which we are to acquiesce in. And here it must be observed, that it cannot be learnt from the light of nature, for then we should certainly be able to behold some traces or footsteps thereof in the works of creation and providence, that so this might be understood thereby, as well as the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, as the cause is known by its effect; but we should never have known that God made all things by his essential word, *without whom nothing was made, that was made*, as the evangelist speaks, John i. 3. had we not received this doctrine from divine revelation: likewise, we should never have known that the Spirit, as a distinct Person from the Father, created all things, and performed several other works, by which his personal glory is demonstrated, had we not received the account which we have thereof from scripture. The light of nature could discover to us, indeed, that God, who is a Spirit, or incorporeal Being, has produced many effects worthy of himself; but we could not have known hereby, that the word Spirit signifies a distinct person, which we are beholden to divine revelation for.

And as for the work of our redemption, in which, more than in all the other divine works, the personal glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is demonstrated, we could have known as little of that by the light of nature, as we do the persons to whom it is attributed. But I am sensible that it will be objected to this,

Object. 1. That our first parents knew the doctrine of the Trinity as soon as they were created, otherwise they could not have given that distinct glory to the Persons in the Godhead that is due to them; and if we are required, not only to worship the divine Being, but to worship the Father, Son, and Spirit; and, if this worship is due from us, as creatures, and not merely as fallen and redeemed: then it will follow from hence, that our first parents must know the doctrine of the Trinity: but this they did not know by divine revelation; therefore they knew it by the light of nature.

Ans. w. We will allow every thing contained in this objection, excepting that they did not know this by divine revelation; for certainly they had some ideas conveyed this way at first, otherwise they could not have known any thing that related to in-

stituted worship, which, it is plain, they did. And shall it be reckoned any absurdity to suppose that they received this doctrine of the Trinity by divine revelation, though we have no particular account thereof, in that short history which Moses gives us of things relating to the state of innocency? It is therefore sufficient to our purpose, to suppose that it was agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of God to make known to them this important truth, and consequently that he did so, though not by the light of nature.

Object. 2. It is farther objected, that the heathen knew something of the doctrine of the Trinity, as appears by their writings, though they were unacquainted with scripture. To support this objection, they refer to several mystical expressions in the works of Plato, which seem to look that way, when he speaks of three principles; one whereof he calls goodness, or a being that is good; the second he calls his word, or reason; and the third a spirit, which diffuses its influence throughout the whole system of beings, and calls him sometimes the soul of the world; and in other places, he speaks of them as having a distinct sovereignty.* And he supposes the first of these to be the cause of things most great and excellent; the second, the cause of things of an inferior nature; the third, of things yet more inferior; and some of his followers plainly call them three hypostases; and sometimes, Father, Word, and Spirit.

Ansiv. The account which Plato and his followers seem to have given of the doctrine of the Trinity does not appear to have been taken from the light of nature, and therefore this makes nothing to the objection. We have sufficient ground to conclude that Plato travelled into Egypt, with a design to make improvements in knowledge; and some suppose, that there he saw some translation of a part of the Bible into Greek, † more ancient than that which is commonly attributed to the LXX, which was not compiled till an hundred years after his time. But whether he did this, or no, is uncertain: it is true, he used several expressions, which are contained in the books of Moses, and took the plan of his laws from thence; upon which account some have called him a second Moses, speaking Greek: but whether he received his notions more immediately from scripture, or by conversation with the Jews, of whom a great number settled in Egypt, after Gedaliah's death, is not material; however, it is sufficiently evident, that he had not all of them, in a way of reasoning, from the light of nature: and as for his followers, such as Plotinus, Proclus, Porphyry, and others, they lived in those ages, when Christianity prevailed in the world, though none of them pretended to be Christians; and one of

* *Vid. Epist. 2. ad Dionys.* † *Vid. Euseb. Præp. Evang. Lib. XIII. cap. 12.*

them was the most inveterate enemy to Christianity that lived ; yet these might well be supposed to make their master Plato speak several things, as to this mystery, which he never intended, were it only to persuade the Christians to believe that he was not inferior to Moses, or any other recorded in scripture.

Thus having answered the objections, we shall take leave to consider how unwarily some divines, who have defended the doctrine of the Trinity, have not only asserted that Plato understood a great deal of it, but have made use of this, as an answer to the Anti-trinitarian objection before mentioned, that the doctrine of the Trinity is unintelligible ; and they have taken a great deal of pleasure in accounting for this doctrine in such a way as these philosophers have done :* and some of them have taken notice of a few dark hints, which they have met with in some of the poetical fictions, and from thence concluded that there was something of the Trinity known, even by the Heathen in general : thus when the word three is mentioned by them, and applied to some things, which they relate concerning their gods ; or when they speak of gods delighting in an unequal number, or in the number three. But this is too gross to be particularly mentioned, lest it should give us an unbecoming idea of this divine mystery, or of those who have better arguments than these to defend it.

The reflection which I would make on this is, that what they call an advantage to the doctrine has been certainly very detrimental to it ; and, as a late learned divine observes, has tended only to pervert the simplicity of the Christian faith with mixtures of philosophy and vain deceit.† And I doubt not but the apostle had an eye to this, among other corruptions, which they who were attached to the Heathen philosophy began to bring into their scheme of divinity, and would notoriously do in after ages, which he purposely fences against, when he says, *Beware, lest any man spoil you, through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*, Col. ii. 8. And this corruption so much prevailed, that it has given occasion to some of the Anti-trinitarians, to reproach the doctrine of the Trinity, as though it were a system of Platonism. And it is their being too fond of using Plato's words, in explaining the doctrine of the Trinity ; that has given occasion to some of the fathers to be suspected, as though they were less favourable to the scripture account thereof ; by which means the adversaries have laid claim to them as their own ; and produced some unwary expressions out of Justin Martyr, and others, supposing them to be in the Arian

* *Vid. Huet. Concord. Ration. & Fid. Lib. II. cap. 3.*

† *See Dr. Berriman's*

Historical account, &c. page 94.

scheme, who, in other parts of their writings, appear to be remote from it. (a)

(a) "Philo uses not the name for his derivative Being in the Godhead, which we see the other Jews of the time using in the Gospels. He speaks not of him, by his natural appellation of the Son of God. No! He takes up another title for him, which indeed was known equally to other Jews, or Philo could not possibly have adopted it; which was known equally to the Gentiles, as I shall show hereafter; but which was known only to the scholars of either. He calls him "the Logos of God." This is a name, that can be borrowed, together with the idea annexed to it, only from the Jews, or from the common ancestors of them and of the Gentiles; that answers exactly to the *Dabar* of Jehovah in the Hebrew Scriptures, and to the *Memra* of Jehovah in the Chaldee paraphrasts upon them; and signifies merely "the WORD of God." This name has been since introduced into our religion, by one of the inspired teachers of it. And notwithstanding the duality of the Greek language in this instance, which would allow it to be rendered either the *Word* or the *Reason* of God; yet the English Bible, with a strict adherence to propriety, and in full conformity to the ancient Christians and ancient Jews, has rejected the accidental signification, and embraced only the immediate and the genuine. Yet, even now, the name is confined in its use to the more improved intellects among us. And it must therefore have peculiarly been, in the days of Philo, the *philosophical* denomination of Him, who was *popularly* called the Son of God.

The use of the name of Logos, or Word, by Philo and by St. John in concurrence, sufficiently marks the knowledge of the name among the Jews. But the total silence concerning it, by the Jewish writers of the three first Gospels; the equal silence of the introduced Jews concerning it, in all the four; and the *acknowledged* use of it through all the Jewish records of our religion, merely by St. John himself; prove it to have been familiar to a few only. It is indeed too mysterious in its allusion, and too reducible into metaphor in its import, to have ever been the common and ordinary appellation for the Son of God. Originating from the *spiritual* principle of connexion, betwixt the first and the second Being in the Godhead; marking this, by a *spiritual* idea of connexion; and considering it to be as close and as necessary as the *Word* is to the energetick *Mind* of God, which cannot bury its intellectual energies in silence, but must put them forth in speech; it is too *spiritual* in itself, to be addressed to the faith of the multitude. If with so full a reference to our *bodily* ideas, and so positive a *filiation* of the Second Being to the First, we have seen the grossness of Arian criticism endeavouring to resolve the doctrine into the mere dust of a figure; how much more ready would it have been to do so, if we had only such a *spiritual* denomination as this, for the second? This would certainly have been considered by it, as too unsubstantial for distinct personality, and therefore too evanescent for equal divinity.

St. John indeed adopted this philosophical title, for the denomination of the Son of God; only in one solemn and prefatory passage of his Gospel, in two slight and incidental passages of his Epistles, and in one of his Book of revelations. Even there, the use of the popular instead of the philosophical name, in the three Gospels antecedent to his, precluded all probability of misconstruction. Yet, not content with this, he formed an additional barrier. At the same instant in which he speaks of the Logos, he asserts him to be distinct from God the Father, and yet to be equally God with him. "In the beginning," he says, "was THE WORD; and THE WORD was *with* God; and THE WORD was God." Having thus secured the two grand points relating to the Logos, he can have nothing more to say upon the subject, than to repeat what he has stated, for impressing the deeper conviction. He accordingly repeats it. His personality he impresses again, thus; "THE SAME was in the beginning *with* God." His divinity also he again inculcates, thus: "ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM, and WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADE." Here the very repetition itself, of enforcing his claim to divinity, by ascribing the creation to him; is plainly an union of two clauses, each announcing him as the Creator of the universe, and one doubling over the other. And the un-

And this leads us to consider the method which some divines have taken, in using similitudes to explain the doctrine of the

created nature of his own existence is the more strongly enforced upon the mind, by being contrasted with the created nature of all other existences. These were *MADE*, but he himself *WAS*; *made* by Him, who *was* with God, and *was* God. Nor would all this precaution suffice, in the opinion of St. John. He must place still stronger fences against the dangerous spirit of error. He therefore goes on to say, in confirmation of his personality and divinity, and in application of all to our Saviour: "HE was in the world, and THE WORLD WAS MADE BY HIM, and the world "knew him not; HE came unto HIS OWN [PROPER DOMAINS,] and HIS OWN [PROPER DOMESTICKS] received him not." And he closes all, with judiciously drawing the several parts of his assertions before into one full point; and with additionally explaining his philosophical term, by a direct reference of it to that popular one which he uses ever afterwards: "and THE WORD was made flesh, and dwelt "among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE "FATHER, full of grace and truth."

Yet, when such guards were requisite, what induced St. John to use this philosophical title at all? The reason was assuredly this. The title was in high repute, and in familiar use, among the refined spirits of the age; and his Gospel was peculiarly calculated for the service of *such*. The almost perpetual recurrence of the appellation in Philo's works shows evidently the use and the repute in which it was, among the more spiritualized of the Jews. St. John therefore adopted it himself, for the more easy access to *their* conviction. It was also congenial, probably, of itself to the spiritualized state of St. John's mind. He, who has drawn so much more than the other Evangelists upon the *doctrines* of our Saviour; and who has drawn out so many of them, in all their spiritual refinement of ideas: would naturally prefer the *spiritual* term of relationship for God the Son and God the Father, before the *bodily*, whenever the intellect was raised enough to receive it, and whenever the use of it was sufficiently guarded from danger. These were two reasons, I suppose, that induced St. John to use it a *few* times. And these were equally (I suppose) the reasons, that induced him, with all his guards, to use it only a few.

Nor let us be told, in the rashness of Arian absurdity, that we misunderstand St. John in this interpretation of his words. If reason is capable of explaining words, and if St. John was capable of conveying his meaning in words to the ear of reason; then we may boldly appeal to the common sense of mankind, and insist upon the truth of our interpretation. Common sense indeed hath *already* determined the point, in an impartial person, in an enemy, in a Heathen. I allude to that extraordinary approbation, which was given by a Heathen of the third century to this passage of St. John. "Of modern philosophers," says Eusebius, "*Amelius* is an eminent one, being himself, if ever there was one, a zealot for the philosophy of Plato; and he called the Divine of the Hebrews a *Barbarian*, as if he would not condescend to make mention of the Evangelist John by name." Such is Eusebius's account of our referce. But what are the terms of his award? They are these. "And such indeed was the *Logos*," he says, "by whom, a perpetual existence, the things created were created, as also Heraclitus has said; and who by Jupiter, *the Barbarian* says, being constituted in the rank and dignity of a Principle, is with God and is God, by whom all things absolutely were created; in whom the created living thing, and life, and existence, had a birth, and fell into a body, and putting on flesh appeared a man; and, after showing the greatness of his nature, and being wholly dissolved, is again deified and is God, such as he was before he was brought down into the body and the flesh and a man. These things, if translated out of *the Barbarian's* theology, not as shaded over there, but on the contrary as placed in full view, would be plain." In this very singular and very valuable comment upon St. John's Gospel in general, and upon his preface in particular, we may see, through the harsh and obscure language of the whole, some circumstances of great moment. The bold air of arrogance in the blinded Heathen over the illuminated Divine must strike at

Trinity, which, at best, tend only to illustrate, and not to prove a doctrine : and we can hardly make use of this method of illustrating this doctrine, without conveying some ideas, which are unbecoming, if not subversive thereof ; and while we pretend to explain that which is in itself inexplicable, we do no service to the truth.

I shall here give a short specimen of this matter, that hereby we may see how some have unwarily weakened the cause which they have been maintaining. Some have taken a similitude from three of the divine perfections, *viz.* that there are three invisibles of God ; power, wisdom, and goodness. Power creates, wisdom governs, and goodness conserves ; and so they have gone on to explain this doctrine, till they had almost given it into the hands of the Sabellians : and, indeed, they might have instanced in more divine perfections than three, had it been to their purpose.

Again, others have explained this doctrine by some resemblance which they apprehend to be of it in man ; and so they speak of the soul as a principle of a threefold life, rational, sensitive, and vegetative. Others speak of three causes concurring to produce the same effect ; such as the efficient, constitutive and final cause. Others have taken their similitude from inanimate things ; as the sun, in which there is light, heat, and motion, which are inseparably connected together, and tend to produce the same effects.

Moreover, others illustrate it by a similitude, taken from a fountain, in which there is the spring in the bowels of the earth, the water bubbling out of the earth, and the stream diffusing itself in a perpetual course, receiving all it communicates from the fountain. I am sorry there is occasion to caution any against

once upon every eye. But the Logos appears, from him, to have been known to the *philosophers* of antiquity *later* than the Gospel ; and known too as a perpetual Existence, and the Maker of the world. St. John also is witnessed by a Heathen, and by one who put him down for a Barbarian, to have represented the Logos as THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS, AS WITH GOD, and as GOD ; as one likewise, “ *in whom the created living Thing,*” or the human soul of our Saviour, “ *and*” even “ *Life and Existence*” themselves, those primogenial principles of Deity, “ *had a birth, and fell into a body, and putting on flesh appeared a man,*” who was therefore man and God in one ; who accordingly “ *showed the greatness of his nature*” by his miracles, was “ *wholly dissolved,*” and then “ *was again DEIFIED, and is GOD,*” even “ *SUCH AS HE WAS, before he was brought down into the body and the flesh and a man.*” And St. John is attested to have declared this, “ *not even as shaded over,* but “ *on the contrary as placed in full view.*” We have thus a testimony to the *plain meaning* of St. John, and to the *evident Godhead* of his Logos, a *Godhead* equally *before* and *after* his death ; most unquestionable in its nature, very early in its age, and peculiarly forcible in its import. St. John, we see, is referred to in a language, that shows him to have been well known to the Grecian contemporaries of Amelius, as a writer, as a foreigner, and as a marked assertor of *Divinity* for his Logos.”

this method of explaining the doctrine of the Trinity. But these, and many other similitudes of the like nature, we find in the writings of some, who consider not what a handle they give to the common enemy. There are, indeed, in most of them, three things, which are said, in different respects, to be one; but we may observe, that all these similitudes, and others of the like nature, brought to illustrate this doctrine, lead us to think of the whole divided into those parts, of which they consist, whereof they take notice of the number three; or they speak of three properties of the same thing; and if their wit and fancy saw it needful to speak of more than three, the same method of illustrating would serve their purpose, as much as it does the end for which they bring it. Therefore I would conclude this head, by using the words of God to Job, *Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?* Job xxxviii. 2. Who are these, that, by pretending to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity by similitudes, do that, which, though very foreign to their design, tends to pervert it?

6. We shall now consider what general rules may be observed for our understanding those scriptures, on which our faith, with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, is founded; and since it is a doctrine of pure revelation, as has been before observed, we must keep close to scripture, even to the words thereof, where they are express and distinct, as to this matter; and to consequences deduced from it, so far as they are just, and self-evident; and, at the same time, while we are sensible that we cannot comprehend this mystery, we must take care that we pretend not to be wise above what is revealed. Now there are some rules, which may be of use to us, in our enquiries into the sense of scripture concerning this doctrine; as,

(1.) We must not suppose that the words of scripture, relating thereunto, are to be taken in a sense, which can be known by none but criticks, as though it were designed only for them to understand; or that the unlearned part of the world should be left in the dark, or led astray, as to several things contained in this important doctrine. Thus we are not to suppose that we are at a loss as to the proper sense of the word God; or could hardly know how to direct our faith and worship, founded thereon, without the help of criticism; or, for want of being acquainted with some distinctions, concerning one that may be called God by nature, or the supreme God, and others who may be called gods by office, or subordinate gods, we should be led to ascribe divine honour where it is not due; or else we must be able to distinguish also concerning worship, and, instead of honouring the Son as we honour the Father, must give him an inferior kind of divine worship, short of what is due to the Father. This we have no scripture warrant for; neither are we

led by the scriptures to have any notion of a middle being between God and the creature, or one that is not properly God, so as the Father is, and yet more than a creature, as though there were a medium between finite and infinite; neither are we led, by scripture, to conceive of any being, that has an eternal duration, whose eternity is supposed to be before time, and yet not the same with the eternal duration of the Father. These things we shall have occasion to mention in their proper place, and therefore need make no farther use of them at present, but only to observe, from hence, how intelligible the scripture would be in what relates to this doctrine, if the words thereof had not a plain and determinate sense; but we must make use of these methods of reasoning, if we would arrive to the meaning thereof.

(2.) If some divine perfections are attributed in scripture to the Son and Spirit, all the perfections of the divine nature, may, by a just consequence from thence, be proved to belong to them, by reason of the simplicity and unity thereof: therefore, if we can prove, from scripture, that they have some perfections ascribed to them, which, I hope, it will not be a difficult matter to do, we are not to suppose that our argument is defective, or that the doctrine of the Trinity is not sufficiently maintained, if we cannot produce a scripture to prove every perfection of the divine nature to be ascribed to them.

(3.) When any thing is mentioned in scripture, concerning our Saviour, or the Holy Spirit, which argues an inferiority to the Father, this is to be understood consistently with other scriptures, which speak of their having the same divine nature; since scripture does not, in the least, contradict itself; and how this may be done, will be farther considered under a following head.

(4.) If we have sufficient arguments to convince us of the truth of this doctrine, our faith ought not to be shaken, though we cannot fully understand the sense of some scriptures, which are brought to support the contrary; not that we are to suppose that the scripture gives countenance to two opposite doctrines: but a person may be fully satisfied concerning the sense of those scriptures that contain the doctrine of the Trinity, and yet not be supposed perfectly to understand the meaning of every word or phrase used in scripture, or of some particular texts, which are sometimes brought to support the contrary doctrine; so that objections may be brought, which he is not able readily to reply to. Shall he therefore deny the truth, because he cannot remove all the difficulties that seem to lie in the way of it? That would be to part with it at too easy a rate, which, when he has done, he will find greater difficulties attending the contrary scheme of doctrine. Do they object, that we believe things contrary to reason, because we assert the incomprehen-

sibleness of divine mysteries? or that we are Tritheists, because we believe that there are three Persons in the Godhead, and cannot exactly determine the difference between divine and human personality: We could, on the other hand, point at some difficulties, that they cannot easily surmount. What shall we think of the head of giving divine worship to our Saviour, when, at the same time, they deny him to have those perfections, that denominate him God in the same sense as the Father is so called? The Socinians found it very difficult, when the matter was disputed among themselves, to reconcile their practice with their sentiments, when they worshipped him, whose Deity they denied. And the Arians will find that this objection equally affects their scheme; and it will be no less difficult for them to reconcile Christ's character, as Redeemer, Governor of the world, Judge of quick and dead, with their low ideas of him, when denying his proper Deity. These things we only mention occasionally at present, that it may not be thought that the doctrine of the Trinity is exposed to greater difficulties than the contrary doctrine, to the end that they who are not furnished with all those qualifications, which are necessary for its defence, may not reckon those arguments, by which they have been convinced of the truth thereof, less valid, because they are not able, at present, to answer all the objections that may be brought against them.

(5.) The weight of several arguments, taken from scripture, to prove this doctrine, is to be considered, as well as the arguments themselves; we do not pretend that every one of them is equally conclusive; there are some, which are oftentimes brought to support it, which we can lay no great stress upon, and therefore shall omit to mention them, among other arguments brought to that purpose, lest we should give occasion to the adversary to insult, or conclude that we take any thing for an argument that has been brought as such to prove this doctrine. Therefore we will not pretend to prove, or peremptorily to determine, that the doctrine of the Trinity is contained in those words of the Psalmist, Psal. xxxiii. 6. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the Hosts of them by the breath of his mouth.* Nor will we pretend to prove this doctrine from the threefold repetition of the word Jehovah, in the form of benediction to be used by the high priest, Numb. vi. 24, 25, 26. *The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.* Nor do we lay any stress on the three-fold repetition of the word *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts*, Isa. vi. 3. though we shall shew, in its proper place, that there are several things in this chapter, which prove this doctrine. However, if at

any time, together with arguments that are more conclusive, we bring some that are less so; this use may be made of it, to shew how the scripture way of speaking is consistent therewith in those places that do not so directly prove it. This we thought proper to mention, because it is a very common thing for those, who cannot answer the most weighty arguments that are brought to support a doctrine, to bend their greatest force against those which have the least strength; and then to triumph, as though they had gained the victory, when they have only done it in what respects that which is less material.

II. We shall now consider in what sense we are to understand the words *Trinity* and *Persons* in the Godhead; and in what respect the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are said to be one. It is true, the word *Trinity* is not to be found in scripture, but what we understand by it is plainly contained therein; therefore we use the word, as agreeable thereunto: thus we read of the *three that bear record in heaven, viz. the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and that these three are one*, 1 John v. 7. These three here mentioned are Persons, because they are described by personal characters; and we shall take occasion elsewhere, when we prove the Deity of the Son and Spirit, to consider their being one, that is, having the same divine nature, which we shall therefore wave at present, being only considering the sense of words commonly used by us in treating of this doctrine. All contending parties, however they have explained the word *Trinity*, according to their different ways of thinking, have notwithstanding, in compliance with custom, used the word, and so far explained it, as that we might understand that they intend hereby three, who are, in some respect one, though some have not cared to use the word *Person*; or if they have, it is without the most known and proper idea contained in it. Thus the Sabellians, whenever they use the word, intend nothing by it, but three relations, which may be attributed to the same Person; as when the same Person may be called a father, a son, and a brother, in different respects; or as when he that, at one time, sustains the person of a judge, may, at another time, sustain that of an advocate: this is what some call a Trinity of names; and they might as well have declined to use the words altogether, as to explain them in this sense.

Again, the Arians use the word *Person*; but these have run into another extreme, inasmuch as that, whilst they avoid Sabellianism, they would lay themselves open to the charge of Tritheism, did they not deny the proper Deity of the Son and Spirit; for they suppose that every distinct Person is a distinct being, agreeable to the sense of personality, when applied to men; but this, as has been before considered, is to be abstract-

ed from the idea of personality, when applied to the Persons in the Godhead. These also understand the oneness of these divine Persons, in a sense agreeable to their own scheme, and different from ours, and therefore they speak of them as one in will, consent, or design, in which respect God and the creature may be said to be one: accordingly Arius, and his adherents, in the council at Nice, refused to allow that the divine persons were ὁμοουσιος consubstantial, and, with a great many evasions and subterfuges, attempted to conceal their sentiments: all that they could be brought to own was, that the Son was ὁμοιος, or ὁμοιουσιος, which amounts to no more than this, that whatever likeness there may be, in some respects, yet he has not the same proper divine nature with the Father and Holy Ghost.

Which leads us to consider the sense in which it is generally used by those who defend what we think to be the scripture-doctrine of the Trinity. There are some, it is true, both among ancient and modern writers, that attempt to explain what they mean by the word *Person*, who are so unhappy as to leave the sense thereof more dark than they found it, when they have given a definition thereof, agreeable to what is used by metaphysicians and schoolmen, to this effect, that it is a *suppositum*, endowed with reason; or that it is one entire, individual, incommunicable, rational subsistence: and when they define Personality, some tell us, that it is a positive mode of a being terminating and compleating its substantial nature, and giving incommunicability to it, which words need to be explained more than the thing defined thereby. And here I cannot but take notice of that warm debate which there was between the Greek and Latin church about the words *Hypostasis* and *Persona*; the Latin, concluding that the word *Hypostasis* signified substance or essence, thought, that to assert that there were three divine *Hypostases*, was to say that there were three Gods: On the other hand, the Greek church thought that the word *Person* did not sufficiently guard against the Sabellian notion of the same individual being sustaining three relations; whereupon each part of the church was ready to brand the other with heresy, till by a free and mutual conference, in a synod at Alexandria, A. D. 362. they made it appear, that it was but a mere contention about the grammatical sense of a word; and then it was allowed, by men of temper on both sides, that either of the two words might be indifferently used.* But what signifies the use of them, when perplexed with the scholastic explications thereof? This has given occasion to some, whose sentiments have been very remote as to the doctrine of the Trinity, to express themselves with some dislike; on the one hand, the Socinians, and some among the Remonstrants, who made very great

* Vid. Forbes. *Instruct. Hist. Theol. Lib. I. cap. 2. §. 3.*

advances toward their scheme, viz. Curcellæus, Episcopius, and others,† have complained of clouding this doctrine with hard words; and the complaint is not altogether groundless, though it may be their design herein was to substitute such words in the room of them, as would make the remedy worse than the disease. On the other hand, some, who have embraced the doctrine of the Trinity, would not have liked its advocates the worse, had they chose to have defended it in a more plain intelligible manner. Thus Calvin himself wishes, that some words, which are so warmly opposed and defended on each side, were altogether laid aside, and buried, provided that such might be retained as express our faith in the doctrine of the Father, Son, and Spirit, being the one God, but distinguished by their personal properties.‡ And this is that plain sense of the word, which I shall make use of, in what I shall farther attempt to lay down in the defence thereof. And accordingly,

1. We never call any thing a person that is not endowed with understanding and will; and therefore the most glorious inanimate creatures, either in heaven or earth, whatever excellencies they have, or how useful soever they are to the world, they are not persons. Thus, when the sun is described as though it were a person, and is compared to a *bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race*, Psal. xix. 5. the words are never understood in any other but a metaphorical sense; so Behemoth and the Leviathan, mentioned in Job, being no other than brute creatures, are described with personal characters, in the same figurative way of speaking; therefore we suppose a person to have an understanding and will.

2. Whenever *I, thou, or he*, are applied to such a subject, they always connote a person; *I*, a person speaking; *thou*, a person spoken to; and *he*, or *him*, a person spoken of; and when such modes of speaking are sometimes applied to things that are destitute of reason, or to any moral virtues or principles of acting, which, from the nature of the thing, cannot be denominated persons, such expressions are very easily understood in a figurative sense, which may without any difficulty be distinguished from the proper one, whereby those who are so described are denominated persons.

There are some characters which always denote persons, and some works performed which are properly personal, which can be performed by none but persons. Thus the character of a father, or a son; so a Creator, a Redeemer, a benefactor, a Mediator, an advocate, a surety, a judge, a lord, a law-giver, and many others of the like nature, are all of them personal

† Vid. Curcell in *Quatvern. Dissert. de Voc. Trinit. personæ* &c. ; Vid. *Cels. Institut. Lib. I. cap. 13. §. 5.*

characters. So that whoever acts with design, and has such-like characters attributed to him, according to the proper acceptance of the word, him we call a person; and these characters we shall endeavour to apply to the Persons in the Godhead, to prove their distinct personality.

But since we are at present only considering the acceptance of words, we shall briefly observe the difference between a divine and a human person, when some personal properties, characters, or works, are attributed to each of them. And,

(1.) Human persons are separated one from the other: thus, for instance, Peter, James, and John, were three persons, but they were separated one from the other; whereas the Persons in the Godhead, however distinguished by their characters and properties, are never separated, as having the same divine essence or nature. As for human persons, one of them might have had a being and personality, had the other never existed, because it exists by the will of God; but the divine persons have a necessary existence and personality, as being, in all respects, independent, so that as they could not but be God, they could not but be divine Persons; the personality of the Son and Spirit are equally independent with that of the Father, and as much independent as their being and divine perfections.

(2.) Human persons have only the same kind of nature, which is generally called a common specific nature, but not the same individual nature with another person; so that though every man has a nature like that of the rest of mankind, yet the human nature, as attributed to one person, is not the same individual human nature that is attributed to another, for then the power and understanding, or the ideas that there are in one man, would be the same individual power and ideas, that are in another, which they are not. Whereas, when we speak of the Persons in the Godhead, as having the divine nature and perfections, we say that this nature is the same individual nature in all of them, though the persons are distinct, otherwise the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, could not be said to be truly and properly God, and to have the same understanding, will, and other perfections of the divine nature.

(3.) When we speak of human persons, we say, that as many persons as there are, so many beings there are; every human person has its own proper being, distinct from all other persons or beings; but we do not say so with respect to the divine Persons, for the divine Being is but one, and therefore the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the very same; which is what we understand when we say, that though there are three Persons in the Godhead, yet they are the same in substance, or the one only living and true God.

This leads us to consider in what respect the Father, Son,

and Holy Ghost, are said to be one; by which we mean, that the Son and Holy Ghost have all the perfections of the divine nature, in the same sense as the Father has; to say less than this, is to assert no more than what our adversaries will allow; for they will not deny them perfections, nor would they be thought to deny them to have divine perfections; yea, many of them will not stick to say, that they are truly and properly God; by which they mean, that whatever deity is attributed to them in scripture, by the appointment of the Father, that is, whatever divine authority they have, this properly belongs to them: but, I think, they will none of them allow that they have the divine nature in the same sense in which the Father is said to have it. This is what we shall endeavour to prove; and more need not be said concerning them, in order to establish that supreme worship which is due to them, as well as the Father; and, in order hereto, we shall consider the force of those arguments contained in one of these answers; and, together with them, the sense of that scripture, John x. 30. in which our Saviour says, *I and my Father are one*; as also that other scripture, 1 John v. 7. that *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, who bear record in heaven, are one*; the consideration whereof we shall reserve to a following head.

And inasmuch as they are said to be equal in power and glory, we may observe, that there are two expressions, which we often use, to set forth the deity of the Son and Spirit; sometimes we say they are God, equal with the Father; at other times, that they have the same essential perfections. To which, it may be, some will reply, that if they are equal, they cannot be the same; or, on the other hand, if they are the same, they cannot be equal. For the understanding what we mean by such-like expressions, let it be observed, that when we consider them as having the divine essence, or any of the perfections thereof, we do not chuse to describe them as equal, but the same; we do not say that the wisdom, power, holiness, &c. of the Son and Spirit are equal to the same perfections, as ascribed to the Father: but when we speak of them as distinct Persons, then we consider them as equal: the essential glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the same; but their personal glory is equal; and in this sense we would be understood, when we say the Son and Holy Ghost are each of them God, or divine Persons, equal with the Father.(a)

(a) "The doctrine of a plurality appears in the very first words of inspiration. God would not record the history of *creation*, without informing the Church that the character of Creator was by no means to be confined to one person. It has often been observed, that this is taught in the words rendered *God created*, where we have a noun in the plural joined with a verb in the singular number, plainly

III. We shall prove that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are distinct persons in the Godhead, by applying what has been

expressing a plurality in unity. That this is the genuine sense of the passage appears from the work ascribed, in the next verse, to the Spirit of God, who is said to have "moved on the face of the waters." By modern Jews, whom some Christians have followed, this expression has been rendered, "a wind of God," or "a mighty wind." But the firmament, or expanse, was not created till the second day. This includes the atmosphere which surrounds our earth: for the fowl is said to "fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." Now, it cannot reasonably be supposed that there could be a mighty wind, or any wind at all, before the existence of an atmosphere.

If we turn to the gospel-history, we find a third person mentioned as engaged in the work of creation. "All things were made by" that Word, who "in the beginning existed with God."

This plurality appears still more expressly, when the sacred historian gives an account of the creation of man: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." But it is a plurality in unity: "So God created man in his own image." It has been justly observed, that to this the language of Elihu, and of the royal Preacher, agrees: "None saith, Where is God my Makers;" and, "Remember now thy Creators." Nothing can be more absurd than the various attempts which have been made to shew, that this language may be otherwise understood. God could never speak in this manner to angels, or to any second causes. For to whomsoever these words were addressed, they must have been co-operators with God in this divine work. They must have assisted him in making man. Philo the Jew expressly says that these words, *Let us make*, declare a plurality. That the Jewish writers in general view this language as including a mystery, not to be made known to the vulgar, and indeed studiously concealed by them, from their abhorrence of Christianity, has been elsewhere demonstrated. It is therefore unnecessary to enlarge here. I shall only add, that the modern Jews are so fully convinced that the doctrine of a plurality is contained in these words, as to wish to alter the reading. Instead of *Let us make man*, they incline to read, *Let man be made*; although the Samaritan text, the Septuagint, the Talmudists, and all their translations, whether ancient or modern, express the language in the same manner with our version.

The same important doctrine is introduced in the history of the *Fall*. That three-one God, who said, "Let us make man after our image," in the same character laments the loss of this image. "Jehovan God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us;" or, as some read the passage, "Behold the man, who was as one of us!" Here Philo observes; "These words, *as one of us*, are not put for one, but for more than one." The learned Allix has remarked that the ancient Jewish writers maintain, that God "speaks not this to the angels, who had no common likeness to the unity or essence of God, but to Him who was the celestial Adam, who is one with God." To whom this character applies, we learn from the Targum of Jonathan on the place, who here speaks of "the only begotten in heaven."

This doctrine is also taught in the history of the *Confusion of Tongues*. "Jehovan said,—Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language." Here the Jews repeat their contemptible subterfuge, that God addresses his "house of judgment," that is, created angels. For it is an established doctrine with them, that "God does nothing without previously consulting with his family above." But it has justly been observed, that these words, if spoken to angels, would imply that God were one of them, or that he descended in the same manner with them, by a real change of place. Besides, in a moment to change one language into many, and to infuse these into the minds of men, who were utter strangers to them before, so that they should entirely forget their former modes of speech, is a work that far surpasses the power of angels, and can be accomplished by no being but that God, with whom to will and to do is the same.

It must be evident to every one, who reads the history of the Old Testament with any degree of attention, that an *Angel* is often introduced as speaking the

but now observed, by which any one may, by our common mode of speaking, be denominated a person; and to this we

language, performing the works, and accepting the worship, which exclusively belong to the Supreme Being. In other words, one, who is undoubtedly a divine person, often appears in a delegated character. Now, while it was the will of God in this manner constantly to remind his Church of the economy of redemption, he at the same time taught her a distinction of persons in the divine essence. It was this Angel who appeared to Abraham on different occasions, to Hagar, to Jacob, to Moses, to Joshua, to the Israelites at Bochim, to Gideon, to Manoah and his wife. But I enter not into a particular consideration of these appearances, having endeavoured to illustrate the character of this divine Messenger in another place. There it has also been proved, that the law was given to the Israelites at Mount Sinai by the second person of the adorable Trinity, in the character of the Angel of *JEHOVAH*. It deserves particular attention, that at the very time that the God of Israel gave his people a law, by which they were to be distinguished from all the idolatrous nations around, one special design of which was to preserve the doctrine of the divine unity;—at the very time that he pronounced that leading precept, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me;” he, according to the Sacred History, viewed in its connexion, sustained the character of an Angel, and was pleased to communicate the knowledge of this fact to his people. How can these apparent contradictions be reconciled, but by admitting that it was the will of God to reveal himself to his church, as at the same time possessing essential unity and personal plurality?

The more ancient Jewish writers declare, that two persons were engaged in promulgating the law. They say; “The two first precepts were spoken by the Supreme Spirit, but he spoke all the rest by his Glory, who is called *El Shaddai*, known to the fathers; by whom the prophets foretold future events; who is called *Jah*: in whom the Name of God is; the Beloved of God who dwelt in the temple; and the Mouth of the LORD; and the Face of the LORD; and the Rock; and that Goodness which Moses saw, when he could not see God.” Elsewhere they call him “the *Schechinah*, by whom we draw near to God, and presented our supplications to him; who is that Angel in whom the name of God is, who is himself called God and *JEHOVAH*.” The change of person, in the promulgation of the law, asserted by these writers, is evidently a mere fancy. But their language deserves attention; as it shews how fully they were convinced of the doctrine of a plurality in unity, when they introduced it in this manner.

It has been universally admitted by the friends of revelation, that the great end which God hath in view in the work of *Redemption* is the display of his own adorable perfections. But there is doubtless another, although less attended to, no wise incompatible with this, nay, itself an eminent branch of the supreme end. This is the manifestation of the mystery of the Trinity, and of the mode of subsistence peculiar to each person in the divine essence. This must undoubtedly be viewed as included in the one great design of the all-wise God in our redemption; and it is evident that he hath still kept it in eye, in the revelation given to the Church, and especially in the history of that work, as it is recorded in the gospels. We may trace the doctrine of a Trinity in the accounts given of the old creation; but it appears with far superior evidence in the history of the new. This corresponds to the superior greatness of the work, and to the brighter and more extensive display of divine perfection.

Such was the state of the Church, as to admit of a more full manifestation of this mystery. It was more obscurely revealed to the patriarchs, and under the Mosaic economy. This was analogous to the general character of the revelation then made; as well as to the state of the Church, yet in her infancy, and exposed to constant temptations to polytheism, from the situation of all the surrounding nations. But “when the fulness of the time was come,” that the gospel should be preached to every creature, and the kingdom of Satan full as lightning from heaven, in the overthrow of heathen darkness; there were no such impediments to the more clear revelation of this mysterious doctrine. The

shall add something concerning those personal properties, mentioned in one of the answers we are explaining, with respect to

rest of the divine conduct indeed rendered this necessary. God had now "sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." The ends of this mission could not be accomplished, without a full revelation of the character of this illustrious Messenger. He could not otherwise receive that homage from the Church, which he merited as her Redeemer, and which was necessary, in order to her salvation. Now, his character, as essentially the Son of God, and at the same time a divine Messenger, could not be properly unfolded, without a declaration both of the paternity of the First Person, and of that wonderful dispensation, according to which the Second, although equal in power and glory, voluntarily "emptied himself." Nor could the unity of the work of redemption, as pervading all the dispensations given to the Church, and the beautiful harmony of the law and the gospel, be otherwise displayed. Without a full revelation of this mystery, how could it have been known that he, who appeared in the end of ages as sent of God, was the very same person who had formerly led the Church, as the Angel of his face; that He, who now brought spiritual redemption to his folk, was no other than that Angel-Redeemer, who had already so frequently delivered them from temporal calamities?

If this mystery be unknown or disbelieved, there can be no faith in Christ as the Mediator between God and men. For he who believes not that the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son, as to identity of essence, while at the same time there is a distinction of persons, denies the voluntary subjection of the Son to the Father in the eternal covenant, and thus the whole foundation of his merit and of our salvation. In relation to the work of our redemption, and in the history given of it, are revealed various internal actings of the divine persons towards each other, as well as those of an external nature. The Father appoints, gives, sends, prepares a human nature for his Son; the Son undertakes, gives himself, comes, assumes this nature.

From the history given of the conception of Christ, we find that three divine persons were engaged in the creation of this "new thing in the earth." The Father appears in the character of "the Highest;" the Third Person, as "the Holy Ghost," and "the Power of the Highest;" and the Second, as "the Son of God." When this wonderful Person, the incarnate Word, was to be manifested to Israel at his baptism, each divine Person concurred in the work. The Father testified his presence and approbation by a voice from the excellent glory, announcing Jesus as his beloved Son; and the Holy Ghost descended like a dove, and rested on him. The history of his death, viewed in its connexion, affords a proof of a similar kind. As "it pleased JEHOVAH," in the person of the Father, sustaining the character of Judge, to bruise the Son as our Surety; and as he, having power over his own life, commended his spirit into the hands of his Father, thus presenting unto him a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour; he did so "through the Eternal Spirit." The same thing appears from the resurrection of Jesus. He was "powerfully declared to be the Son of God in his resurrection from the dead;" for he had "power to take again" that which no one could take from him. This work is frequently ascribed to God, where the term evidently denotes the First Person. "God hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." As he was "put to death in the flesh, he was quickened by the Spirit," by that Spirit of holiness, "by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." Nor is this less evident from the account given of the effusion of the Spirit. This is undoubtedly a divine work; and it is described as belonging to each adorable Person. Jesus had foretold that the Comforter should come, that himself should send him, and that he should at the same time be sent by the Father. Accordingly, from the account given of this wonderful event by the apostle Peter, which is left on record for the instruction of the Church, we find that each divine Person was engaged in accomplishing it;

the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost. And,

“Jesus, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.”

It is undeniable, that one special end, which Christ had in view in his miraculous works, was to confirm his doctrine with respect to his equality with the Father. When he gave thanks at the tomb of Lazarus, before raising him from the dead, it was because of the people who stood by, that they might believe that the Father had sent him; and sent him as a Messenger invested with divine power, because essentially possessing divine perfection. For he had previously said to his disciples: “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby;” and taught Martha, that if she “would believe, she would see the glory of God,” in seeing the manifestation of that power which essentially belonged to himself, as “the Resurrection and the Life.” When he cured the man sick of the palsy, it was in order to prove that he had “power on earth to forgive sin;” while he admitted the principle held by the scribes, that no one could forgive sins but God only. On different occasions he refers to his miraculous works, as irrefragable evidences of his having the same essence with the Father; and of the mutual inexistence, as some have expressed it, of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Father, in respect of this essential unity, while there is at the same time a real distinction of persons. When his enemies accused him of blasphemy, because he said, “I am the Son of God,” “making himself God;” he replied, “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.” To Philip, when desiring to see the Father, he said, “Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very work’s sake.” The Evangelist John, when referring to the signs recorded in the preceding history, subjoins this declaration: “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God.” That he appropriates this character to Jesus, as expressive of supreme deity, is evident from the uniform tenor of the gospel which bears his name.

The doctrine of the Trinity is peculiarly elucidated by the history of redemption; as it does not merely exhibit all the adorable Persons as engaged in this work, but ascribes a peculiar operation to each Person. The contrivance of our redemption is ascribed to the Father; the purchase of it to the Son; and the effectual application of this purchased redemption to the Holy Spirit. The Father sends his Son as our Surety; the Son cheerfully comes in this character; and the Holy Spirit is sent by both. The purpose of election is more immediately ascribed to the Father; the objects of his love are all chosen in Christ; and they, who were thus chosen from eternity, are in time chosen out of the world, and separated for himself, by the renewing and sanctifying work of the Spirit.

Nor is this all. The peculiar operation of each Person, in the work of our salvation, is perfectly analogous to the order of subsistence in the Holy Trinity; and thus beautifully illustrates the mutual relations of the divine Persons. All the external works of God, indeed, are common to each Person; as the divine nature is the same indivisible principle of operation. Yet these works are distinctly ascribed to the three Persons, because each Person operates according to the order of subsistence. In the old creation, the Father called all things into being by his co-essential Word, communicating life immediately by the Spirit, as exercising a generating power on the unformed mass. When God created man, the First Person formed him by the Second, as his essential Image, giving him life, both natural and moral, by the Third, as “the Spirit of life.” Yet this implies no inferiority, or mere instrumentality, in any of the adorable Persons; but only the most perfect order and harmony. The case is the same in the new creation. It seems most consistent with divine wisdom, that he who is first in the order of subsistence should rather *send* than be *sent*; that the Son, who is “the image of the invisible God,” should procure the restoration of that blessed image lost by sin; and that he, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, should be sent by both.

1. To prove the personality of the Son. If this be reckoned needless, inasmuch as the Arians and Socinians never yet called it in question, we own that it is not necessary, when we dispute with them, to prove it: but inasmuch as the Sabellians deny it, as a late writer* has done, who plainly gives in to that scheme, and concludes the Son of God to be no other than the eternal reason of God; and so he renders that text, John i. 1. *In the beginning was the word, that is, reason, and by him, that is, by it, were all things made;* and when it is objected, that this mode of speaking signifies nothing more than a quality in God, the only answer he gives to it, is, that it signifies no more a quality, than if we should translate it, *The word*, as it is generally done: I say, if persons, whether they pretend to be Sabellians or no, express themselves in such a manner, it is certainly necessary for us to prove the personality of the Son.

* See *Le Clerc's Supplement to Dr. Hammond on the New Testament, preface to John i.*

to quicken those who are spiritually dead. This distinct operation indeed, as it corresponds with the order of subsistence, beautifully harmonizes with the distinguishing character belonging to each Person. He, who is essentially the Father, assumes the character of paternity, in a federal respect, towards those who are orphans and aliens. The only begotten Son of God is sent forth, made under the law, that they may "receive the adoption of sons," and appears as "the first-born among many brethren." The adorable Spirit, "the breath of *JEHOVAH*," breathes on the slain, that they may live; giving them a new heart and a right spirit. He, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, unites the sinner to both.

Is it "life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent?" Hath no one the Father, who "denieth the Son?" Can no one honour the Father, "who honoureth not the Son?" Is it the Spirit alone who quickeneth, and who teacheth us to "know the things that are freely given us of God?" Can no man "say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost?" Is it through Christ that "we have access by one Spirit unto the Father?" Let us bless God for the revelation of the mystery of a Trinity in unity; and especially because he hath revealed it so clearly in the history of our redemption, in relation to that work in which a peculiar operation belongs to each adorable Person, in which the love of a three-one God is so wonderfully displayed, in which we discern so blessed a harmony, not only of divine perfections, but of divine Persons! In all our worship, let us view God according to this revelation, ascribing glory to him "who is, and who was, and who is to come, and to the Seven Spirits which are before his throne, and to Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." Let us earnestly desire communion with this three-one God; with the Father, in his love as the spring of our salvation; with the Son, in all that grace which he hath purchased by his blood; and with the Holy Ghost, in the whole extent of his efficacious operation. In order to this, let us press after union with Christ, that in him we may be united to the Father by that one Spirit who proceeds from both, and who is conferred by both as the Spirit of adoption. Let us cultivate love to the brethren, as members of the same mystical body, desiring to be "one heart and one soul;" that although many, we may be one, and thus be assimilated, in our weak measure, to the blessed Trinity in respect of unity; as Jesus prays in behalf of his Church;—"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us.—I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

It appears, therefore, that the Son is a distinct Person from the Father,

(1.) Inasmuch as we often read, in scripture, of two divine Persons speaking to, or of, one another, the distinguishing personal characters, *I, thou, and he*, being applied to them: thus it is said, Psal. cx. 1. *The Lord, that is the Father, said unto my Lord, namely the Son, sit thou at my right-hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool*: this may be observed throughout the whole Psalm; thus, ver. 3. *Thy people shall be willing*; and ver. 6. *He, meaning the Son, shall judge among the heathen*; and ver. 7. *He shall drink of the brook in the way*; so Psal. xlv. 2. speaking of the Son, *Thou art fairer than the children of men*; and ver. 6. *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*. The places of scripture, which have such modes of speaking concerning the Son, are almost innumerable; and therefore we proceed to consider,

(2.) Other personal characters given him; thus, when he is called the Son of God, whatever we are to understand by that relation or character, of which more under a following head, it certainly denotes him a Person distinct from the Father; so does his being sent into the world by the Father, which expression is frequently used in the New Testament; now a quality, relation or property, cannot be said to be sent as the Son is. So when he is described as a Redeemer, a Mediator, a Surety, a Creator; and when he is styled, by the prophet, *the everlasting Father*; and often described as a prophet, priest, or king; or *Lord of all*, or the *Prince of peace*, or the *Prince of the kings of the earth*; all these characters sufficiently prove his personality; and all those works which he performs, as sustaining these relations or characters, are properly personal; and some of them are never ascribed to any other person. Thus the Father, or Holy Ghost, are never said to assume the human nature, or to become sureties for the salvation of men, or to execute mediatorial offices, subservient thereunto; from all which it evidently appears, that the Son is a distinct Person: that he is a divine Person, will be proved under a following head: we shall therefore proceed,

2. To prove the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost. This is denied, not only by the Sabellians, but by some of the Socinians; yea, even by Socinus himself; who describes the Holy Ghost as the power of God, intending hereby, as his mode of speaking seems to denote, the energy of the divine nature, or that whereby the Father, who is the only one, to whom, according to him, the divine nature is attributed, produces those effects which require infinite power; so that they call the Spirit the power of God essentially considered; these set aside all those proofs, that may be produced from scripture, to evince

his personality, which are so plain and evident, that many of them have dissented from Socinus herein, and owned the Spirit to be a person. Accordingly some of them have described him as the chief of created spirits, or the head of the angels, because they deny his divine nature. Thus a bold writer expresses himself; “I believe that there is one principal minister of God and Christ, peculiarly sent from heaven, to sanctify the church, who, by reason of his eminency and intimacy with God, is singled out of the number of other heavenly ministers, or angels, and comprised in the holy Trinity, being the third person thereof; and that this minister of God and Christ is the Holy Spirit.†”

Now we shall prove the personality of the Holy Ghost, by considering some personal characters ascribed to, and works performed by him. Thus there are several such characters, by which he is denominated a person; particularly when he is called a Sanctifier, a Reprover, a Witness, a Comforter, it evidently appears from hence that he is a person: thus when it is said, in John xvi. 8. that *when he, to wit, the Comforter is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment; and also, that he will guide you into all truth; he shall shew you things to come, &c.* And in John xiv. 16, 17. there is the distinct personality of the three persons, and particularly of the Holy Ghost, asserted; *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth; and also in ver. 26. The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.†*

It is certain, that to be said to teach, or to instruct, is a personal character; so it is to speak, or to dictate, to another what he should say: but this he is said to do, as our Saviour says to his disciples, *Whatever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not you that speak, but the Holy Ghost,* Mark xiii. 11.

Moreover, to witness, or testify, is a personal character; especially when the testimony is not merely objective, as when Job calls his wrinkles and his leanness a witness against him, Job xvi. 8. But when there is a formal testimony given, he

† See *Biddle's Confession of Faith, touching the holy Trinity, Article VI.*

‡ Some have thought, that *ὁτις* being of the masculine gender, because it refers immediately to *πνεῦμα*, which is of the neuter, implies, that the Spirit is taken personally, which is the reason of this grammatical construction; but if it be said that the reason why it is masculine is, because it agrees with *περὶ αὐτοῦ*, it, notwithstanding, proves the Personality of the Holy Ghost, since a Comforter is a personal character. The same thing is observed in the grammatical construction of that scripture, *Eph. i. 13, 14. speaking concerning the Holy Spirit of promise, το πνεῦμα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας; it is said, ὡς ἐνν ἀπαλάω, which denotes the personal character of the Spirit, otherwise it would have been ὡ ἐνν ἀπαλάω, unless you suppose ὡς agrees with ἀπαλάω, which seems to be a more strained sense of the grammatical construction than the other, which proves his personality.*

that gives it is, according to our common way of speaking, generally considered as a person; and thus the Holy Ghost is described, Acts v. 32. *We are his witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God has given to them that obey him.* Here the Holy Ghost's being a witness is as much a personal character, as their being witnesses; and, Acts xx. 23. it is said, *The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide me.*

Again, dwelling is a personal character; no one ever supposes that any thing that is in a house dwells there, excepting persons; but the Holy Ghost is said to dwell in believers, John xiv. 17. and alluding hereto, as also connoting his divine personality, it is said, 1 Cor. vi. 19. *Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;* as a house is the dwelling-place of a person, so a temple is the dwelling-place of a divine person.

Again, to send any one is a personal character; but this is attributed to the Holy Ghost, Acts xiii. 4. *The apostles being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed.*

Again, acting with a sovereign will and pleasure is what belongs only to a person; but this is applied to the Holy Ghost, Acts xv. 28. *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.*

Again, prohibiting, or forbidding, a person to act, is a personal character; but this is applied to the Holy Ghost, Acts xvi. 6. *The apostles were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.*

Again, to constitute, or appoint, any one to execute an office is a personal character; but this the Holy Ghost is said to do, Acts xx. 28. he is said to have *made them overseers.* There are several other personal works and characters, which might have been mentioned; but these are, I humbly conceive, sufficient to prove the thing intended, that the Holy Ghost is a person. I have no more than mentioned the scriptures, which contain these personal characters, because I shall have occasion under a following head, to refer to some of them for the proof of his deity. (a)

(a) "THAT the Holy Scriptures make mention of *Three* by way of great eminence and distinction may appear from many passages, out of which I shall only produce some. At the Prediction of the blessed Virgin's conception, which was to be without the concurrence of a man, the divine message is delivered in these words: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; Therefore, also that Holy Thing, that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.* Here are plainly distinguished from each other, the *Holy Ghost*, or *Power* overshadowing; the *Highest*, whose Power that Spirit is; and the *Holy Thing*, or *Person*, who is called the *Son of God*, because born of a mother, impregnated by that Divine Power. At our Blessed Lord's Baptism, the *Spirit of God*, we read, *descended like a dove and rested upon him, and a voice from Heaven declared him to be the Son of God:* Nothing can be plainer than three Personalities in this transaction; the *Father* speaking from Heaven, the *Son* coming out of Jordan, and the *Spirit* descending from above. In the Promise, which our

Object. It will be objected, by those who are favourers of the Sabellian scheme, that the characters which we have laid down,

blessed Saviour makes his disciples, to comfort their hearts against what was coming upon them, *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth; and when the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me,* there are manifestly Acts, and Persons, and capacities, different. The Father, from whom the Spirit proceeds, whom the Son prays, and by whom, at the Son's Request, the Comforter was given: The Son, praying the Father, sending the Comforter from the Father, and testified of by the Spirit so sent: And the Spirit, given by the Father, sent by the Son, testifying of the Son, and, upon the Son's Departure, abiding for ever with the Disciples.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles, to enforce the Doctrine of the resurrection, tells the Romans, *that if the Spirit of him, who raised Jesus from the dead, dwell in them, he that raised Christ from the dead would also quicken their mortal bodies by his Spirit, that dwelled in them;* where he evidently refers to Jesus, the Son of God, raised from the Dead; to the Spirit of God, by which he was raised; and to him that raised Jesus, and at the last great day shall raise all others, in whom his Spirit dwells. The same apostle, to satisfy the Corinthians of the benefits of their conversion, after having enumerated several ranks of sinners, and such were some of you, says he, *but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God, i. e. God the Father.* It cannot be denied that Sanctification and Justification are the gifts of God alone; for none can absolve us from the Guilt and pollution of sin, but he only: But then the Apostle tells the Corinthians, that this benefit they received not only from God the Father, but from the Lord Jesus likewise, and from the Holy Spirit: Analogous to which is that other Passage in the same epistle; *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, (there is the third Person in the Trinity) there are differences of Administration, but the same Lord, (there is the second Person) and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, (or first person in the Trinity) that worketh all in all.* Once more, the same Apostle, in his prayer for the Thessalonians, directs his devotion to the ever-blessed Trinity: *Now God himself, even our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you, and the Lord, (i. e. the Holy Ghost) make you to increase and abound in love one towards another:* For that by the Lord we are here to understand the Holy Ghost, I think is very plain from the next verse; *to the end, that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints;* since he is the Sanctifier, and to establish our hearts in holiness is his proper work and office: And if so, then is there a plain enumeration of the three Persons of the Trinity in this passage.

The great Apostle of the Jews begins his first Epistle general to his dispersed Brethren with a declaration of the same article, when he calls them *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through Sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus;* for there we may observe, that the three Persons are not only expressly named, but their distinct employments, with reference to man's salvation, are particularly specified, while the Father is said to elect, the Spirit to sanctify, and the holy Jesus to shed his blood. The beloved Apostle St. John, in his Salutation to the Churches, *Grace, and Peace from him, which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his Throne, and from Jesus Christ* has given us a distinct enumeration of the three Persons in the Deity, if we will but admit, (as most interpreters have done) that by the Seven Spirits, which was a sacred number among the Jews, that one Person (viz. the Holy Ghost) is to be understood, from whom all that variety of gifts and operations, which were then conspicuous in the Christian Church, did proceed. But however this be, 'tis certain, that the passage in his Epistle of the *Three which bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost,* are as full and plain a Testimony and declaration of this Mystery, as

to prove the personality of the Son, and Holy Ghost, are not sufficient to answer that end; inasmuch as they are oftentimes

can be cited in words; and though some have endeavoured to invalidate the authority of this passage, as not extant in some ancient copies, and seldom appealed to by the first defenders of the catholic faith against the *Arians* and *Macedonians*, yet the contrary to this is most evident. *Tertullian*, *St. Cyprian*, and *Fulgentius* quote it in their writings; *Athanasius* made use of it in the council of *Nice* against *Arius*; and the reason why it was left out in some ancient copies *Socrates* acquaints us with in his *Ecclesiastical* history, when he tells us, "That the *Christian* Church had all along complained, that the Epistle of *St. John* had been corrupted by the first adversaries of the doctrine of Christ's divinity." 'Twas by their artifice therefore that it was omitted; for several learned pens, both of our own and other churches, have made it very manifest, that it was* *originally* in the text, and that the most and ancientest copies always had it.

But we need not be so tenacious of one text, when, besides these already mentioned, and many more that might be produced upon a farther enquiry, the very form of our admission into the Christian covenant is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; the form of our prayers is thus directed, that through the Son we have an access by one Spirit to the Father; and the form of our dismission from them is, every day, with this benediction, *The grace of the Lord Jesus, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore*; as if the Wisdom of God had intended to inculcate this notion of the Trinity, and, in every act of our religious worship, to remind us of the manner of his subsistence.

Thus it appears that there are *Three*, very often occurring in scripture, under the different appellations of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*: and that these three are not *one* and the *same Being*, under different respects and considerations, but *three* real and distinct persons, with a peculiar manner of subsisting, is plain from the very names of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, if we understand them in a proper and natural sense; because these are opposite relations, which can never meet in the same subject: for a *Father* cannot be *Father* to himself, but to his *Son*; nor can a *Son* be *Son* to himself, but to his *Father*; nor can the *Holy Ghost* proceed from himself, or (in this sense) be his own *Spirit*, but the *Spirit* of the *Father*, and *Son*, from whom he proceeds: and therefore the *Father* is not the *Son*, nor the *Holy Spirit*; nor the *Son* the *Father*, or *Holy Spirit*; nor the *Holy Spirit* either *Father* or *Son*. The only question is, whether these names, when spoken of the Trinity have a proper and natural, or only an allusive and metaphorical signification.

The divine nature and perfections indeed, (as they are far exalted above our conception) may be brought down by metaphors, taken from some things, that are analogous in creatures; in which sense we may allow *Father* and *Son* to be metaphorical names, when applied to God: not that God the *Father* is not, in the highest and most perfect sense, a *Father*, and his *Son* a most proper, natural, and genuine *Son*; but because the *divine generation* is so perfect a communication of the divine nature and being from *Father* to *Son*, that *human generations* are but obscure and imperfect images and resemblances of it. The truth is, when any thing is spoken metaphorically of God, the metaphor and image are always in the creatures; the truth, perfection, and reality of all, in God: and if so, then if God be a *Father*, and have a *Son*, an only-begotten *Son*, begotten eternally of himself; though this eternal generation be infinitely above what we can imagine or conceive, yet it is evident, that God the *Father* is more properly and perfectly a *Father*, and God the *Son* more properly and perfectly a *Son*, than any earthly fathers or sons ever were. And if God the *Father* and his *Son* be truly and perfectly *Fa-*

* To confirm this we may add, that if the difference of copies happened by the negligence of transcribers, such a mistake is much more easily made by omitting a clause, than by inserting one, especially when the same words occur twice very near together, which is the present case: and that, without this clause, the next verse is maimed, and hardly good sense, the words, *in earth*, standing disjointed by themselves; whereas the words, *in heaven* (as we now read them) make a clear, strong, and elegant antithesis: and for these reasons, those copies, in which this passage is found, are more likely to be true, than those in which it is wanting — *Troppe's Doctrine of the Trinity*.

applied, in a metaphorical way, to those things which no one supposes to be persons, and therefore that they may be taken

ther and Son, they must be truly and perfectly *distinct* beings; for the Father cannot be the Son whom he *begets*; nor the Son the Father that *begat* him; nor the Holy Ghost either the Father or the Son, from whom he *proceeds*: consequently, they must be distinct, and real, and proper *persons*; for he that *begets*, and he that is *begotten*, and he that *proceeds* from both, cannot be one and the same person.

And as this *difference of relations* makes a manifest distinction between the three persons; so the different *offices and employments*, that are ascribed to them in scripture, is a farther *note of discrimination*. For who sees not, that the work of *creation* of all things at first, and ever since the just, and wise, and merciful *disposal* of them, are attributed to the *Father*; that the great undertaking of our *redemption* is the care and employment of the *Son*; and the business of *enlightening and sanctifying* those, whom the Son redeemeth, the particular province of the *Holy Ghost*? Without supposing them to be three distinct persons, I say, no satisfactory solution can be given, why, in the great work of man's salvation, a distinct office and operation should be proper to each of them; why the Father only should be said to *elect*; the Son only to *have shed and sprinkled his blood*; and the Holy Ghost only to *sanctify* us unto obedience. So far then as a diversity of names, offices, and operations, distinguishes one being from another, there is plainly a distinction of persons subsisting in the Godhead. But this is not all.

Those, who pretend to state * the true notion of a *person* as a term made use of in this argument, tell us, that it is a *being, which has understanding, and is a distinct, entire substance of itself; an individual substance of a rational nature, or a complete intelligent substance, with a peculiar manner of subsistence*: so that there is a *common nature*, which must be joined by a *peculiar manner of subsisting*, to make a person, otherwise it would be a mere *mode*; for we never conceive a *person without the essence in conjunction with it*. And this notion may haply be of use, not only to state the true distinction of the Persons in the Godhead, but to account likewise for some *dubious passages* in the fathers, and reconcile the different parties that contend about them: only we must take care (as I said before) that, when we discourse of the sacred *Trinity*, the word *person* be not conceived in the same sense as among men. The *persons* of men are *distinct* men, as well as distinct persons; but this is no ground for us to affirm, that the *persons* in the divine nature are distinct *Gods*. The distinction of the persons of men is founded in a *separate and divided subsistence*; but this cannot be the foundation of the *distinction* of the *divine persons*, because *separation and division* cannot belong to an *infinite Being*. In a word, three human *persons* are three *men*, because, though they have the same *specific nature*, yet they have not the same *numerical nature*: but the three Persons in the Godhead are not three *Gods*, because they have the same *numerical essence*, which belongs in common to them all: and since it is confessed on all hands, that *nature and subsistence* go to the making up of a *person*, why may not the way of their subsistence be as different as the *human and Divine natures* (one *finite*, and the other *infinite*) are confessed to be? Though therefore in things *created* it is necessary for one single essence to subsist in one single person, and no more; yet this does not at all prove that the same must be necessary in *him*, whose *nature* is wholly different from *theirs*, and, consequently, may differ as much in the *manner* of his subsistence. For 'tis a thing agreeable even to the notions of bare reason to imagine, that the *divine nature* has a way of subsisting very *different* from the subsistence of any *created being*, and consequently, may have one and the same nature diffused into three distinct persons: but *how*, and in what manner *this* is effected; how one substance in the Deity is

* A late learned author has given us this definition of a *single person*. "That it is an intelligent agent, having the distinctive characters of *I, thou, and he*, and not divided or distinguished into more intelligent agents, capable of the same characters." [*Waterland's second Defence*,] and thereupon he thus argues in another place. "Our ideas of person are plainly taken from our conceptions of human persons, and from them transferred to other subjects, though they do not exactly answer in every circumstance. Properly speaking, *he* and *him*, are no more applicable to a divine person, than *she* or *her*;" but we have no third way of denoting a person, and so, of the two, we choose the best, and custom familiarizes it.—*His Sermons at Lady Mary's Lectures*.

in this sense, when applied to the Son and Spirit. To support this objection, they produce several instances out of the book of Job, and some other parts of scripture, where things are described with personal characters, which are not really persons. Thus Job xxxix. 11, 12. speaking concerning the unicorn, it is said; *Wilt thou trust him? Wilt thou leave thy labour to him? Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?* So concerning the horse, it is said, as though he acted with design, as an intelligent creature, ver. 21. *Ec. He goeth on to meet the armed men; he mocketh at fear; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet; he saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha!* And concerning the eagle, ver. 28. *She dwelleth in the rock.* And concerning the leviathan, chap. xli. 3. *Ec. Will he make many supplications to thee? Will he speak soft words unto thee? Will he make a covenant with*

communicated to more, and becomes theirs; how of one and the same essence, there can be three persons numerically different; this is the difficulty, and what made the holy father (writing upon the argument) confess, "That the mystery of the Trinity is immense and incomprehensible, beyond the expression of words, or reach of sense; that it blinds our sight, and exceeds the capacity of our understanding: I understand it not, says he; nevertheless I will comfort myself in this, that angels are ignorant of it, nor do ages apprehend it; that neither the apostles enquired after it, nor the Son himself has thought fit to declare it."

The only valid objection (and to which all others are reducible) against these personalities, so often occurring in scripture, is taken from the simplicity of the divine nature, which, in the opinion of some, will not admit of any distinction. But though the simplicity of God excludes all mixture, i. e. all composition of things heterogeneous in the Godhead, (there being nothing in God but what is God) yet, notwithstanding this, there may be a distinction of hypostases in the Godhead, provided they are homogeneous, and of the same nature. Nay, the simplicity of the divine nature, if rightly considered, is so far from excluding, that it necessarily infers a distinction of hypostases in the Godhead: for, since the simplicity of the Godhead consists chiefly in this, that God is a pure eternal Mind, free from the mixture of all kind of matter whatever; an eternal Mind must needs have in it, from all eternity, a notion or conception of itself, which the schools call *verbum mentis*; nor can it, at any time, be conceived without it. Now this word cannot be in God, what it is in us, a transient vanishing accident; for then the divine nature would be compounded of substance and accident, which would be repugnant to its simplicity; and therefore must be a substantial subsisting word, and though not divided, yet distinct from the eternal Mind, from whence it proceeds. This is no novel subtlety of the schools, but a notion, that* runs through all the Fathers of the first ages, and is not destitute of a sufficient foundation in scripture. It proves indeed only two Persons in the Godhead, not a Trinity; but then it proves, that a distinction of persons in the Godhead is very consistent with its simplicity; nay, that from the true nature of the simplicity of the Godhead, such a distinction necessarily follows; and if there is a distinction of two, there may be of three; and that there is of three, the full evidence of scripture (as I have already shewn) abundantly assures us."

STACKHOUSE.

* It has, with good reason, been supposed by the *Catholick* writers, that the design of the word *Abg* was to intimate, that the relation of Father and Son bears some resemblance and analogy to that of thought, viz. that as thought is co-eval with the mind, so the Son is co-eval with the Father; and that as thought is closely united to, proceeds from, and yet remains in the mind, so also may we understand that the Son is in the bosom of the Father, proceeding from him, and yet never divided or separate, but remaining in him and with him.—*Waterland's Sermons on a dy Boyer's Lectures.*

thee? He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. Darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of the spear. And ver. 34. He beholdeth all high things; he is a king over all the children of pride. There are many other personal characters given to brute creatures, which are taken in a metaphorical sense; and sometimes they are applied to inanimate creatures. Thus Job xxxviii. 28, &c. *Hath the rain a father? and who hath begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it? Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season, or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?* By which nothing is intended but the signs in the Zodiack, or some of the constellations, together with the particular stars of which they consist; yet these are described, as though they were persons. So ver. 35. *Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, here we are?* Again, the powers and faculties of the soul of man have sometimes personal characters ascribed to them. Thus, conscience is said to *bear witness*, Rom. ix. 1. And some instances may be brought from scripture of a person's speaking to himself; yet this doth not connote two persons in man, one speaking, and the other spoken to. It is therefore inferred from hence, that we cannot prove the personality of the Son and Holy Ghost from those personal characters ascribed to them, which may be taken in a metaphorical sense, as well as in the instances but now mentioned.

Ansiv. In answer to this objection, several things may be considered.

1. Though the scripture often uses figurative, and particularly metaphorical, ways of speaking, yet these may be easily distinguished from the like phrases used elsewhere, concerning which we have sufficient ground to conclude that they are to be taken in a proper sense; therefore, though it is true that there are personal characters given to things which are not persons, yet we are not to conclude from hence, that whenever the same modes of speaking are used, and applied to those who are capable of performing personal actions, that therefore these must be taken in a metaphorical sense; which is a known exception from the common idea contained in the same words.

2. Most of those passages of scripture, where personal characters are attributed to things which are not persons, in a metaphorical sense, are in the poetical books thereof; or in some particular places, where there is a peculiar beautiful mode of speaking taken from thence; will it therefore follow, that these personal characters are used in other parts of scripture, in which the Holy Ghost does not think fit to express himself in such an elegance of style? Now it is certain, that the personal charac-

acters before mentioned are given to the Son and Holy Ghost, throughout the whole scripture, without designing to use a lofty, figurative, or uncommon way of speaking, as in the instances before mentioned.

3. We must not suppose that the Holy Ghost uses any figurative ways of speaking, so as to cast a veil on plain truths, or to endanger our being led hereby out of the way, as we should certainly be, if so many hundred places of scripture, in which these personal characters are applied to the Son and Spirit, were to be taken in a metaphorical sense, without any intimation given in the context that they are so to be understood. And it will be certainly very difficult to find out any place in scripture, that may serve to direct us in our application of these characters, *viz.* when they are to be taken in a metaphorical sense, when applied to the Persons in the Godhead, and when not.

4. Though we find many metaphors in scripture, yet we observe that the most important truths are laid down in the plainest manner; so that the injudicious and unlearned reader, who understands nothing of the art of rhetoric, or criticism, may be instructed thereby; at least they are not universally wrapt up in such figurative ways of speaking; and it would be strange, if the account we have of the Personality of the Son and Holy Ghost, which is a doctrine of the highest importance, and such as renders them distinct objects of worship, should be expressed in such a way, as that we should be at the greatest uncertainty whether they are persons or not.

5. If these personal characters are not metaphorical, when applied to men or angels, who are subjects capable of having personality attributed to them, why should they be reckoned metaphorical, when applied to the Son and Spirit, who, though they are not distinct beings, yet they have a divine understanding and will, and therefore are not rendered incapable of having personality ascribed to them, as signified by these characters.

6. The asserting that personal characters attributed to the Son and Spirit are always to be understood in a metaphorical sense, would give equal ground to conclude that they are to be so taken, when applied to the Father; and accordingly, while we militate against the Personality of these, we should, at the same time, overthrow his Personality: and while we deny that there are three Persons in the Godhead, we should, in effect, suppose that there are no Persons in the Godhead, any otherwise than as the Godhead, which is common to the Father, Son, and Spirit, is often described as though it were a Person; and if ever *Personality* is used or applied in a metaphorical sense, it must be when the Godhead is described as though it were a Person.

7. Though some personal characters are occasionally applied

in a metaphorical sense, to things that are not persons, yet it is not usual for them to be described as performing personal works, and these not occasionally hinted at, and joined with other metaphorical ways of speaking, but a long series of action referred to, and variety of works performed, which must certainly be taken in a most proper sense. Thus, when the Son and Spirit are set forth in scripture as performing those works, which are expressive of their personal glory; the one in what respects the purchase of redemption; and the other in the application thereof: and when each of them is described as standing in those relations to men, which are founded in the performance of these works for them; certainly this must be taken in a most proper sense; and we must take heed, lest, while we attempt to prove that the Persons in the Godhead are to be taken in a figurative sense, we do not give occasion to any to think that the great benefits, which we receive from them, are to be understood in the same sense.

We shall now take notice of some other personal properties, whereby the Son and Spirit are distinguished from one another, and from the Father; particularly, as they are expressed in one of the answers under our present consideration: it is proper to the Father to beget the Son, or, as it is sometimes expressed, to be unbegotten; and to the Son, to be begotten of the Father; and to the Holy Ghost, to proceed from the Father and the Son, from all eternity. This is certainly one of the most difficult heads of divinity that can be insisted on; and some have made it more so, by their attempting to explain it. I have sometimes thought that it would be the safest and most eligible way, to pass it over, as a doctrine less necessary to be understood; but since there are several scripture-expressions, on which it is founded, which we ought to pay the greatest deference to, much more than to those explications which are merely human; and inasmuch as these properties plainly prove the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be distinct Persons, therefore we must humbly enquire into the meaning of those scriptures, wherein they are contained; and so to speak something as to what is generally called the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost; and I hope, through divine assistance, we shall advance no doctrine that is either subversive of our faith in the doctrine of the Trinity, which we are endeavouring to maintain, derogatory to the essential or personal glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit, or altogether contrary to the sense, in which many Christians, who are unacquainted with those modes of speaking, used by the fathers and schoolmen, understand those scriptures upon which this doctrine is founded.

And here we shall give a brief account of what we apprehend

hend to be the commonly received sentiments of divines, who, in their writings, have strenuously maintained, and judiciously defended, the doctrine of the Trinity, concerning the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost; which I shall endeavour to do with the greatest deference to those who have treated of these subjects, as well as with the greatest impartiality; and shall take occasion to shew how far the Arians conclude that we give up the cause to them, and yet how little reason they have to insult us upon this head.

(1.) As to the eternal generation of the Son, it is generally explained in this manner; the Father is called, by some, the fountain of the Godhead, an expression taken from some of the fathers, who defended the Nicene faith: but others of late, have rather chose to call the Father the fountain of the Trinity; and he is said to be of himself; or unbegotten; which they lay down as his distinct Personal character, from that of the Son.

On the other hand, the Son, as to his Personality, is generally described as being from the Father, and many chuse to express themselves about this mystery in these terms; that the Father communicated the divine essence to the Son, which is the most common mode of speaking, though others think it safer to say, that he communicated the divine Personality to him; though I cannot tell which is least exceptionable.

But when I find others calling it the Father's giving the divine essence to the Son, their mode of speaking being founded, as they apprehend, on that scripture, John v. 26. *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself*, I cannot but think it an unguarded expression, and foreign to the design of the Holy Ghost in that scripture, as will be hereafter considered. The Arians are ready to insult us upon such modes of speaking, and suppose that we conclude that the Son receives his divine perfections, and therefore cannot be God equal with the Father: but, however, none of them, who use this expression, suppose that the Son's Deity is founded on the arbitrary will of the Father; for they all assert that the divine nature is communicated necessarily, and from all eternity, as the sun communicates its rays necessarily, which are of equal duration with it; so that while they make use of a word, which, according to its most known acceptation, seems subversive of the truth, they happily, for truth's sake, explain away the proper sense thereof; so that all they can be blamed for herein, by the adversary, is impropriety of expression.

Again, others speak a little more exceptionably, when, explaining the eternal generation of the Son, they say that the Father produced him: but this idea they also happily explain away; and therefore say it is not such a production, where the

cause produces the effect, though some of the fathers, who have been in the Trinitarian scheme, have unwarily called the Father the cause of the Son; yet our modern divines seldom, or never, use that expression, or if they speak of an eternal production, they suppose it vastly differs from the production of all creatures, or from that sense in which the Arians suppose the Son to be produced by him; but certainly this expression had better be laid aside, lest it should be thought that we conclude the Son not equally necessary, and, from all eternity, co-existent with the Father, which our divines, how unwarily soever in other respects they may express themselves, are very far from denying.

(2.) We shall now proceed to consider how some divines express themselves, concerning the procession of the Holy Ghost, which they generally do in this manner, as though the divine essence were communicated by the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost; and so they suppose that the Holy Ghost, at least as he is a divine Person, or has the divine nature communicated to him, cannot be said to be, any more than the Son, of himself, but from the Father and the Son, from whom he proceeds, or receives, as some express it, the divine nature, and others the divine personality.

Others speak of the Spiration of the Holy Ghost, which they suppose to be the same with his procession; but the world is much at a loss to understand what they mean by the word *Spiration*: it seems to be a mere metaphorical expression, as when they call him the breath of the Father and the Son, and, if so, then it will not prove his proper personality: but since we are pretty much in the dark about the reason of this mode of speaking, it would be much better to lay it aside, as many modern writers have done.

As to the manner of the procession of the Holy Ghost, there was, about the eighth and ninth centuries, a very warm dispute between the Greek and Latin church; whether the Spirit proceeded from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son; and the controversy arose to such a height, that they charged one another with heresy and schism, when neither side well understood what they contended about; and if they had agreed to the healing expedient, afterwards proposed, that they should mutually acknowledge that the Holy Ghost was from the Father by the Son, the matter would have been left as much in the dark as it was before.

Some speak of the procession of the Holy Ghost, as though he was produced by the Father and the Son, as the Son, as was before observed, is said, in his eternal generation, to have been produced by the Father; yet they suppose that neither of them were so produced, as that they may be called effects; and they

term it the production of a person in, and not out of, the divine essence, for that would be to give away the cause we contend for: but which way soever we take it, it contains such an impropriety of expression, as can hardly be defended; and it is much better to explain away the proper and grammatical sense of words, than to corrupt the truth; however, I would not copy after them in this mode of speaking.

Moreover, some have pretended to determine the difference between the eternal generation of the Son and the Spirit's procession; to which they have, with modesty, premised, that it is not to be explained; but, as far as they enter into this matter, they suppose that they differ in this; that in the eternal generation of the Son, the Father communicated the divine essence, or, at least, personality to him, which is his act alone, and herewith he communicated a property, or power, to him, to communicate the same divine essence to the Holy Ghost; whereas, when the Holy Ghost is said to proceed from the Father and the Son, there is no power therewith conveyed to him to communicate the divine essence to any other, as a fourth person in the Godhead. These things may be observed in the writings of those who treat of this subject; but it is to be feared, they enter too far into the explication of this unsearchable mystery; and some will be ready to conclude that they attempt to be wise above what is written. And,

If I may be allowed to give my sense of the communication of the divine essence, though it will probably be thought that I do not say enough concerning it, yet I hope that, in other respects, none will conclude that I advance any thing subversive of the doctrine of the Trinity, when I assert that the divine essence is communicated, not by the Father to the Son and Holy Ghost, as imparting or conveying it to them; but take the word *communicate* in another sense, namely, that all the perfections of the divine nature are communicated, that is, equally attributed to, or predicated of, the Father, Son, and Spirit; this sense of the word is what some intend when they say the human nature is communicated to every individual, upon which account they are denominated men; and, as the word is used in this sense, sometimes, by logicians and schoolmen, so it seems to be taken in the same sense, in Heb. ii. 14. where the Greek words, τα παιδια κλησινωθησεν σαρκος και αιματος, which we render, the children were partakers of flesh and blood, might be rendered, as in the vulgar Latin version, *Communicaverunt carni & sanguini*, i. e. they have the human nature communicated to, and predicated of, them, or they are truly and properly men. And it is in this sense that we use the word, when we say that the different properties of the divine and human nature are communicated to, that is, predicated of, the Person of Christ, which di-

vines generally call a communication of properties. In this sense I would be understood, when I say that the divine perfections are communicated to, or predicated of, the Father, Son, and Spirit; and this all who maintain the doctrine of the Trinity will allow of. The other sense of communication, *viz.* imparting, conveying, or giving the divine essence, I shall be very ready to fall in with, when the apparent difficulties, which, to me, seem to lie in the way thereof, some of which have been already considered, are removed.

As to what concerns the farther explication of this mystery, we may observe, that the more nice some have been in their speculations about it, the more they have seemed bewildered: thus, when some have enquired whether the eternal generation is one single act, or an act continued; or whether, when it is said, This day have I begotten thee, the meaning is, that the divine nature was communicated at once, or whether it is perpetually communicating.* And the difficulties that attend their asserting either the one or the other of them, which they, who enquire into these matters, take notice of, I shall entirely pass over, as apprehending that this doctrine receives no advantage by such disquisitions.

Neither do I think it tends much to our edification to enquire, as some have done, whether, in the eternal generation, the Father is considered as acting, and the Son as him on whom the action terminates, as the subject thereof; which, when they suppose it does, they farther enquire, whether, in this respect, he is said to be passive, which they are not willing to assert.

And I cannot but take notice of another nicety of inquiry, *viz.* whether, in the eternal generation, the Son is considered as co-existent with the Father, or as having the divine essence, and hereby only deriving his Sonship from him, from all eternity; or whether he derives both his Sonship and his essence; the former of which is the most generally received opinion. But I am not desirous to enter into this enquiry, especially without first determining what we mean by Sonship.

There is indeed one thing that must be enquired into, and that is, whatever be the explication given of the eternal generation of the Son, and procession of the Holy Ghost, whether they are each of them self-existent, or, as some call it, *αὐτοθεοί*; and it is generally determined, that the Son and Holy Ghost have the same self-existent divine nature: but with respect to their manner of having it, some say the Son has his divine nature from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and Son; or that the Father only is self-existent, as some speak; or, as most others say, that he is self-subsistent; and that this is his

* Some, who take delight in darkening this matter, by pretending to explain it, call the former *αὐτοθεοί*, stans; the latter, flucus.

personal property, as he is distinguished from the Son and Holy Ghost, whom they conclude not to be self-subsistent, but the one to subsist from the Father, and the other from the Father and the Son. This is a generally received opinion; notwithstanding I must confess myself to be at a loss to account for it: so that the principal thing, in which I am obliged, till I receive farther conviction, to differ from many others, is, whether the Son and Spirit have a communicated or derived Personality: this many assert, but, I think, without sufficient proof; for I cannot but conclude that the divine Personality, not only of the Father, but of the Son and Spirit, is as much independent, and underived, as the divine essence.

Thus we have considered how some have embarrassed this doctrine, by being too nice in their enquiries about it: we shall proceed to consider how others have done prejudice to it, by pretending to explain it; and when they make use of similitudes to that purpose, have rather prejudiced the enemies of this doctrine against it, than given any conviction to them. I shall only mention what I have found in some of their writings, whom, in other respects, I cannot but exceedingly value, as having deserved well of the church of God, in defending this truth with good success, yet, when they take this method to explain this doctrine, to say the best of it, they have done but little service to the cause which they have maintained: thus we find them expressing themselves to this purpose; as the soul of man sometimes reflects on itself, and considers its own nature, powers, and faculties, or when it is conversant about itself, as its object, this produces an idea, which contains the moral image of itself, and is like as when he sees his face in a glass, and beholds the image of himself; this, say they, illustrates the eternal generation of the Son, as God beholding himself, or his divine perfections, begets an image of himself, or has an eternal idea of his own perfections in his mind, which is called his internal word, as opposed to the word spoken, which is external; by this they express the generation of the Son, for which reason he is called, in Heb. i. 3. *The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, as the wax expresses the character or mark of the seal that is impressed on it.

Again, they farther add, that there is a mutual love between the Father and the Son, which brings forth a third Person, or subsistence in the Godhead, to wit, the Holy Ghost; so that as there is in the divine essence an infinite understanding reflecting on itself, whereby it begets, a Son, as was before observed, and an infinite will, which leads him to reflect on himself, with love and delight, as the chief good, whereby he brings forth a third Person in the Godhead, to wit, the Holy Ghost, accordingly they describe this divine Person as being the result of the mu-

tual joy and delight that there is between the Father and the Son : these explications many are at a loss to understand ; and we humbly conceive it would be much better to let them alone, and confess this doctrine to be an inexplicable mystery, or else some other way may be found out, which is less liable to these exceptions, while we explain those scriptures, which speak of the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost.

The scriptures generally brought in defence of this doctrine are such as these.

1. To prove the eternal generation of the Son, there are several scriptures referred to, particularly that in which the Father is represented as speaking to him, in Psal. ii. 7. *Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee ;* that is, say they, I have, in my eternal, unsuccessive duration, communicated, or imparted, the divine essence, or, at least, personality, to thee.

Another scripture brought to this purpose is that in Prov. viii. 22, 23, 25. *The Lord possessed me, speaking of his eternal Word, or Son, in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting ; from the beginning, or ever the earth was ; before the mountains were settled ; before the hills was I brought forth.* Where they suppose that God's possessing him, which is certainly to be taken in a different sense from his being the possessor of all creatures, is to be understood of his being God's proper Son by nature ; and his being said to be brought forth, they suppose, proves his eternal generation.

Another scripture brought to the same purpose is that in Micah v. 2. speaking of the Son, it is said, *His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting ;* by which they attempt to prove his being begotten in the divine essence : but how that can be called his going forth, I do not well understand.

Moreover, that scripture before mentioned, in Heb. i. 3. *Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.* And another parallel scripture, in Col. i. 15. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature ;* where, by first-born, they understand, that he was begotten before all worlds : the divine essence, or, at least, personality, being communicated to him from eternity.

Another scripture, which we before referred to, brought to prove this doctrine, is John v. 26. *As the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son to have life in himself ;* that is, say some, as the Father hath all divine perfections in himself originally, so the Son hath these perfections, by communication from him ; which they suppose not to be an arbitrary, but a necessary, donation.

Again, this is farther proved, from John i. 17. where he is

said to be *the only begotten Son of the Father*. And ver. 18. *The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father*. From the former of which scriptures they prove the eternal generation of the Son; and from the latter, his being begotten in the divine essence, which distinguishes it from all finite productions, which are out of himself.

Moreover, there are many other scriptures that speak of our Saviour as the Son of God; and particularly in Matth. xvi. 16. he is called, *The Son of the living God*; and in Rom. viii. 32. *his own Son, &c.* which some render, *his proper Son*, that is, not only his Son, who has the same divine nature with himself, but as implying also the manner of its communication; and in Mat. iii. 17. he is called *his beloved Son*.

2. We shall now consider the scriptures that are generally brought to prove the procession of the Holy Ghost, in the sense before explained. Thus he is said, in John xv. 26. to be *sent by the Son from the Father*; and *to proceed from the Father*; where they suppose that this proceeding from the Father signifies the communication of the divine essence, or, at least, his personality; and his being sent by the Son, implies, that this communication is from him, as well as the Father. So in Gal. iv. 6. it is said, *God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son*; and, in John xvi. 7. our Saviour says, *I will send him unto you*, and ver. 14. *He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*; these scriptures, if not brought directly to prove this doctrine, are, notwithstanding, supposed sufficient to evince the truth thereof, inasmuch as the Son could not send him, if he had not proceeded from him; nor could he have received that which he shews to his people, if he had not, from all eternity, received his divine essence, or personality, from him.

There is another scripture, brought by some very valuable divines, to prove the Spiration of the Holy Ghost, which is so termed, either as supposed to be expressive of the manner of his having his personality as a Spirit, or else it is taken from those words of scripture, brought to prove this Spiration, John xx. 22. in which our Saviour is said to have breathed on his disciples, saying, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*; which external sign, or symbol, used in the act of conferring him on them in time, proves his procession from him from eternity; as a temporal procession supposes an eternal one.

These are the scriptures which are generally brought to prove this doctrine. But we shall take occasion to enquire, whether there may not be another sense given thereof, which is less liable to exception, as well as more intelligible. It is to be owned, that they contain some of the deep things of God; and therefore it is no wonder, if they are reckoned among those scriptures that are hard to be understood: but so far as I have any light

either from the context of the respective scriptures, or the analogy of faith, I cannot but conclude that these, and all others of the like nature, that are brought to prove the eternal generation, or Sonship of Christ, respect him as God-man, Mediator; (a) and those other scriptures, that speak of the procession of the

a "In the Saviour's exalted relation to his Father, the name Son of God comes chiefly under observation. It is known that in the sacred word, rational creatures are often dignified with the honorary title of Sons or Children of God; and that in various respects, and for obvious reasons. But certainly that name in Christ signifies something higher. John x. 35—38. He is not only a Son of God, but the Son, by way of eminence above all *é vras*: So that he is by this, as a peculiar and proper denomination, distinguished from other subjects. We know, that the Son of God is come. 1 John v. 20. John viii. 36.—He is God's only-begotten Son. John i. 14, 18. iii. 16. God's own Son. Rom. viii. 32. "To which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? Heb. i. 5. When Christ spoke to his disciples concerning the Father, he never said, *our Father*, (as he had taught them to pray;) but always with an express distinction *my Father*: Luke ii. 48, 49. John ii. 16. chiefly John xx. 17.—From the prophetic doctrine, that name was known in Israel, as in its full force applicable to the Messias; which can be clearly evinced from various passages. Mat. xvi. 15, 16. xxvi. 63. Mark iii. 11. John vi. 69. xi. 27. x. 36. Amidst all the confusion of their apprehensions, they found so much emphasis in it, that the acknowledgment of it was among them a ground of *adoration*, Mat. xiv. 33. John ix. 35—38.; so that when Jesus, with the distinction and appropriation of the divine works, called God *his Father*, they thence concluded, which the Saviour did not contradict, that he held God for his own Father, and thus made himself equal to God. John v. 18. x. 33—35. Indeed, however intimate the connexion is betwixt being the Messias, the Christ, and being the Son of God, this last signifies still something different, something more original. For Paul preached Christ, that he was the Son of God*. In the love of the truth, let us observe the divine testimony, he did not become the Son of God by or after his coming in the flesh, by or after the execution of his ministry; but herein is God's great mercy celebrated, that "he sent him who was his Son, made him under the law, and delivered him up for us all." This is evident, from a variety of passages. Gal. iv. 4. Rom. viii. 32. Heb. v. 8. 1 John iv. 9, 10. It is plainly supposed in the parable, the lord of the vineyard sent to the husbandmen many servants, some of whom they beat, and others they slew. Having therefore yet one son who was dear to him, he sent him last of all to them, saying, "they will surely reverence my son. Mark xii. 6.—In his supreme excellence, as the Son of God, lies the reason of punishing unbelief. As the Son of God, "he is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Heb. i. 3. On the self-same account, he is, according to the language of men, his heir, that is, has a natural right to all the works of God, especially to his church; which are also made by him, in communion with the Father. See this described in a lofty strain by the apostle, Heb. i. 1—3. iii. 2—5. Col. i. 15—17. and also by Jesus himself. Mark xii. 6, 7.—Though, therefore, a further theological illustration of Christ's divine sonship should best be preceded by the proof of his true Deity, yet in the meantime, the name Son of God, as ascribed to him, points us not only to his distinguished elevation above all creature; which Argus acknowledged, but also to his unity of nature with the Father,† and to the ground of his existence in the eternal and necessary existence of the Father." WYNERSE.

* Acts ix. 20; see also chap. viii. 37. In both these places, however, there is a different reading in the Greek. But compare Jesus' first accusation before Pilate, that he said he was the Christ. (Luke xxiii. 2.) with a new word added, that he made himself the Son of God. (John xix. 7.)

† *Unity of nature with the Father.* In the original it is, equality of his nature. But apprehending that, by an error of the press, γαλκλιδι εν τω πατρι εβληθη, I have adverted to translate the passage as above; and that in the fullest consistency with the design of the worthy author. In the whole of this treatise, and with his express words in the close of the second paragraph of this very section, where he says, "ne Jare not esteem Christ less than *αυτου*," that is, of the same nature or essence with God.

Holy Ghost, respect the subserviency of his acting as a divine Person to the Mediator's glory, in applying the work of redemption.

And here we shall consider these scriptures in particular; and then answer some objections that may be brought against this sense thereof, whereby, I hope, it will appear, that we assert nothing but what tends to the glory of the Son and Spirit, establisheth the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, and agrees with the commonly received faith, so far as it is founded on scripture, without being tenacious of those modes of speaking, which have the sanction of venerable antiquity, and are supported by the reputation of those who have used them; though it may be, those scriptures will be otherwise understood by them, who regard explications that are merely human, no farther than they are defensible.

The first scripture before mentioned, which was brought to prove the eternal generation of the Son, was Psal. ii. 7. *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* This cannot, I humbly conceive, respect the communication of the divine nature, or personality to the Son, as appears from the words immediately foregoing, in which it is said, *I will declare the decree, or what I had before decreed, or determined.* Far be it from us to suppose that the divine nature, or personality, of the Son was the result of an act of the divine will: and, indeed, the whole Psalm plainly speaks of Christ as Mediator; as such he is said, ver. 6. *To be set as God's king, on his holy hill of Sion,* and, as such, he is said to intercede with, or ask of God; and, as the result hereof, the Father is said, ver. 8. to give him *the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;* and all this is spoken of him, as a farther explication of those words, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* And the apostle, in Heb. i. 5. refers to this scripture, when speaking of him as Mediator, and as *having, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than the angels;* which he has done, as he is constituted heir of all things: and he subjoins that promise, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son,* that is, he shall perform that obedience that is due from him as a Son; and I will give unto him those rewards, which are due from a Father, who has committed this work to him, with a promise of the conferring those reveaues of Mediatorial glory on him, that should ensue on his fulfilling it. Moreover, this scripture is referred to, by the apostle, in Acts xiii. 32, 33. when he says, *That the promise, which was made to the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* So that it is plain the Psalmist speaks of him as having finished his work

of redemption, at which time he was raised from the dead; and then, in the fullest sense, he had the *heathen for his inheritance*. And, upon this account, he is also called, in Rev. i. 5. *The first begotten of the dead*; and, in Col. i. 18. *The first-born from the dead*.

The next scripture brought to prove the eternal generation of the Son, in Prov. viii. 22, 23, 25. refers to Christ, as Mediator; when God is said to *possess him in the beginning of his way*, the meaning is, that in his eternal design of grace relating to the redemption of man, the Father possessed, or laid claim to him as his Son, or servant, appointed in the human nature, to bring about that great work; and accordingly it follows, *I was set up from everlasting*, that is, fore-ordained of God, to be the Mediator and head of his elect: and this agrees very well with what follows, ver. 30, 31. *I was daily his delight*, that is, God the Father was well pleased with him, when foreseeing from all eternity what he would do in time, to secure the glory of his perfections in the redemption of man, as God publicly testified his well-pleasèdness in him, when he was actually engaged in this work. And it is farther added, *That he was always rejoicing before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men*; which signifies the great pleasure Christ had, in his eternal fore-sight of what he would do for the sons of men, whom he is elsewhere said to *have loved with an everlasting love*.

The next scripture is in Micah v. 2. where speaking of the Son, it is said, *Whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting*. For the understanding of which scripture, let us consider, that God's goings are sometimes taken in scripture for what he does, whereby he renders himself the object of his people's astonishment and praise; these are his visible goings. Thus, Psal. lxxvi. 24. *They have seen thy goings, O God, even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary*; that is, they shall see the great things which thou wilt do for man, in the work of redemption: so in this scripture, the sense whereof we are considering, we read of Christ's goings forth, his invisible goings, as we may call them, or his secret purposes, or designs of grace, relating to the redemption of his people: *His goings forth were from everlasting*; that is, he did, from eternity, design to save them; the outgoings of his heart were towards them, and, as the result hereof, he came into the world according to this prediction, and was born in Bethlehem, as in the foregoing words.

The next scripture is in Heb. i. 3. where he is said to be *the brightness of his*, that is, his Father's *glory*, and *the express image of his person*. By the former expression, I humbly conceive, is meant, that the glory of the divine perfections shines

forth most illustriously in Christ, our great Mediator, as the apostle expresses it elsewhere, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *God hath shined in our hearts, to give the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ.* By the latter expression, in which Christ is called *the express image of his Person*, I humbly conceive, is meant, that though his divine nature be the same with the Father's, yet his Personality is distinct; and therefore it is not said to be the same, but the *image of his Father's*; and it also proves his proper divine Personality, as being, in all respects, like that of the Father, though not the same.

The next scripture is in John v. 26. *As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.* We cannot think that the Father's having *given to the Son to have life in himself* implies his giving him the divine perfections, for the propriety of that mode of speaking cannot be defended consistently with his proper underived Deity. But I humbly conceive that the meaning of it is this; that *as the Father hath life in himself*, that is, as he has eternal life, or that fulness of grace and glory, which his people are to be made partakers of, at his own disposal, and has designed to give it, in his eternal purpose; so hath he given to the Son, as Mediator, to have life in himself, that is, that, as such, he should be the treasury of all this grace, and that he should have life in himself to dispense to them. This is very agreeable to his character and office, as Mediator, and with what follows, ver. 24. where it is said; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life;* and ver. 27. it is farther added, that He, to wit, the Father, *hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man;* which plainly denotes, that this life, which he has received from the Father, is that eternal life, which he is impowered or commissioned to bestow on his people, as Mediator; this he has in himself, and accordingly he is said, John i. 14. to be *full of grace and truth;* and Col. i. 19. *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.*

The next thing to be considered, is the sense of those many scriptures, in which our Saviour is described as the *Son of God*, or the *Son of the living God*, or *his only begotten Son*, or *his own* or *proper Son*, as distinguished from all others, which, I humbly conceive, sets forth his glory, as Mediator, which we shall endeavour to prove. But, to prepare our way for the prosecution of this argument, as well as to prevent any misconstruction that might give prejudice thereunto, we shall take leave to premise,

1. That when we read of the Son of God, as dependent on the Father, inferior and obedient to him; and yet, as being

equal with him, and having the same divine nature, we cannot conceive of any character which answers to all these ideas of sonship, unless that of a Mediator. If we consider the properties of sonship among men, every one who stands in this relation to a Father is dependent on him. In this respect, the father is the cause of his son, and it is not like other productions, for no effect can, properly speaking, be called a son, but that which hath the same kind of nature with his father; and the relation of sonship always connotes inferiority, and an obligation to yield obedience. I do not apply this, in every respect, to the Sonship of Christ, which no similitude, taken from mere creatures, can sufficiently illustrate; but his character, as Mediator, seems to answer to it, more than any thing else that can be said of him, since he has, as such, the same individual nature with the Father, and also is inferior to, and dependent on him. As a son, among men, is inferior to, and dependent on, his father, and, as the prophet speaks, Mal. i. 6. *Honoureth his father*; so whatever Christ is, as Mediator, he receives it from the Father, and, in all that he does, he *honoureth his Father*, as he says, John viii. 49. As the whole work of redemption is referred to the Father's glory, and the commission, by which he acts as Mediator, is received from the Father, so, as a Son, he refers all the glory thereof to him.

2. This account of Christ's Sonship does not take away any argument, by which we prove his Deity; for when we consider him as Mediator, we always suppose him to be both God and man, which is what we intend when we speak of the Person of Christ in this respect; so that, as God, he is equal with the Father, and has an equal right to divine adoration. This belongs to him as much, when considered as Mediator, as it can be supposed to do, if we consider his Sonship in any other respect.

3. It does not take away any argument to prove his distinct Personality from the Father and Holy Ghost, or, at least, if it sets aside that which is taken from the dependence of his Personality on the Father, as received from him by communication, it substitutes another in the room of it, inasmuch as to be a Mediator is, without doubt, a personal character; and because neither the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, can be said to be Mediators, it implies, that his Personality is distinct from theirs; likewise his acting as Mediator from the Father; and the Holy Spirit's securing the glory which arises to him from hence, and applying the redemption purchased by him, is a farther proof of this distinction of the Persons in the Godhead.

4. Since we consider the Mediator as both God and man, in one Person, we do not suppose that this character respects either of his two natures, considered separately.

(1.) Not his divine nature. It is true, that his having the same nature with the Father might be reckoned, by some, a character of Sonship, as it contains one ingredient in the common idea that we have among men. They, as sons, are said to have the same kind of nature with their fathers; so our Saviour's having the same individual nature with the Father might give occasion to some to denominate him, for that reason, his Son: but though this may be the foundation of his being called God's *proper Son*, *in the strict sense*, yet this is not his distinguishing character as a Son: for it would follow from hence, that the Holy Ghost, who has the same nature with the Father, would, for that reason, be called his Son, which is contrary to the scripture-account given of him, as proceeding from the Father and the Son.

(2.) This character of Christ, as God-man, Mediator, does not respect his human nature, considered separately from his divine, nor any of those peculiar honours conferred upon it, beyond what any mere creatures are made partakers of.

This leads us to consider the difference between this notion of his Sonship, and that which was generally assigned, as the reason of his being so called, by the Socinians; these generally speak of Christ, as being denominated the Son of God, because of the extraordinary and miraculous conception, or formation, of his human nature in the womb of the Virgin; and for this they refer to that scripture in Luke i. 35. (a) *The Holy Ghost*

(a) "The meaning of the terms, *Son of God, only-begotten Son of God*, must needs be of importance, inasmuch as the belief of the idea signified by them was made a leading article in the primitive professions of faith. John vi. 69. iii. 18. xx. 31. Acts xviii. 37. 1 John iv. 15. Whatever disputes have arisen of late among christians, there seems to have been none on this subject in the times of the apostles. Both Jews and christians appear to have agreed in this: the only question that divided them was, whether Christ was the Son of God, or not? If there had been any ambiguity in the term, it would have been very unfit to express the first article of the christian faith.

It has been frequently suggested, that the ground of Christ's sonship is given us in Luke i. 35, and is no other than his miraculous conception: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.*

It is true that our Lord was miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit, and that such a conception was peculiar to him; but it does not follow that by this he became the *Son*, or *only-begotten Son of God*. Nor does the passage in question prove any such thing. It has been thought that the phrase *Son of God*, in this place, is used in a peculiar sense, or that it respects the origin of Christ's human nature, as not being by ordinary generation of man, but by the extraordinary influence of God; and that he is here called the Son of God in the same sense as Adam is so called, (Luke iii. 38.) as being produced by his immediate power. If this be the meaning of the term in the passage in question, I should think it will be allowed to be peculiar, and therefore that no general conclusion can be drawn from it, as to the meaning of the term in other passages. But granting that the sonship of Christ, in this place, is to be understood in the same sense as it is commonly to be taken in the new testament, still it does not follow that the miraculous conception is the origin of it. It may be a reason given why Christ is called the Son of God; but not why he is so. Christ is called

shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. The sense, in which

the Son of God as raised from the dead, and as exalted at the right hand of God. Acts xiii. 33. Heb. i. 4, 5. Did he then become the Son of God by these events? This is impossible; for sonship is not a progressive matter. If it arose from his miraculous conception, it could not for that reason arise from his resurrection, or exaltation: and so on the other hand, if it arose from his resurrection, or exaltation, it could not proceed from his miraculous conception. But if each be understood of his being hereby *proved, acknowledged, or, as the scriptures express it, declared* to be the Son of God with power, all is easy and consistent.

Whether the terms, *Son of God*, and *only-begotten Son of God*, be not expressive of his divine personality, antecedent to all consideration of his being conceived of the holy Spirit, in the womb of the Virgin, let the following things determine.

First: The glory of the *only-begotten of the Father*, and the glory of the *Word*, are used as convertible terms, as being the same: but the latter is allowed to denote the divine person of Christ, antecedent to his being made flesh; the same therefore must be true of the former. *The Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory;* that is, the glory of the Word, *the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* John i. 14. It is true, it was by the Word being made flesh, and dwelling amongst us, that his glory became apparent; but the glory itself was that of the eternal Word, and this is the same as *the glory of the only-begotten of the Father.*

Secondly: The Son of God is said to *dwell in the bosom of the Father;* that is, he is intimately acquainted with his character and designs, and therefore fit to be employed in making them known to men. *The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.* John i. 18. If this be applied to his divine person, or that *eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us,* 1 John i. 2. it is natural and proper; it assigns his omniscience as qualifying him for making known the mind of God: but if he became the only-begotten of the Father by his miraculous conception, or by any other means, the beauty of the passage vanishes.

Thirdly: God is frequently said to have *sent* his Son into the world: John vii. 17. x. 36. 1 John iv. 9, 10. but this implies that he was his Son antecedent to his being sent. To suppose otherwise, is no less absurd than supposing that when Christ is said to have sent forth his twelve disciples, they were not disciples, but in consequence of his sending them, or of some preparation pertaining to their mission.

Fourthly: Christ is called the Son of God antecedently to his miraculous conception, and consequently he did not become such by it.—*In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law—God sent his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh.* Gal. iv. 4. Rom. viii. 3.—The terms, *made of a woman, made under the law*, are a parenthesis. The position affirmed is, that God sent forth his Son to redeem the transgressors of the law. His being made of a woman, and made under the law, or covenant of works, which man had broken, expressed the necessary means for the accomplishment of this great end; which means, though preceding our redemption, yet follow the sonship of the Redeemer. There is equal proof that Christ was the *Son of God* before he was *made of a woman*, as that he was the *Word* before he was *made flesh*. The phraseology is the same in the one case as in the other. If it be alleged that Christ is here called the Son of God *on account* of his being made of a woman, I answer, If so, it is also on account of his being *made under the law*, which is too absurd to admit of a question.—Moreover: To say that *God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh*, is equal to saying that the Son of God assumed human nature: he must therefore have been the Son of God before his incarnation.

Fifthly: Christ is called the Son of God antecedent to his being *manifested to*

they understand this text, is, that Christ is called the Son of God, because of this extraordinary event: But we cannot think that a miraculous production is a sufficient foundation to sup-

destroy the works of the devil: but he was manifested to destroy the works of the devil by taking upon him human nature; consequently, he was the Son of God antecedent to the human nature being assumed. There is equal proof from the phraseology of 1 John iii. 8. that he was the *Son of God* antecedent to his being manifested to destroy the works of the devil, as there is from that of 1 Tim. iii. 16. that he was *God* antecedent to his being manifested in the flesh; or from 1 John i. 2, that *that eternal life, which was with the Father*, was such antecedent to his being manifested to us.

Sixthly: The ordinance of baptism is commanded to be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Matt. xxviii. 19. The terms, *Father* and *Holy Spirit*, will be allowed to denote divine persons; and what good reasons can be given for another idea being fixed to the term *Son*?

Seventhly: The proper deity of Christ precedes his office of Mediator, or High Priest of our profession, and renders it an exercise of *condescension*. But the same is true of his sonship: *He maketh the Son a High Priest—Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience*. Heb. vii. 28. v. 8. His being the Son of God, therefore, amounts to the same thing as his being a divine person.

Eighthly: It is the proper deity of Christ which gives *dignity* to his office of Mediator: but this dignity is ascribed to his being the *Son of God*. *We have a GREAT High Priest, Jesus, the SON of GOD*. Heb. iv. 14. His being the Son of God, therefore, amounts to the same thing as his being a divine person.

Lastly: It is the proper deity of Christ which gives *efficacy* to his sufferings—*By HIMSELF he purges our sins*. Heb. i. 3. But this efficacy is ascribed to his being the *Son of God—The blood of Jesus Christ, HIS SON, cleanseth us from all sin*. 1 John i. 7. His being the Son of God therefore amounts to the same thing as his being a divine person.

Those who attribute Christ's sonship to his miraculous conception, (those however to whom I refer,) are nevertheless constrained to allow that the term *implies* proper divinity. Indeed this is evident from John v. 18, where his saying that *God was his own Father* is supposed to be *making himself equal with God*. But if the miraculous conception be the proper foundation of his sonship, why should it contain such an implication? A holy creature might be produced by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, which yet should be merely a creature; i. e. he might, on this hypothesis, profess to be the Son of God, and yet be so far from making himself equal with God, as to pretend to be nothing more than a man.

It has been objected, that Christ, when called the Son of God, is commonly spoken of as engaged in the work of mediation, and not simply as a divine person antecedent to it. I answer; In a history of the rebellion in the year 1745, the name of his Royal Highness, the commander in chief, would often be mentioned in connexion with his equipage and exploits; but none would infer from hence that he thereby became the king's son.

It is further objected, that sonship implies *inferiority*, and therefore cannot be attributed to the divine person of Christ.—But, whatever inferiority may be attached to the idea of Sonship, it is not an inferiority of *nature*, which is the point in question: and if any regard be paid to the Scriptures, the very contrary is true. Christ's claiming to be the Son of God was *making himself*, not inferior, but *as God, or equal with God*.

Once more: Sonship, it is said, implies *posteriority*, or that Christ, as a Son, could not have existed till after the Father. To attribute no other divinity to him, therefore, than what is denoted by sonship, is attributing none to him; as nothing can be divine which is not eternal. But if this reasoning be just, it will prove that the divine purposes are not eternal, or that there was once a point in duration, in which God was without thought, purpose or design. For it is as true, and may as well be said, that God must exist before he could purpose, as that the Father must exist before he had a Son: but if God must exist before he could

port this character, and therefore must conclude, that the glory of Christ's Sonship is infinitely greater than what arises from thence: therefore, I humbly conceive that this scripture is to be understood, with a small variation of the translation, in this sense, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, &c. because that Holy Thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called, as he really is, the Son of God*; that is, he is as Mediator, an extraordinary Person appointed to execute a glorious office, the God-head and the manhood being to be united together, upon which account he is called the Son of God: and therefore it is expedient that the formation of his human nature should be in an extraordinary way, to wit, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Again, there is a very wide difference between our account of Christ's Sonship, as Mediator, and theirs, as taken from this scripture, in that they suppose that his being called the Son of God, refers only to some dignities conferred upon him, whom they suppose to be no more than a man. This is infinitely below the glory, which we ascribe to him, as Mediator, since their idea of him, as such, how extraordinary soever his conception was, argues him to be no more than a creature; but ours, as has been before observed, proves him a divine Person, since we never speak of him, as Mediator, without including both natures.

Having premised these things, to explain our sense of Christ's being called the Son of God, as Mediator, we proceed to prove this from scripture. And here we are not under a necessity of straining the sense of a few scriptures, to make them speak agreeably to this notion of Christ's Sonship; but, I think, we have the whole scripture, whenever it speaks of Christ, as the Son of God, as giving countenance to this plain sense thereof; so that I cannot find one place, in the whole New Testament, in which Christ is called the Son of God, but it is, with sufficient evidence, proved, from the context, that it is applied to him, as Mediator. Here we shall refer to several scriptures, in which he is so considered: thus that scripture before-mentioned, in Matth. xvi. 16. where Peter confesses, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God*; in which, speaking of him as

purpose, there must have been a point in duration in which he existed without purpose, thought, or design; that is, in which he was not God! The truth is, the whole of this apparent difficulty arises from the want of distinguishing between the order of nature and the order of time. In the order of nature, the sun must have existed before it could shine; but in the order of time, the sun and its rays are coeval: it never existed a single instant without them. In the order of nature, God must have existed before he could purpose; but in the order of time, or duration, he never existed without his purpose: for a God, without thought or purpose, were no God. And thus in the order of nature, the Father must have existed before the Son; but, in that of duration, he never existed without the Son. *The Father and the Son therefore are properly eternal.*"

FULLER

Christ, or the Mediator, that is, the Person who was invested in the office, and came to perform the work of a Mediator, he is, in this respect, *the Son of the living God*; so when the high priest asked our Saviour, *Matth. xxvi. 63. Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?* that is, art thou the Messiah, as thou art supposed to be by thy followers? Our Saviour, in ver. 64. replied to him, *Thou hast said*, that is, it is as thou hast said; and then he describes himself in another character, by which he is often represented, as Mediator, and speaks of the highest degree of his Mediatorial glory to which he shall be advanced at his second coming, ver. 64. *Nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* And, doubtless, the centurion, and they who were with him, when they confessed that *he was the Son of God*, in *Matth. xxvii. 54.* understood by it, that he was the Messiah, or the Christ, which is a character by which he was most known, and which had been supported by so many miracles, and was now confirmed by this miracle of the earthquake, which gave him this conviction; also in *Luke iv. 41.* when the devils are represented as crying out, *Thou art Christ, the Son of God*, it follows, that *they knew that he was Christ*; so that the commonly received notion of our Saviour's Sonship was, that he was the Christ. And in *John xi. 3.* when Jesus says concerning Lazarus, *that his sickness was not unto death*, that is, not such as that he should continue in the state of the dead, *but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby*, the meaning is, that he might give a proof of his being the Christ, by raising him from the dead; therefore, when he speaks to Martha, with a design to try whether she believed he could raise her brother from the dead, and represents himself to her as the object of faith, she replies, ver. 27. *I believe that thou art the Christ the Son of God, which should come into the world.* Again, it is said, in *Acts ix. 20.* that Saul, when converted, *preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God*, that is, he proved him to be the Messiah; and accordingly, ver. 22. when he was establishing the same doctrine, it is said, that *he proved that he was the very Christ.*

Moreover, our Saviour is farther described, in scripture, as executing some of his mediatorial offices, or as having received a commission to execute them from the Father, or as having some branches of mediatorial glory conferred upon him, at the same time that he is called the Son of God, which gives us ground to conclude, that this is the import of his Sonship. Thus we read, *Heb. iv. 14.* that *we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God*; and in *John i. 29.* John the Baptist gives a public testimony to him, as suc-

taining such a character, which belongs to him, as Mediator, when he says, *Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world*; and afterwards, referring to the same character, he says, ver. 34. *I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God*; and at another time he gives a noble testimony to him, as God-man, Mediator, John iii. 29, &c. when he calls him, *The Bridegroom which hath the bride*, that is, who is related to, and has a propriety, in his church, and that *he testifies what he has seen and heard*, and that it is *he whom God hath sent, who speaks the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him*; and then, as a farther explication hereof, he says, ver. 35. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand*. This is, in effect, the same, as when he is called elsewhere, *his beloved Son*; and, in Heb. iii. 6. Christ is said to be *a Son over his own house, whose house are we*; which denotes not only his propriety in his church, but his being the Head thereof, as Mediator; and the apostle, 1 Thess. i. 10. speaks of him, as *the Son of God, whom we are to wait for from heaven; whom he has raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come*; and, Gal. ii. 20. he speaks of the Son of God, as *one who loved him, and gave himself for him*; and Col. i. 13. he is spoken of as *God's dear Son*, and, at the same time, as having a kingdom, into which his people are translated; and in the following verse, as the person *in whom we have redemption, through his blood, who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature*; which seems to be taken in the same sense as when he said, Heb. i. 2. to have been *appointed Heir of all things*, and so referring to him as God-man, Mediator.

Moreover, when he is considered as a Son related to his Father; this appears, from the context, to be a description of him as Mediator. Thus, John xx. 17. he says, *I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God*; that is, my Father by whom I am constituted Mediator, and your Father, namely, the God who loves you for my sake: he is first my God, as he has honoured, loved and glorified me; and then your God, as he is reconciled to you for my sake; so the apostle says, 2 Cor. i. 3. *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort*.

Object. 1. In these scriptures, and others of the like nature, there are two ideas contained; namely, one of our Saviour, as the Son of God, by eternal generation; the other of him, as Mediator; whereas we suppose that one contains only an explication of the other.

Answer. If Christ's Sonship, in the sense in which it is generally explained, were sufficiently proved from other scriptures,

which take no notice of his mediatorial character, or works, or could be accounted for, without being liable to the difficulties before-mentioned, and if his character, as Mediator, did not contain in it an idea of Personality, the objection would have more weight than otherwise it seems to have.

Object. 2. It is said, Gal. iv. 4. *God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law;* therefore he was the Son of God before he was sent into the world, when made of a woman, and under the law, that is, his Son by eternal generation.

Ans. The answer I would give to this objection is,

1. It is not necessary to suppose that Christ had the character of a Son before he was sent, though he had that of a divine Person; since the words may, without any strain, or force, upon the sense thereof, be understood thus; when the fulness of time was come, in which the Messiah was expected, God sent him forth, or sent him into the world, with the character of a Son, at which time he was made of a woman, made under the law; the end whereof was, that he might redeem them that were under the law.

2. If we suppose Christ had the character of a Son before he was sent into the world, it will not overthrow our argument: since he was, by the Father's designation, an eternal Mediator, and, in this respect, God's eternal Son; and therefore, he who before was so by virtue of the eternal decree, is now actually sent, that he might be, and do, what he was from all eternity designed to be, and do: he was set up from everlasting, or appointed to be the Son of God; and now he is sent to perform the work which this character implies in it.

Object. 3. It is farther objected, that his Sonship is distinct from his being Mediator, inasmuch as it is said, Heb. v. 8. *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.* Now it cannot, in propriety of speech, be said, though he were Mediator, yet he learned obedience, since he was under an obligation to obey, and suffer as Mediator; therefore the meaning must be, though he were a Son by eternal generation, yet he condescended to put himself into such a capacity, as that he was obliged to obey, and suffer, as Mediator.

Ans. The stress of the objection lies in the word which we render *though*, *καὶ ὡς υἱὸς* &c. which may be rendered, with a small variation, *though being a Son*, he learned obedience by the things he suffered; *but being made perfect*, viz. after his sufferings, he became the author of eternal salvation, unto all them that obey him; and then it takes away the force of the objection. However, I see no absurdity if it be rendered, as it is in the vulgar Latin version, *And, indeed, being a Son, he*

*learned obedience**, and then it proves the argument we are endeavouring to defend, *q. d.* it is agreeable to the character of a son to learn obedience; it was with this view that it was conferred upon him, and in performing obedience, and suffering as Mediator, and thereby securing the glory of the divine perfections in bringing about the work of our redemption, he acted in pursuance of that character.

Object. 1. It will be farther objected, that what we have said concerning the Sonship of Christ, as referred to his being Mediator, has some consequences attending it, which seem derogatory to his Person; particularly, it will follow from hence, that had not man fallen, and stood in need of a Mediator, our Saviour would not have had that character, and therefore never have been described as the Son of God, or worshipped as such. And our first parents, while in the state of innocency, knowing nothing of a Mediator, knew nothing of the Sonship of Christ, and therefore could not give him the glory, which is the result thereof. Moreover, as God might have prevented the fall of man, or, when fallen, he might have refused to have recovered him by a Mediator; so our Saviour might not have been the Son of God, that is, according to the foregoing explication thereof, a Mediator between God and man.

Ans. This objection may be very easily answered, and the charge, of Christ's mediatorial Sonship being derogatory to his glory, removed; which that we may do, let it be considered,

1. That we allow, that had not man fallen, our Saviour would not have been a Mediator between God and man; and the commonly received notion is true, that his being a Mediator is, by divine ordination and appointment, according to the tenor of several scriptures relating thereunto; and I see no absurdity in asserting, that his character, as the Son of God, or Mediator, is equally the result of the divine will, or decree. But this I hope, if duly considered, will not contain the least diminution of his glory, when we farther assert,

2. That though our Saviour had not sustained this character if man had not fallen, or if God had not designed to bring about the work of redemption by him, yet he would have been no less a distinct Person in the Godhead, and, as such, would have had a right to divine glory. This appears from what hath been before said, concerning his personality being equally

* *Kai* $\tau\eta$ is used six times in the New Testament; in two or three of which places it might be rendered, without deviating from the sense of the respective texts, & quidem, as well as *quamvis*; and I see no reason why the enclitic particle $\tau\eta$, being added to *καί*, should always, without exception, alter the sense thereof, any more than when it is joined to *αυ*, *αυ*, or *αυ*. And whereas I render *καί*, in ver. 9. But, instead of And, that may be justified by several scriptures, where it is so rendered; as Luke vii. 35. Math. vi. 29. Acts x. 28. 1 Cor. xvi. 12.

necessary with his Deity, which; if it be not communicated to him, certainly it has not the least appearance of being the result of the divine will; and, indeed, his divine personality is the only foundation of his right to be adored, and not his being invested in an office, which only draws forth, or occasions our adoration. When we speak of Christ's being adored, as Mediator, it is his divine personality, which is included in that character, that renders him the object of adoration, and not his taking the human nature, or being, or doing, what he was, or did, by divine appointment; and I question whether they, who assert that he had the divine nature, or personality, communicated to him, will lay the stress of his right to divine adoration, on its being communicated, but on his having it, abstracting from his manner of having it; so when we speak of Christ as Mediator, it is his having the divine glory, or personality, which is included in that character, that renders him the object of adoration; therefore, if man had not fallen, and Christ had not been Mediator, he would have had a right to divine glory, as a Person in the Godhead. And I doubt not but that our first parents, before they fell, had an intimation hereof, and adored him as such; so that if Christ had not been Mediator, it would only follow from thence, that he would not have had the character of a Son, but he would, notwithstanding, have had the glory of a divine Person; for though his sonship be the result of the divine will, his personality is not so. (a)

(a) Dr. Ridgley differs from the most of his brethren on the Sonship of Christ as Mediator. The following note, and the two preceding, represent, it is presumed, the orthodox doctrine on this important head.

“The Redeemer is the Son of God, in a peculiar and appropriated sense, and by which he is distinguished from every other person in the universe. He is therefore called the *first begotten*, or first born son of God: his *only begotten son*; his *own son*; and eminently *The Son*, and *The Son of the Father*. His *dear Son*; or, as it is in the original, *The Son of his love*; His *beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased*. “For he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 2 Pet. i. 17. He is “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.” John i. 18. Who only knows the Father; and none does or can reveal and make him known but the Son. Matt. xi. 27. John i. 18. He being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; he that hath seen the Son, hath seen the Father, John xiv. 9. Heb. i. 3. Which epithets and declarations distinguish him from all other sons; as much as his Father is distinguished from all other fathers. He is mentioned as the Son of God above *an hundred times* in the New Testament; and fifty times by the apostle John. And the Father of Jesus Christ, the Son, is mentioned above *two hundred and twenty times*; and more than one hundred and thirty times in the gospel and epistles of St. John. Jesus Christ often makes use of the epithets, *The Father, My Father, &c.* This character is represented as essential to the Redeemer and peculiar to him, and is an essential article of the christian faith. This confession Peter made as the common faith of the disciples of Christ. “We believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God;”

Having enquired into the sense of those scriptures which treat of the Sonship of Christ, we shall next consider those that are generally brought to prove the procession of the Holy

John vi. 69. Matt. xvi. 16. This was the Eunuch's faith, required in order to his being baptized. "I believe that Jesus Christ *is the Son of God.*" And he who believes with all his heart, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, hath the Son, and with him eternal life. When Peter made this confession, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," Christ said to him, "Blessed art thou; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Matt. xvi. 16, 17. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life." John iii. 36. And Jehn says, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God! He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. These things have I written unto you *that believe on the name of the Son of God:* that ye may know ye have eternal life, and that ye may *believe on the name of the Son of God.*" 1 John iv. 15. v. 5, 12, 13.

It must be farther observed, that this title, the Son of God, is the *highest title* that is given to the Redeemer, and denotes his divinity, or that he is himself God, and therefore equal with the Father, if his divinity be any where expressed in the Bible; and that it is there abundantly declared, we have before shewed. He styles himself, and is called *The Son of Man*, more than *eighty times* in the New Testament, by which epithet his humanity is more especially denoted, but not excluding his divinity. And, on the contrary, he is called the Son of God, more particularly to express his infinitely superior character, his divinity or godhead. In this view, let the following passages be considered. When the angel, who declared to the virgin Mary that she should be the mother of the Messiah, expressed to her the greatness of this her Son, he does it by saying that he should be called *the Son of the Highest, the Son of God.* "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest. Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Luke i. 32, 35. If this were not his greatest, his highest title and character, he most certainly would have given him a higher, and one that did fully express divinity. This, therefore, did express it in the fullest and strongest manner. And no one, who believes in the divinity of Christ, can, consistently, have any doubt of it. And when the Father gives him the highest encomium, and recommends him to men, as worthy of their highest regards, implicit obedience, and unlimited trust and confidence, and commands them thus to regard, love, trust in, and obey him, this is the highest character he gives him, by which his divinity is expressed, "This is *my beloved Son*, in whom I am well pleased: Hear ye him." If this does not express his divinity, we may be sure divinity is no part of his character; and that he is not God. So, when Peter undertakes to express the idea he had of the high and glorious character of his Lord and Master, he does it in the following words, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." If Peter believed the divinity of Christ, he certainly expressed this in these words; for he did not conceive of any higher character, that could be given in any other words. This also appears by Nathaniel's using this epithet, when he was struck with wonder and surprise at the omniscience of Christ. "Rabbi, thou art *the Son of God*, thou art the King of Israel." John i. 49. When our Lord Jesus Christ proposed himself to the man whom he had restored to sight, as the proper object of his faith and trust, he said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And when he told the man that he himself was the person, he said, "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." John ix. 35, 38. It appears from this, that *Son of God* was the highest title which Jesus assumed, and that this had special reference to, and expressed his divinity; and therefore in this character, and as the Son of God, this pious man paid him divine honour, and worshipped him. When the disciples of our Lord, and all that were in the ship with

Ghost; the principal of which, as has been before observed, are in John xiv. 26. and chap. xv. 26. and xvi. 7. in which he is said to *proceed from the Father*, or to be *sent by the Father*

them, had seen him walking upon the sea, in the midst of a terrific storm, and reducing the boisterous winds, and raging waves, to a calm, by his word and presence, they were struck with a fresh and affecting conviction of his divinity, that he was God, and expressed it by coming to him, falling down and worshipping him, "saying, of a truth, thou art the Son of God." Matt. xiv. 33. In which words they expressed his divinity, and gave a reason for their worshipping him, as their Lord and their God, viz. that they were sure from clear and abundant evidence, that he was the Son of God. The apostle John, when he would represent Jesus Christ in his highest and most glorious character, gives him this title, and adds, "This is the true God." He says, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true: And we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." 1 John v. 20.

It is to be further observed, that when our Lord said to the Jews, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," the Jews, therefore sought the more to kill him, *because he said that God was his Father, (his own proper Father, as it is in the original) MAKING HIMSELF EQUAL WITH GOD.*" This is to be understood as the sense which St. John the Evangelist puts upon the words of Christ, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." For this was making himself equal with God the Father, as doing the same work with him: And this is represented as implied in God's being *his own Father*; or in his being the Father's own Son, the Son of God. But if we understand it as the sense which the Jews put upon the words of Christ, and that they said this was making himself equal with God, it amounts to the same thing; for it appears that their inference was just; and our Saviour is so far from denying it to be true, that in his reply to them, he confirms it, and asserts that whatsoever the Father does, the Son does the same; and instances in his raising the dead, and judging the world, and having all things, and all power in his hands. "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." John v. 13—17. Thus he makes the Son equal with the Father. Hence it appears that to be the Son of God, and God's own Son, is the same with a divine person, and denotes one who is truly God; and that this title is used to express the divinity, rather than the humanity of Jesus Christ.

The same appears from what passed between our Lord and the Jews at another time. He said to them, "I and my Father are One." This, they said, was blasphemy, because being a man, he made himself God. It is plain from the answer which he makes to them that they considered him as a blasphemer, because he claimed to be the Son of God, by calling God his Father. "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, *I am the Son of God?*" This was the blasphemy with which they charged him; because they considered his saying, that he was the Son of God, by calling God his Father, as an assertion that he was God. John x. 30, 33, 36. And it appears, not only from this passage, but from others, that the Jews, and others, did affix the idea of divinity to the Son of God, and considered this title as expressing a character infinitely above a mere creature. When Jesus was arraigned before the Jewish council, the High Priest charged him with the solemnity of an oath, saying, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of the living God?" And when Jesus answered in the affirmative, he with all the members of the council, charged him with blasphemy; and pronounced him worthy of death for making this claim. Matt. xxvi. 64, 65, 66. And they brought this accusation against him to Pilate, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. When, therefore, Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid." John xix. 7, 8. By this, it is evident that Pilate considered the Son of God, to imply divinity. When the Centurion, and the guard who were with him, saw the earthquake and the other supernatural events which attended the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, "they feared

in Christ's name, or to be sent by the Son. We have already considered the most commonly received sense hereof, as including in it an eternal procession, *viz.* the communication of

greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God." Matt. xxvii. 54. From this, it is evident that they considered the Son of God to be more than a man, at least, if not really God.

There was some idea and belief propagated among other nations, as well as the Jews, of an extraordinary personage, a divinity, who was denominated *The Son of God*, and who was to make his appearance in the world. To this, Nebuchadnezzar doubtless had reference, when he said, that in a vision, he saw a fourth person, walking in the midst of the fire of the furnace into which he had cast three men; and that none of them had been hurt by the fire; and the form of the fourth was like *the Son of God*. Dan. iii. 25. And who but this divine person can be meant by Agur, when he says, "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" Prov. xxx. 4.

This epithet and character we find expressly mentioned by David, the divinely inspired king of Israel, in the second Psalm. And he is there introduced and described, as a divinity, who claims divine homage, trust, and worship, as the Omnipotent heir, possessor and ruler of the world. "I will declare the decree. The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art MY SON, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!"* From this ancient oracle in Israel, and from a revelation which was made upon the first apostacy, and handed down by tradition, not only the Jews, but also those of other nations who had any particular connexion with them, were taught to consider the expected Messiah as the Son of God in a peculiar and appropriated sense; and as implying real divinity. Therefore, it was supposed on all hands, that this person, the Son of God, the King of Israel, the King of the Jews, was to be worshipped as worthy to receive divine honours. Hence the wise men from the East, being admonished of the birth of this glorious personage, came to worship him, to pay him divine honours; for which they had a particular warrant, having had him pointed out to them by a STAR, which was a known symbol, or hieroglyphic of the Divinity, or a God. And Herod took it for granted, that this person was to be worshipped, and receive divine honours. For he said to the wise men, "When ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also."

All this will be of no weight, indeed, and as nothing with the Anti-trinitarians, the Sabellians; and with all those who deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Arians and Socinians. But they who believe in a Trinity of persons in the Deity, and that Jesus Christ is God, the second person of the Trinity, must be sensible that he is called the Son of God, the Son of the Father, with a special reference to his divine nature, and to denote his Godhead, as the second person in the Triune God.—The Arians and Socinians hold that he is the Son of God, considered as a mere creature, being by this distinguished from all other creatures; and conse-

* This is an incontestible proof that the Son is God, even JEHOVAH. The Psalmist often says, "Blessed are they, blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord." And here he says, Blessed are all they who trust in the Son of God, and yet forbids us to put our trust in any but God. "Put not your trust in princes, or in the son of man, in whom there is no help. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." Psalm cxlvi. 3, 5. And he says, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." Psalm lxxii. 5. They only are blessed, who trust in God; and all others are cursed. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Jer. xvii. 5, 7. They are blessed, who trust in the Son of God. Therefore he is the Lord.

the divine essence, or personality to him, as distinguished from the eternal generation of the Son; but now we shall enquire whether there may not be another sense given of these scrip-

quently that there was no Son of God before this creature did exist. The latter, or Trinitarians, believe that the sonship of Jesus Christ, necessarily includes his divinity; but are not all agreed as to the foundation of his sonship, and in what it consists. It has been generally believed, and the common doctrine of the church of Christ, from the beginning of the fourth century, and so far as appears from the days of the apostles to this time, that Jesus Christ is the *eternal* Son of God: That his Sonship is essential to him, as the second person in the Trinity, and that *in this sense*, he is *the only begotten Son of the Father*, antecedent to his incarnation, and independent on it, even from eternity. But there are some who think that the Sonship of the Redeemer consists in an union of the second person of the Trinity, or the Word, with the human nature; and that he became the Son of God by becoming man; and therefore before the incarnation, there was no Son of God, though there were a Trinity of persons in the GODHEAD. This opinion seems to be rather gaining ground, and spreading, of late.

Those on each side of this question differ in their opinion of the importance of it, and of the bad tendency of either of these opposite sentiments. Some suppose that the difference is of little or no importance, as both believe the Redeemer to be God and man, in one person, and that he is the Son of God, and that this implies his divinity, though they differ in opinion respecting the time and manner of his filiation. Others think this is a difference so great and important, and attended with such consequences; and that those who are opposed to them on this point embrace such a great and dangerous error, that they ought to be strenuously opposed: and consequently do not desire an accommodation, or think it possible.

Though it be needless and improper here to undertake the labour of entering into all the arguments which have been produced, or may be mentioned in support of each side of this question; yet the following observations may not be altogether useless; but may be of some help to form a judgment upon this point, agreeable to the scriptures.

1. As this question respects the character of the Redeemer, it may justly be considered as an important one; as every thing relating to his character is very important and interesting. Who would be willing to be found at last taking the wrong side of this question; and always to have entertained so unbecoming ideas and conceptions of the Redeemer, which his must be, if on this point he embraces and contends for that which is directly contrary to the truth? Though such an error should not be fatal to him who embraces it, but be consistent with his being a real christian; yet it must be a very criminal mistake, and dishonourable to Jesus Christ; as every idea of him must be, which is contrary to his true character: For that is so perfect and glorious, that nothing can be taken from it, or added to it, which will not mar and dishonour it. His character, as it respects the question before us, is without doubt properly and clearly stated in divine revelation, and if we embrace that which is contrary to the truth, it must be wholly our own fault, and a very criminal abuse of the advantages which we enjoy, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ his Son, whom he has sent. Those considerations ought to awaken our attention to this subject, and excite a concern and earnest desire to know and embrace the truth; which will be attended with a modest, humble, diligent enquiry, sensible of the danger in which we are, through prejudice, or from other causes, of embracing error; and earnestly looking to the great Prophet to lead us into the truth.

2. What has been observed above, and, it is believed, made evident, viz. that the term, Son of God, so often given to Christ, is used to denote his divine nature, and to express his divinity, rather than his humanity, seems naturally, if not necessarily, to lead us to consider this character as belonging to him independent of his union to the human nature, and antecedent to his becoming man; and therefore, that it belongs to him as God, the second person in the Trinity. For if his

tures, agreeable to the analogy of faith, that may be acquiesced in by those, who cannot so well understand, or account for, the common sense given thereof, which, I humbly conceive, is

sonship consists in his union to the human nature, and he became a son, only by becoming a man; then this character depends wholly upon this union, and is derived from his being made flesh: Therefore this epithet could not be properly used to denote his divinity, independent of his humanity, or what he is as a divine person, antecedent to his incarnation; or to express his divine, rather than his human nature. And Son of God, would be no higher a character, and express no more than Son of man; which is contrary to the idea which the scripture gives us on this head, as has been shown.

This may, perhaps, be in some measure illustrated by the following instance. The son of a nobleman of the first honour and dignity, came from Europe, and married the daughter of a plebian in America, by which he became his son: But as his honour and dignity did not consist in his marrying this woman, or in his being the son of the plebian, by this union with his daughter, but in his original character; no man thought of expressing his highest and most dignified character by which he was worthy of the greatest respect, by using an epithet which denoted only his union to that woman, and which was not applicable to him in any other view: or by calling him *son*, as expressing this new relation: But the highest title which they gave him, was that which had a special respect to, and expressed his original character, which he sustained antecedent to this union; and in which his highest dignity consisted. And he being the son of a nobleman and a lord, in which all his honour and dignity did consist, they used this phrase, My noble Lord, to express their highest respect, and his most worthy character. This epithet was always used to express his original and highest character and relation, and could not, with propriety, be used to express any thing else. He was often called, indeed, the son of the plebian, when they designed particularly to express his union to his wife, and speak of him as standing in this relation.

3. The Son of God is spoken of in many instances, if not in every one where this term is used, so as will naturally lead the reader to consider him as sustaining this character and relation antecedent to his incarnation, and independent of it. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." John iii. 16. Do not these words seem to express this idea, viz. that there existed an only begotten son, antecedent to his being given: that God gave this his Son to the world by his becoming flesh, and being united to the human nature; and not that he became his Son by this union? "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." 1 John iv. 9, 10. If God sent his only begotten Son into the world, does not this suppose he had a Son to send, antecedent to his sending him; and that he did not become his Son by his sending him into the world, or only in consequence of this! This is expressed in the same manner by St. Paul. "But when the fulness of time was come God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Gal. iv. 4. The Son was sent forth. Does not this seem at least to imply that there was a Son to be sent forth antecedent to his being made of a woman, and that he was not made a Son, by being made of a woman or becoming man? "No man hath seen God at any time: The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." John i. 18. Do not these words naturally lead us to conceive of the only begotten Son as existing in the nearest union with the Father as his Son, independent of the human nature?

It is said, "God was manifested in the flesh." 1 Tim. iii. 16. It would be unnatural and absurd to suppose, from this expression, that Jesus Christ was not God, antecedent to his being manifested in the flesh, and that by his becoming man, he became a God. Directly the contrary to this is asserted, viz. that he who is God from eternity, did in time appear in the human nature, and manifested himself to be God, independent of the flesh, in which he appeared. It is also said,

this: that the Spirit is considered not with respect to the manner of his subsisting, but with respect to the subserviency of his acting, to set forth the Mediator's glory, and that of the Fa-

“For this purpose, the Son of God *was manifested*, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” I John iii. 8. These two passages appear to be parallel. God manifested in the flesh, and the Son of God manifested, are two expressions of the same thing. From this it may be inferred, that the Son of God, and God, are synonymous here, and of the same import. This serves to confirm what has been said above of the use and meaning of the term, Son of God. And may it not with equal certainty be inferred from these two passages, compared together, that the Son of God existed in this character as the Son of God, antecedent to his manifestation in the flesh, and independent of it; and that he did not become the Son of God by being made flesh? If God be manifested in the flesh, there must be a God to be manifested antecedent to such a manifestation, and independent of it. And is it not equally certain that if the Son of God be manifested, he must have existed the Son of God, antecedent to such manifestation, and independent of it? Consequently he did not become the Son of God by his being manifested in the flesh: His Sonship does not consist in the union of the divine and human natures in one person. His personality existed before this union with the human nature; and he was the Son of God before this: This same Son of God, this same person who existed without beginning, assumed the human nature, not a human person, into a union with himself, his own person, and so appeared, was manifested in the flesh.

When David speaks of the Son of God, and represents the Father as saying, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” so long before his incarnation, the idea which most naturally arises in the mind from this is, that there was then such a person as the Son, who did at that time declare the decree, by the mouth of David; and not, that there should in some future time be a Son begotten, who should *then* declare the decree. “I will declare the decree: The Lord said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” It is very unnatural, and contrary to all propriety of speech to suppose, “this day have I begotten thee,” means I will beget thee in some future time; and that the Son should be made to declare the decree, long before any such person existed; and when there was in fact no such Son. The decree which the Son declares is not that declaration, “Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee;” but what follows, “ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, &c.” “*This day*,” that is, *now*, not in time which is passed, or which is to come; for with God there is no succession, no time passed or to come; but he exists, as we may say, in one eternal, unsuccessive now. Therefore, when we speak of an eternal, immanent act, it is most properly expressed thus, “This day, or now, have I begotten thee.” This therefore is the sense in which the best divines have generally understood it.

St. Paul cites this passage as being illustrated and verified in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Acts xiii. 33. But he cannot mean that he by the resurrection became the Son of God, and was then begotten: for he had this title before that. His meaning is explained by himself in his epistle to the Romans. “Declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.” Rom. i. 4. That is, this was a fresh and open manifestation and declaration that he was indeed what had been often asserted of him, and what he always was: The only begotten Son of God.

What the angel said to the virgin Mary, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest—The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God,” cannot reasonably be understood as a declaration that his sonship consisted in his miraculous conception, or in the union of the second person of the Trinity with the human nature, thus conceived. But that this child, conceived in this manner, and born of a virgin, should

ther that sent him. I chuse to call it a subserviency of acting, without connoting any inferiority in the agent; or if we suppose that it argues any inferiority in the Holy Spirit, this is

appear, and be known to be the Son of God, that very person who had been spoken of and known in all past ages by this title; of whom Isaiah had particularly spoken, when he said, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name **ISMAEL**. Unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: And his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God:" Isaiah vii. 14. ix. 6. That this Son was now to be born of the virgin Mary: the long expected Messiah, who is considered and spoken of by the people of God, by the title of the Son of God, which title he shall bear, as he is indeed the mighty God.

We are naturally lead to consider the Son of God as existing in this character before his incarnation, and the same with the Word, by what is said of him in the first chapter of John. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten of the Father. No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, this was he of whom I spake, he that cometh after me, is preferred before me: *For he was before me.* And I saw, and bear record that this is the Son of God." Here John is represented as asserting that the Son of God, concerning whom he bore witness, did exist *before him*, which therefore must be *before his incarnation*; for John was conceived before the incarnation of Jesus. But how can this be true, if there were no Son of God, before John existed? But if we consider the Word and the Son of God as synonymous, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God, and created all things, this whole chapter will be plain and easy to be understood; and we shall see John bearing witness to the Son of God, who existed before him in this character, and was now come in the flesh.

We find the same representation made in the epistle to the Hebrews. "God, who spake in time past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things; *by whom also he made the worlds.* Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, *and upholding all things by the word of his power,*" &c. How could God make the worlds *by his Son*, four thousand years before he had a Son; and on this supposition, where is the propriety or truth of this assertion? And how could the Son be said to uphold all things by the word of his power, thousands of years before any Son existed? "And again, *when he bringeth the first begotten into the world*, he saith, *And let all the angels of God worship him.*" This expression naturally suggests the idea that God the Father had a first-begotten Son to bring into the world, whom he commanded the angels to worship. How can he be said to *bring* his first begotten Son *into the world*, when he had no such Son to bring into the world; and indeed never did bring this his Son into the world, if he was begotten and received his sonship *in this world*, when he took the human nature in the womb of the virgin, and was not a son before?

Again, speaking of Melchisedec, he says, he was "Without father, without mother, without descent, *having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God.*" Heb. vii. 3. If there were no Son of God till the human nature of Christ existed, then the Son of God did *begin to exist*; consequently there was a beginning of his days; and Melchisedec was not made like him, but *unlike* to him, by having no beginning of days.

Since there are so many passages of scripture, (and there are many more than have now been mentioned) which seem to represent the Redeemer as the Son of God, antecedent to his incarnation, and independent of it, which will naturally lead those who attend to them to this idea of him; and some of them cannot be easily reconciled to the contrary opinion; this will fully account for the generally received doctrine in the christian world from the earliest ages to this time, viz. That the Redeemer of man is the second person in the Trinity, the eternal

only an inferiority in acting, as the works that he does are subservient to the glory of the Mediator, and of the Father, though his divine personality is, in all respects, equal with

Son of God, who in the fulness of time was made flesh, by a personal union with the human nature.

4. It is worthy of consideration, whether the contrary opinion, viz. That the Redeemer is the Son of God, only by the second person in the Trinity being united to human nature, and becoming man, does not naturally lead to dangerous and evil consequences; and what good end is to be answered by it? If it be not agreeable to scripture, we know it must be dangerous and hurtful in a greater or less degree, (as all errors respecting the person and character of the Redeemer are) and naturally tends to lead into other mistakes, still greater, and of worse consequence. And if it be agreeable to scripture, it certainly has no bad tendency. If, therefore, it does appear from reasoning upon it, or from fact and experience, that this opinion tends to evil consequences, and has a bad effect; we may safely conclude that it is wrong, and contrary to divine revelation.

1. Does not this sentiment tend to lower our ideas of the Redeemer, and lead into a way of thinking less honourably of him? It has been observed that it appears from scripture, that this title, Son of God, was used to express the highest and most honourable idea which his friends had of his person and character. But if we understand by it, nothing but what takes place by his union to man, by taking flesh upon him, and consider it as signifying nothing but what took place by his becoming man, nothing is expressed by it more than by *Son of man*. And we are left without any epithet or common scripture phrase, whereby to express the divinity, the Godhead of the Redeemer, and his equality with the Father. Thus, instead of raising our conceptions of the Redeemer, does it not tend to sink them? Does not the sonship of Christ become an infinitely less and more inconsiderable matter, upon this plan, than that which has always been esteemed the orthodox sentiment on this point, which considers his sonship, as wholly independent of the whole creation, as eternal, and altogether divine?

We live in an age when the enemies of the Redeemer lift up their heads, and are suffered to multiply and prevail. The deists attempt to cast him out as an impostor. Arians and Socinians strip him of his divinity: And the careless, ignorant, immoral and profane, treat him with contempt, or neglect. This is agreeable to his great enemy, Satan; who seems now to be let loose in an unusual degree, and has uncommon power among men, to lead them into gross errors, and those especially which are dishonourable to Christ, and injurious to his character. And if this sentiment now under consideration, concerning the Sonship of the Redeemer, should spread and prevail now, this would be no evidence in favour of it; but, considering what has been now observed, concerning it, would it not give reason to suspect, at least, that it is dishonourable to the Son of God, and leads to other errors yet more dishonourable to him?

This leads to observe,

2. It is worthy of consideration, whether this doctrine of the filiation of Jesus Christ, does not tend to reject the doctrine of the Trinity, as it has been held by those who have been called the orthodox in the christian church, and leads to what is called Sabellianism; which considers the Deity as but one person, and to be three only out of respect to the different manner or kind of his operations.

This notion of the Sonship of Christ, leads to suppose that the Deity is the Father of the Mediator, without distinction of persons; and that by Father so often mentioned in the New Testament, and generally in relation to the Son is commonly, if not always, meant Deity, without distinction of persons. If this be so, it tends to exclude all distinction of persons in God, and to make the personality of the Redeemer to consist wholly in the human nature; and finally, to make his union with Deity no more, but the same which Arians and Socinians admit, viz. the same which takes place between God and good men in general; but in a higher and peculiar degree.

theirs. This explication of these texts, is allowed of by many, if not by most, of those who defend the doctrine of the Trinity, notwithstanding their maintaining another notion of the Spirit's

But if there be no tendency in this doctrine of the sonship of Christ, to the consequences which have been now mentioned; and it can be made evident that none of those supposed evils do attend it, or can follow from it; yet it remains to be considered *what advantage attends it*, and the good ends it will answer, if it were admitted to be true. None will say, it is presumed, that it is more agreeable to the general expressions of scripture relating to this point, than the opposite doctrine; who well considers what has been observed above. The most that any one can with justice say with respect to this is, that the scripture may be so construed and understood, as to be consistent with the sonship of Christ, commencing at the incarnation, however inconsistent with it some passages may appear at first view.

It may be thought, perhaps, that this notion of the sonship of the Redeemer is attended with two advantages, if not with more, viz. It frees the doctrine of the Trinity from that which is perfectly incomprehensible, and appears a real contradiction and absurdity; that the second person should be Son of the first, who is the Father; the Son being begotten by the Father from eternity; than which nothing can be more inconceivable, and seemingly absurd. And this appears inconsistent with the second person being equal with the first; for a son begotten of a father, implies inferiority, and that he exists after his father, and consequently begins to exist, and is dependent. Both these difficulties are wholly avoided, it is thought, by supposing that the second person in the Trinity became a son by being united to the human nature, and begotten in the womb of the virgin. And it is probable that these supposed advantages have recommended this scheme of the Sonship of Christ, to those who embrace it, and led them to reject the commonly received opinion; and not a previous conviction that the former is most agreeable to the scripture. This therefore demands our serious and candid attention. And the following things may be observed upon it.

1. If we exclude every thing from our creed, concerning God, his existence, and the manner of his existence, which to us is incomprehensible and unaccountable, we must reject the doctrine of the Trinity in unity, and even of the existence of a God. The doctrine of three persons in one God is wholly inconceivable by us, and Unitarians consider it as the greatest contradiction and absurdity imaginable. And those Trinitarians, who have undertaken to explain it, and make it more intelligible, have generally failed of giving any light; but have really made it absurd and even ridiculous, by "darkening counsel by words without knowledge." If we reasoned properly on the matter, we should expect to find in a revelation which God has made of himself, his being and manner of subsistence, mysteries which we can by no means understand, which are to creatures wonderful, and wholly unaccountable. For the being of God, and the manner of his existence, and of his subsisting, must be infinitely above our comprehension: God is infinitely great, and we know him not. And if we attempt to search out these mysteries by reason, we are prone to think they are contradictions and absurdities, merely because our reason cannot fathom them; and they appear more unintelligible, the more we try to understand them. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the ALMIGHTY to perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." Job ii. 7, 8, 9. "Teach us what we shall say unto him, (and what we shall say concerning him;) for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. Shall it be told him that *I speak*?" and attempt to comprehend and explain the mysteries that relate to his existence? "If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up." Job xxxvii. 19, 20. If a man undertake thus to speak, instead of giving any light, he will be involved and overwhelmed in impenetrable darkness.

They, therefore, who do not believe the eternal sonship of Jesus Christ, because it is mysterious and incomprehensible, and to some it appears to be ful

procession from the Father and the Son, from all eternity, in the sense before considered. I need only refer to that explanation which a great and learned divine gives of these, and

of contradiction, will, if they be consistent with themselves, for the same reason, reject the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in one God.*

2. If the doctrine of the eternal generation and sonship of the second person in the Trinity be soberly and modestly considered in the light of the foregoing observation, and with a proper sense of our own darkness and infinite inferiority to the divine Being, and how little we can know of him; we shall not be forward to pronounce it inconsistent with reason, and absurd; but be convinced, that to do thus, is very bold and assuming; and that it may be consistent and true, notwithstanding any thing we may know; though it be mysterious and incomprehensible. This is a *divine generation*, infinitely above any thing that takes place among creatures, and infinitely different. It is that of which we can have no adequate idea, and is infinitely out of our reach. What incompetent judges are we then of this matter? What right or ability have we to pronounce it absurd or inconsistent, when we have no capacity to know or determine what is true, consistent, or inconsistent in this high point, any farther than God has been pleased to reveal it to us? There may be innumerable mysteries in the existence and manner of subsistence of the infinite Being, which are, and must be, incomprehensible, by a finite understanding. God has been pleased, for wise ends, to reveal that of the Trinity, and this of the eternal generation and sonship of the second person: And he has done it in a manner, and in words best suited to convey those ideas of it to men, which it is necessary they should have: And we ought to receive it with meekness and implicit submission, using our reason in excluding every thing which is contrary to, or below infinite perfection, and absolute independence; without pretending to comprehend it, or to be able to judge of that which is infinitely high and divine, by that which takes place among creatures, with respect to generation, and father and son.

God is said in scripture, to repent and be grieved at his heart; to be angry, and to have his fury to come up in his face; and hands, feet, eyes, mouth, lips and tongue, &c. are ascribed to him. These words are designed and suited to convey useful ideas, and important instruction to men. But if we should understand these expressions as meaning the same thing in the Divine Being, that they do when applied to men; we must entertain very unworthy, and most absurd notions of God, and wholly inconsistent with other declarations in the sacred Oracles. But if we exclude every thing that is human, or that implies any change or imperfection from these expressions when applied to the Deity, they will convey nothing absurd or inconsistent, or that is unworthy of God. And it will doubtless be equally so in the case before us; if it be constantly kept in mind that the only begotten Son of God denotes nothing human, but is infinitely above any thing which relates to natural, or creature generation, and does not include any beginning, change, dependence, inferiority, or imperfection. This will effectually exclude all real absurdity and contradiction.

It will be asked, perhaps, when all this is excluded from our ideas of generation, of Father and Son, what idea will remain in our minds, which is conveyed by these words? Will they not be without any signification to us, and altogether useless? To this, the following answer may be given: From what is revealed concerning this high and incomprehensible mystery, we learn, that in the existence of the Deity, there is that which is high above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth, infinitely beyond our conception, and different from any thing which takes place among creatures, which is a foundation of a per-

* It has been before observed, that the denial of the eternal sonship of Christ seemed to have a tendency to a rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity; and in what way. But what is here observed, shews how the denial of the former tends, *another way*, to the rejection of the latter. For if the former be rejected, because it is incomprehensible, and appears inconsistent, it may be expected that when the doctrine of the Trinity is more particularly considered, it will appear equally unintelligible; and therefore be rejected, for the same reason. Is it not probable, that Sabellius, the ancient Anti-trinitarian, was in this way led to give up the doctrine of the Trinity?

such like texts, notwithstanding his adhering, in other respects, to the common mode of speaking, relating to the eternal generation of the Son, and procession of the Holy Ghost. His

sonal distinction, as real and great as that between father and son among men, and infinitely more perfect: which distinction may be in the best manner conveyed to us by Father and Son, to express the most perfect union and equality; that the Son is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and that there is infinite love and endearment between them; and that in the economy of the work of redemption, the Son is obedient to the Father, &c. All this, and much more, our minds are capable of conceiving from what is revealed on this high and important subject; which is suited to impress our hearts with a sense of the incomprehensible, infinite, adorable perfection and glory of the Father and the Son; and is necessary in order to give us a right understanding of the gospel; of the true character of the Redeemer, and of the work of redemption.

What has been now said under this second particular, may serve to remove the other supposed difficulty in admitting the eternal filiation of the second person in the Trinity, viz. that it represents the Son as inferior to the Father, and as existing *after him*, and therefore his existence had a beginning. This is obviated by the above observations; and particularly by this, that it is a *divine filiation*, and therefore infinitely unlike that which is human; and above our comprehension. Besides, to suppose eternal generation admits of *before or after*, or of a beginning, is inconsistent. It may be further observed,

3. That the opinion that Jesus Christ is the first and only begotten Son of God, by the second person in the Trinity becoming incarnate, and united to the human nature, is, perhaps, attended with as great difficulties as the other which has been considered, if not greater. If so, the inducement to embrace it, and reject the other, which we are examining, wholly ceases.

If the Son was begotten by the miraculous formation of the human nature; then the Holy Ghost begot the Son and is the Father, as much as the first person in the Trinity. For the angel said to the virgin, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." If we take these words as referring only to the production of the human nature, and if it be granted that by the highest, is meant the first person in the Trinity, of which there does not appear to be any evidence, yet the third person, the Holy Ghost, is represented as doing as much, and being as active in this production as the first person. But if this were no difficulty, and the first person of the Trinity be supposed to produce the human nature, and in this sense to be the Father of Jesus Christ; yet this will make him his Father in no other and higher sense than he is the Father of angels, and of Adam; and Jesus Christ will be the Son of God in no other, or higher sense than they; for they were created and formed in an extraordinary, miraculous way.

If the Son was begotten by uniting the second person of the Trinity with the human nature, and the filiation of the Son is supposed to consist wholly in being thus united to man; this is attended with the following difficulties, as great, perhaps, if not greater, than those which attend the eternal Sonship of the second person.

1. This is as different in nature and kind from natural or creature generation, as eternal divine generation; and the one bears no analogy or likeness to the other.

2. This union of God with the creature so as to become one person, is as mysterious and incomprehensible, as the eternal Sonship of the second person of the Trinity; and as inexplicable: so that nothing is gained with respect to this, by embracing this scheme.

3. It is not agreeable to scripture to suppose that the first person of the Trinity only, united the second person to the human nature, and so became a Father by thus begetting a Son. The third person, the Holy Ghost, is represented as doing this, or at least, being active in it; and there is nothing expressly said of the first person doing any thing respecting it as such. "The Holy Ghost shall

words are these * : " All that discourse which we have of the mission, and sending of the Holy Ghost, and his proceeding and coming forth from the Father and Son, for the ends specified, John xiv. 26. and xv. 26. and xvi. 7, 13. concerns not at all the eternal procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and Son, as to his distinct personality and subsistence, but belongs to that œconomy, or dispensation of the ministry, that the whole Trinity proceedeth in, for the accomplishment of the work of our salvation."

Now if these scriptures, which are the chief in all the New Testament, on which this doctrine is founded, are to be taken in this sense, how shall we find a sufficient proof, from other scriptures, of the procession of the Holy Ghost in any other sense? Therefore, that we may farther explain this doctrine, let us consider, that whatever the Son, as Mediator, has purchased, as being sent by the Father for that end, is applied by the Holy Ghost, who therefore acts in subserviency to them. This is generally called, by divines, the œconomy of persons in the Godhead, which, because it is a word that we often use, when we consider the distinct works of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in their respective subserviency to one another, we shall take occasion briefly to explain, and shew how it may be applied to them in that respect without inferring any inferiority as to what concerns their Personal glory. We shall say nothing concerning the derivation, or use, of the word œconomy, though we cannot forbear to mention, with indignation, the sense which some of the opposers of the blessed Trinity have given of it, while laying aside all the rules of decency and reverence, which this sacred mystery calls for, they represent us, as speaking of the family-government of the divine Per-

* See Dr. Owen against Biddle, p. 362.

come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." " Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. When his mother, Mary, was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." And the angel of the Lord said unto Joseph, " Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." Matt. i. 18, 20. And this uniting the divine nature with the human, is expressly ascribed, not to the first, but to the second person. " For as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Heb. ii. 14, 16. Do not they speak not only without scripture, but contrary to it, who say that the first person of the Trinity became a Father by uniting the second person to the human nature, in the womb of the virgin Mary; by which the latter became the only begotten Son of the Father? That the relation of Father and Son began in the incarnation of Christ, and consists wholly in this? And do they by this supposition avoid any difficulty, and render the filiation of the Redeemer more consistent, intelligible, or honourable to him? Let the thoughtful candid discerning reader judge."

sons, which is the most invidious sense they could put upon the word, and most remote from our design in the use of it. Now that we may explain and apply it to our present purpose, let it be considered,

1. That all those works, which are the effects of the divine power, or sovereign will, are performed by all the Persons in the Godhead, and attributed to them in scripture; the reason whereof is very evident, namely, because the power and will of God, and all other divine perfections, belong equally, and alike, to the Father, Son, and Spirit: if therefore that which produces these effects belongs to them, then the effects produced must be equally ascribed to them; so that the Father is no more said to create and govern the world, or to be the author of all grace, and the fountain of blessedness, than the Son and Spirit.

2. Nevertheless, since the Father, Son, and Spirit, are distinct Persons, and so have distinct personal considerations in acting, it is necessary that their personal glory should be demonstrated, or made known to us, that our faith and worship may be fixed on, and directed to them, in a distinct manner, as founded thereon.

3. This distinction of the Persons in the Godhead cannot be known, as their eternal power or Deity is said to be, by the works of creation and providence, it being a doctrine of pure revelation; therefore,

4. We are given to understand, in scripture, when it treats of the great work of our salvation, that it is attributed first to the Father, then to the Son, as Mediator, receiving a commission from him to redeem and save his people, and then to the Holy Ghost, acting in subserviency thereunto; this is what we are to understand when we speak of the distinct œconomy of the Father, Son, and Spirit, which I cannot better express than by considering of it as a divine determination, that the personal glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit, should be demonstrated in such a way. Now, to instance in some particular acts, or works; when a divine Person is represented in scripture as doing, or determining to do, any thing relating to the work of our redemption, or salvation, by another divine Person, who must, for that reason, be considered herein, as Mediator, it is to be understood of the Father, in this œconomic sense, inasmuch as, by this means, he demonstrates his personal glory: thus it is said, Eph. i. 4, 5. *He, i. e. the Father, hath chosen us in him, namely, the Son; and he is said to have predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.* Though election and predestination are also applied to the Son and Spirit, when they have another reference corresponding with the demonstration of their personal glory, yet,

in this place, they are only applied to the Father. And there are several other scriptures, in which things done are particularly applied to the Father for the same reason. Thus, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. it is said, *God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and that he was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself*; and, in 1 Cor. i. 30. it is said, *Of him, namely the Father, are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God, that is, the Father, is made unto us wisdom, &c.* in which, and several other scriptures to the same purpose, the Father is, in a peculiar manner, intended, because considered, as no other divine person is, as acting by the Mediator, or as glorifying the perfections of the divine nature, which belong to him, by what this great Mediator did by his appointment.

Moreover when a divine Person is considered as acting in subserviency to the Father's glory, or executing a commission relating to the work of redemption, which he had received from him, and accordingly performing any act of obedience in an human nature assumed by him for that purpose, this is peculiarly applied to, and designed to demonstrate the Son's Personal character, as belonging to no other Person in the Godhead but him. Of this we have several instances in scripture; thus though to judge the world be a branch of the divine glory, which is common to all the Persons in the Godhead; yet there are some circumstances in the character of a divine Person in particular, who is denominated as Judge of quick and dead, that are applicable to none but the Son; and so we are to understand that scripture, John v. 22. *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son*; that is, the Son is the only Person in the Godhead who displays his Mediatorial character and glory, as the Judge of the whole world; yet when there is another personal character ascribed to God, as the Judge of all; or when he is said to *judge the world in righteousness, by that Man*, to wit, our Lord Jesus, *whom he hath ordained*, as in Acts xvii. 31. then this personal character determines it to belong to the Father.

Again, to give eternal life is a divine prerogative, and consequently belongs to all the Persons in the Godhead; yet when a divine Person is said to give eternal life to a people, that were given to him for that purpose, and to have received power, or authority, from another, to confer this privilege as Mediator, then it is peculiarly applied to the Son: thus John xviii. 2. *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

Moreover, when a divine Person is said to do any thing in subserviency to the Mediator; or, as it is said, in John xvi. 14. *He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*, this is peculiarly applied to the Spirit. So

when he is said to give his testimony to the mission, or work of the Mediator, by any divine works performed by him, this is peculiarly applied to him; or when he is said to sanctify and comfort, or to seal and confirm believers unto the day of redemption. Though these being divine works, are, for that reason, applicable to all the Persons in the Godhead; yet when he is said to perform them in a way of subserviency to Christ, as having purchased them, then his distinct personal character, taken from thence, is demonstrated, and so these works are especially applied to him. This is what we understand by that peculiar œconomy, or dispensation, which determines us to give distinct personal glory to each of the Persons in the Godhead.

And now we are speaking of the Spirit, considered as acting, whereby he sets forth his Personal glory, we may observe, that, in compliance with this way of speaking, the gifts and graces of the Spirit, are, by a metonymy, called the *Spirit*, as in Acts xix. 2. when it is said, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost? They said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.* We are not to understand it as though they had not heard whether there were such a Person as the Holy Ghost; but they had not heard that there was such an extraordinary dispensation of the gifts of the Holy Ghost conferred on men; so John vii. 39. it is said, *The Holy Ghost was not yet given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified; the word *given* being supplied in our translation, and not in the original; it ought rather to be rendered, *The Holy Ghost was not as yet*; by which we are to understand the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and not his Personality, which was from all eternity.

And here we may farther observe, that when the Holy Ghost is spoken of as a Person, that word which denotes his Personality, ought not to be rendered *It*, but *He*, as expressive of his Personal character; but when it is taken in a figurative sense, for the gifts or graces of the Spirit, then it should be translated *It*. This is sometimes observed in our translation of scripture; as in John xvi. 13. it is said of the Spirit, *He will guide you into all truth*, where the Personal character of the Spirit is expressly mentioned, as it ought to be: but it is not duly observed by our translators in every scripture; Rom. viii. 16. it is said, *The Spirit itself beareth witness*, which ought to have been rendered *Himself*; as also in ver. 26. *The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us*. The same ought to be observed in all other scriptures, whereby we may be led to put a just difference between the Spirit, considered as a divine Person; or as acting, or producing those effects, which are said to be wrought by him.

Thus concerning the Sonship of Christ, and the procession of

the Holy Ghost. What I have said, in attempting to explain those scripture that treat of the Person of Christ, as God-man, Mediator, and of his inferiority, in that respect, (or as he is said to sustain that character) to the Father; as also those which speak of the subserviency of the Spirit, in acting, to the Father and the Son, does not, as I apprehend, run counter to the common faith of those who have defended the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. Therefore I hope that when I call one the Sonship of Christ, and the other the procession of the Holy Ghost, this will not be deemed a new and strange doctrine. And I cannot but persuade myself, that what I have said concerning the Mediator, as acting in obedience to the Father, and the Spirit, in subserviency to him, will not be contested by those who defend the doctrine of the Trinity. And, if I have a little varied from the common way of speaking, I hope none will be offended at the acceptation of a word, especially since I have endeavoured to defend my sense thereof, by referring to many scriptures. And, if I cannot give into the common explication of the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost, I am well satisfied I do no more than what many Christians do, who have received the doctrine of the Trinity from the scripture, and are unacquainted with those modes of speaking which are used in the schools: these appear as much to dislike them, when used in public discourses about this doctrine, as any other can do, what has been attempted to explain it in a different way.

IV. We shall now proceed to consider the Godhead of the Son, and Holy Ghost, as maintained in one of the answers we are explaining, by four general heads of argument.

I. From those divine names which are given to them, that are peculiar to God alone.

II. From their having the divine attributes ascribed to them, and consequently the divine nature.

III. From their having manifested their divine glory, by those works that none but God can perform.

IV. From their having a right to divine worship, which none but God is worthy to receive.

If these things be made to appear, we have all that we need contend for; and it will be evident from thence, that the Son and Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father. These heads of argument we shall apply to them distinctly; and,

First, To the Son, who appears to be God equal with the Father,

I. From those divine names given to him, that are peculiar to God alone. And here we shall premise something concerning the use of names given to persons, together with the de-

sign thereof. Names are given to persons, as well as things, with a twofold design.

1. Sometimes nothing else is intended thereby, but to distinguish one from another, in which sense the names given are not in themselves significant, or expressive of any property, or quality, in those that are so described. Thus most of those names we read of in scripture, though not all of them, are designed only to distinguish one man from another, which is the most common use and design thereof; notwithstanding,

2. They are sometimes given to signify some property in those to whom they are applied, *viz.* what they should be, or do. Thus we have many instances, in scripture, of persons called by names, which have had some special signification annexed to them, assigned as a reason of their being so called. Thus Adam had that name given him, because made of earth; and Eve was so called, because she was the mother of all living. The same may be said concerning Seth, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and several others, whose respective names have a signification annexed to them, agreeable to the proper sense of the words, and the design of their being so called.

And, to apply this to our present purpose, we may conclude, that when names are given to any divine Person, they are designed to express some excellency and perfection belonging to him; and therefore we shall have sufficient reason to conclude the Son to be a divine Person, if we can make it appear that he has those names given to him in scripture, which are proper to God alone. And,

1. The name Jehovah is given to him, which is peculiar to God. Here we shall prove, *First*, that the name Jehovah is peculiar to God. And, *Secondly*, that it is ascribed to Christ.

(1.) That the name Jehovah is peculiar to God, whereby he is distinguished from all creatures: thus it is said, Isa. xlii. 8. *I am the Lord, or Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another; or, as the text may be rendered, I am Jehovah, that name of mine, and my glory, which is signified thereby, will I not give to another:* therefore it follows, that it is an incommunicable name of God: and when he says, *I will not give it to another,* it supposes that it necessarily belongs to him; and therefore that he cannot give it to another, since that would be unbecoming himself; therefore this name, which is expressive of his glory in so peculiar a manner, is never given to any creature.

There are other scriptures to this purpose, in which the name Jehovah is represented, as peculiar to God. Thus when the prophet Amos had been speaking of the glory of God, as displayed in the works of creation and providence, he adds, *that*

the Lord, or Jehovah, is his name, chap. v. 8. So that those works, which are peculiar to God, might as well be applied to creatures, as that name Jehovah, which is agreeable thereunto. And in chap. ix. 6. the prophet gives another magnificent description of God, with respect to those works that are peculiar to him, when he says, *It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; and then he adds, the Lord, or Jehovah, is his name.*

Again, it is said, in Psal. lxxxiii. 18. *That men may know, that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth.* This is never said of any other divine names, which are, in a limited sense, sometimes given to creatures; and, indeed, all creatures are expressly excluded from having a right hereunto.

Again, there are other scriptures, in which this name Jehovah is applied to God, and an explication thereof subjoined, which argues that it is peculiar to him. Thus when Moses desired of God, that he would let him know what *his name* was for the encouragement of the faith of the Israelites, to whom he sent him, Exod. iii. 13. *g. d.* he desires to know what are those divine glories, that would render him the object of faith and worship; or how he might describe him in such a way to the children of Israel, whereby they might express that reverence and regard to him, that was due to the great God, who sent him about so important an errand. In answer to which God says, ver. 14. *I AM THAT I AM.* Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *I AM* hath sent me unto you; which description of him doth not set forth one single perfection, but all the perfections of the divine nature; as though he should say, *I am a God of infinite perfection; and then he adds, in the following verse, Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, The Lord, or Jehovah, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; where Jehovah signifies the same with I AM THAT I AM.* And he adds, *This is my memorial unto all generations;* therefore this glorious name is certainly peculiar to God.

What has been already observed, under this head, is sufficient to prove that the name Jehovah is proper to God alone. But we might hereunto add another argument, of less weight, which, though we do not lay that stress upon, as though it was sufficient of itself to prove this matter; yet, being added to what has been already suggested, it may not be improper to be mentioned, *viz.* that the word Jehovah has no plural number, as being never designed to signify any more than the one God; neither has it any emphatical particle affixed to it, as other words in the Hebrew language have; and particularly several

of the other names of God, which distinguishes him from others, who have those names sometimes applied to them; and the reason of this is, because the name Jehovah is never given to any creature.

And to this we might add, that since the Jews best understood their own language, they may, in some respects, be depended on, as to the sense they give of the word Jehovah; and it is certain they paid the greatest regard to this name, even to superstition. Accordingly, they would never pronounce it; but, instead thereof, use some other expressions, by which they describe it. Sometimes they call it, *that name*, or *that glorious name*, or *that name that is not to be expressed*; * by which they mean, as Josephus says, † that it was not lawful for them to utter it, or, indeed, to write it, which, if any one presumed to do, they reckoned him not only guilty of profaneness, in an uncommon degree, but even of blasphemy; and therefore it is never found in any writings of human composure among them. The modern Jews, indeed, are not much to be regarded, as retaining the same veneration for this name; but Onkelos, the author of the Chaldee paraphrase on some parts of scripture, who lived about fifty years after our Saviour's time, and Jonathan Ben-Uzziel, who is supposed to have lived as many years before it, never insert it in their writings; and, doubtless, they were not the first that entertained these sentiments about it, but had other writings then extant, which gave occasion thereunto. Some critics conclude, from Jewish writers, that it was never pronounced, even in the earliest ages of the church, except by the High Priest; and when he was obliged, by the divine law, to pronounce it, in the form of benediction, the people always expressed an uncommon degree of reverence, either by bowing, or prostration; but this is not supported by sufficient evidence. Others think it took its rise soon after their return from captivity, which is more probable; however, the reason they assign for it is, because they reckoned it God's incommunicable name.

And here I cannot but observe, that the translators of the Greek version of the Old Testament, commonly called the LXX. which, if it be not altogether the same with that mentioned by Aristæus, which was compiled almost three hundred years before the Christian Æra, is, without doubt, of considerable antiquity; these never translate the word JEHOVAH, but, instead thereof, put *Κυριος*, Lord; ‡ and, even when it seems absurd not to do it, as in Exod. vi. 3. when it is said, by my

* *ὄνομα ἀνεκφάνητον.*

† *Antiq. Lib. III. Cap. 5.*

‡ *This the Holy Ghost has condescended, for what reason I know not, to give countenance to, in all those quotations in the New Testament, where the name JEHOVAH, is referred to from the Old.*

name, JEHOVAH, was I not known, they render it, by my name, the LORD, was I not known. §

This we take occasion to observe, not as supposing it is a sufficient proof of itself, of the argument we are maintaining, but as it corresponds with the sense of those scriptures before mentioned, by which it appears that this is the proper, or incommunicable, name of God.

Object. It is objected, by the Anti-Trinitarians, that the name Jehovah is sometimes given to creatures, and consequently that it is not God's proper name; nor does it evince our Saviour's Deity, when given to him. To prove that it is sometimes given to creatures, they refer to several scriptures; as Exod. xvii. 15. where the altar that Moses erected is called *Jehovah Nissi*, i. e. the Lord is my banner; and, in Judges vi. 22. another altar that Gideon built, is called *Jehovah Shalom*; and Gen. xxii. 14. it is said, that Abraham called the name of the place, in which he was ready to offer Isaac, *Jehovah Fireh*; and, in Ezek. xlvi. 35. it is said, that Jerusalem, from that day, should be called *Jehovah Shammah*; they add also, that the Ark was called *Jehovah*, upon the occasion of its being carried up into the city of David, when it is said, Psal. xlvii. 5. *The Lord, i. e. Jehovah is gone up with a shout, even the Lord with the sound of a trumpet*, and also on other occasions. And the name Jehovah is often, in the Old Testament, given to angels, and therefore not proper to God alone.

Ans. 1. When they pretend that the name Jehovah was given to inanimate things, and in particular to altars, as in the instance mentioned in the objection, that one of the altars was indeed called *Jehovah Nissi*, it is very unreasonable to suppose, that the name and glory of God was put upon it; had it been a symbol of God's presence, it would not have been called by this name, especially in the same sense in which our Saviour and the Holy Spirit have it applied to them; and therefore the meaning of this scripture, as I apprehend, is nothing but this, that there was an inscription written on the altar, containing these words, *Jehovah Nissi*, the design whereof was to signify, to the faith of those who came to worship there, that the Lord was their banner: therefore this name, strictly speaking, was

§ In two places, indeed, it is rendered by Θεός, God, Gen. iv. 1. and Isa. liv. 15. And there is one place in which some think they attempt a literal translation of it, 2 Sam. i. 11. where, instead of the people of the Lord, they translate the text, *ἐπί τον λαόν 'Ιωδα*, in which, some think, 'Ιωδα, is put for 'Ιουδα, or 'Ιαζα, through the mistake of some amanuensis; but it seems rather to be an explication than a literal translation of the words; and whereas some think, the reason of this method used by them in their translation, is, because the Hebrew letters, of which that name consists, cannot well be expressed by the letters of the Greek alphabet, so as to compose a word like it, that does not seem to be the reason of it, inasmuch as they attempt to translate other names equally difficult; as in Gen. x. 2. 'Ιαβυβ, for Javan; and 2 Kings xii. 2. 'Ιαδαζι for Jehoiada.

not given to the altar, but to God; upon which some, not without good reason, render the word; he built an altar, and called the name of it, the altar of *Jehovah Nissi*. The same may be said with respect to the altar erected by Gideon, which was called *Jehovah Shalom*, or the altar of *Jehovah Shalom*, to the end that all who came to offer sacrifice upon it, might hereby be put in mind that God was a God of peace, or would give peace to them.

2. As for the place to which Abraham went to offer Isaac, which is called *Jehovah-Jireh*, it was the mount *Moriah*; and it is certain that this was not known by, or whenever spoken of, mentioned, as having that name; neither had Abraham any right to apply to it any branch of the divine glory, as signified thereby; therefore when it is said, he called the name of the place *Jehovah-Jireh*, it is as though he should have said, let all that travel over this mountain know, that the Lord was seen, or provided a ram instead of Isaac, who was ready to be offered up; let this place be remarkable, in future ages, for this amazing dispensation of providence, and let them glorify God for what was done here, and let the memory hereof be an encouragement to their faith. Or else we may farther consider him speaking as a prophet, and so the meaning is, this place shall be very remarkable in future ages, as it shall be the mount of vision; here *Jehovah* will eminently appear in his temple, which shall be built in this place. Or if you take the words in another sense, *viz. God will provide*, it is as though he should say, as God has provided a ram to be offered instead of Isaac, so he will provide the Lamb of God, who is to take away the sin of the world, which was typified by Isaac's being offered. So that the place was not really called *Jehovah*; but Abraham takes occasion, from what was done here, to magnify him, who appeared to him, and held his hand, whom alone he calls *Jehovah*.

And to this we may add, that when Jerusalem is called *Jehovah Shammah*, *the Lord is there*, the meaning hereof is only this, that it shall eminently be said in succeeding ages of the new Jerusalem, that *the Lord is there*; the city, which was commonly known by the name Jerusalem, is not called *Jehovah*, as though it had any character of divine glory put upon it; but it implies, that the gospel church, which is signified thereby, should have the presence of God in an eminent degree; or, as our Saviour promised to his disciples, *Matth. xxviii. 20.* that *he would be with them always, even unto the end of the world*; and, as the result thereof, that *the gates of hell should not prevail against it*, *Matth. xvi. 18.*

3. As for the *ark*; it was not called *Jehovah*, though the Psalmist takes occasion, from its being carried up into the city of David, with a joyful solemnity, and an universal shout, with

the sound of a trumpet, to foretel the triumphant and magnificent ascension of our Saviour into heaven, which was typified hereby; concerning whom he says, *Jehovah* is gone up; or, speaking in a prophetic style, the present, or time past, being put for the time to come, it is as though he should say, the Lord, when he has completed the work of redemption on earth, will ascend into heaven, which shall be the foundation of universal joy to the church; and then he shall, as the Psalmist farther observes, *reign over the heathen, and sit on the throne of his holiness.*

Again, it does not appear that the ark was called *Jehovah*, in Exod. xvi. 33, 34. because, when Aaron is commanded to *lay the pot full of manna before the testimony*, that is, the ark, this is called, a laying it before *Jehovah*: but the reason of the expression is this; *viz.* God hath ordained that the mercy-seat over the ark should be the immediate seat of his residence, from whence he would condescend to converse with men, and accordingly he is said, elsewhere, to *dwell between the cherubims*; and, upon this account, that which was laid up before the ark, might be said to be laid up before the Lord.

But since none are so stupid to suppose that inanimate things can have the divine perfections belonging to them, therefore the principal thing contended for in this argument, is, that the ark was called *Jehovah*, because it was a sign and symbol of the divine presence; and from thence they conclude, that the name of God may be applied to a person that has no right to the divine glory, as the sign is called by the name of the thing signified thereby.

To which it may be answered, that the ark was not only a sacramental sign of God's presence, for that many other things relating to ceremonial worship were; but it was also the seat thereof: it was therefore the divine Majesty who was called *Jehovah*, and not the place of his residence; and it was he alone to whom the glory was ascribed that is due to his name.

4. When it is farther objected, that the name *Jehovah* is often applied to angels, the answer that may be given to this is; that it is never ascribed to any but him, who is called, by way of eminence, the angel, or *Messenger of the covenant*, *viz.* our Saviour, Mal. iii. 1. And whenever it is given to him, such glorious things are spoken of him, or such acts of divine worship demanded by and given to him, as argue him to be a divine Person; as will plainly appear, if we consider what the angel that appeared, in Exod. iii. says concerning himself, ver. 6. *I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*; and it is said, *Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God*; and in verses 7, 8. *The Lord, or Jehovah, said, I have surely seen the affliction of my*

people that are in Egypt, and I am come down to deliver them ; and ver. 10. *I will send thee unto Pharaoh ;* and then, in the following verses, he makes mention of his name, as of the great *Jehovah*, the *I AM*, who sent him. And Jacob gives divine worship to him, when he says, Gen. xlviii. 16. *The Angel, that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.* I might refer to many other scriptures, where the Angel of the Lord is said to appear, in which from the context, it is evident that it was a divine Person, and not a created angel. The most ancient Jewish writers generally call him the *Word** of the Lord.

But this will not properly be deemed a sufficient answer to the objection, inasmuch as it is not denied, that the Person, who so frequently appeared in the form of an angel, made use of such expressions, as can be applied to none but God ; therefore they say that he personated God, or spake after the manner of his representative, not designing that the glory of the divine perfections should be ascribed to him, but to *Jehovah*, whom he represented.

To which it may be replied, that the angel appearing to *Moses*, in the scripture before mentioned, and to several others, doth not signify himself to personate God, as doubtless he ought to have done, had he been only his representative, and not a divine Person ; as an ambassador, when he speaks in the name of the king, whom he represents, always uses such modes of speaking, as that he may be understood to apply what he says when personating him, not to himself, but to him that sent him ; and it would be reckoned an affront to him, whom he represents, should he give occasion to any to ascribe the honour that belongs to his master to himself. Now there is nothing, in those texts, which speak of this angel's appearing, that signifies his disclaiming divine honour, as what did not belong to him, but to God ; therefore we must not suppose that he speaks in such a way as God doth, only as representing him : we read, indeed, in Rev. xxii. 8, 9. of a created angel appearing to *John*, who was supposed by him, at the first, to be the same that appeared to the church of old, and accordingly *John* gave him divine honour ; but he refused to receive it, as knowing that this character, of being the divine representative, would not be a sufficient warrant for him to assume it to himself ; we must therefore from hence conclude, that the angel that appeared to the church of old, and is called *Jehovah*, was a divine Person.

2. Having considered that the name *Jehovah* is peculiarly applied to God, we now proceed to prove that it is given to the Son, whereby his Deity will appear ; and the first scripture

* See Dr. Allix's judgment of the Jewish church against the Unitarians, chap. viii. to xvi.

that we shall refer to is Isa. xl. 3. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, or Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.* Now if we can prove that this is a prophecy of John's preparing the way of our Saviour, then it will appear that our Saviour, in this scripture, is called Jehovah. That it is a prediction of John's being Christ's fore-runner, appointed to prepare the Jews for his reception, and to give them an intimation, that he, whom they had long looked for, would suddenly appear, is plain from those scriptures in the New Testament, which expressly refer to this prediction, and explain it in this sense: thus Matth. iii. 3. *This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight;* therefore he whose way John was to prepare, whom the prophet Esaias calls Jehovah, is our Saviour.

Again, it is said, in Isa. viii. 13. *Sanctify the Lord, or Jehovah, of hosts himself, and let him be your fear and your dread;* where he speaks of a person, whom he not only calls Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, which alone would prove him to be a divine Person; but he farther considers him as the object of divine worship, *Sanctify him, and let him be your fear and your dread.* Certainly, if we can prove this to be spoken of Christ, it will be a strong and convincing argument to evince his proper Deity; now that it is spoken of him, is very evident, if we compare it with the verse immediately following, *And he shall be for a sanctuary,* which I would chuse to render, *For he shall be for a sanctuary,* as the Hebrew particle *Vau*, which we render *And*, is often rendered elsewhere, and so it is assigned as a reason why we should sanctify him; and then it follows, though we are obliged so to do, yet the Jews will not give that glory to him, for he will be *to them for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence,* as he shall be *for a sanctuary* to those that are faithful. That this is spoken of Christ, not only appears from the subject matter hereof, as it is only he that properly speaking, is said to be a rock of offence, or in whom the world was offended, by reason of his appearing in a low condition therein; but, by comparing it with other scriptures, and particularly Isa. xxviii. 16. *Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste,* this will more evidently appear. In the latter of these scriptures, he is styled, a foundation stone, the rock on which his church is built; in the former a burthensome stone; and both these scriptures are referred to, and applied to him, 1 Pet. ii. 6, 8. *Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them*

that are disobedient ; where the apostle proves plainly, that our Saviour is the Person who is spoken of, in both these texts, by the prophet Isaiah, and consequently that he is Jehovah, whom we are to sanctify, and to make our fear and our dread.

Again, there is another scripture, which plainly proves this, viz. Numb. xxi. 5, 6, 7. *And the people spake against God, and against Moses ; and the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died ; therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, or Jehovah, and against thee. He, who is called God, in ver. 5. whom they spake against, is called Jehovah in ver. 7. who sent fiery serpents among them, that destroyed them, for their speaking against him ; now this is expressly applied to our Saviour by the apostle, 1 Cor. x. 9. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.*

Again, the prophet Isaiah, having had a vision of the angels, adoring and ministering to that glorious Person, who is represented, as sitting on a throne, in chap. vi. 1, 2. he reflects on what he had seen in ver. 5. and expresses himself in these words, *Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord, or Jehovah, of hosts.* Now this is expressly applied to our Saviour, in John xii. 41. *These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him ;* where it is plain that he intends this vision ; as appears from the foregoing verse, which refers to a part thereof, in which God foretels that he would blind the eyes, and harden the hearts of the unbelieving Jews ; from whence it is evident, that the Person who appeared to him, sitting on a throne, whom he calls Jehovah, was our Saviour.

Again, this may farther be argued, from what is said in Isa. xlv. 21. to the end, *There is no God else besides me, a just God, and a Saviour, there is none besides me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else, I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength ; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.* This is a glorious proof of our Saviour's Deity, not only from his being called Jehovah, but from several other divine characters ascribed to him ; thus the Person whom the prophet speaks of, styles himself *Jehovah*, and adds, that there is no God besides me ; and he is represented as swearing by himself, which none ought to do but a divine Person ; and he encourages all the ends of the earth to look to him for salvation ; so that if it can be made appear that this is spoken of our Saviour, it will be an

undeniable proof of his proper Deity, since nothing more can be said to express the glory of the Father than this. Now that these words are spoken of our Saviour, must be allowed by every one, who reads them impartially, for there are several things that agree with his character as Mediator; as when all the ends of the earth are invited to look to him for salvation. We have a parallel scripture, which is plainly applied to him, in Isa. xi. 10. *And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, that is, the Messiah, who should spring from the root or stock of Jesse; which shall stand for an ensign to the people, to it, or to him, shall the Gentiles seek,* which is the same thing as for the ends of the earth to look to him; and besides, the word looking to him is a metaphor, taken from a very remarkable type of this matter, to wit, Israel's looking to the brazen serpent for healing; thus he, who is here spoken of, is represented as a Saviour, and as the object of faith.

Again, he is represented as swearing by himself; and the subject matter of this oath is, *That unto him every knee should bow, and every tongue should swear;* this is expressly applied to our Saviour, in the New Testament, as containing a prophecy of his being the judge of the world, Rom. xiv. 10, 11, 12, *We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ; for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God; so then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.* And the same words are used, with a little variation, in Phil. ii. 10, 11. *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.*

Again, the person, of whom the prophet speaks, is one against whom the world was incensed, which can be meant of none but Christ, as signifying the opposition that he should meet with, and the rage and fury that should be directed against him, when appearing in our nature.

Again, he is said to be one in whom we have *righteousness,* and in whom the *seed of Israel shall be justified;* which very evidently agrees with the account we have of him in the New Testament, as a person by whose righteousness we are justified, or whose righteousness is imputed to us for that end.

And this leads us to consider another scripture, Jer. xxiii. 6. in which it is said, *This is his name, whereby he shall be called, The Lord, or Jehovah, our righteousness.* His being called our righteousness, as was but now observed, implies, that the Messiah, our great Mediator, is the person spoken of, who is called Jehovah. But this is farther evinced from the context, inasmuch as it is said, ver. 5. *Behold the days come, viz. the Gos-*

pel day, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper; and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth; which any one, who judges impartially of the sense of Scripture, will conclude to be spoken concerning our Saviour's erecting the gospel-dispensation, and being the sole lord and governor of his church. How the exercise of his dominion over it proves his Deity, will be considered under a following head. All that we need to observe at present is, that this description is very agreeable to his character in Scripture, as Mediator; therefore he is called Jehovah in this verse.

Object. 1. It is objected, that the words may be otherwise translated, viz. *This is the name, whereby the Lord our righteousness, namely, the Father, shall call him.*

Answ. It may be replied, that the Father is never called in Scripture, our righteousness as was but now observed; this being a character peculiar to the Mediator, as it is fully explained in several places in the New Testament. As to what may be farther said, in answer to this objection, it is well known that the Hebrew word יֵשׁוּעַ signifies either actively or passively, as it is differently pointed, the letters being the same; and we shall not enter into a critical disquisition concerning the origin, or authenticity of the Hebrew points, to prove that our translation is just, rather than that mentioned in the objection; but shall have recourse to the context to prove it. Accordingly it appears from thence, that if it were translated according to the sense of the objectors, it would be little less than a tautology, *q. d. I will raise to David a righteous branch; and this is the name whereby Jehovah, our righteousness, shall call him, viz. the Branch;* so that at least, the sense of our translation of the text, seems more natural, as well as more agreeable to the grammatical construction observed in the Hebrew language, in which the words of a sentence are not so transposed as they are in the Greek and Latin, which they are supposed to be, in the sense of the text contained in this objection.

Object. 2. It is farther objected; that though our translation of the text were just, and Christ were called Jehovah, yet it will not prove his Deity, since it is said, in Jer. xxxiii. 16. speaking concerning the church, *This is the name whereby she shall be called, The Lord, or Jehovah, our righteousness.*

Answ. It is evident from the context, that this is a parallel scripture with that before mentioned; the same person, to wit, the Branch, is spoken of and the same things predicted concerning the gospel church, that was to be governed by him. Therefore, though it is plain that our translators understood this text, as spoken of the church of the Jews or rather the Gospel-Church,

as many others do, yet, if we consider the sense of the Hebrew words here used יְקוֹהָוִה, it is very evident that they might, with equal, if not, with greater propriety, have been rendered, *shall be called by her*; and so the sense is the same with that of the other but now mentioned; the Branch, to wit, our Saviour, is to be called, The Lord our righteousness, and adored as such by the church.

There is another scripture, in which our Saviour is called Jehovah, in Joel ii. 27. *And ye shall know that I am the Lord, viz. Jehovah, your God, and none else; compared with ver. 32. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, viz. Jehovah, shall be delivered.* In both these verses, it is evident, that our Saviour is called Jehovah; for the person, who is so called, in the former of them, is said, ver. 28. *to Pour out his Spirit on all flesh; &c.* which Scripture is expressly referred to him, in Acts ii. 16, 17. and this pouring out of his Spirit on all flesh here predicted is also applied, in ver. 33. to him; *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father, the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.* The argument is therefore this: he who was, according to this prophecy, to pour out his Spirit on all flesh, is called Jehovah, your God; but this our Saviour is said to have done, therefore the name Jehovah is justly applied to him. As to the latter of these verses, viz. 32. *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered;* this also is referred to, and explained, as spoken of Christ, in Rom. x. 13. And that the apostle here speaks of calling on the name of Christ, is plain, from the foregoing and following verses. In ver. 9. it is expressed, by confessing the Lord Jesus, and it is there connected with salvation. And the apostle proceeds to consider, that, in order to our confessing, or calling on his name, it is necessary that Christ should be preached, ver. 14, 15. and he farther adds, in the following verses, that though Christ was preached, and his glory proclaimed in the gospel, yet the Jews believed not in him, and consequently called not on his name; which was an accomplishment of what had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah, chap. liii. 1. *Who hath believed our report, &c.* intimating that it was predicted, that our Saviour should be rejected, and not be believed in by the Jews: so that it is very evident the apostle is speaking concerning him, and applying to him what is mentioned in this scripture, in the prophecy of Joel, in which he is called Jehovah; therefore this glorious name belongs to him. Several other scriptures might have been referred to, to prove that Christ is called Jehovah, which are also applied to him in the New-Testament, some of which may be occasionally mentioned under

some following arguments; but, I think, what hath been already said is abundantly sufficient to prove his Deity, from his having this glorious name given to him; which leads us to consider some other names given to him for the proof thereof; accordingly,

2. He is styled Lord and God, in such a sense, as plainly proves his proper Deity. We will not, indeed, deny, that the names *Lord* and *God*, are sometimes given to creatures; yet we are not left without sufficient light, whereby we may plainly discern when they are applied to the one living and true God, and when not. To assert the contrary, would be to reflect on the wisdom and goodness of God; and it would not only render those scriptures, in which they are contained, like the trumpet, that gives an uncertain sound, but we should be in the greatest danger of being led aside into a most destructive mistake, in a matter of the highest importance, and hereby be induced to give that glory to the creature, which is due to God alone; therefore we shall always find something, either in the text, or context, that evidently determines the sense of these names, whenever they are applied to God, or the creature.

And here let it be observed, that whenever the word God or Lord is given to a creature, there is some diminutive character annexed to it, which plainly distinguishes it from the true God: thus when it is given to idols, it is intimated, that they are so called, or falsely esteemed to be gods by their deceived worshippers; and so they are called strange gods, Deut. xxxii. 16. and molten gods, Exod. xxxiv. 17. and new gods, Judges v. 8. and their worshippers are reprov'd as brutish and foolish, Jer. x. 8.

Again, when the word God, is applied to men, there is also something in the context, which implies, that whatever characters of honour are given to them, yet they are subject to the divine controul; as it is said, Psal. lxxxii. 1, 6. *God standeth in the congregation of the mighty he judgeth among the gods; and they are at best but mortal men; I have said ye are gods, and all of you are children of the most high, but ye shall die like men;* they are, indeed, described, as being made partakers of the divine image, consisting in some lesser branches of sovereignty and dominion; but this is infinitely below the idea of sovereignty and dominion, which is contained in the word when applied to the great God.

It is true, God says to Moses, *See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh*, Exod. vii. 1. by which we are not to understand that any of the divine perfections were communicated to, or predicated of him: for God cannot give his glory to another: but the sense is plainly this, that he was set in God's stead: thus he is said to be instead of God to Aaron, chap. iv. 16. and

the same expression is used by Elihu to Job, chap. xxxiii. 6. *I am according to thy wish in God's stead*; so that Moses's being made a god to Pharaoh, implies nothing else but this, that he should, by being God's minister, in inflicting the plagues which he designed to bring on Pharaoh and his servants, be rendered formidable to them; not that he should have a right to receive divine honour from them.

Again, when the word God is put absolutely, without any additional character of glory, or diminution annexed to it, it must always be understood of the great God, this being that name by which he is generally known in scripture, and never otherwise applied, without an intimation given that he is not intended thereby: thus the Father and the Son are described in John i. 1. *The Word was with God, and the Word was God*, and in many other places of scripture; therefore if we can prove that our Saviour is called God in scripture, without any thing in the context tending to detract from the most known sense of the word, this will be sufficient to prove his proper Deity; but we shall not only find that he is called God therein; but there are some additional glories annexed to that name, whereby this will more abundantly appear.

As to the word Lord, though that is often applied to creatures, and is given to superiors by their subjects or servants, yet this is also sufficiently distinguished, when applied to a divine Person, from any other sense thereof, as applied to creatures. Now, if we can prove that our Saviour is called Lord and God in this sense, it will sufficiently evince his proper Deity; and, in order hereto, we shall consider several scriptures, wherein he is not only so called, but several characters of glory are annexed, and divine honours given to him, which are due to none but a divine Person, which abundantly determines the sense of these words, when applied to him. And,

(1.) We shall consider some scriptures in which he is called Lord, particularly, Psal. cx. 1. *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*; that our Saviour the Messiah, is the person whom David calls his Lord, is very evident, from its being quoted and applied to him in the New Testament, in Mat. xxii. 44. &c. and that by calling him Lord he ascribes divine honour to him, appears from hence, that when the question was put to the Pharisees, If Christ were David's Lord, how could he be his Son? They might easily have replied to it, had it been taken in a lower sense; for it is not difficult to suppose that David might have a son descending from him, who might be advanced to the highest honours, short of what are divine; but they not understanding how two infinitely distant natures could be united in one person, so that at the same time he should be call-

ed David's son, and yet his Lord, in such a sense as proves his Deity, they were confounded, and put to silence.

But whether they acknowledged him to be a divine Person or no, it is evident that David considers him as such; or as the Person who, pursuant to God's covenant made with him, was to sit and rule upon his throne, in whom alone it could be said that it should be perpetual, or that of his kingdom there should be no end; and inasmuch as he says, ver. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*, speaking of the Person whom he calls his Lord, who was to be his Son, he plainly infers that he should exert divine power, and consequently prove himself to be a divine Person.

Again, if the word *Lord* be applied to him, as denoting his sovereignty over the church, and his being the Governor of the world, this will be considered under the next head, when we speak concerning those glorious titles and attributes that are given to him, which prove his Deity; and therefore we shall wave it at present, and only consider two or three scriptures, in which he is called *Lord*, in a more glorious sense than when it is applied to any creature: thus in Rev. xvii. 14. speaking of the Lamb, which is a character that can be applied to none but him, and that as Mediator, he is called *Lord of lords*, and the *Prince of the kings of the earth*, in Rev. i. 5. and the *Lord of glory*, in 1 Cor. ii. 8. which will be more particularly considered, when we speak concerning his glorious titles, as an argument to prove it; therefore all that we shall observe at present is, that this is the same character by which God is acknowledged by those that deny our Saviour's Deity to be described in Deut. x. 17. *The Lord your God, is God of gods, and Lord of lords; a great God and terrible*; so that we have as much ground to conclude, when Christ is called *Lord*, with such additional marks of glory, of which more in its proper place, that this proves his Deity, as truly as the Deity of the Father is proved from this scripture.

(2.) Christ is often in scripture called *God*, in such a sense, in which it is never applied to a creature: thus he is called, in Psal. xlv. 6. *Thy throne O God, is for ever, and ever*; and there are many other glorious things spoken of him in that Psalm, which is a farther confirmation that he, who is here called *God*, is a divine Person, in the same sense as God the Father is; particularly he is said, ver. 2. *To be fairer than the children of men*, that is, infinitely above them; and, ver. 11. speaking to the church, it is said, *He is thy Lord, and worship thou him*; and, in the following verses, the church's compleat blessedness consists in its being brought into his palace, who is the King thereof, and so denotes him to be the spring and fountain of compleat blessedness, and *his name, or glory, is to be re-*

membered in all generations, and the people shall praise him for ever and ever. This glory is ascribed to him, who is called *God*; and many other things are said concerning him, relating to his works, his victories, his triumphs, which are very agreeable to that character; so that it evidently appears that the Person spoken of in this Psalm, is truly and properly God.

I am sensible that the Anti-trinitarians will object to this, that several things are spoken concerning him in this Psalm, that argue his inferiority to the Father; but this only proves that the Person here spoken of is considered as God-man, Mediator, in which respect he is, in one nature, equal, and, in the other, inferior to him; were it otherwise, one expression contained in this Psalm would be inconsistent with, and contradictory to another.

To this we shall only add, as an undeniable proof, that it is Christ that is here spoken of, as also that he is considered as Mediator, as but now observed; that the apostle, speaking of him as Mediator, and displaying his divine glory as such, refers to these words of the Psalmist, Heb. i. 8. *Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*

Again, another proof of our Saviour's Deity may be taken from Math. i. 23. *Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us.* His incarnation is what gives occasion, as is plain from the words, for his being described by this name or character, *God with us*, which imports the same thing as when it is elsewhere said, John i. 14. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* This cannot be applied to any but Christ; to say the Father is called *Emmanuel*, is such a strain upon the sense of the text, as no impartial reader will allow of; for it is plain that it is a name given to the Son upon this great occasion; and this is as glorious a display of his Deity, as when God the Father says, if we suppose that text to be spoken of him elsewhere, in Exod. xxix. 45. *I will dwell amongst the children of Israel, and will be their God.*

Again, Christ's Deity is proved, in 1 Tim. iii. 16. from his being styled *God, manifest in the flesh*, implying, that the second Person in the Godhead was united to our nature; for neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost were ever said to be manifested in the flesh; and, besides, he is distinguished from the Spirit, as justified by him. And he is not called *God*, because of his incarnation, as some Socinian writers suppose; for to be incarnate, supposes the pre-existence of that nature, to which the human nature was united, since it is called elsewhere, assuming, or taking flesh, as it is here, being manifested therein, and consequently that he was God before this

act of incarnation; and there is certainly nothing in the text which determines the word *God* to be taken in a less proper sense, any more than when it is applied to the Father.

Object. It is objected that the word *God* is not found in all the manuscripts of the Greek text, nor in some translations thereof, particularly the Syriac, Arabic, and vulgar Latin, which render it, *the mystery which was manifest in the flesh*, &c.

Answo. It is not pretended to be left out in above two Greek copies, and it is very unreasonable to oppose these to all the rest. As for the Syriac and Arabic translations; some suppose that it is not true in fact that the word *God* is left out in the Arabic, and though it be left out in the Syriac, yet it is contained in the sense there, which is, great is the mystery of godliness *that he was* manifested in the flesh; and as for the vulgar Latin version, that has not credit enough, especially among Protestants, to support it, when standing in competition with so many copies of scripture in which the word is found; therefore we can by no means give up the argument which is taken from this text to prove our Saviour's Deity. Besides as a farther confirmation hereof, we might appeal to the very words of the text itself, whereby it will plainly appear, that if the word *God* be left out of it, the following part of the verse will not be so consistent with *a mystery* as it is with *our Saviour*; particularly it is a very great impropriety of expression to say that a mystery, or as some Socinian writers explain it, the will of God*, was manifest in the flesh, and received in a glorious manner; for this is not agreeable to the sense of the Greek words, since it is plain that ἐν σαρκὶ φανεραῖθι, which we render *was manifest in the flesh*, is justly translated, being never used in scripture to signify the preaching the gospel by weak mortal men, as they understand it: but on the other hand it is often applied to the manifestation of our Saviour in his incarnation, and is explained when it is said, John i. 14. that he was *made flesh, and we beheld his glory* †; and as for the gospel, though it met with reception when preached to the Gentiles, and there were many circumstances of glory that attended this dispensation, yet it could not be said for that reason to be received up into glory. Now since what is said

* Vid. Catech. Racov. ad Quest. lix.

† It is elsewhere said concerning him, 1 John iii 5. that he was manifested, &c. ἐπαφάνη, as also in ver. 8. And as for what is said in the last clause of the verse we are considering, that he was received up into glory, it is a very great strain on the sense of these words, to apply it to a mystery, or to the gospel, since the words, ἀναβῆθι εἰς οὐρανόν, plainly intimate a person's meeting with a glorious reception when ascending into heaven; ἀνακαμῆσθαι, signifies sursum recipere, therefore we render it, received up; and so it is often applied to our Saviour, Acts i. 2, 11, 22. and his ascension is called, Luke ix. 51. πρὸς τὴν ἀναβῆσθαι, the time in which he should be received up.

in this verse agrees to our Saviour, and not to the mystery of godliness, we are bound to conclude that he is God manifest in the flesh, and therefore that this objection is of no force.

The next scripture which we shall consider, is Acts xx. 28. *Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood*, where we observe, that he who is here spoken of is said to have a propriety in the church; this no mere creature can be said to have, but our Saviour is not only here but elsewhere described as having a right to it; thus it is said in Hebrews iii. 3, 4, 6. *He was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house, hath more honour than the house; and he that hath built all things is God*, which is as though he should say, our Lord Jesus Christ hath not only built his church but all things, and therefore must be God; and ver. 6. he is called a Son over his own house; so that he is the purchaser, the builder, and the proprietor of his church, and therefore must be a divine person; and then it is observed, that he that hath purchased this church is God, and that God hath done this with his own blood; this cannot be applied to any but the Mediator, the Son of God, whose Deity it plainly proves.

Object. 1. Some object against this sense of the text, that the word *God* here is referred to the Father, and so the sense is, feed the church of God, that is, of the Father, which *He*, that is, Christ, hath purchased with his own blood.

Ans. To this it may be answered, that this seems a very great strain and force upon the grammatical sense of the words, for certainly *He* must refer to the immediate antecedent, and that is God, to wit, the Son. If such a method of expounding scripture were to be allowed, it would be an easy matter to make the word of God speak what we please to have it; therefore we must take it in the most plain and obvious sense, as that is which we have given of this text, whereby it appears that God the Son has purchased the church with his own blood, and that he has a right to it.

Object. 2. God the Father is said to have purchased the church by the blood of Christ, which is called his blood, as he is the Proprietor of all things.

Ans. Though God be the Proprietor of all things, yet no one, that does not labour very hard to maintain the cause he is defending, would understand *his blood* in this sense. According to this method of speaking, God the Father might be said to have done every thing that the Mediator did, and so to have shed his blood upon the cross, as well as to have purchased the church thereby, as having a propriety in it.

The next scripture, which proves our Saviour's Deity, is Rom. ix. 5. *Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who*

is over all, God blessed for ever; where he is not only called God, but God blessed for ever; which is a character too high for any creature, and is the very same that is given to the Father, in 2 Cor. xi. 31. who is styled, *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore*, that is, not only the Object of worship, but the Fountain of blessedness. Now if Christ be so called, as it seems evident that he is, then the word *God* is, in this text, applied to him in the highest sense, so as to argue him a divine Person. Now that this is spoken of our Saviour, is plain, because he is the subject of the proposition therein contained, and is considered, as being *of the fathers, concerning the flesh, i. e.* with respect to his human nature; so that if we can prove that he is here called *God, blessed for ever*, we shall have the argument we contend for, this being the only thing contested by the Anti-trinitarians.

Object. It is objected, that the words may be otherwise rendered, namely, *Let God, viz. the Father, who is over all, be blessed for ever*, to wit, for this great privilege, that Christ should come in the flesh; therefore it does not prove that which we bring it for.

Answer. In defence of our translation of these words, it may be replied, that it is very agreeable to the grammatical construction thereof. It is true, Erasmus defends the other sense of the text, and thereby gives an handle to many after him, to make use of it, as an objection against this doctrine, which, he says, may be plainly proved from many other scriptures; it is very strange, that, with one hand, he should build up, and, with the other, overthrow Christ's proper Deity, unless we attribute it to that affectation which he had in his temper to appear singular, and, in many things, run counter to the common sense of mankind; or else to the favourable thoughts which he appears to have had, in some instances, of the Arian scheme. It may be observed, that the most ancient versions render this text in the sense of our translation; as do most of the ancient fathers in their defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, as a late writer observes.* And it is certain, this sense given thereof by the Anti-trinitarians, is so apparently forced and strained, that some of the Socinians themselves, whose interest it was to have taken it therein, have not thought fit to insist on it. And a learned writer †, who has appeared in the Anti-trinitarian cause, seems to argue below himself, when he attempts to give a turn to this text, agreeable to his own scheme; for certainly he would have defended his sense of the text better than he does, had it been defensible; since we can receive very little conviction from his alleging, that "It is

* See *Whitby in loc.* † See *Dr. Clarke's reply to Nelson, page 86.*

“uncertain whether the word *God* was originally in the text; “and if it was, whether it be not spoken of the Father.” To say no more than this to it, is not to defend this sense of the text; for if there were any doubt whether the word *God* was left out of any ancient manuscripts, he would have obliged the world, had he referred to them, which, I think, no one else has done: and, since he supposes it uncertain whether it be not there spoken of the Father, that ought to have been proved, or not suggested. We might observe, in defence of our translation, that whenever the words are so used in the New Testament, that they may be translated, *Blessed be God**, they are disposed in a different form, or order, and not exactly so as we read them therein: but, though this be a probable argument, we will not insist on it, but shall rather prove our translation to be just, from the connexion of the words, with what goes immediately before, where the apostle had been speaking of our Saviour, as descending from the fathers, according to the flesh, or considering him as to his human nature; therefore it is very reasonable to suppose he would speak of him as to his divine nature, especially since both these natures are spoken of together, in John i. 14. and elsewhere; and why they should not be intended here, cannot well be accounted for; so that if our translation be only supposed to be equally just with theirs, which, I think, none pretend to deny, the connexion of the parts of the proposition laid down therein, determines the sense thereof in our favour.

Here I cannot pass over that proof which we have of our Saviour’s divinity, in 1 John v. 20. *This is the true God, and eternal life*; where the *true God* is opposed, not only to those idols, which, in the following verse, he advises them to *keep themselves from*; in which sense the Anti-trinitarians themselves sometimes call him the true God, that is as much as to say, he is not an idol; upon which occasion a learned writer † observes, that they deal with him as Judas did with our Saviour, cry, Hail Master, and then betray him: they would be thought to ascribe every thing to him but proper Deity; but that this belongs to him, will evidently appear, if we can prove that these words are spoken of him. It is true, the learned author of the scripture-doctrine of the Trinity ‡, takes a great deal of pains to prove that it is the Father who is here spoken of; and his exposition of the former part of the text, which does not immediately support his cause, seems very just, when he says, *The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, viz. the Father,*

* Thus they are four times, Luke i. 68. 2 Cor. i. 5. Eph. i. 3. and 1 Pet. i. 3. wherein *εὐλογητός* is put before *Θεός*.

† Dr. Owen against Biddle, page 256.

‡ See Dr. Clarke’s reply to Nelson, page 97.

and *we are in him that is true*, speaking still of the Father. *by or through his Son Jesus Christ*; but, I humbly conceive, he does not acquit himself so well in the sense he gives of the following words, upon which the whole stress of the argument depends, not only in that he takes it for granted, that the word *is*, *This*, refers back, as is most natural and usual, not to the last word in order, but to the last and principal in sense, namely, the Father, which is, at least, doubtful, since any unprejudiced reader, who hath not a cause to maintain, which obliges him to understand it so, would refer it to the immediate antecedent, *viz.* the Son, by whom we have an interest in the Father; for when he had been speaking of him as Mediator, and, as such, as the author of this great privilege, namely, our knowing the Father, and being in him, it seems very agreeable to describe him as a Person every way qualified for this work, and consequently as being the true God; and besides, the apostle had spoken of the Father in the beginning of the verse, as *him that is true*, or, as some manuscripts have it, *him that is the true God*, as the same author observes; therefore what reason can be assigned why this should be again repeated, and the apostle supposed to say we know the Father, who is the true God, which certainly doth not run so smooth, to say the best of it, as when we apply it to our Saviour: that author, indeed, attempts to remove the impropriety of the expression, by giving an uncommon sense of these words, namely, *This knowledge of God is the true religion, and the way to eternal life*; or, *this is the true worship of God by his Son unto eternal life*, which, though it be a truth, yet can hardly be supposed to comport with the grammatical sense of the words; for why should *the true God* be taken in a proper sense in one part of the verse, and a figurative in the other? And if we take this liberty of supposing ellipses in texts, and supplying them with words that make to our own purpose, it would be no difficult matter to prove almost any doctrine from scripture; therefore the plain sense of the text is, that our Saviour is the true God intended in these words; and it is as evident a proof of his Deity, as when the Father is called, *the true God*; or *the only true God*, as he is in John xvii. 3. where, though he be so called, nevertheless he is not to be considered as the only Person who is God, in the most proper sense, but as having the one divine nature; in which sense the word *God* is, always taken, when God is said to be one.

Moreover, let it be observed, that he who is here called the true God, is styled, *life eternal*, which, I humbly conceive, the Father never is, though he be said to *give us eternal life*, in one of the foregoing verses; whereas it is not only said concerning our Saviour, that *in him was life*, John i. 4. but he says, John

xiv. 6. *I am the life*; and it is said in 1 John i. 2. *The life was manifested, and we have seen it, or him, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father*, *προς τον Πατερα* which is an explication of his own words, John i. 1. *προς τον Θεον with God*; and then he explains what he had said in ver. 14. of the same chapter, when he says, *the word of life, or the Person who calls himself the life was manifested unto us*; which seems to be a peculiar phrase, used by this apostle, whereby he sets forth our Saviour's glory under this character, whom he calls *life, or eternal life*; and he that is so, is the same Person, who is called the true God; which character of being *true*, is often used and applied to Christ, by the same inspired writer, more than by any other, as appears from several scriptures, Rev. iii. 17, 14, and chap. xix. 11. and though, indeed, it refers to him, as Mediator, as does also his being called *eternal life*, yet this agrees very well with his proper Deity, which we cannot but think to be plainly evinced by this text.

There is another scripture, which not only speaks of Christ as God, but with some other divine characters of glory added to his name, which prove his proper Deity: thus in Isa. ix. 6. he is styled, *the mighty God*, and several other glorious titles are given to him; as, *the wonderful Counsellor, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace*; these are all applied to him, as one whose incarnation was foretold, *to us a Child is born*, &c. And he is farther described as a Person who was to be the Governor of his church, as it is said, *the government shall be upon his shoulders*; all which expressions so exactly agree with his character as God-man, Mediator, that they contain an evident proof of his proper Deity.

Object. They who deny our Saviour's Deity, object, that the words ought to be otherwise translated, *viz. the wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, shall call him, the Prince of peace.*

Answer. We have before observed, in defence of our translation of another text, * that the Hebrew word, that we translate, *he shall be called*, (which is the same with that which is used in this text) does not fully appear to signify actively; and also that such transpositions, as are, both there and here, made use of, are not agreeable to that language; and therefore our sense of the text is so plain and natural, that any one, who reads it impartially, without forcing it to speak what they would have it, would take it in the sense in which we translate it, which contains a very evident proof of our Saviour's divinity.

There is another scripture which speaks of Christ, not only as God, but as the *great God*, in Tit. ii. 13. *Looking for that bles-*

* See Page 307

sed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; none ever denied that he, who is said to appear, is true and proper God, and therefore the principal thing we have to prove is, that the text refers only to our Saviour, or that the apostle does not speak therein of two Persons, to wit, the Father and the Son, but of the Son; and accordingly, though we oftentimes take occasion to vindicate our translation, here we cannot but think it ought to be corrected; and that the word *and* should be rendered *even*: * But, because I would not lay too great a stress on a grammatical criticism, how probable soever it may be; we may consider some other things in the text, whereby it appears that our Saviour is the only Person spoken of therein, from what is said of him, agreeable to his character as Mediator: thus the apostle here speaks of his appearing; as he also does elsewhere, in Heb. ix. 28. *He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation*; and in 1 John iii. 2. *When he shall appear, we shall be like him*, &c. and then he who, in this text, is said to appear, is called the *blessed hope*, that is, the object of his people's expectation, who shall be blessed by him when he appears: thus he is called, in 1 Tim. i. 1. *our hope*, and in Coloss. i. 27. *The hope of glory*; now we do not find that the Father is described in scripture as appearing, or as the hope of his people. It is true, a late writer † gives that turn to the text, and supposes, that as the Father is said to judge the world by Jesus Christ, and as when the Son shall come at last, it will be in the glory of his Father; so, in that sense, the Father may be said to appear by him, as the brightness of his glory shines forth in his appearance. But since this is no where applied to the sense of those other scriptures, which speak of every eye's seeing him in his human na-

* It is certain, that *καί* is oftentimes exegetical, as well as copulative; and it appears to be so, by a great many instances in the New Testament; when it is put between two nouns, the first whereof has an article, and the other none; thus it will be acknowledged by all, that it is taken, in 2 Cor. i. 3. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ὁ Θεὸς καὶ Πατὴρ; so in Eph. i. 3. 2 Thes. ii. 16. 1 Pet. i. 3. Rom. xv. 6. Phil. iv. 20. 2 Cor. xi. 31. and in Col. ii. 2. In these scriptures, and others of the like nature, the Arians themselves allow that this rule holds good, though they will not allow it, when it proves our Saviour's Deity, because it militates against their own scheme; as in Eph. v. 5. where the apostle speaks of the kingdom of Christ, and of God, as we render it; but, I think, it ought to be rendered, even of God; for it is, τὸ Χριστὸν καὶ Θεὸν so in 2 Thes. i. 12. The grace of our God, and, or even, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the words are, τὸ Θεὸν ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. See among many other scriptures to the like purpose, 1 Tim. v. 21. and chap. vi. 13. 2 Pet. i. 2. It is true there are several exceptions to this rule, though they are generally in such instances, in which it is impossible for the latter word to contain an explication of the former, though, in other instances, it, for the most part, holds good; and therefore it will, at least, amount to a probable argument, that the words in this text, τὸ μεγάλου Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ought to be rendered, of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ. Vide Granville Sharp on the Greek article, and Middleton on the same subject. † See Dr. Clark's reply to Nelson, page 85.

ture, and plainly refer to some glories that shall be put upon that nature, which shall be the object of sense ; why should we say that the text imports nothing else but that the Father shall appear in his appearing, which is such a strain upon the sense of the words, that they who make use of it would not allow of, in other cases ? I might have added, as a farther confirmation of the sense we have given of this text, its agreeableness with what the apostle says, in Tit. ii. 10. when he calls the gospel, *The doctrine of God our Saviour*, and with what immediately follows in ver. 14. where, having before described him as our Saviour, he proceeds to shew wherein he was so, namely, *by giving himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity* ; and he is not only called *God our Saviour* by this apostle, but he is so called in 2 Pet. i. 1. where the church is said *to have obtained like precious faith, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ* ; or as the marginal reading has it, *of our God and Saviour* ; this seems to be so just a reading of the text we are considering, that some, on the other side of the question, allow that the words will very well bear it ; but they think their sense agreeable, as the author but now mentioned says, to the whole tenor of Scripture, which is little other than a boast, as though the scripture favoured their scheme of doctrine, which, whether it does or no, they, who consider the arguments on both sides, may judge ; and we think, we have as much reason to conclude that our sense of the words, which establishes the doctrine of our Saviour's being the great God, is agreeable to the whole tenor of scripture ; but, passing that over, we proceed to another argument.

There is one scripture in which our Saviour is called both *Lord and God*, viz. John xx. 28. *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord, and my God.* The manner of address to our Saviour, in these words, implies an act of adoration, given to him by this disciple, upon his having received a conviction of his resurrection from the dead ; and there is nothing in the text, but what imports his right to the same glory which belongs to the Father, when He is called his people's God. Herein they lay claim to him, as their covenant God, their chief good and happiness ; thus David expresses himself, Psal. xxxi. 14. *I trusted in thee, O Lord, I said thou art my God* ; and God promises, in Hos. ii. 23. *that he would say to them which were not his people, Thou art my God* ; and chap. viii. 2. *Israel shall cry unto me, My God we know thee* ; and the apostle Paul speaking of the Father, says, Phil. iv. 19. *My God shall supply all your need, &c.* that is, the God from whom I have all supplies of grace ; the God whom I worship, to whom I owe all I have, or hope for, who is the Fountain of all blessedness. Now if there be nothing in this text we are considering, that

determines the words to be taken in a lower sense than this, as there does not appear to be, then we are bound to conclude, that Christ's Deity is fully proved from it.

Object. Some of the Socinians suppose, that the words, *my Lord*, and *my God*, contain a form of exclamation, or admiration; and that Thomas was surprized when he was convinced that our Saviour was risen from the dead, and so cries out, as one in a rapture, *O my Lord! O my God!* intending hereby the Father, to whose power alone this event was owing.

Answer. Such exclamations as these, though often used in common conversation, and sometimes without that due regard to the divine Majesty, that ought to attend them, are not agreeable to the scripture way of speaking. But, if any scriptures might be produced to justify it, it is sufficiently evident, that no such thing is intended in these words, not only because the grammatical construction will not admit of it,* but because the words are brought in as a reply to what Christ had spoken to him in the foregoing verse; *Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord*, &c. whereas it is very absurd to suppose, that an exclamation contains the form of a reply, therefore it must be taken for an explicit acknowledgment of him, as *his Lord*, and *his God*; so that this objection represents the words so contrary to the known acceptation thereof, that many of the Socinians themselves, and other late writers, who oppose our Saviour's proper Deity, do not think fit to insist on it, but have recourse to some other methods, to account for those difficulties, that lie in their way, taken from this, and other texts, where Christ is plainly called God, as in John i. 1. and many other places in the New Testament.

Here we may take occasion to consider the method which the Anti-trinitarians use to account for the sense of those scriptures, in which Christ is called God. And,

1. Some have have recourse to a critical remark, which they make on the word *θεος God*, namely, that when it has the article *ο* before it, it adds an emphasis to the sense thereof, and determines it to be applied to the Father. And inasmuch as the word is sometimes applied to him, when there is no article, (which, to some, would appear an objection, sufficient to invalidate this remark) they add, that it is always to be applied to him, if there be nothing in the text that determines it otherwise. This remark was first made by Origen, and afterwards largely insisted on by Eusebius, as Dr. Clarke observes;† and he so far gives into it, as that he apprehends it is never applied,

* The words, *ο Κυριος* and *ο Θεος* are in the nominative case, which denotes that they are not spoken in a way of exclamation.

† See reply to Nelson, page 67.

when put absolutely in scripture, to any other Person; we shall therefore enquire into the justice thereof.

By the word *God* absolutely taken, (whether *θεος* have an article before it or no) we understand nothing else but its being used without any thing to determine its application, either to the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost; whereas, on the other hand, when it is not absolutely used, there are several things, by which we may certainly know to which of the divine persons it belongs: thus it is particularly applied to the Father, when there is something in the text that distinguishes him from the Son or Spirit; so John xiv. 1. *Ye believe in God, viz. the Father, believe also in me*; and in all those scriptures, in which Christ is called the Son of God, there the word *God* is determined to be applied to the Father; and when God is said to act in relation to Christ as Mediator, as in Heb. ii. 13. *Behold, I and the children which God hath given me*, it is so applied.

And the word *God* is determined to be applied to the Son, when he is particularly mentioned, and so called, or described, by any of his Mediatorial works or characters; as in Matt. i. 23. *God, viz. the Son, with us*; and 1 Tim. iii. 16. *God manifest in the flesh*; or when there is any thing in the context, which discovers that the word *God* is to be applied to him.

Also, with respect to the Holy Ghost, when any of his Personal works, or characters, are mentioned in the text or context, and the word *God* applied to him, to whom they are ascribed, that determines it to belong to the Holy Ghost; as in Acts v. 3, 4. speaking concerning lying to the Holy Ghost, it is explained, *Thou hast not lyed unto men, but unto God*; and 1 Cor. iii. 16. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*; but more of this when we speak of the Deity of the Holy Ghost. In these, and such like cases, the word *God* is not put absolutely; but, on the other hand, it is put absolutely when there is nothing of this nature to determine its application; as in those scriptures that speak of the divine Unity, viz. in Matt. xix. 17. *There is none good but one, that is God*; and in 1 Cor. viii. 4. *There is none other God but one*; and in James ii. 19. *Thou believest that there is one God, &c.* and John x. 33. *Thou, being a man, makest thyself God*; and in many other places of the like nature, in which there is an idea contained of the divine perfections; but it is not particularly determined which of the Persons in the Godhead is intended thereby.

This is what we are to understand by the word *θεος, God*, being put absolutely without any regard to its having an article before it, or not; from whence nothing certain can be determined concerning the particular application thereof, since many scriptures might easily be referred to, in which it is put without

an article, though applied to the Father; and, on the other hand, it has very often an article put before it when applied to idols, or false gods; * and the devil is called, *ὁ θεὸς τῆς αἰῶνος τούτου*, *the god of this world*; and it may be observed, that in two evangelists, † referring to the same thing, and using the same words, one has the word with an article, and the other without.

Therefore, setting aside this critical remark about the application of the word *God*, when there is an article before *θεός*, the main thing in controversy is how we are to apply it, when neither the context, nor any of the rules above-mentioned, give us any direction, therein, namely, whether it is in that case only to be applied to the Father, or indifferently to any of the Persons in the Godhead. The author above-mentioned, in his scripture-doctrine of the Trinity, always applies it to the Father; and it may easily be perceived, that he has no other reason than this to apply many scriptures to the Father, which others, who have defended the doctrine of the Trinity, in another way, apply to the Son, as being directed herein by something spoken of him in the context, as in Rev. xix. 4, 5, 6, 17. ‡

And this is, indeed, the method used by all the Anti-trinitarians, in applying the word *God*, especially when found absolutely in scripture. That which principally induces them hereto, is because they take it for granted, that as there is but one divine Being, so there is but one Person who is truly and properly divine, § and that is the Father, to whom they take it for granted that the word *God* is to be applied in scripture to signify any finite being, as the Son, or any creature below him. But this supposition is not sufficiently proved, *viz.* that the one divine Being is a person, and that this is only the Father, whom they often call the supreme, or most high God, that is, superior, when compared with the Son and Spirit, as well as all creatures; but this we cannot allow of, and therefore cannot see sufficient reason to conclude, that the word *God*, when put absolutely, is to be applied to no other than the Father.

That which I would humbly offer, as the sense of the word, when thus found in scripture, is, that when the Holy Ghost has left it undetermined, it is our safest way to consider it as such, and so to apply it indifferently to the Father, Son, or Spirit, and not to one person, exclusive of the others: thus when it is said, Mark xii. 29, 32. *The Lord our God is one Lord; and there is one God, and there is none other but him*; the meaning is,

* Acts vii. 43. chap. xiv. 11. † See Matt. xix. 26. compared with Mark x. 27.

‡ See *Scripture-doctrine, &c.* page 67, 68, and in many other places.

§ This is the sense of Dr. Clarke's first section in Part 2, on which the whole scheme seems to be founded; and he speaks to the same purpose in several other places; and, in particular, in his reply to Nelson, page 67, 68, he concludes the word *θεός*, *God*, absolutely taken to import the same, as *ὁ παντοκράτωρ* or *ὁ ἐνὶ πάλαιον* *θεός*, by which he always intends the Father.

that there is but one divine Being, who is called God, as opposed to the creature, or to all who are not God by nature: thus when the unity of the Godhead is asserted in that scripture here referred to, Deut. vi. 4. and Israel was exhorted to *serve him*, they are, at the same time, forbidden to *go after other gods*, ver. 13, 14. And when it is said, that to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, is more than all burnt-offering and sacrifices, Mark xii. 33. it implies, that religious worship was performed to God; but it is certain that this was performed to all the Persons in the Godhead; therefore none of them are excluded in this scripture, in which the unity of God is asserted. And however Dr. Clarke concludes Athanasius, from his unguarded way of speaking, in some other instances, to be of his side; yet, in that very place, which he refers to,* he expressly says, that when the scripture saith the Father is the only God, and that *there is one God*, and *I am the First*, and *the Last*; yet this does not destroy the divinity of the Son, for he is that one God, and first and only God, &c. And the same thing may be said of the Holy Ghost.

Again, when it is said, Mat. xix. 17. *There is none good but one, that is God*; it implies, that the divine nature, which is predicated of all the persons in the God-head, hath those perfections that are essential to it, and particularly that goodness by which God is denominated All-sufficient: so in Acts xv. 18. when it is said, *Known unto God are all his works*; where the word *God* is absolute, and not in a determinate sense, applied either to Father, Son, or Spirit, the meaning is, that all the Persons in the Godhead created all things, which they are expressly said to do in several scriptures, and, as the consequence thereof, that they have a right to all things, which are known unto them.

Object. It will probably be objected to this, that we assert that there are four divine Persons, namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the Godhead which is common to them all, since we call it *God*, which word in other instances, connotes a personal character; and, if so, then it will follow, that we are chargeable with a contradiction in terms, when we say that there are three Persons in the Godhead, *viz.* in one Person.

Ans. To this it may be replied, that though the divine nature, which is common to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is represented, in scripture, as though it were a Person, when it is called *God*, yet it is to be taken in a metaphorical sense; whereas the Father, Son, and Spirit, as has been before considered, are called *Divine Persons* properly, or without a metaphor.† Moreover, the divine nature, though it be called *God*, is never considered as co-ordinate with, or as distinguished from the divine Persons, as though it were a Person in the

* See *Scripture-doctrine*, page 3.

† See page 120.

same sense as they are ; and therefore, whenever it is so called, it must be considered as opposed to the creature ; as we before observed, the one God is opposed to those who are not God by nature. It may also be considered, that those divine perfections, which are implied in the word *God*, taken in this sense, are known by the light of nature ; (whereas the divine Personality, as applied either to the Father, Son, or Spirit, is a matter of pure revelation) and it is such an idea of God, or the Godhead, that is intended thereby ; so that all the force of this objection consists only in the sense of a word, and the principal thing in debate is, whether the word *God* thus absolutely and indeterminately considered, is a proper mode of speaking, to set forth the divine nature : now if the scripture uses the word in this sense, it is not for us to enquire about the propriety, or impropriety, thereof ; but we must take heed that we do not pervert, or misunderstand, the sense hereof which they do, who either speak, on the one hand, of the Godhead, when called *God*, as though it were distinct from the Father, Son, and Spirit ; or, on the other hand, understand it only of the Father, as opposed to the Son and Spirit, as the Anti-trinitarians do, who deny their proper Deity, and when they assert that there is but one God, do in effect, maintain that there is but one Person in the Godhead. Thus concerning the sense in which the Anti-trinitarians take the word *God*, when (as it is generally expressed) it is taken absolutely in scripture, as applying it only to the Father ; we proceed to consider,

2. That they farther suppose that our Saviour is called God, in the New Testament, by a divine warrant, as a peculiar honour put upon him ; and here they think it not difficult to prove, that a creature may have a right conferred on him to receive divine honour ; which if they were able to do, it would tend more to weaken our cause, and establish their own, than any thing they have hitherto advanced. But this we shall have occasion to militate against under the fourth head of argument, to prove the Deity of the Son, *viz.* his having a right to divine worship, and therefore shall pass it over at present, and consider them as intending nothing more by the word *God*, when applied to our Saviour, but what imports an honour infinitely below that which belongs to the Father ; and this they suppose to have been conferred upon him, on some occasions, relating to the work for which he came into the world. The Socinians, in particular, speak of his being called God, or the Son of God.

(1.) Because of his having been *sanctified* and *sent into the world*, John x. 36. *viz.* to redeem it, in that peculiar and low sense in which they understand the word *redemption*, of which more hereafter.

(2.) Also from his extraordinary conception and birth, by

the power of the Holy Ghost, as it is said, in Luke i. 35. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall over-shadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.*

(3.) Another reason of his having this honour conferred upon him, they take from his resurrection, and so refer to Rom. i. 4. in which it is said, that he was *declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.*

(4.) Another reason hereof they take from his ascension into heaven, or being glorified, at which time they suppose that he was made an High Priest, and had, in an eminent degree, the name and character of God put upon him, for which they refer to Heb. v. 3. in which it is said, *Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

But they plainly pervert the sense of these respective texts but now mentioned, inasmuch as they suppose that his mission, incarnation, resurrection, and ascension, are the principal reasons of his being called God; and that his deity is founded not in the excellency of his nature, but in these relative circumstances, in which, as an act of grace, this honour was conferred upon him, which God, had he pleased, might have conferred on any other creature, capable of yielding obedience to him, or receiving such a commission from him: whereas, in reality, these scriptures refer to that glory which he had as Mediator, as a demonstration of his Deity, and these honours were agreeable to his character, as a divine Person, but did not constitute him God, as they suppose.

But these things are not so particularly insisted on by some late Anti-trinitarians, though they all agree in this, that his right to divine honour is the result of that authority which he has received from God, to perform the works which are ascribed to him, relating to the good of mankind; whereas we cannot but conclude, from the scriptures before brought to prove his proper Deity, in which he is called *Lord* and *God*, in as strong a sense, as when those words are applied to the Father, that he is therefore God equal with the Father.

Thus having considered our Saviour's proper Deity, as evinced from his being called *Lord* and *God*; and also, that these names are given to him in such a sense, as that hereby the Godhead is intended, as much as when it is applied to the Father; we shall close this head, by considering two scriptures, in which the divine nature is ascribed to him; and the first of them is in Coloss. ii. 9. *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; in which we may observe, that it is not barely said, that God dwelleth in him, which would not so evidently have proved his deity, because God is elsewhere said to dwell in others:

thus, in 1 John iv. 12. it is said, *God dwelleth in us*; but here it is said, the Godhead dwelleth in him, which is never applied to any creature; and the expression is very emphatical, the fulness, yea, all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in him; what can we understand thereby, but that all the perfections of the divine nature belong to him? The apostle had been speaking, in ver. 2. of the *mystery of Christ*, as what the church was to know, and acknowledge, as well as that of the Father; and he also considers him as the Fountain of wisdom, ver. 3. *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; and what is here spoken concerning him, very well corresponds therewith, as being expressive of his divine glory; the fulness of the Godhead is said, indeed; to dwell in him *bodily*, by which we are to understand his human nature, as the body is, in some other scriptures taken for the man; thus, in Rom. xii. 1. we are exhorted *to present our bodies, i. e. ourselves, a living sacrifice to God*; so here the divine nature, as subsisting in him, is said to dwell in, that is, to have the human nature united to it, which is meant by its dwelling in him bodily.

The account which some give of the sense of this text, to evade the force of the argument, taken from thence, to prove our Saviour's Deity, does little more than shew how hard the Anti-trinitarians are put to it to maintain their ground, when they say that the word *θεοτης*, which we render *Godhead*, signifies some extraordinary gifts conferred upon him, especially such as tended to qualify him to discover the mind and will of God; or, at least, that nothing else is intended thereby, but that authority which he had from God, to perform the work which he came into the world about; since it is certain, that this falls infinitely short of what is intended by the word *Godhead*, which must signify the divine nature, subsisting in him, who assumed, or was made flesh, and so dwelt therein, as in a temple.

There is another scripture, which seems to attribute to him the divine nature, viz. Phil. ii. 6. where it is said, that he was *in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God*; by *the form of God*, I humbly conceive, we are to understand the divine nature which he had, and therefore it was no instance of robbery in him to assert, that he was equal with God. If this sense of the text can be defended, it will evidently prove his proper Deity, since it is never said, concerning any creature, that he is in the form of God, or, as the words may be rendered, that he subsisted in the form of God; now it is well known, that the word which we render *form*, is not only used by the schoolmen, but by others, before their time, to signify the nature, or essential properties, of that to which it is applied; so that this sense thereof was well known in the apostle's days. Therefore, why may we not suppose, that the Holy

Ghost, in scripture, may once, at least, use a word which would be so understood by them? And it will farther appear, that Christ's Deity is signified thereby, if the following words are to be understood in the sense contained in our translation, that *he thought it not robbery to be equal with God*; now this seems very plain, for the same word *ηγησατο*, *he thought*, is taken in the same sense in the third verse of this chapter; *Let every man esteem, or think, others better than themselves*; and it is used about twenty times in the New Testament, five times in this epistle, besides in this text, and never understood otherwise than as signifying *to think, esteem, or account*; and it would destroy the sense of the respective texts, where it is used, to take it otherwise. This the Anti-trinitarians themselves will not deny, inasmuch as it does not affect their cause; notwithstanding they determine that it must be otherwise translated in this text; and so they render the words, *εχ αρπαγματον ηγησατο το εινα ισα Θεου*, *he did not covet to be honoured, or was not greedy, or in haste of being honoured as God**, that is, he did not affect to appear like a divine Person, or catch at those divine honours that did not belong to him. Could this sense of the text be made out to be just, it would effectually overthrow our argument, taken from thence, to prove Christ's proper Deity: but this is as foreign from the sense of the words, as any sense that could be put upon them; and all that is pretended to justify it, is a reference which they make to a phrase, or two, used in a Greek writer, which is not at all to their purpose †. More-

* See Dr. Clarke's Scripture Doctrine, page 176.

† Whitby is very particular in laying down this sense of the text, with the defence thereof, in his annotations on this scripture, from Heliodorus, where he finds the words, *αρπαγμα ποιειν*, which he renders, to snatch at; and *αρπαγμα ηγησθαι*, which, he supposes, signifies to pursue, or covet, a thing that is desirable; but, however, the words going before, or following, in that author, may determine that to be his sense thereof, as the sense of particular words is oftentimes greatly varied thereby; yet this will not justify the rendering them in the same sense, in other instances, very foreign thereunto, as certainly the text we are explaining must be reckoned to be; besides, the word is not the same, for it is *αρπαγμα*, which properly signifies a prey, or the thing stolen; and therefore though *αρπαγμα ποιειν ζυνηχιαν* may signify, to catch an opportunity, as a person catches at what he thinks for his advantage, yet if the word *αρπαγματον* had been used instead of it, it would very much have altered the sense thereof; also though *αρπαγμα ηγησθαι* signifies, to esteem a thing worthy to be pursued, or caught at, as a prey, yet *αρπαγματον ηγησθαι*, which are the words in the text we are considering, signify no such thing, but rather to reckon a thing unlawful to be pursued, as what he has no right to; and that is the sense thereof in our text, q. d. He did not think it unlawful to pursue, or lay claim to that divine honour, of being equal with God, or, as we render it, thought it not robbery, &c. For the justifying of this sense, every one, that observes the acceptation of the Greek words, will find that *αρπαγμα* signifies, the action of robbing, and *αρπαγμα* the thing stolen, as may be observed in many other words, where the former construction signifies the act; the latter the effect: as in *λογισμος* and *λογισμα*, *κομπασμος*, and *κομπασμα*, *κωλασμος* and *κωλασμα*, *ορισμος* and *ορισμα*, *οπλισμος* and *οπλισμα*, *σοχασμος* and *σοχασμα*; and, in the New Testament, *βαπτισμος* signifies the action of baptizing, and *βαπτισμα* the ordinance in which it is performed. See Mark vii.

over the sense of this text, as agreeable to the words of our translation, will farther appear to be just, if we consider, that our Saviour's *being in the form of God*, is there opposed to his having afterwards been *in the form of a servant*, or the *fashion of a man*; now if the latter be to be understood of his being truly and properly man, and not to be taken barely for something in him which resembled the human nature; or if his *taking on him the form of a servant*, imports, his being in a capacity to perform that obedience which was due from him, as man to God, in a proper, and not a theatrical sense; then it will follow, that his being in the form of God, as opposed hereunto, must be taken for his being truly and properly God, or for his having the divine nature, as before mentioned; which was the thing to be proved.

I might here consider the sense which Dr. Whitby, in his annotations, gives of our Saviour's being *in the form of God*, as opposed to that of a servant, (after he had given up the sense of the words, as in our translation, to the adversary) which is, that his being in the form of God, implies, his appearing, before his incarnation, in a bright shining cloud, or light, or in a flame of fire, or with the attendance of an host of angels, as he is sometimes said to have done, which the Jews call Shechinah, or the divine Majesty, as being a visible emblem of his presence; this he calls *the form of God*, and his not appearing so, when incarnate in this lower world, *the form of a servant*, as opposed to it; and adds, that when he ascended into heaven, he assumed the form of God; and therefore whenever he has occasionally appeared, as to the martyr Stephen at his death, or to the apostle Paul at his first conversion, it has been in that form, or with like emblems of majesty and divinity, as before his incarnation.

Here I would observe concerning this, that what he says of Christ's appearing with emblems of majesty and glory before his incarnation, and the glory that was put upon his human nature after his ascension into heaven, is a great truth; but as this is never styled, in scripture, the form of God, nor was the symbol of the divine glory ever called therein the divine majesty, however it might be called by Jewish writers; therefore this has no reference to the sense of this text, nor does it, in the least, enervate the force of the argument, taken from it, to prove our Saviour's proper Deity, any more than this critical remark on the words thereof does, the sense of our translation, whereby it evidently appears.

I might also observe the sense which another learned * writer gives of *the form of God* in this text, which is the same that

8. compared with Matt. iii. 7. and chap. xxi. 25. Multitudes of instances might have been given, but these are sufficient. * Gratius in loc.

is given by several of the Socinians; namely, that it has a relation to his working miracles while here upon earth, which is certainly very disagreeable to the scope and design of the text, since he is said to be *in the form of God*, before he took upon him the form of a servant, that is, before his incarnation: and besides, the working miracles, never was deemed sufficient to denominate a person to be in the form of God, for if it had, many others, both before and after him, might have had this applied to them; whereas it is a glory appropriate to him, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

I would not wholly pass over that which some call a controverted text of scripture, in 1 John v. 7. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one*, lest it should be thought that I conclude the arguments, brought by the Anti-trinitarians, sufficiently conclusive to prove it spurious, (a) but I shall say the

(a) "It may readily be granted that any tract published by an apostolick man, in the early Christian church, would be circulated among the Christians of those times, with great dispatch, *immediately* on its publication. This is a natural and indefeasible position, since it arises from a principle in human nature itself. It is natural, too, that, in those times, it should be copied without delay in such churches as were then extant. And this *first* edition would be circulated to the widest extent, of course. Churches that were established afterwards were more likely to receive the *second* edition of such a writer's works; especially, if they had intercourse with the town where he resided in his latter days, and drew their copies from thence, *immediately*. But I think we may say, that for one copy of the second edition that was circulated, there would be 20, or 50, or 100 copies of the first edition; since not only would it have the advantage of priority, but not one reader in a hundred would think of the second as different from the first. And this has led our translators to mark, as *doubtful*, the first quotation which I selected from the first Epistle of John, in my last; chap. ii. 23. I have no doubt of the genuineness of the *addition*; but possibly there may be 50 copies without it to *one* which contains it.

Admitting, then, the residence of St. John be at Ephesus, or any part of Asia Minor, for the last thirty years of his life, for which we have the testimony of ancient history, we may date his first epistle, early in that period: or even before he came to live there. This would spread *first*, among the neighbouring churches in Asia Minor: *secondly*, eastward, to those countries which professed Christianity, Antioch, for certain: Syria, Cilicia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia, Babylonia, &c. Toward these countries, there are caravans which go every month, or six weeks, from Asia Minor: there is a regular intercourse maintained, between Smyrna, and the internal parts of Asia Minor, and on through Tarsus to Antioch:—from Ephesus to Smyrna was easy. We have every reason to affirm, that it was the same anciently, and therefore, there was an *immediate* conveyance of such addresses as the apostle John published for the general use of all Christians, from Ephesus, eastward to the oriental provinces of the Roman empire, where Christianity was settled and flourished. In these churches his writings would be in request. Moreover, these churches would be the first to translate his writings into their current language, for the use of the natives of these provinces, who did not understand Greek (which, however prevalent the Greek language was, must have been many) because here was a great number of professing Christians, who desired to be acquainted with their contents.

It is evident, therefore, that these translations, having for their basis the *first* edition, can be no evidences of what the apostle thought proper to add in his

less on this subject, because it is a very hard matter to advance any thing that has not been very largely insisted on, by various writers; among whom I cannot but mention, with great

second addition. The Syriac version, for instance, if we suppose that to be the earliest of all, would represent the *first* edition, as would also, all versions made from it, and all copies made from those, at that time, received in those parts. Whereas, the Armenian version, because it is much later, would at least stand the chance of obtaining (and being made from) the *second* edition. The Syriac version, therefore, is no evidence against an *addition*. The Armenian version is an evidence *for* it. This version contains 1 John v. 7.

Also, the churches in Africa were not planted till many years *after* those of Asia; their intercourse with Ephesus, being by sea, was irregular, and could only take place, occasionally, if it was direct. If we suppose it to be, on the subject before us, through Italy, then it was subject to the same circumstances as attended the intercourse between Ephesus and Rome. I say Rome, because we have no reason to think that there was any number of Christians, worth mentioning, in any other city of Italy. The apostle Paul, when travelling from Rhegio upward was met by brethren *from Rome*: which when he saw, he thanked God, and *took courage*. Certainly, then, he had not met with many friends in places that he passed through, and his courage had been somewhat cast down, for that reason. We find no trace of Christianity in Herculaneum, one of the cities of Italy, of the second size, which was destroyed A. D. 79, though we meet with traces of Judaism there; and in short, it must be admitted, that, compared with Asia, the western provinces had but few Christians. We have no reason to think that Rome sent out missionaries early. The south of France was christianized from Asia, though so much further off than Rome. The natural inference is, that these parts would receive *later* copies of any apostolick writing, published in Asia Minor, than those parts which had a regular intercourse, half a dozen times in a year, at least, but probably much oftener, with Ephesus. And whatever versions were extant in the west, would represent the second edition with its variations, whatever they might be.

As to Rome itself, I infer, that that capital of the empire had, if any place had, *both* editions. Suppose, for a moment, that the *first* edition had reached Rome, when Aristobulus quitted that city for Britain, or that it was sent to Aristobulus, in Britain, from Rome, it will follow, that the ancient British copies would *not* contain those additions which the apostle John inserted in the *second* edition. And to this agrees the fact: for Pelagianism could hardly have been repressed by any text more effectually than by the one in question. Yet that error rose in Britain, and it was not so decidedly opposed then, as it is now; *minus* the testimony of this text. Moreover, the text is not quoted by the venerable Bede, in a passage of his works, where we should expect to find it, at least, alluded to. He, therefore, might have the first edition.

In short, almost all the arguments employed against the authenticity of the text may be admitted. They cease to have any great force, after it is once conceded to those who use them, that the *first* edition, together with all its representatives, in the first century, suppose, had not the words in debate. They are reduced to the infirmity of a negative argument, at best.

I must now observe, that the African churches being planted long after the Asiatick, they, no doubt, would obtain the best transcripts of the works of any inspired writer, which could be procured about the time of their being founded; i. e. the *second* edition of the letter under consideration. To this agrees the fact; *the African bishops quote the passage*. Tertullian, Cyprian, Eucherius, Eugenius, with his consistory of 400 bishops, Vigilus, Fulgentius, &c. &c. so that it was undeniably extant in their copies from the second century downwards. The argument, then, is reduced to a point: either these divines *found* the passage in their copies, or they *put* it there. The latter alternative is so dishonourable to Christians and to Christianity, that one is willing to accept of any hypothesis

esteem; one who has defended the scripture-doctrine of the Trinity with a great deal of learning and judgment, who has given a particular account of several that have written on either side of the question*. No one pretends to deny, that this text is not to be found in a great number of manuscripts, among which some are generally allowed to be of great antiquity; therefore it is less to be wondered at, that it is left out in some ancient versions thereof, which were taken from copies that were destitute of it; all which only proves, that the text has been corrupted: but the main question is, which of those copies are to be reckoned genuine, those which have it, or others which have it not? It must be allowed, that there are a considerable number, in which the text is inserted, as Beza and others observe; and it will be a hard matter to prove that these are all spurious, which must be done, before we shall be obliged to expunge it out of scripture.

If it be objected, that the manuscripts, which have the text, are not so ancient as those that are without it, it will be a difficult matter for them to determine the antiquity thereof, with such exactness, as, by comparing one with the other, it may be certainly known, with respect to all of them, which has the

* *Mr. Abraham Taylor, in his true Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity, Part. I. chap. 2. in which we have his own method of reasoning in defence thereof, which is, at least, sufficient to remove the boasts and insults of those who wonder that we should not give up the cause entirely to them.*

which may vindicate professors and teachers from such enormous guilt.—But further:

I have said, that Rome might be expected to procure whatever was most excellent in Christian literature, as well as in other studies. It had, then, the *first* edition, because that was the *earliest* which could be procured; and the *second*, because the influx of persons to Rome from all parts was so great, that every thing which was portable of a literary nature, might be expected to be brought there. Rome had an ancient version of the scriptures, known under the name of the old *Italic version*. It is not of any consequence to our argument, whether this version contained the text of the *heavenly witnesses*, since it was made very early; but if the *revised* Roman version of the New Testament contained it, we are reduced to the same dilemma as before, in reference to the African bishops.—The reviser of this edition (Jerom) either *found* it, or *forged* it. The same arguments that relieve the characters of the African bishops, relieve the character of this father. The accusation is incredible. It is loading the party with a crime so far beyond ordinary culpability, that the mind revolts at the charge. It is admitted, then, that the Latin version reads this verse; that St. Jerome adopted it; that it was adopted by the learned after him; as by our own famous Alkwin, at the time, and in the court of Charlemagne, and has so continued ever since. The inference is, that St. Jerome preferred the authority and text of the second edition, and followed it.

These, moreover, are *independent* witnesses; for, the African bishops, who wrote before Jerom, could not receive this passage from his revised version: or, if any choose to affirm that the African bishops received this passage from the old *Italic version*, then the authenticity of the passage follows of course, in proportion to whatever importance is attached to this increased antiquity.

preference; and by what a number of years: besides, since it is certain, that more manuscripts of scripture are lost by far, than are now known to be in the world; unless we suppose that religion, in ancient times, was contracted into a very narrow compass, or that very few, in the first ages of the church, had copies of scripture by them, which is not to be supposed; and, if so, then it will be hard to prove that those manuscripts, which have the text inserted, did not take it from some others, that were in being before them; so that the genuineness, or spuriousness of the text, is not to be determined only or principally by inspection into ancient manuscripts.

Nor can I think it very material to offer conjectures concerning the manner how the text came first to be corrupted. Dr. Hammond, and others, suppose, that some one, who transcribed this epistle, might commit a blunder, in leaving out this text, because of the repetition of the words in the following verse, *There are three that bare record*. It is, indeed, a hard thing to trace every mistake made by an amanuensis to its first original; however, this must be concluded, that it is possible for it to be left out through inadvertency, but it could not be put in without a notorious fraud; and no one would attempt to do this, unless some end, which he thought valuable, were answered thereby. Indeed, if the doctrine of the Trinity could not have been maintained without such an insertion, I will not say, that every one, who ever defended it, had honesty enough to abhor such a vile practice; but this I am bound to say, that if any one did so, he was guilty not only of fraud, but folly, at the same time; since the divinity of the Son and Spirit, as well as of the Father, is maintained throughout the whole scripture; and the principal thing asserted concerning the Son, in this text, *viz.* that he is *One* with the Father, is expressly laid down in his own words, John x. 30. *I and my Father are one*.

I know the Arians take occasion to censure the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity, as being guilty of this fraud, though Father Simon * is a little more sparing of his reflections on them; but he is no less injurious to the truth, when he maintains, that some person or other, in the margin of a copy, which he had by him, which he supposes to have been about five hundred years old, had affixed to ver. 8. these words, as an explication thereof, as though the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were intended thereby, to wit, by the *Spirit, water, and blood*; and from hence concludes, that the next person, who transcribed from this manuscript, mistook this note for a part of the text; and so the 7th verse came to be inserted. This Le Clerc calls a setting the matter in a clear light; for some

* See *Histoire Crit. du Nouv. Testam.* chap. 18. page 204.

persons are ready to believe that which supports their own cause, how weakly soever it be maintained.

It might easily be replied to this, that this text was known in the world long enough before that manuscript was wrote, and consequently this insertion could not first take its rise from thence; and therefore to produce a single instance of this nature, is, I humbly conceive, nothing to the purpose*.

But, passing by what respects scripture-manuscripts, there is more stress to be laid on the writings of those who have referred to this text; and accordingly it is certain, that it was often quoted in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, by ancient writers, in the fifth and following centuries, therefore it was found in the manuscripts that they used. It is true, it is not quoted by the Fathers, who wrote in the fourth century, to wit, Athanasius, Cyril, Gregory, Nazianzen, Chrysostom, nor by Augustin, and some others; but nothing can be inferred from hence, but that it was not in the copies they made use of: but it does not follow that it was in no copy at that time; for, if we look farther back to the third century, we find it expressly referred to by Cyprian, which I cannot but lay a very great stress on; he has it in two places †, in the former of which, he occasionally mentions these words, *These three are one*; and, in the latter, he expressly quotes this scripture; and says, it is *written of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that these three are one*; which evidently proves, that he found it in some manuscript extant in his time, which was before any manuscript, now in being, is pretended to have been written; for even the Alexandrian manuscript is, I think, supposed by none to be of greater antiquity than the fourth century, which seems to me to be of greater force than any thing that is suggested, concerning its being not found in manuscripts of later date; and we may observe, that that Father does not speak of it as a certain manuscript, which was reserved, as a treasure, in some private library, which might be adulterated; nor doth he pretend to prove the authority thereof, nor make use of it, to prove the genuineness of the text; but quotes the text, as we do any other place of scripture, as supposing it was generally acknowledged to be contained therein; and he also was reckoned a man of the greatest integrity, as well as piety, and so would not refer to any text, as a part of the sacred writings, which was not so.

Object. It is objected against this, by the Anti-trinitarians, that though he quotes scriptures, yet it is not this, but ver. 8. and that not in the words thereof, but in a mystical sense, which he puts upon it, by the Spirit, water, and blood, agree-

* See this conjecture of Father Simon learnedly opposed in Smith. *Miscellan. contra Simon.*

† *Vid. Epist. lxxiii. ad Iubecianum, & de Unitate Eccl. §. 4.*

ing in one, intending the Father, Son, and Spirit, being one : and this is the sense Facundus, an African bishop, who lived about the middle of the sixth century, puts upon it, and supposes him thus to quote it.

Ans. v. But to this it may be answered, that his judgment is no more to be valued, who lived three hundred years after him, than if he had lived in this present age ; nor had he any farther light to understand Cyprian's meaning, than we have ; and we know very well, that Cyprian was not so unreasonably fond of mystical interpretations of scriptures, as Origen, and some others of the Fathers were : and even they never presumed to quote any mystical sense, which they put on scripture, as the words thereof, or say, as this Father does, it is so written ; much less are we to suppose that his words are to be taken in this sense. And whatever Facundus's sense was of his words, another who lived in the same century, together with, or a little before him, *viz.* Fulgentius, refers (as the learned author above mentioned * observes) to this passage of Cyprian ; not as a mystical explication of ver. 8. but as distinctly contained in ver 7. and, as such, makes use of it against the Arians.

As for that known passage in Tertullian †, in which he speaks of the union, or connexion, as he calls it, of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Comforter, making three joined together, and that these three are one, that is, one divine Being, not one Person, and so referring to our Saviour's word's, *I and the Father are one*, it is a very good explication of the sense of this text, and discovers that, in that early age of the church, he had a right notion of the doctrine of the Trinity : but whether it is sufficiently evident from hence, that he refers to this scripture under our present consideration, though defending the doctrine contained in it, I will not determine. I shall add no more in the defence of the genuineness of this text, but rather refer the reader to others, who have wrote professedly on this subject. ‡

And whereas some of the anti-trinitarians have supposed, that if this scripture were genuine, it doth not prove the doctrine of the Trinity, because the words ought to be taken as implying, that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are one only in testimony ; to this it may be answered, that though it be an undoubted truth that they agree in testimony, yet it doth not amount to the sense of the words, *They are one* ; for if that had been the principal idea designed to be conveyed thereby, no reason can be assigned why the phrase should be different from

* See true Scripture-doctrinae, &c. page 53.

† Contra Praxeam, cap. 25.

‡ See the Author before referred to, in the true scripture-doctrine, &c. as also Hoiland de tribus in caelo testibus.

what it is in the following verse ; but it would, doubtless, have been expressed, *αἱ τὸ ἓν εἰσίν*, *They agree in one.*

Thus we have endeavoured to prove our Saviour's proper Deity from those scriptures that speak of him, not only as a being called *Lord* and *God*, but from others, that assert him to have the divine nature, or to be equal with God the Father ; we shall now proceed to consider some scriptures, by which it appears, that he asserts this concerning himself ; or what proofs we have of his Deity from his own words, in several conferences which he held with the Jews, by which he gave them reason to conclude that he was God equal with the Father ; and the opposition which he met with from them, who, for this reason, charged him with blasphemy, plainly intimates, that they understood his words in this sense. And if it be replied to this, as it often is, that nothing can be inferred to prove his Deity from their misunderstanding his words, and so charging him, without ground to be guilty thereof ; to this it may be answered, though we do not lay much stress on what they understood to be the meaning of his words, yet it plainly appears, that he intended them in this sense, inasmuch as if they misunderstood him, he did not undeceive them, which certainly he ought to have done, had he not been a divine Person. If any one seems to assume to himself any branch of the glory of God, that does not belong to him, though the ambiguity of words, provided they may be taken in two contrary senses, may in some measure, excuse him from having had such a design, however unadvisable it be to speak in such a way, yet if he apprehends that they, to whom he directs his discourse, are in the least inclined to misunderstand him, he is obliged, from the regard which he has to the divine glory, and the duty which he owes to those with whom he converses, as well as in defence of his own character, to undeceive them ; therefore, if our Saviour had not been equal with God, he would, doubtless, upon the least suspicion which the Jews might entertain, that he asserted himself to be so, immediately have undeceived them, and would have told them, that they took his words in a wrong sense, and that he was far from usurping that glory, which belonged to God ; that had he intended them in that sense, they might justly have called him a blasphemer ; this he would, doubtless have done, had he by his words, given them occasion to think him a divine Person if he were not so.

Thus the apostles Paul and Barnabas, when the people at Lys-tra, upon their having wrought a miracle, concluded that they were gods, with what zeal and earnestness did they undeceive them ! In Acts xiv. 14, 15. it is said, when they perceived they were going to offer sacrifice to them, *they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why*

do ye these things? we also are men of like passions with you. And, at another time, we read, that Peter and John, in Acts iii. 11,—13. when they had cured the lame man, though the people did not conclude them to be divine persons, yet, perceiving that they were amazed, and being jealous that some thoughts might arise in their minds, as though they had a right to that glory, which belongs to God alone, or that this miracle was to be ascribed to themselves, rather than to him, we read, that *when Peter saw that they marvelled, and that the people ran together, he answered, ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though, by our own power, or holiness, we had made this man to walk?* and accordingly takes occasion to shew, that the glory hereof was due to none but God.

But our Saviour takes no such method to exculpate himself from this charge of blasphemy; therefore we must suppose they did not mistake his words but that he intended thereby, that they should understand him to be a divine Person; yea, he is so far from undeceiving them, if they were deceived, that he rather confirms, than denies, the sense, which they put upon them. This appears from Matt. ix. 2—5. when they brought to him a man sick of the palsey, to whom, when he healed him, he said, *Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee*, he perceived, that *certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth*, supposing that none had power to forgive sins but God. It is true, the words might have been understood, as though he had said, thy sins are forgiven thee, only in a *declarative way*, as signifying, that the man had obtained forgiveness from God, without insinuating thereby, that he had a power, as a divine Person, to forgive sins. But it is plain, that the Jews took his words in this latter sense, from their charging him with blasphemy; but, instead of rectifying the mistake, if it was one, he asserts, that notwithstanding the meanness of his appearance, while in his humble state on earth, yet he had a power to forgive sins; and he not only asserts, but proves this, when he says, ver. 5. *Whether it is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say Arise, and walk?* Many suppose, that our Saviour hereby intends to establish his Deity, by asserting his infinite power, which was exerted in working a miracle, and so it is as though he should say: he that can produce any effect, which is above the laws of nature, as miracles are, at least if he does it by his own power, must be God: but this he had done, and so proved his deity thereby, and consequently his right to forgive sins.

But I am sensible it will be objected to this, that since creatures have wrought miracles, which were as truly and properly so as this that Christ wrought; therefore the working a mi

fact will not prove the divinity of the person that wrought it, unless we could prove that he did it by his own power, that we cannot do without supposing his deity, and therefore that ought not to be made use of, as a medium to prove it.

Some, indeed, attempt to prove it from that scripture, Luke xi. 20. in which he says, *he cast out devils by the finger of God.* supposing he means hereby his own divine power. Others take notice of something peculiar to himself as they suppose, in the way of his working miracles, that herein he spake, and acted like a God. But, since neither of these arguments will be reckoned conclusive, therefore I would take a method somewhat different, which is not liable to the aforesaid objection, to account for this matter; and that is that our Saviour first tells the man, that his sins were forgiven him, knowing, before-hand, how this would be resented by the scribes, who would, upon this occasion, charge him with blasphemy, which accordingly they did; and then, to convince them that he was a divine Person, and had a power to forgive sin, he wrought a miracle, and so bade the man, sick of the palsey, to *arise and walk*; whereby he proved his deity, of which he designed to give an extraordinary conviction, and consequently of his having a power to forgive sin, by an appeal to this miracle. Now though miracles do not argue the divinity of the person that works them, from any visible circumstance contained therein as but now mentioned, yet they effectually prove it, provided this be the thing contested, and an explicit appeal be made to the divine power to confirm it by miracles, then they are an undoubted proof thereof, as much as they prove any thing relating to the Christian religion: and, in this sense, I humbly conceive, Christ proved his deity by miracles, which he is expressly said elsewhere to have done; as in John ii. 11. speaking concerning his first miracle in Cana of Galilee, it is said, that thereby *he manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him*; where, by *his glory* is doubtless, meant his divine glory; for the faith of his disciples, which was consequent hereupon, was a divine faith: and we never read of the glory of Christ, in his humbled state more especially, but it must import the glory of his deity, which his disciples are said, in some measure to behold, when they believed in him. This Christ confirmed by his miracles, in the same way, as his mission was confirmed thereby. By this means, therefore, he proved his deity and consequently his right to forgive sin: and therefore was so far from endeavouring to convince the Jews, that they were mistaken in thinking him a divine person, he farther insists on, and proves, that he was so.

There is another conference which our Saviour held with the Jews, mentioned, John vi. in which we read, that after he

had healed a lame man on the sabbath-day, for which, ver. 16. *the Jews sought to slay him*, as a sabbath-breaker, he replies, ver. 17. *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*; upon which they were more enraged, and as it is said, ver. 18. *sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but said also, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God*. It is plain they understood his words, as importing that he was equal with God; and, indeed they could do no otherwise, for he compares his works with God's, and speaks of himself as working co-ordinately with him. Certainly our works ought not to be mentioned at the same time with God's; therefore they suppose that he asserted himself to be a divine Person, and farther proved it by calling God his Father; which, according to the sense in which they understood it, denoted an equality with him. Hereupon they charge him with blasphemy, and go round about to kill him for it. Now it is certain, that, if he had not been equal with God, he ought to have undeceived them, which he might easily have done, by telling them that though I call God my Father, I intend nothing hereby, but that I worship, reverence, and yield obedience to him; or that I am his Son, by a special instance of favour, in such a sense as a creature may be; but far be it from me to give you the least occasion to think that I am equal with God, for that would be to rob him of his glory: but we find that our Saviour is far from denying his equality with the Father, but rather establishes and proves it in the following verses.

It is true, indeed, in some passages thereof, he ascribes to himself the weakness of a man, as having therein respect to his human nature, which is included in his being the Messiah and Mediator, as well as his divine: thus he says, ver. 19. *The Son, viz. as man, can do nothing of himself*; and ver. 20. *The Father sheweth him all things*; but, in other passages, he proves that he had a divine nature, and farther confirms what he had before asserted, namely, that he was equal with God; in ver. 21. *For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will*. Observe, he not only speaks of himself, as having divine power, but sovereignty; the former in that he quickeneth; the latter, in that he does it according to his own will or pleasure; and, in ver. 23. he signifies his expectation from men, that *all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*. Thus he lays claim to divine glory, as well as ascribes to himself the prerogative of raising the whole world, at the general resurrection, and determining their state, either of happiness or misery, ver. 28, 29. *Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that*

have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. From hence, therefore, we may conclude, that our Saviour was so far from disclaiming the charge of being equal with God, which they called blasphemy, that he proves it by arguments yet more convincing.

Another conference, which he held with the Jews about this matter, we read of in John viii. wherein, taking occasion to speak concerning Abraham, who rejoiced to see his day, he tells them plainly, ver. 58. *Before Abraham was, I am*; not intending hereby, as the Arians suppose, that he was the first creature, but that he was equal with God; and, indeed, there seems to be something in his mode of speaking that argues his asserting his eternal and unchangeable Deity. The phrase here used is the same, with a little variation, with that which is used to set forth the eternity and immutability of God, in Isa. xliii. 13. *Before the day was, I am he.* If the prophet is to be understood, as asserting that God the Father existed before time, before the *day* was, or the course of nature began, why may we not suppose our Saviour to intend as much, when he says, *Before Abraham was, I am.*

However, since it will be objected, that this, at best, is but a probable argument, though it is such as many of the Fathers have made use of in defending his Deity, yet we will not lay the whole stress of our cause upon it, but may observe, that whatever critical remark others may make on the sense of the words, it is certain the Jews understood them no otherwise, than as implying, that he thought himself equal with God; therefore it is said, ver. 59. that *they took up stones to stone him*; which was a punishment inflicted, under the law, on blasphemers; and ought he not, had they misunderstood his words, to have cleared himself from this imputation, if he had not been equal with God? But he is far from doing this; for it is said, in the following words, that *he hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.*

Again, there is another conference, which he held with the Jews, mentioned in John x. in which he speaks like a divine Person in several verses; as ver. 14. *I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine*; which is the same that is ascribed to God, in Psal. xxiii. 1. *The Lord is my Shepherd*; and he lays claim to his church, whom he calls his sheep, as his own; and ver. 18. he speaks of himself, as having a power over his own life; *I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again*; which is a greater instance of dominion than belongs to a creature, who has not a power to dispose of his own life at pleasure; and, in ver. 28. he ascends yet higher in his expression, when he speaks of himself, as having a power *to give eternal life* to his people, which is cer-

tainly the gift of none but God; and when, in ver. 29. he owns himself to be inferior to his Father, as man; notwithstanding, in ver. 30. he plainly asserts his Deity, when he says, *I and my Father are one.*

Object. 1. The Anti-trinitarians object to this, that Christ did not speak of himself as one with the Father, any otherwise than in consent, or, at least, as having power and authority derived from him.

Ans. w. To say that those words, *I and my Father are one,* imply nothing more than that they are One in consent, does not well agree with the sense of the foregoing words, in which he speaks of the greatness, and the power of his Father, and in this of his being One with him. Besides, had he only meant his being One with him in consent, as implying the subjection of all the powers and faculties of his soul to him, that is a sense in which every good man may be said to be one with God; therefore the Jews would not have charged him with blasphemy for it, which, it is plain, they did, and took up stones to stone him, if his own words had not given them ground to conclude that he intended more than this, namely, that he was one in nature with God. It is therefore farther objected,

Object. 2. That the Jews, indeed, misunderstood him, and nothing can be inferred from their stupidity, to prove his Deity: but he seems, in the following verses, to do more to the undeceiving them, than he had done in some of the foregoing instances; for he tells them plainly the reason why he spake of himself as a God, namely, because he was a prophet; and these were called *gods, to whom the word of God came*, or, at least, that he had a right to be so called, from his being *sanctified, and sent into the world.*

Ans. w. By these expressions, he does not intend to set himself upon a level with the prophets of old, but they contain an argument from the less to the greater; and so it is, as though he should say, If some persons, who made a considerable figure in the church of old, and were sent about important services to them, are called gods, I have much more reason to claim that character, as having been sanctified, and sent into the world about the great work of redemption, consecrated, or set apart to glorify the divine perfections therein; which work, as will be observed under a following head, proves his Deity; and therefore we are not to suppose that he disclaims it, when he speaks of himself, as engaged therein. Then he proceeds yet farther, in asserting his Deity, when he speaks of his *being in the Father, and the Father in him*, which, it is certain, the Jews took in a very different sense from what those words are taken in, when applied to creatures, for they concluded, that he spake of himself as a divine Person; for it follows, ver. 39. that *they*

sought again to take him, but he escaped out of their hand; so that he still gives them occasion to conclude, that he was God equal with the Father.

Thus he asserted his Deity in all these various conferences with the Jews; in which, if he had not been what they apprehended him to insinuate that he was, many charges must have been brought against him; not only as to what concerns matters of common prudence, as incensing the people by ambiguous expressions, and thereby hazarding his own life; but his holiness would have been called in question, had he given occasion to them, to think that he assumed to himself divine glory, had he not had a right to it. (a)

And this leads us to consider that last public testimony, which he gave to his Deity, in the presence of the Sanhedrim, which, in some respects, may be said to have cost him his life, when he stood before Pontius Pilate; upon which occasion, the apostle says, 1 Tim. vi. 13. that *he witnessed a good confession*: this we have recorded, Matth. xxvi. 61. where we observe, that when false witnesses were suborned to testify against him, who contradicted one another, in their evidence, upon which the high priest desired that he would make a reply to what they said, in his own defence, he did not think that worthy of an answer, and therefore held his peace: but when he was asked, in the most solemn manner, and adjured by the living God, to tell them, *Whether he were the Christ, the Son of God?* that is, the Messiah, whom the Jews expected, who governed his church of old, and whom they acknowledged to be a divine Person, or the Son of God; here the whole matter is left to his own determination. Had he denied this, he would have saved his life; and if he confessed it, he was like to die for it. On this occasion, he does not hold his peace, or refuse to answer; therefore, says he, ver. 64. *Thou hast said*; which is as though he he had said, *It is as thou hast said, I am the Christ, the Son of God*; and then in the following words, *Nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man, sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven*; whereupon the high priest rent his clothes, and appealed to the people that they had heard his blasphemy, and accordingly they judged him worthy of death. Here we observe, that he not only asserts himself to be the Son of God, and to have a right to the glory of a divine Person, but, as a farther confirmation thereof, applies to himself a text, which the Jews supposed to belong to the messiah, Dan. vii. 13. *I saw in the night-visions, and behold, one, like the Son of man, came with the clouds of heaven, &c.* So that, from all this, it follows, that if Christ, when he conversed occasionally with the Jews, or when he was called

(a) Vide Abbadie on the Divinity of Christ, per totum.

before the Sanhedrim, asserts himself to be the Son of God, which includes in it his Deity, and so does not shun to speak of himself, as equal with God, we have the doctrine, which we are defending, maintained by himself; therefore we must conclude, that he really is what he declared himself to be, namely, God equal with the Father.

II. We proceed to consider how our Saviour's Deity appears, from those divine attributes, which are ascribed to him, which are proper to God alone; to which we shall add, those high and glorious titles, by which he is described in scripture. The attributes of God, as has been before observed *, are all essential to him, and therefore cannot, in a proper sense, be any of them applied to a creature, as they are to Christ, which will be particularly considered in some following heads.

1. He is said to be eternal, and that not only without end, as the angels and saints in heaven shall be, but from everlasting: this appears from Micah v. 2. *Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* If his goings forth have been from everlasting, then he existed from everlasting, for action supposes existence. Nothing more than this can be said, to prove that the Father was from everlasting: and that this is spoken of our Saviour is very plain, from the reference to this text, in Matth. ii. 6. where the former part of this verse is quoted and explained, as signifying our Saviour's being born in Bethlehem; therefore the latter part of it, *whose goings forth,* &c. must belong to him. Again, he is said, in John i. 1. to have been *in the beginning*; observe, it is not said he was *from* but *in*, the beginning; therefore it is plain, that he existed when all things began to be, and consequently was from eternity.

When we consider this divine perfection as belonging to our Saviour, we militate against both the Socinians and the Arians; as for the former, they deny, that he had any existence, properly speaking, before his conception in the womb of the virgin Mary, and interpret all those scriptures that speak of his pre-existence to it, such as that in John viii. 58. *Before Abraham was, I am,* or that *the Word was in the beginning,* as importing either, that he was from eternity, in the decree and purpose of God, relating to his incarnation, in which sense every thing that comes to pass was eternal, as fore-ordained by God, which is therefore a very absurd exposition of such-like texts; or else they suppose, that his being in the beginning signifies nothing else but his being the Founder of the gospel-state, which cannot be the sense of the evangelist's words, because he is said *to be with God*; and it immediately follows, *and all things were made by him,* which every unprejudiced reader would suppose to intend the creation of the world, and not the erecting the gos-

* See Quest. vii.

pel-dispensation ; this therefore evidently appears to be a perversion of the sense of the text.

As for the Arians, they distinguish between Christ's being in the beginning of time, and his being from eternity ; and so they suppose the meaning of the text to be, that *the Word was from the beginning* ; and whatever disguise they seem to put upon their mode of speaking, when they say there was not a point of time in which Christ was not, or that he was before the world, they are far from asserting that he was without beginning, or properly from eternity. And, in answer hereunto, let it be considered, that we cannot conceive of any medium between time and eternity ; therefore whatever was before time, must be from eternity, in the same sense in which God is eternal. That this may appear, let us consider that time is the measure of finite beings, therefore it is very absurd, and little less than a contradiction, to say that there was any finite being produced before time ; for that is, in effect, to assert that a limited duration is antecedent to that measure, whereby it is determined, or limited. If we should allow that there might have been some things created before God began to create the heavens and the earth, though these things might be said to have had a being longer than time has had, yet they could not have existed before time, for time would have begun with them ; therefore if Christ had been created a thousand millions of ages before the world, it could not be said that he existed before time ; but it would be inferred from hence, that time, which would have taken its beginning from his existence, had continued so many ages ; therefore that which existed before time, must have existed before all finite beings, and consequently was not produced out of nothing, or did not begin to be, and is properly from eternity. Therefore I cannot but think the objection evasive, or a fruitless attempt to take off the force of this argument, to prove our Saviour's Deity, since the expressions of scripture, by which his eternity is set forth, are as strong and emphatical, as as those whereby the Father's is expressed, and consequently his Deity is equally evident.

2. Our Saviour is said to be unchangeable, which perfection not only belongs to God, but is that whereby he is considered as opposed to all created beings, which are dependent upon him, and therefore changed by him, at his pleasure. Now that Christ is immutable, is evident, if we compare the words of the Psalmist, Psal. cii. 25,—27. *Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure ; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment ; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed ; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end,* with Heb. i. 10. where the apostle uses the same words.

and considers them as applied to Christ ; so that it will be a very hard matter for any to evade the force of this argument. I am persuaded, that if the apostle had not applied these words to Christ, the Anti-trinitarians would have allowed, that the Psalmist gives as plain an account of the immutability of God, as can be found in scripture, or, indeed, as words can express. Some of the writers on that side of the question, have passed over this scripture, as thinking, I suppose, that it is better not to attempt to account for it consistently with their scheme, than to do it in such a way, as will not, in the least, support it : others do not care to own that they are applied to Christ ; but that is to break the chain of the apostle's reasoning, and thereby to fasten an absurdity upon him. Now, that we may briefly consider the connexion between this and the foregoing verses, whereby it will evidently appear that our Saviour is the Person here described, as unchangeable, let us consider, that the design of this chapter is to set forth the Mediatorial glory of Christ, to establish his superiority to angels ; and after he had referred to that scripture, which speaks of the eternity of his kingdom, to wit, the 45th Psalm, ver. 6. he then speaks of him as unchangeable, and so applies the words of the Psalmist, but now mentioned, to him. We may also observe, in the text, that he is not only unchangeable, as to his existence, but his duration is unchangeable, which farther confirms what was observed under the last head, that he is eternal, as God is, *viz.* without succession, as well as from everlasting : this seems to be contained in that expression, *Thou art the same, thy years shall not fail*, as though he should say, thy duration does not slide, or pass away by successive moments, as the duration of time and created beings do.

To this we might add what the apostle says, Heb. xiii. 8. that he *is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, that is, throughout all the changes of time, he remains unchangeably the same in his divine nature. A late writer* supposes the meaning of this scripture to be nothing but this, that the doctrine of Christ, once taught by the apostles, ought to be preserved unchanged : it is true, he says elsewhere,† that it is certainly true that the Person of Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; whether, by yesterday, he means any thing more than a limited duration of time past, which he must do, or else give up the doctrine that he every where contends for, I cannot tell ; but he does not think that this text respects the Person of Christ, but his doctrine as above mentioned ; the principal argument by which he proves it is, its supposed connexion with the foregoing verse ; and so it is as though he

* See Dr. Clarke's Scripture doctrine, page 127

† Reply to Nelson, page 169

should say; Have regard to what has been delivered to you by those who have preached the word of God, who, though they are no more among you, yet the doctrine they have delivered is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. But it seems to be too great a strain on the sense of the words, to suppose *Christ* to import the same with *his doctrine*; and, with submission, I cannot think that this is to be inferred from what goes before, or follows after it; but the sense seems to be this; Adhere to the doctrine you have formerly received from those who have preached the word of God to you, and be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, so as to change your sentiments with your teachers, for that would not be to act in conformity to Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; so that he designs to establish their faith from the consideration of Christ's immutability, whatever changes they are liable to from the death of their teachers, or the innovations of those who succeed them, and endeavour to carry them away by divers and strange doctrines; so the text seems to be as plain a proof of our Saviour's immutability as that scripture, Rev. i. 4. is of the immutability of God, in which it is said, *He is, was, and is to come*. If, by his being *yesterday*, we are to understand, as some do, his managing the affairs of his church under the legal dispensation; and *to-day*, his governing them under this present dispensation; and *for ever*, the eternity of his kingdom, it plainly proves, that whatever changes he has made in the affairs of the government of the church and of the world, yet he is the same, and consequently a divine Person.

3. Another divine attribute ascribed to our Saviour, is omnipresence, as in Matt. xviii. 20. *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*; which expression imports the same thing, with that whereby the divine omnipresence (as is allowed by all) is set forth in Exod. xx. 24. *In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee*. Now that Christ's presence in the midst of his people, in all places, argues his omnipresence, is very evident, since he designs, by this promise, to encourage them in all places, and at all times, to perform religious duties, with an eye to this privilege; so that wherever there is a worshipping assembly, they have hereby ground to expect that he will be present with them. Now it is certain, that no creature can be in two places at the same time, much less in all places, which is the same as to *fill heaven and earth*, and is applicable to God alone, as the prophet expresses it, in Jer. xxiii. 24. Moreover, when Christ says, that he will be with his people in all places, it must be meant at the same time, and not successively, otherwise he could not be where-ever two or

three are met in his name ; this therefore is a plain proof of his omnipresence, which is an incommunicable perfection of the divine nature, and consequently argues him to be true and proper God.

Object. 1. It is objected to the sense we have given of this scripture, (to weaken the force of the argument taken from it) that our Saviour is here said to be present, only by his authority, where two or three are met together in his name ; and accordingly the words are to be taken in a metaphorical sense, as when a king is said to be present in all parts of his dominions, where persons, who are deputed to represent him, act by his authority.

Ans. w. Though we allow, that whatever is done in Christ's name, must be said to be done by his authority ; yet we cannot allow that his being in the midst of them is to be taken only for his being so by his authority ; for we must not suppose that our Saviour, in these words, makes use of a tautology ; and, indeed, it would be a very jejune and empty way of speaking to say, that where two or three are met together in my name, that is, by my authority, there am I in the midst of them, by my authority. Certainly, Christ's being in the midst of them, must be taken in the same sense with that parallel scripture before referred to, in *Exod. xx. 24.* where *God's coming to his people*, in those places where he records his name, is explained, as having a very great privilege attending it, namely, his *blessing them*, which he is said to do, when he confers blessedness upon them, and gives them a full and rich supply of all their wants ; this therefore must be the sense of our Saviour's being in the midst of his people.

Moreover, as God is said to be present where he acts, so Christ's powerful influence, granted to his people in all places, which supposes his omnipresence, contains a great deal more than his being present by his authority ; and if that were the only sense in which this scripture is to be taken, it might as well be alleged, that all the scriptures, which speak of the divine omnipresence might be taken in that sense, which would be to set aside all the proofs we have from thence of this perfection of the divine nature ; therefore this objection seems to be rather an evasion, than an argument, to overthrow Christ's divinity, taken from his omnipresence.

Object. 2. Others suppose that Christ being in the midst of his people, when met together in his name, implies nothing more than his knowing what they do when engaged in acts of religious worship.

Ans. w. We observe, that they who make use of this objection, that they may militate against that argument, which is brought to prove his Deity from his omnipresence, will, for ar-

gument's sake, allow him to be omniscient, not considering that that equally proves him to be a divine Person, as will be considered under our next head. Now, to prove that Christ's being present with his people, is to be understood of his knowing what they do, they refer to that scripture, 2 Kings v. 26. in which Elisha says to Gehazi, as knowing what he had done, when he followed Naaman, the Syrian, for a reward; *Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot with thee?* But since this scripture signifies nothing else but that this secret was revealed to him, which is, in a figurative way of speaking, as though he had been present with him, it will not follow from hence that the prophet pretended to know what was done in all places, and that at all times, which is more (as will be farther observed under the next head) than what seems communicable to any creature: but this is intended by Christ's knowing all things, and more than this, doubtless, is meant by his being in the midst of his people, whereby he encourages them to expect those blessings, which they stand in need of, from him, in which respect he promises to be with them in a way of grace; and certainly he that is so present with his people, must be concluded to be, in the most proper sense, a divine Person.

There is another scripture, which is generally brought to prove Christ's omnipresence, and consequently his proper Deity, to wit, John iii. 13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.* For the understanding of which words, we must consider their connexion with what goes immediately before; thus by, *No man hath ascended up into heaven, but he that came down from heaven,* It is plain our Saviour means, that no man has a full and comprehensive knowledge of heavenly things, of which he had been speaking in the foregoing verse, but he that came down from heaven; in which he asserts his divine omniscience*, as the person in whom all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid, as it is expressed elsewhere; or none knows the mysteries which are hid in God, but he that is in the bosom of the Father, who came down from heaven; or, as the apostle expresses it, 1 Cor. xv. 47. who is *the Lord from heaven*; and then, as a farther proof of his Deity, he adds, that *he is in heaven*; that is, while he was on earth, in one nature, as being omnipresent, he was in heaven in the other nature; and, agreeably to this sense of the scripture, he is said to *come down from heaven*, as his divine nature manifested its glory here on earth, when the nature was united to it, which is the only sense in which God is said to come down into this lower world; as we have the same mode of speaking, in Gen. xi. 7

* See a parallel scripture, Prov. xxx. 2, 3.

Exod. iii. 8. and other places; so that if he is thus omnipresent, we must conclude that he is a divine Person.

The Arians give a very different sense of this text, especially those words, *The Son of man, who is in heaven*; (a) for, they suppose, the words ought to be rendered, *was in heaven*; and that it does not argue his omnipresence, but that nature, which they call divine, first resided in heaven from the beginning, when it was produced by the Father; and afterwards in his incarnation, by a removal from heaven to earth it was said to come down from thence. But, before we allow of this sense of the text, they must prove that Christ was the first creature, and that, in this finite nature, he resided in heaven till his incarnation, and that he afterwards, by a change of place, descended into this lower world; and, if they could make this appear, there is yet a difficulty in the expression, as they understand the words; for it is not usual to say, *I came from a place, and was in that place before I came from it*; therefore whether their exposition of the words, or ours, be most proper, I leave any one to judge.

As for the Socinians, who deny that Christ had any existence before his incarnation, these are very much at a loss to account for the sense of this scripture; though Socinus himself, and many of his followers, have concluded from thence, that Christ was taken up into heaven some time after his incarnation, which they suppose to have been in some part of those forty days in which the scripture says he was in the wilderness tempted of the devil; but how he could ascend into heaven, and yet be in the wilderness, where one of the evangelists says he was all the forty days, as Mark i. 13. cannot be easily understood, or accounted for; and, indeed, the scripture is altogether silent as to this matter: and it is very strange, if it had been so, that when we have an account of other circumstances in his life, which are of less importance, no mention should be made of this, which, had it been discovered, would have been a great inducement to his followers to have paid the highest regard to his doctrine; for they suppose he was taken up into heaven, that he might be instructed in those things which he was to impart to the world. And, instead of a proof hereof, they only say that this is a parallel instance with that of Moses, who was called up to the top of mount Sinai, which was then the immediate seat of the divine presence, and there received the law, which he was to impart to Israel; so, they suppose, it was necessary, that our Saviour should ascend into heaven, that he might there be instructed in that doctrine, which he was to communicate to his church.

But we cannot but conclude, that being omniscient, as will

(a) ο υν ο τω ουρανω, is admitted by Griesback into his text

structions, and having, in his human nature, had an unction from the Holy Ghost; or, as it is expressed, John iii. 34. that *God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him*, therefore it was necessary that he should ascend into heaven, to receive the doctrines from thence, which he was to deliver. Moreover, according to this conjecture, his coming from heaven, in the end of time, to judge the world, should have been called his *third* coming, (as his first coming from thence was in his incarnation, and his second coming is supposed to be his return to this world, after he ascended into heaven, during this interval of time) which is contrary to that text of scripture, in Heb. ix. 28. which calls it, *his coming the second time, without sin, unto salvation*. And, indeed, it is so ungrounded a supposition, that some of the Socinians themselves reckon it, at most, but a probable conjecture, but do not pretend to say that it is sufficiently founded in scripture; and therefore we cannot think that this will have any tendency to enervate the force of our argument, to prove Christ's Deity, taken from the above-mentioned sense of that text; *The Son of man, which is in heaven*.

4. Our Saviour's Deity may farther be proved, from his being omniscient: thus the apostle Peter says, in John xxi. 17. *Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*. This is too great a glory to be ascribed to any creature; and had it been spoken of the Father, the Anti-trinitarians themselves would have owned, that it is as great a proof of his Deity, as any contained in scripture, as importing the same thing with what the Psalmist says, Psal. cxlvii. 5. *His understanding is infinite*. But, besides this there is another expression that abundantly proves this matter, wherein he is denominated the Searcher of hearts, which is a glory that God appropriates to himself, in Jer. xvii. 10. *I the Lord search the hearts, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways*; and elsewhere, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. *The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts*; and all creatures are excluded from having any branch of this glory, when it is said, in 1 Kings viii. 39. *Thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men*: now such a knowledge as this is ascribed to Christ; sometimes he is said to know the *inward thoughts and secret reasonings of men within themselves*, Mark ii. 8. And, if it be said, that this is only a particular instance of knowledge, such as he might have had by immediate divine inspiration, and therefore that it does not prove his Godhead; there is another scripture, that speaks of his knowledge, as more extensive, viz. that he knows the thoughts of all men, John ii. 25. *He needed not that any one should testify of man, for he knew what was in man*; and this be proved under our next head, he had no need to receive in-

his knowledge does not only respect men's present, but their future thoughts, which are not known to themselves: thus it is said, in John vi. 64. that *he knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.* And if all this be not reckoned sufficient to prove him to be the heart-searching God, nothing can be expressed in plainer terms than this is, concerning him, in Rev. ii. 23. *All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you, according to your works.*

Object. 1. It is objected to this argument for Christ's omniscience, taken from Peter's confession above-mentioned, *Lord, thou knowest all things,* &c. that nothing else is intended hereby, but that he had a very great degree of knowledge; not that he was strictly and properly omniscient, as supposing that it is an hyperbolical expression, not altogether unlike that of the woman of Tekoa to David, in 2 Sam. xiv. 20. when she says, *My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.*

Answer. It is true, this expression of her's is either an unwarrantable strain of compliment, or flattery, occasioned by David's suspecting that Joab had employed her to plead the cause of Absalom; or else it is a sincere acknowledgment of his great wisdom, without supposing him to be absolutely omniscient, as though she should say, thou knowest all things that are done in the land: there is no plot or contrivance, how secret soever it may be managed, but thou wilt, some way or other, find it out, as thou hast done this that I am sent about. But what reference has this to Peter's confession? Does it follow, that because there are hyperbolical expressions in scripture, as well as in other writings, that this must be one? or because a wise governor may have a conjectural knowledge of what is done by his subjects, when considering the various circumstances that attend their actions, that therefore the apostle intends nothing more than this? It is plain he appeals to Christ, as the heart-searching God, concerning the inward sincerity of his love to him, as well as of his repentance, after a public and shameful denial of him, which might have given just occasion for its being called in question; and it is as evident a proof of his omniscience, as that is of the Father's, in Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, &c.*

Object. 2. Others, especially some of the Arians, do not so much deny Christ's omniscience, as the consequence deduced from it, to wit, his proper Deity; and these make use of a more abstruse and metaphysical way of reasoning, and accordingly they suppose that a creature may know all things, that

is, all finite objects, and consequently all things that are done in the world, namely, all creatures, and all their actions, since the object of this knowledge is, at most, but finite; therefore it is possible for a finite mind to be so enlarged, as to take in all finite things, or to have the knowledge of all things communicated to it, since the object and the recipient are commensurate with each other. Therefore our Saviour may know all things; and yet it will not follow from hence, that his understanding is infinite, or that his knowledge is so properly divine as the Father's is; and consequently this is no sufficient argument to prove his Deity in the sense in which we understand it.

Answ. This method of reasoning might as well be used to evade the force of every argument, brought from scripture, to prove the Father's omniscience, or, indeed, to evince his infinite power, since all effects produced, which are the objects thereof, are but finite; and therefore it may as well be said, that it does not require infinite power to produce them, nor prove his eternal power and Godhead.

Moreover, as this would tend to destroy the infinite disproportion between God and the creature in acting, so it supposes that God can communicate a branch of his own glory to a creature, by enlarging it to such a degree, as to take in all finite objects. There are some things not so properly too great for God to do, as for a creature to be the subject of: we do not pretend to set limits to the divine power; yet we may infer, from the nature of things, and the powers of finite beings, that it is impossible for any one, below God, to know all things past, present, and to come, at one view; which our Saviour must be supposed to do, or else this attribute of omniscience is not justly applied to him; nor would he be fit to govern the world, as will be observed under a following head; therefore we must conclude, from hence, that he is truly and properly a divine Person.

To what has been said, concerning Christ's omniscience, we may subjoin those scriptures that speak of him, as the *wisdom of God*, the *Fountain of all communicated wisdom*, the *light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, as he is called, in John i. 9. And it is supposed, by many, that *wisdom* spoken of in Prov. viii. is to be understood of our Saviour, as the personal wisdom of God, inasmuch as there are several personal characters ascribed to him: thus it is said, ver. 23. *I was set up from everlasting*, &c. and ver. 30, 31. *Then, to wit, before the creation of all things, I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.* This cannot properly speaking, be applied to God's essential wisdom; it must therefore be

a description of an eternal divine Person, distinct from the Father.

But since many suppose, that whatever is spoken of wisdom, in this and some other chapters of this book, is only metaphorical, or a beautiful description of divine wisdom, as the instructor of mankind; though we cannot see how this, if nothing else be intended by it, can agree with some of the personal characters before mentioned, which seem applicable to our Saviour; yet we find that he is elsewhere called the *wisdom of God*, in a sense, that can by no means be supposed to be figurative: thus when we read in Luke xi. 49. *Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, &c.* it is certainly understood of our Saviour. (a) To which, if it be objected, that, by the *wisdom of God*, is meant there the wise God, to wit, the Father; it may be answered, that another evangelist, referring to the very same thing, explains what is meant by the *wisdom of God*, and represents our Saviour as speaking in his own Person, Matt. xxiii. 34. *Therefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, &c.*

5. The next divine perfection that is ascribed to Christ, is almighty power. This attribute is appropriated, by the Arians to the Father;* and accordingly they suppose, that it implies not only his supremacy over all creatures, but over the Son and Holy Ghost: and therefore they peremptorily conclude it is never applied to them, and consequently that the Deity of our Saviour cannot be proved by it; and that they may turn our own weapons upon us, or improve some unwary concessions, made by some very considerable writers, who have, in other respects, very well defended the doctrine of the Trinity, they seem to insinuate, as though this were a matter to be taken, as it were, for granted, though it might easily be made appear, that they strain the sense of those expressions, from whence they conclude them to have given up the cause to them, beyond what they ever intended; and there are many others, who are far from making such concessions.

As for the word *αὐτοκρατορίας*, *Almighty*, there is nothing in the derivation thereof, from whence it may justly be inferred, that it is a perfection, that contains a greater display of the divine glory, than the other perfections, that are attributed to all the Persons in the Godhead, though indeed it contains in it an idea of the universal extent of divine power, with respect to the objects thereof; yet this is not to be separated from the sense of the word, when power is ascribed to God in those scriptures,

* See Dr. Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine*, page 63.

(a) By the wisdom of God seems here to be meant the wisdom of God essentially considered. But see Matt. xxiii. 34.

where he is called *the Almighty*; therefore, if we can prove that Christ has power ascribed to him, that is properly divine, this will evince his Deity, as much as though we could produce several scriptures, in which he is indisputably called *the Almighty*; and this we shall first endeavour to do, and then enquire whether we have not as much, or more reason to conclude, that he is called Almighty, than they have to deny it.

That power, such as is properly divine, is attributed to Christ, may be proved from that scripture before-mentioned, which is evidently applied to him, Isa. ix. 6. where he is called, *the mighty God*; and, in Psal. xlv. 3. which, as has been before observed, is spoken concerning him, in which he is called *most mighty*; and, in Phil. iii. 21. we read of his *changing our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*; which is such an effect of power, as plainly argues it divine, as much as the production of all things out of nothing could do; and this is said to be done, *according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself*. We might observe many other things, which he has done, and will do, that require infinite power, which we shall have occasion to consider, when we prove his deity from his works under a following head.

But since all this is to no purpose, with respect to those who deny his proper Deity, unless we can prove that he is called *Almighty*; and the whole stress of this argument is laid upon it, for no other reason, as I presume, but because they think it impossible for us to do it: I shall attempt it; and I hope to make it appear that we have greater probability, on our side, that he is so called, than they have ground to deny it. Here I shall take notice of this perfection of the divine nature, as we find it in the book of the Revelations, in which this attribute is mentioned nine times, and, in some places, seems to be applied to the Father, but in others to the Son.

The first we shall mention is in chap. i. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*; which seems to be spoken of our Saviour,

1. Because he is described at large in the three foregoing verses; and there is nothing which gives the least ground to question its application to him, unless that character's being given to the Person here spoken of, which is given to the Father, in ver. 4. *which is, and which was, and which is to come*; but since we find in other scriptures, the same divine glories ascribed to the Son that had before been ascribed to the Father; as in John v. 21. *As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will*; and in Tit. iii. 4. the Father is called *God our Saviour*, as appears by comparing it with the 5th and 6th verses: and so is Christ called.

chap. ii. 10, 13. therefore, why may not the Father and the Son be each of them described with this character, *Which was, is, and is to come?* and that more especially, if we consider, that the ascribing this to Christ, is, in effect, the same with what is said of him elsewhere, Heb. xiii. 8. where he is said *to be the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*†

2. It farther appears, that this text, in which the Person spoken of is called *Almighty*, is applied to Christ, because that character, *Alpha* and *Omega*, seems to be applied to none but him in other places, where it is used. We find it four times in this book, viz. not only in this verse, but in ver. 11. in which it is indisputably applied to him, as will appear, by comparing it with the following verses. And, in chap. xxi. 6. he is again called *Alpha* and *Omega*, which, that it is applied to him, appears from the context; it is he that *makes all things new*, or puts a new face upon the affairs of his church; and it is he who commands John to write what he saw and heard; *He said unto me, Write these words*, ver. 5. We may observe, that wherever John is commanded, in this book, to write, it is Christ that gives forth the command: thus he said to him before, chap. i. 19. *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter*; and he is again commanded to write, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*, by him who is called the Son of man, chap. xiv. 13, 14.

Again, in chap. xxii. 13. he is called *Alpha* and *Omega*, who is described in the foregoing verse, *as coming quickly, whose reward is with him*; which is undoubtedly meant of our Saviour: for it is said concerning him, ver. 20. *Surely I come quickly, Amen: even so come, Lord Jesus.*

That which I infer from hence, is, that if Christ be styled *Alpha* and *Omega*, in all other places in this book, it is more than probable he is so in this 8th verse of the 1st chapter, in which he is said to be *the Almighty*. And as he is called *Alpha* and *Omega*, so the explication of these words, wherever we meet with it in this book without the words themselves, is applied to Christ: thus he is called, chap. i. 17. and ii. 8. *the first and the last*; and, chap. iii. 14. *the beginning of the creation of God*: from hence, I humbly conceive, we have more ground to conclude, that Christ is called the *Almighty* in this verse, than the Arians have to deny it.

Again, there is another place in this book where he seems to be styled *the Almighty*, chap. xv. 3. *And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.* This triumphant song is occasioned by one of the greatest victories which the

† See page 344, 345, ante.

church expects to obtain in this world: by the song of Moses, I humbly conceive, is meant the church's celebrating the glory of God, for the greatest victory that ever was obtained under the legal dispensation; and the song of the Lamb, is an acknowledgment of the greatest that is, or shall be obtained under the gospel-dispensation; and, in celebrating the Lamb's victories, they set forth the praises of the mighty Conqueror in the following words, *Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty*: it is the Lamb that is every where described in this book, as fighting the church's battles, and obtaining victory for it; therefore it is his glory which is here set forth.

And as he is always described, in this book, as thus fighting the church's battles; so it is he who is described as taking vengeance on its enemies, which is the just consequence thereof. Therefore I cannot but conclude, that he is spoken of, in chap. xvi. 6, 7. as having *given* their persecutors *blood to drink, for they were worthy*; and, in ver. 7. *Even so Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.*

Again, in chap. xvi. 14. we read of *the battle of that great day of God Almighty*; and then it immediately follows, *Behold, I come as a thief in the night, &c.* which expression is known to be elsewhere applied to our Saviour, and to none but him; and that it is he who fights the church's battles, is evident from chap. xvii. 14. *These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overthrow them*; and from chap. xix. 12, &c. where it is said, *his eyes were as a flame of fire*; as he is elsewhere described, chap. i. 14. to denote that the great day of his wrath was come; and his name is called, in the 13th verse of this 19th chapter, *the Word of God*; and we read of the *armies which followed him*, and that *out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that he might smite the nations*. From whence we may conclude, that since Christ is represented, in so many places in this book, as fighting with, and triumphing and reigning over his enemies, inflicting his plagues upon them, and delivering his church from their persecution, which is a work of divine power, he is fitly styled in several places, *Lord God Almighty*.

We might consider several other divine attributes ascribed to Christ, which prove his Deity, *viz.* holiness, truth, and faithfulness: thus, in Rev. iii. 7. *These things saith he that is holy, he that is true*; and he is farther described in the following words, as having uncontrollable power; *who openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth*. That this is spoken of him, is beyond dispute; and in chap. vi. 10. *They cried with a loud voice, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?* to whom did they cry but to the Lamb, who is said to have opened the seals, or to have discovered the mysteries that

were thereby revealed, as in ver. 1. And when he had opened the sixth seal, he is described, as hearing his church's prayer, and avenging their blood, and so is represented as coming to judgment, in a very terrible manner; upon which occasion it is said, *the great day of his wrath is come*; and therefore it is he who is described as *holy and true*.

But if it be replied to this, that creatures are sometimes called holy and true, we may farther add, that it is Christ to whom it is said, chap. xv. 4. *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest*. This I infer from what has been before considered, that it is he who obtains victory over, and pours forth his judgments on his church's enemies; and it is he whose praises are celebrated in the song of the Lamb, mentioned in the verse immediately foregoing.

Having considered several divine perfections, as ascribed to our Saviour, and these so glorious, that nothing greater can be mentioned to set forth the glory of a divine Person; yet we may add hereunto, those glorious titles that are given him with a design to excite in us adoring and admiring thoughts of him: amongst which we shall only mention some which are either the same with, or are equivalent to those which are given to the Father, which they who deny Christ's Deity, cannot but own to be distinguishing characters of a divine Person, when so applied. Thus, is the Father styled, in Heb. xiii. 20. *The God of peace*? our Saviour is styled, in Isa. ix. 6. *The Prince of peace*; and he is said, Eph. ii. 14. to be *our peace*; and as peace includes in it all the blessings that accompany salvation, Christ's being styled the Author thereof, denotes him to be the Fountain of blessedness, which he could not be, were he not a divine Person.

Again, as God is called *a Sun*, and *a Shield*, Psal. lxxxiv. 9. so Christ is called, in Mal. iv. 2. *The Sun of Righteousness*; and, in Isa. xxxii. 2. *An hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*.

Again, it is said of God the Father, Deut. xxx. 20. *He is thy life, and the length of thy days*; our Saviour says, concerning himself, in John xi. 25. compared with chap. xiv. 6. that he is *the life*; and, Acts iii. 15. he is called *the Prince of life*; and, in Colos. iii. 4. *our life*. Again, is the Father called, in Psal. lxxx. 1. *The Shepherd of Israel*? Christ is called, in Heb. xiii. 20. *That great Shepherd of the sheep*.

Moreover, is God often described in scripture as a glorious King; as in Zeph. iii. 15. *The King of Israel, even the Lord in the midst of thee*? our Saviour is styled, in Isa. vi. 5. *The*

King, the Lord of hosts; and, in John i. 49. *The King of Israel*; and, in Rev. xix. 16. *King of kings, and Lord of lords*.

Again, is God styled the *Hope of Israel*, Jer. xiv. 8? our Saviour seems to be so called by the apostle, when he says, in Acts xxviii. 20. *for the Hope of Israel, I am bound with this chain*, that is, for Christ's sake, who is the object of his people's hope. However, whether he is intended thereby, or no, in that scripture, he is called elsewhere *our hope*, 1 Tim. i. 1. compared with Coloss. i. 27.

Moreover, is God the object of desire, so that there is *nothing in heaven or earth*, or within the whole compass of finite beings, that is to be desired *besides*, or in comparison with *him*, as the Psalmist says, Psal. lxxiii. 25? our Saviour is called, in Hag. ii. 7. *The desire of all nations*. I might refer to many other glorious titles that are given to him in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the Revelations, in the epistles to the seven churches; every one of which is prefaced with such a character given of him, as is designed to strike them with an holy reverence, and esteem of him, as a divine Person. Thus concerning those proofs of Christ's Deity, which are taken from the names, attributes, and titles which are given to him; which leads us to consider.

III. The next head of argument taken from those works, which have been done by our Saviour, that are proper to God alone. Divine works argue a divine efficient, or that he has infinite power, and consequently that he is an infinite Person, or truly and properly God, who performs them. Now these words are of two sorts; either of nature and common providence, or of grace, to wit, such as immediately respect our salvation; in all which, he acts beyond the power of a creature, and therefore appears to be a divine Person.

1. He appears to be so, from his having created all things. He that made the world, must be before it; and therefore since time began with the first creature, as has been before observed, it follows that he must be before time, that is, from eternity.

Again, he that created all things, must have a sovereign will, for whose *pleasure they are, and were created*, Rev. iv. 11. And it follows from hence, that he has an undoubted right to all things, and that he might have annihilated them, had it been his pleasure; and also, that he has a right to dispose of them as he will, as the potter has power over his clay. All these things are consequent on the work of creation; therefore it is an undeniable argument, that he, who created all things, must be God.

It may also be observed, that to create, is to exert infinite power, or to act above the power of a creature, which, at best, is but finite: now whatever is more than finite, must be infinite; and consequently he who created all things, must exert infinite power, and that is certainly such as is truly divine.

We might farther consider, that there are many scriptures which appropriate creation to God, and, indeed, it cannot be otherwise; for to suppose that a creature gave being to itself, is to suppose him to be both a cause and an effect, and consequently to be, and not to be, at the same time, to exist as a creator, and not to exist as brought into being, which is a plain contradiction; and it is evident, that, in scripture, the creature is opposed to the Creator: thus, in Rom. i. 25. it is said, *they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.* And there are several scriptures that speak of creation, as a distinguishing evidence of divine glory: thus, in Isa. xi. 28. we have a magnificent description of God, taken more especially from this work, when he is called, *The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth;* and, in chap. xliii. 5. *Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein;* in which, and many other scriptures of the like nature, which might be referred to, it appears that creation is a work peculiar to God.

The next thing we are to prove is, that our Saviour created all things. There are many who think that this may be proved from the work of creation's being ascribed to more persons than one; and therefore when we read of creators, in the plural number, as it is in the original, in Eccles. xii. 1. *Remember thy Creator, or creators;* and when God, in creating man, is represented as speaking after this manner, *Let us make man after our own image, &c.* this seems to imply that there were more divine Persons engaged in this work than the Father.

I do not indeed lay so much stress on this argument, as many do, yet it is not wholly to be neglected; for, I confess, I cannot see any reason why there should be such a mode of expression used, were it not to signify this divine mystery, of a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, to whom this work is ascribed.

Object. As for the objection, which some of the Anti-trinitarians, especially the Socinians, bring against it, that this mode of speaking, is such as is used in conformity to the custom of kings who, speak in the plural number;

Ans. To this it may be answered, that though kings do often speak in the plural number, yet this is only a modern way of speaking, implying, that whatever a king does, is by the advice of some of his subjects, who are his peculiar favourites, and who are also made use of to fulfil his will; but, nevertheless, this way of speaking is not so ancient as scripture-times, much less as Moses's time, or the beginning of the world, which he refers to, when God is represented as thus speaking. It is the

custom of kings, in scripture, to speak in the singular number; and it is very absurd to pretend to explain any mode of speaking used in scripture, by customs of speech, not known till many ages after.

I am sensible, some think that mode of speaking used by Ahasuerus Esth. i. 15. *What shall we do unto the queen Vashti, according to law?* is a proof that it was used in former ages. But the words may be rendered, *What is to be done, according to law, &c.* or what is expedient for me to do? and therefore it doth not prove that kings used, in ancient times, to speak of themselves in the plural number; and consequently it cannot be argued, that when God is represented as speaking so in scripture, it is in compliance with any such custom. Besides, whenever he is represented as speaking in scripture, in all other instances, excepting those that are supposed to be contained in our argument, he is always represented as speaking in the singular number; and therefore it seems still more probable, that this variation from his usual way of speaking, is not without some reason, and that hereby we are led into this doctrine, that there are more divine Persons than one, that created all things.

But not to insist on this, since we have more plain proofs hereof in scripture, it evidently appears that Christ made all things, not only from what is said in John i. 3. that *all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made;* but, from Col. i. 16. *By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him;* in which he is not only said to be the Creator, but the end of all things, which is the same with what is said in Prov. xvi. 4. that *the Lord hath made all things for himself.*

This farther appears from Psal. cii. 25. *Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands;* which is expressly applied to Christ by the apostle, in Heb. i. 10.

By these, and such-like scriptures, it evidently appears that Christ made all things. The Socinians, indeed, who are sensible that creation was an evident proof of divine power, and therefore that the Creator of all things must be God, labour very hard to prove that all those scriptures that ascribe this work to our Saviour, are to be taken in a metaphorical sense, and so signify nothing else but his being the author of the gospel-state, which is a kind of new creation peculiar to him; and that he did this as a prophet, revealing those doctrines which relate thereunto; and accordingly they take the sense of that scripture, in John i. 2, 3. which speaks of his being *in the beginning, and that all things were made by him,* as intending nothing

else, but that he was in the beginning of the gospel, and that whatever was made, or ordained, to be a standard and rule of faith, was by him; and that, in the discharge of this work, he was to restore decayed religion, and to correct several mistaken notions, which the Jews had entertained concerning the moral law, to add some new precepts to it, and give directions concerning that mode of worship which should be observed in the church for the future. This is all they suppose to be intended by that work, which is ascribed to Christ as a Creator; whereas, in this scripture, it is plainly said, that there was nothing in the whole frame of nature, nothing that was an effect of power, made without him. And there is another scripture, which cannot, with any colour of reason, be understood in that sense, *viz.* in Col. i. 16. *By him were all things created that are in heaven; and that are in earth, visible and invisible;* where the apostle speaks of the creation of angels and men, as well as all other things: now, certainly, Christ did not come into the world to rectify any mistakes or restore decayed religion among the angels, therefore the apostle here plainly proves that our Saviour created all things.

But since this opinion of the Socinians is now almost universally exploded by the Anti-trinitarians, we have no occasion to add any thing farther in opposition to it; but shall proceed to consider what the Arians say concerning Christ's creating all things. These allow that the work of creation is ascribed to him; but they deny that this argues him to be God in the same sense as the Father is. The account which they give thereof is, that God, to wit, the Father, created all things by the Son, as an instrument, created by him, immediately for that purpose; so that the Son was an inferior, or second cause of the production of all things; and therefore that it cannot, from thence, be concluded that he is God equal with the Father.

What I would humbly offer, in opposition hereunto is,

1. That, in this account of creation, there is not a just difference put between the natural and supernatural production of things, of which the latter can only be called creation; therefore, if these two be confounded, the distinguishing character of a Creator is set aside, and consequently the glory arising from hence cannot be appropriated to God; nor is that infinite perfection, that is displayed therein, duly considered, but according to this scheme or method of reasoning a creature may be a Creator, and a Creator a creature; nor can the *eternal power and Godhead* of the divine Being be demonstrated by the things that are made or created, as the apostle says they are in Rom. i. 20.

2. From that first mistake arises another, namely, that because, in natural productions, that which was created by God,

may be rendered subservient to the production of other things; in which respect it may be termed an instrument made use of by a superior cause, and may have an energy or method of acting, peculiar to itself, whereby it produces effects according to the course and laws of nature, fixed by God, the first cause of all things; therefore they suppose, though without sufficient ground that God might create all things by an instrument, or second cause thereof, as they conclude he did by the Son.

3. Notwithstanding we must assert, that creation being a supernatural production of things, what has been said concerning natural production, is not applicable to it; therefore,

4. Though things may be produced in a natural way, by second causes, whose powers are limited, and subjected as aforesaid, to the laws of nature; yet supernatural effects cannot be produced by any thing short of infinite power; therefore, since creation is a supernatural work, it must be concluded to be a work of infinite power.

5. It follows, from hence, that it is not agreeable to the idea of creation, or the producing all things out of nothing, for God to make use of an instrument. That this may appear, let it be considered, that whatever instrument is made use of, it must be either finite or infinite. An infinite instrument cannot be made use of, for then there would be two infinites, one superior, the other inferior. Nor can a finite one be made use of, for that, according to our last proposition, cannot produce any supernatural effect, as creation is supposed to be, which requires infinite power, and that cannot be exerted by a finite medium, therefore no such instrument can be used. Moreover, if it requires infinite power to create all things, this power, in its method of acting, would be limited, by the instrument it makes use of; for whatever power a superior cause has in himself, the effect produced, by an instrument will be in proportion to the weakness thereof. This some illustrate by the similitude of a giant's making use of a straw, or a reed, in striking a blow in which the weakness of the instrument renders the power of the person that uses it insignificant. Thus if God the Father should make use of the Son, in the creation of all things, the power that is exerted by him therein, can be no other than finite; but that is not sufficient for the production of things supernatural, which require infinite power. To this we may add,

6. That the creation of all things is ascribed to the sovereignty of the divine will; accordingly the Psalmist describing it, in Psal. xxxiii. 9. says, *He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast*; so when God, in Gen. i. 3. said, *Let there be light, and there was light*, and when we read of the other parts of the creation, as produced by his almighty word, it implies that they were produced by an act of his will. Now

it seems impossible, from the nature of the thing, that an instrument should be made use of in an act of willing any more than in an act of understanding.

7. No cause can reasonably be assigned why God should make use of an instrument in the production of all things; for certainly he that, by his immediate power, produced the instrument, might without any difficulty, or absurdity, attending the supposition, have created all things immediately without one. And we must farther suppose, that if there were nothing in the nature of things, which required him to make use of an instrument, he would not, by making use of one, to wit, the Son, administer occasion to him, to assume so great a branch of his own glory, namely, that of being the Creator of the ends of the earth; or for his being, as the result thereof, worshipped as a divine Person supposing him to have a right to divine worship, for no other reason.

Object. 1. Though no one supposes that God stood in need of an instrument, or could not have created all things without it, yet we must conclude that he did not, because the scripture speaks of the Father's creating all things by the Son; and when one person is said to do any thing by another, it implies that he makes use of him as an instrument therein.

Ans. This seems to be the only foundation on which this doctrine is built. But there is no necessity of understanding the words in this sense, especially if we consider that all effects are produced by the power of God; and this power, supposing the Son to be a divine Person, (which we have endeavoured, by other arguments, to prove) must belong to him; and the Father, and the Son being united, in the same Godhead, one cannot act without the other; therefore whatever is said to be done by the Father, may, in this sense, be said to be done by the Son; for though the Persons are distinct, the power exerted is the same.

Thus a learned writer * accounts for this matter, when he says, that "The Son is of the same nature and substance with the Father, so nearly allied, so closely united, that nothing could be the work of one, without being, at the same time, the work of both: Hence it was, that the Son was Joint-creator with the Father, that all things were made by him, and nothing without him; it was not possible for them either to act, or to exist separately: and therefore it is that the work of creation is, in scripture, attributed to both." This is a very safe as well as a just way of reasoning, consistent with, and founded on the doctrine of the Father and the Son's being united in the same Godhead, though distinct Persons; and therefore it is agreeable to the sense of those scriptures, which attribute this

* *Dr. Waterland, Serm. III. in defence of Christ, page 106.*

work to the Son, in the same sense, as when it is attributed to the Father.

But I am sensible that the Arians will reply to it; that this does not sufficiently account for that subordination in acting, that seems to be implied in the sense of those scriptures, in which the Father is said to have created all things by the Son; therefore I shall take leave to speak more particularly to those texts that treat of this matter, where the same mode of speaking is used. And though there are several scriptures that represent the Son as a Creator, or consider all things, as being made by him, as well as the Father, or as a Joint-creator with him; yet there are but two places in the New Testament, in which the Father is said to have created all things by the Son, namely, Eph. iii. 9. in which it is said, *that God*, that is, the Father, *created all things by Jesus Christ*; and the other is in Heb. i. 2. where it is said, *by whom also he made the worlds*.

We have already considered the absurdity of the Socinian way of expounding those other scriptures, that speak of Christ as a Creator, in which he is not said to act in subserviency to, but co-ordinately with the Father. But inasmuch as God the Father is, in these scriptures, said to create all things by Jesus Christ, I shall humbly offer it, as my opinion, that though the other scriptures, in which Christ is set forth as a Creator, have no reference to him as Mediator, nor to the new creation, yet this seems to be the more probable sense of both these scriptures. (a)

As for the former of them, though some suppose that it is needless to give the sense of it, since the words, *by Jesus Christ*, (b) are wanting in some ancient copies of scripture, as well as in the vulgar Latin and Syriac versions; yet, since there are many copies that have it, we will suppose it to be genuine; and that we may account for the sense of it, we may observe that the apostle makes use of the word *create* three times in this epistle; we find it, in chap. ii. 10. and iv. 24. in both which places it is taken for the new creation, which is brought about by Christ, as Mediator; and, I humbly conceive, that it may be taken so, in this verse, which we are now considering; and therefore this is a part of that mystery, of which the apostle

(a) "That Christ was not a *mere instrument* which God used in the work of creation, as the *Arians* pretend, is plain from this, that the Scriptures not only teach, that Christ was the very supreme God himself that created all things; Psal. cii. 25. Heb. i. 10. but also that *no instrument was used* in that work. It was wrought immediately by *God himself*. As it is written, "God himself formed the earth and made it." Isa. xlv. 18. (This, all grant, was the supreme God: And this God was Jesus Christ.) "He alone spread out the heavens." Job ix. 8. Not by an instrument, but by *himself alone*, Isa. xlv. 24. with *his own hands*. Isa. xlv. 12."

(b) *διὰ Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ* are omitted by Griesbach

speaks in the foregoing words, *that was hid in God*; and this sense seems not to be excluded, by those who suppose, that in other respects, it has some reference to the first creation of all things.*

As for the other scripture, *by whom also he made the worlds*, *ἢ ἔκαστὸν τῶν αἰώνων ἐποίησεν*, that is, by whom he made, instituted, or ordained, the various dispensations, which the church was under, either before or since his incarnation; this was certainly done by him as Mediator; and herein he acted in subserviency to the Father, as well as in all other works performed by him, as having this character. I would not be too peremptory in determining this to be the sense of the text, inasmuch as the apostle speaks of *his upholding all things*, in the following verse, which is well put after this account of his having created them: I am also sensible that the word which we translate *worlds*, is used in Heb. xi. 3. to signify the world that was at first created, in the most proper sense of the word *creation*, when the apostle says, that *through faith we understand that the worlds, τῶν αἰώνων, were framed by the word of God*, &c. But yet when I find that in many other places of the New Testament, where the word is used, it is taken in the sense but now given,† I cannot but conclude it the more probable sense of the text; but that which most of all determines me to acquiesce in it, is, because the subserviency of the Son to the Father in this work is most agreeable to it.

If it be objected, that this sense of the text coincides with that which is given of it by Socinus, and his followers, which we before-mentioned and opposed;

To this I answer, that the sense I have given of it, is very foreign to theirs, who endeavour thereby to evade the force of the argument brought from it, to prove our Saviour's Deity; whereas we only exchange one argument, for the proof thereof, for another; for it seems to me to be as great an evidence, that he is a divine Person, when considered as the Author and Founder of the church, in all the ages thereof, or the rock on which it is built, as when he is called, Creator of the world: if he be the supreme Head, Lord, and Lawgiver to his church, in all the ages thereof; if the faith and hope of all that shall be saved, is founded upon him, as the great Mediator, Redeemer, and Sovereign thereof, then certainly he is God, equal with the Father.

* *Vid. Beza in loc. Unus Deus omnes populos condidit, sic etiam nunc omnes ad se vocat; condidit autem per Christum, sic per Christum instituit.*

† See Matt. xii. 32. 1 Cor. x. 11. Eph. i. 21. and chap. ii. 7. Heb. vi. 5. and chap. ix. 26. the apostle speaking of the foundation of the world, meaning the first creation, uses the word *κόσμος*; but when, in the following words, he speaks of Christ's appearing in the end of the world, to put away sin, &c. he uses the words *τῶν αἰώνων*.

Object. 2. To what has been before suggested, upon which the chief stress of our reasoning depends, *viz.* that a finite creature cannot be an instrument in supernatural productions, it is objected, that miracles are supernatural productions; but these have been wrought by men, as instruments in the hand of God; therefore the creation of all things may as well be supposed to have been performed by the Son, as an instrument made use of to this end by the Father.

Answ. That miracles are supernatural productions, no one denies; and it follows from hence, that they are either a species of creation, or equivalent to it; therefore if it be allowed that a creature can have power communicated to him to work them, and therein may be said to be an instrument made use of by God, then we cannot reasonably deny that God the Father might use the Son as an instrument in creating all things. But we must take leave to deny that any, who are said to have wrought miracles, have had infinite power communicated to them for that purpose; therefore they are not properly instruments in the hand of God, to produce supernatural effects; but all that they have done therein, was only by addressing themselves to God, that he would put forth his immediate power in working the miracle; and in giving the people, for whose sake it was to be wrought, occasion to expect it; and afterwards improving it for their farther conviction. It is true, miracles are oftentimes said to have been wrought by men; but, I humbly conceive, nothing more than this is intended thereby; which, that it may appear, we may observe, that sometimes they who have wrought them, have not made use of any action herein, but only given the people ground to expect the divine interposure: thus, immediately before the earth swallowed up Korah and his company, Moses gave the people to expect this miraculous event, Numb. xvi. 28—30. *And Moses said, Hereby shall ye know that the Lord hath sent me. If these men die the common death of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, then shall ye know that these men have provoked the Lord;* and as soon as he had spoken the words, the ground clave asunder, and swallowed them up. This might be reckoned among the miracles wrought by Moses; though all that he did was only what tended to raise the people's expectation, that such an extraordinary event should immediately happen. Again, at other times, when a miracle has been wrought, we read of nothing done but only a word spoken to signify that God would work it: thus, when the captain, with his fifty men, was sent by the king of Israel, to the prophet Elijah, to command him to come to him, the prophet uses this mode of speaking, 2 Kings i. 12. *If I be a man of God, let fire*

come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty; which immediately happened accordingly.

At other times, when miracles have been wrought, the Person, who, in the sense but now mentioned, is said to work them, has made use of some external and visible sign, which was either an ordinance for his own faith, if no one was present but himself; as when the prophet Elisha smote the waters of Jordan with Elijah's mantle, and said, 2 Kings ii. 14. *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* or else the sign, being given by divine direction, was an ordinance for the faith of the people present, whose conviction was intended thereby; not that they should suppose that the action used had any tendency to produce the miracle: but it was only designed to raise their expectation, that God would work it by his immediate power; as when Moses was commanded, in Exod. xiv. 16. *to lift up his rod, and stretch out his hand over the sea, and divide it, that Israel might pass through;* or, in chap. xvii. 6. *to smite the rock, whereupon God caused water to come out of it;* and in several other actions, which he used, by divine direction, when other miracles were wrought; in which respect, though he was said, in a less proper way of speaking, to have wrought them, yet he was no more than a moral instrument herein, and therefore the divine power was not communicated to, or exerted by him; and if creatures have been instruments in working miracles in no other sense than this, it cannot be inferred from hence that Christ might be made use of by the Father, as an instrument in creating the world: a moral instrument he could not be; for there was no doctrine contested, no truth to be confirmed thereby, no subjects present to expect a divine interposure; and, indeed, none ever supposed that the Son of God was an instrument in this sense; therefore if no one ever was an instrument in any other, nor could be from the nature of the thing, as has been already proved, then the force of the argument, which we have laid down to prove it, is not in the least weakened by this objection.

Thus we have endeavoured to prove the divinity of Christ from the work of creation.

2. We shall proceed to consider how our Saviour's Deity appears, from those works of providence, which are daily performed by him. Providence is as much a divine work, and contains as glorious a display of the divine perfections, as creation; and this is twofold, *viz.* preserving and governing. With respect to the former of these, some divines have asserted, that it is, as it were, a continued creation, not formally so; but as the one produces a creature, the other prevents its sinking into nothing; and because it is, in all respects, dependent on the power of God, and as much so. for the continuance of its

being, as it was for its being brought into being; therefore conserving providence is an evidence of the divine power of him who sustains all things.

Now that this glory belongs to our Saviour, is plain from scripture, which speaks of him, in Heb. i. 3. as *upholding all things by the word of his power*; and in Coloss. i. 17. it is said, *by him all things consist*; both these scriptures respect this branch of divine providence, namely, his preserving all things in being; and this is certainly more than can be said of any creature. And it is not pretended that herein he acts as the Father's instrument, even by those who suppose that he was so, in the creation of all things, inasmuch as scripture does not speak of God's upholding all things by him, but of Christ's upholding them by his own, that is, the divine power; so that we have as plain a proof of his Deity, from his upholding providence, as there is of the being of a God, which is evidently inferred from it.

As to the other branch of providence, respecting the government of the world in general, or of the church in particular, this is also ascribed to Christ, and thereby his Godhead is farther proved. Whatever degree of limited dominion may be said to belong to creatures; yet universal dominion belongs only to God; and this is assigned, as one ground and reason of his right to divine honour; therefore it is said, in Job xxv. 2. *Dominion and power are with him*, that is, there is a holy reverence due to him, as the supreme Lord and Governor of the world; and, in Psal. lxxvii. 4. when it is said concerning the great God, that *he shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth*, this is considered as the foundation of universal joy, *O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy*; and of praise, ver. 5. *Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee*; and, in Psal. xxii. 28. when it is said, *the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the Governor among the nations*; this is assigned, as the reason of their worshipping him, ver. 27. *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee*. This therefore is, undoubtedly, a branch of the divine glory; so that if we can prove that universal dominion belongs to Christ, or that he is the Governor of the world, and of the church therein, this will plainly evince his Deity.

1. Let us consider him as the Governor of the world. This seems to be the meaning of several expressions of scripture, in which royal dignity is ascribed to him; and he is represented as sitting upon a throne, and his *throne to be for ever and ever*, Psal. xiv. 6. and he infinitely greater than all the kings of the earth; upon which account, he is called, in Rev. i. 5. *The Prince of the kings of the earth*; and they are commanded to

testify their subjection to him, and all are represented as blessed that *put their trust in him*, Psal. ii. 12. And as his kingdom is considered, in John xviii. 36. as *not being of this world*, and the honours due to him, such as are divine, this farther proves his Deity.

Moreover, his universal dominion, and consequently his Godhead, is evinced by that glorious character, which we have before considered *, as belonging to him, namely, the Lord of hosts, as the prophet Isaiah says, speaking of the vision which he had of his glory, in chap. vi. 5. *My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*, as denoting his sovereignty over all the hosts of heaven, and all creatures in this lower world, as he governs them, and makes one thing subservient to another, and all this is done to set forth his own glory.

2. This will farther appear, if we consider him as the Governor of his church; in this he has access to the souls of men, working in them those graces, which are the effects of almighty power, which he does, when they are effectually called; and the work of sanctification, which is consequent hereupon, is carried on till it is perfected. We shall have occasion, under some following answers †, to prove that these are divine and supernatural works; the more full and particular proof whereof, we shall reserve to its proper place, and only observe, at present, that they are spoken of as such in scripture, and ascribed to the exceeding greatness of the power of God, no less than that *which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead*, Eph. i. 18,—20. and elsewhere they are called a *new creation*, chap. ii. 1. *a quickening or resurrection, a breaking the rock in pieces, taking away the heart of stone, giving an heart of flesh, or a new heart*; Jer. xxiii. 29. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. which expressions would never have been used, had not the work been divine and supernatural; therefore it follows from hence, that since Christ is the Author of this internal work, he is a divine Person. Now that he is so, is obvious, from many places in the New Testament; as when he is styled, in Heb. xii. 2. *The Author and Finisher of our faith*; and when the apostle, in 1 Tim. i. 14. speaks of *faith and love abounding, which is in Christ Jesus*, he speaks, at the same time, of the *grace of our Lord abounding*, as the spring and fountain thereof; and when the apostles, in Luke xvii. 5. desire him to *increase their faith*, not in an objective way, as affording some greater foundation for it, but subjectively, by an internal work, exciting and promoting the principle thereof, which was before implanted in them; and so causing all those graces, that accompany it, to abound, as the effects of his divine power.

We might farther consider Christ's spiritual government, as

* See page 304.

† See Quest. lxxvii. and lxxviii.

extended to his church, collectively considered, which is exposed to many dangers and difficulties, and meets with much opposition from its enemies, who attempt its ruin, but in vain, because it is the object of the divine care, kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation : for which reason, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Now this is, in a peculiar manner the work of Christ ; he is the rock on which it is built ; and his presence, in the midst of his people, is not only their glory, but their safety ; which it would not be, if he were no more than a creature. We might also consider the subserviency of the various dispensations of providence in the world to their good, as he is *Head over all things to the church*, Eph. i. 22. which could not answer that valuable end, had he not been a divine Person.

We might farther consider how the divine glory of Christ will be demonstrated, in his second coming to compleat the work of salvation, begun in this world. To prepare a way for this, there will be an universal resurrection of the dead, which will be no less an effect of almighty power, than the creation of all things was at first. I need not therefore say any thing farther to prove this to be a divine work ; we need only prove that this general resurrection shall be performed by Christ : this might be proved from several scriptures ; in one whereof he expressly asserts it himself, in words very plain and particular, viz. John vi. 38. *The hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, &c.*

Moreover, when, at the same time, he is represented as coming in the clouds, with power and great glory, in his *own glory*, as well as *that of the Father, and of the holy angels*, in Luke ix. 26. the most natural sense of that text seems to be this, that his divine glory, which is called *his own*, which was comparatively hid from his people, while he was here on earth, shall eminently be demonstrated in his second coming, and also that Mediatorial glory, which he has received from the Father, as what he had a right to, on his having accomplished the work of redemption, which he came into the world about ; and then there is the glory of his retinue, as appearing with all his holy angels ; which bears some resemblance to that expression whereby the majesty of God is set forth upon another occasion, namely, as appearing on mount Sinai, to give the law, when it is said, in Deut. xxxiii. 2. *The Lord came with ten thousands of saints.* And to this we may add, that the work, which he shall, immediately after this, be engaged in, to wit, that of judging the world in righteousness, plainly proves his Deity, since none but a divine Person can judge the secrets of all men, and bring to light every thing that has been done, from the beginning to the end of time ; and this is to be done, in that day :

for it is said, in Eccles. xii. 14. *That God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* This is a farther improvement of that argument, before laid down to prove his divinity from his omniscience; if his judgment must be, as the apostle says, in Rom. ii. 2. *according to truth*, and consequently performed with the greatest impartiality, as well as an exquisite knowledge or discerning of the cause, without which it could not be said, *that the Judge of all the earth does right*, (as he certainly will) in Gen. xviii. 25. and if rewards shall be proportioned to every work done, so that every one shall receive as the apostle says, in 2 Cor. v. 10. *according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad*; and if persons are to be rewarded, or punished, for all the secret springs of action, which must be reckoned either good or bad, according to what they produce, as well as the actions themselves; and if this respects not particular persons only, but all men, who have lived, or shall live, from the beginning to the end of the world, it evidently proves, that he, to whom this glorious work is ascribed, must be a divine Person.

And to this we may add, that the manner of his appearing, with the terror, as well as the majesty of a judge, being such as shall strike his enemies with the utmost horror and confusion, is a farther proof of this matter. This is represented in a lively manner, in Rev. vi. 15—17. in which it is said, *the kings of the earth, and the great men, those who once rendered themselves formidable to their subjects shall desire to hide themselves in the dens and rocks of the mountains, and shall say to the rocks and to the mountains, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?* And,

Lastly, He will not only pronounce the sentence but execute it, and that with respect to his saints and subjects: and his enemies: as to the former of these he will not only command them to come, and possess the kingdom prepared for them, but the blessedness which he will confer upon them, pursuant thereunto, is called the beatific vision, in 1 John iii. 2. *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*; and the happiness of heaven is described in such a way as plainly proves our Saviour to be the fountain thereof, and consequently a divine Person; for it is represented as a state, in which they will *behold his glory*, John xvii. 24. whereas certainly the beholding the glory of the most exalted creature, falls infinitely short of this ingredient in the heavenly blessedness.

And on the other hand, the immediate impressions of the wrath of God on the consciences of his enemies, or the power

of his anger, which shall render them eternally miserable, when banished from his presence, proves him to be a divine Person, inasmuch as the highest degree of misery consists in a separation, or departure from him, which it could not do, if he were not the fountain of blessedness; nor could the punishment of sinners be proportioned to their crimes, if it were not to be inflicted by the *glory of his power*; the apostle joins both these together, in 2 Thess. i. 9. though some understand the words, as implying, that their punishment proceeds from his immediate presence, in the display of the greatness of his power, as a sin-avenging Judge; in either of which senses, it argues him to be a divine Person. And that it is our Saviour who is spoken of, is evident, from the foregoing and following verses; it is he who shall appear *in flaming fire*, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel; and it is he that shall *come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe*; so that we have a very plain proof of his Deity, from the exercise of his government, either in this or the other world.

Having endeavoured to prove the divinity of Christ, from his works of creation and providence and under the former of these, offered some things in answer to the methods taken by the Socinians, and especially the Arians, in accounting for the sense of those scriptures that speak of the Father's creating all things by the Son; it is necessary for us now to consider the most material objections, brought by the Antitrinitarians in general, against what has been said in defence of this doctrine, taken from the works of common and special providence, as ascribed to him, and, in particular, from the administration of his kingdom of grace; it is therefore objected.

Object. 1. That his kingdom, and power of acting, in the administration of the affairs relating thereunto, is wholly derived from the Father: thus he says in Luke xxii. 29. *I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me*; and, in Mat. xi. 27. *All things are delivered unto me of my Father*; and in Psal. ii. 6. *Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion*. And whatever he does in managing the affairs thereof, is by the Father's commission and appointment: thus in John v. 36. he speaks of the works which he was to perform, as those which *the Father had given him to finish*. And as for his power of executing judgment, which is one of the greatest glories of his kingly government, this is derived from the Father, in John v. 22. *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son*; and, in Acts xvii. 31. it is said, that *he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained*, meaning our Saviour: and when he speaks, in Rev.

ii. 27. of his ruling his enemies *with a rod of iron, and breaking them to shivers, as the vessels of a potter*, he adds, that *his he received of his Father*; from whence they argue, that since he received his dominion, or right to govern the world and the church, from the Father, therefore he cannot be God equal with the Father. As we say, in opposition to their scheme of doctrine, that a derived Deity, such as they suppose his to be, cannot be the same with that which the Father has; so they allege this, by way of reprisal, against the argument we have but now insisted on, that a derived dominion cannot be made use of as a medium to prove him that has it to be a divine Person, in the same sense in which we maintain him to be.

2. In all his works, and particularly in the administration of the affairs of his kingdom, he acts for the Father's glory, and not his own; whereas a divine Person, cannot act, for any other end than for his own glory: this therefore rather disproves, than evinces, his proper Deity: as when he says, in John viii. 49. *I honour my Father*; and, in chap. v. 30. he says, *I seek not mine own will, but the will of my Father which hath sent me*. He also speaks of the Father giving him a commandment to do what he did; as in John xii. 49. *I have not spoken of my self, but the Father which sent me; he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak*; and, in chap. xiv. 31. *As the Father gave me commandment, so do I*; and, in chap. xv. 10. he speaks of his having *kept his Father's commandment*, and pursuant hereunto, *abiding in his love*, from whence they argue, that he who is obliged to fulfil a commandment, or who acts in obedience to the Father, is properly a subject, or a servant, and therefore cannot be God in the same sense as the Father, who gave this commandment, is.

3. They add, that in the government of his church, and the world, in subserviency thereunto, he acts in the Father's name, as deputy and vicegerent; as in John x. 25. *The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me*; and accordingly his works are called the Father's, in ver. 37. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not*; and these works are said to be done *from the Father*, ver. 32. *Many good works have I shewed you from my Father*: and, as the consequence of all this, he acknowledges, as he ought to do, in John xiv. 28. that *the Father is greater than he*. How then can he be a divine Person, in the sense in which we have proved him to be, when there is a God above him, in whose name he acts in all he does?

4. They farther argue, that he was *made both Lord and Christ*, and that by the Father, as it is expressly said, in Acts ii. 36.

5. They farther argue that the donatives of his kingdom, or

those honours which are bestowed on his subjects, are not his to give, but the Father's; as it is said, in Matt. xx. 23. *To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them, for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

6. This kingdom which he received from the Father, and thus administers in subserviency to him, is, in the end, to be resigned, or delivered up: thus, in 1 Cor. xv. 24. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and in ver. 28. When all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him, that put all things under him, that God may be all in all; and accordingly, he shall lay aside those divine honours which he now has, or cease to perform those works which give him a right to claim them. These are the strongest arguments, of any, that are brought by the Anti-trinitarians against our Saviour's proper Deity; and, indeed, as though they had little else to object, there is scarce an argument to disprove it, but what is supported in this method of reasoning, which they think to be altogether unanswerable, (and there are many more scriptures, which might have been brought to the same purpose) therefore it is necessary that we should consider what may be replied to it.*

The sum of what has been objected, as thus branched out into several particulars, is, that since Christ is represented as below the Father, or inferior to him, he cannot be equal with him, for that is no other than a contradiction. (a)

(a) "The Father, saith he, is greater than I. John xiv. 28. As Christ is the head of the church, so the head of Christ is God. 1 Cor. iii. 23. xi. 3. He calleth the Father his God. Matt. xxvii. 46. John xx. 17.—The Father raised him to Israel; Acts xiii. 23. anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power; Acts x. 38. spared him not, but delivered him up for us all; Rom. viii. 32. and raised him from the dead. Acts ii. 24.—God had appointed him to execute his saving designs, sent him into this world, and gave him commandments. John iii. 16, 17. vi. 38—49. The work given him he finished, and in it he was faithful to the Father. John iv. 34. xvii. 4. Heb. iii. 2. x. 9.—Therefore, God hath also exalted him above measure; Phil. ii. 9. set him at his own right hand in heaven; Eph. i. 20. and gave him all power. Matt. xxviii. 18. He hath made him Lord and Christ; Acts ii. 36. exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give to Israel repentance and remission of sins. Acts v. 31. He hath also ordained him to judge the world in righteousness; Acts xviii. 31. and to him, Christ shall then be subject, and deliver up the kingdom. 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

To be the true God, and to be under God, to be the Infinite, and to be the subject, are, according to all reason, and the scripture itself, inconsistent properties. By undeniable authority, however, they are ascribed to the same subject; and therefore, there must be a way to solve the difficulty. How often do we meet with particulars in the system of truth, which seem to oppose one another; but when well considered, agree, and even support one another. The human constitution itself, exhibits a clear instance. The grand inquiry is, upon what foundation every different truth is established, and how to reconcile seeming contradictions. Now, while they who attack the Godhead of Jesus, can never in our opinion, answer the multitude of proofs in its favour there is on the contrary, for

Answ. To this it may be replied, that though the scripture speaks of our Saviour, as receiving a commission from the Father, and acting in subserviency to him; yet let it be considered, that this does not respect the inferiority of the divine nature, but the subserviency of what is done by him, as Mediator, to the glory of the Father, as this character and office were received from him. And, indeed, whenever the Son is represented, as engaged in the great work of redemption, or in any thing tending thereunto, or in any work consequent thereupon, whereby what was before purchased is said to be applied by him, this has a peculiar reference to him, as Mediator; therefore let us consider,

1. That nothing is more common, in scripture, than for him to be represented as Mediator, especially in all those things that concern the spiritual advantages, or salvation of his church, which is the principal thing to be considered in his government; and in this sense we are to understand those scriptures, which have been brought to support the objection: and it is plain, that our Saviour generally speaks of himself under this character, which is included in his being the Messiah, or Christ, which is the main thing that he designed to evince by his doctrine and his miracles; therefore, if we duly consider the import of this character, it will not only give light to the understanding such like scriptures, but sufficiently answer the objection against his Deity taken from them.

the confessors of that doctrine, the greatest store of solutions, as often as something not divine, something beneath the nature and authority of his Father, and something finite are testified concerning him. "He who was in the form of God, and counted it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a servant." Phil. ii. 6, 7. "The Word who was with God, and who was God, became flesh; but in that flesh, manifested a glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John i. 1, 14.—According to the infallible testimony, he is therefore true God and true man; and his saving mediator; performances are inseparably founded on both natures. While the value of these, the power to save his people forever, and to direct all things in heaven and on earth to that end, as also the fitness to be the object of their grateful confidence, and his capacity for conducting the general judgment, are founded on, and give an invincible proof of his divine perfection; it is at the same time his finite nature, wherein he finished the human ministrations of his teaching office, and of his priestly sacrifice.—And thus it is intelligible, how the glory and majesty with which he governs the kingdom of God, to the mighty ingathering and defence of his people, and to the destruction of all opposition, occur as an *exaltation*; in as far as the human nature, according to its capacity shared therein, obtained the fruit and reward of its labour, and the Lamb that was slain, deserves and receives everlasting honour, because of the works of salvation in both natures. This appears, because every where, his obedience and deepest humiliation are assigned as the reason of his exaltation.—"I was dead and behold! am alive for evermore, Amen! and have the keys of hell and of death." Rev. i. 18. "To this end Christ died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord over the dead and the living." Rom. xiv. 9. See also Phil. ii. 7—10. Heb. i. 3. John v. 27. Rev. i. 5, 6. v. 12—14."

Our adversaries will not deny that Christ is represented as a Mediator; but they widely differ from us, when they take occasion to explain what they intend thereby: sometimes they seem to mean nothing else by it, but a middle-Being betwixt God and the creature; and therefore the work performed by him as such is not what requires him to be, in the most proper sense, a divine Person, and consequently whatever inferiority to the Father is contained in this character, they conclude that this respects his Deity; whereas we distinguish between the subserviency of the work, performed by him, as Mediator, to the glory of God the Father, together with the subjection, or real inferiority of the human nature, in which he performed it to the Father; and the inferiority of his divine nature: the former we allow; the latter we deny.

2. When we speak of him as Mediator, we always suppose him to be God and Man, in one Person; and that these two natures, though infinitely distinct, are not to be separated. As God, without the consideration of a human nature united to his divine Person, he would be too high to sustain the character, or to perform the work of a servant, and, as such, to yield obedience, which was incumbent on him, as Mediator; and on the other hand, to be a mere man, is too low, and would be altogether inconsistent with that infinite value and dignity, that was to be put on the work which he was to perform. Therefore it was necessary that he should have two distinct natures, a divine and a human, or that he should be God incarnate. This will be more particularly considered under some following answers*; and therefore we shall reserve the proof hereof for its proper place, and there consider the distinct properties of each nature; and all that we shall observe at present is, that the evangelist John, in whose gospel our Saviour is often described, as inferior to the Father, as well as equal with him, which is agreeable to his Mediatorial character, lays down this, as a kind of preface, designing hereby to lead us into the knowledge of such like expressions, when he says, in John i. 14. *The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us*; which is all the proof we shall give of it at present.

3. It follows from hence, that several things may be truly spoken concerning, or applied to him, which are infinitely opposite to one another, namely that he has almighty power in one respect, as to what concerns his Deity; and yet that he is weak, finite, and dependent in another, as to what respects his humanity. In one nature, he is God equal with the Father, and so receives nothing from him, is not dependent on him, nor under any obligation to yield obedience. In this nature,

* See *Quest. vii*

he is the object of worship, as all worship terminates on that Deity, which is common to all the Persons in the Godhead : but, in the other nature, he worships, receives all from, and refers all to the glory of the Father ; therefore,

4. Those scriptures which speak of him as receiving a kingdom, doing all things from, or in obedience to the Father, or in his name, and for his glory, and as inferior to, and dependent on him, are not only applied to him, as Mediator, but they have a particular respect to his human nature ; so that all that can be inferred from such modes of speaking, as those above-mentioned, as so many objections against the doctrine which we are defending, is, that he who is God is also man, and consequently has those things predicated of him, as such which are proper to a nature infinitely below, though inseparably united with his divine.

Moreover, whereas it is said, that *the Father has committed all judgment to the Son*, or that *he judgeth the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained* ; all that can be inferred from hence is, that so far as this work is performed by him, in his human nature, which will be rendered visible to the whole world at the day of judgment, it is an instance of the highest favour and glory conferred upon this nature, or upon God-man Mediator, as man : but whereas he is elsewhere described, as having a right to judge the world, as God ; and as having those infinite perfections, whereby he is fit to do it, these are the same that belong to the Father, and therefore not derived from him.

Again, when, in another scripture, before referred to, it is said, that *God hath made him both Lord and Christ*, it is not there said, that the Father hath made him God, or given him any branch of the divine glory ; but it signifies the unction that he received from the Father, to be the King, Head, and Lord of his church ; which, so far as this is an act of grace, or connotes his dependence on the Father herein, it has an immediate respect to him, in his human nature, in which, as well as in his divine nature, this dominion is exercised ; whereas his sovereignty, and universal dominion over the church and the world, or those divine perfections, which render him, in all respects, fit to govern it ; they belong, more especially to the Mediator, as God, and are the same as when they are applied to the Father.

Moreover, when he says, *I seek not my own will, but the Father's, that sent me* ; and elsewhere, *Not my will, but thine be done* ; it argues that he had a human will, distinct from his divine, in which he expresses that subjection to the Father, which becomes a creature ; this is plainly referred to him as man ; so, on the other hand, when he says, speaking of himself

co-ordinately with the Father, *As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, so even the Son quickeneth whom he will*; this, though spoken of him as Mediator, has a peculiar reference to his divine nature.

Again, when he says, in another scripture, *The Father is greater than I*, that is applied to him as man; whereas elsewhere, in John x. 30. when he says, *I, and my Father are one*, that is spoken of him as God, having the same nature with the Father so that if we suppose our Saviour to be God and Man, as he is plainly proved to be, from scripture, then it follows, that whatever is said concerning him, as importing his right to divine honour on the one hand, or his disclaiming it on the other, these are both true, when we consider him in these different natures.

Thus we are to understand those scriptures, that speak of the real inferiority of the Son to the Father: but when, in other places, nothing is intended but the subserviency of what is done by the Son, as Mediator, or its tendency to set forth the Father's glory, this may be applicable to those divine works, which the Mediator performs; and so we may distinguish between the subserviency of the divine actions to the Father's glory, and the inferiority of one divine Person to another; the former may be asserted without detracting from his proper Deity, while the latter is denied, as inconsistent with it.

Thus we have endeavoured to explain those scriptures, which are referred to by the Arians, to overthrow our Saviour's divinity: and, by the same method of explication, I humbly conceive, all others, that can be brought to that purpose, may be understood. I have passed over that scripture, indeed, which respects *Christ's delivering up the kingdom to the Father*, and being subject to him, which it might have been expected that I should have endeavoured to explain; but I choose rather to refer the consideration thereof to its proper place, when we speak concerning Christ's kingly office, and his being exalted in the execution thereof.

IV. The next argument to prove the divinity of Christ is taken from his being the object of religious worship, which is a practical owning of him to be a divine Person, when there is an agreement between our words and actions, in both which we acknowledge him to have the perfections of the divine nature. This argument is so strong and conclusive, that it is very difficult to evade the force thereof; and, indeed, it affects the very essentials of religion. Now, that we may herein proceed with greater plainness, we shall,

1. Consider what we understand by worship in general, and by religious worship in particular. I am very sensible that the Anti-trinitarians understand the word in a sense very dif-

ferent from what we do, as taking it in a limited sense, for our expressing some degree of humility, or reverence, to a person, whom we acknowledge in some respect, to be our superior; but whatever external signs of reverence, or words, we use, as expressive of our regard to him who is the object thereof, this, when applied to our Saviour, is no more than what they suppose to be due to a person below the Father. Therefore, that we may not mistake the meaning of the word, let it be considered; that worship is either civil or religious; the former contains in it that honour and respect which is given to superiors, which is sometimes expressed by bowing, or falling down, before them, or some other marks of humility, which their advanced station in the world requires; Though this is seldom called worshipping them; and it is always distinguished from religious worship, even when the same gestures are used therein. It is true, there is one scripture, in which the same word is applied to both, in 1 Chron. xxix. 20. where it is said, *All the congregation bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king*, that is, they paid civil respect, accompanied with those actions that are expressive of humility, and that honour that was due to David, but their worship given to God was divine or religious. This is the only sense in which we understand *worship* in this argument, and it includes in it adoration and invocation. In the former, we ascribe infinite perfection unto God, either directly, or by consequence; an instance whereof we have in 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12. *Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in heaven, and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all*; and, in Deut. xxxii. 3. in which we are said to *ascribe greatness* unto him; and, in Rom. i. 21. to *glorify him as God*, or, *give unto him the glory due to his name*, Psal. xxix. 2.

Invocation is that wherein we glorify God, as the Fountain of blessedness, when we ask those things from him, which none but a God can give, which is sometimes called *seeking the Lord*, Psal. cv. 4. or *calling upon him*, Psal. l. 15. And this includes in it all those duties which we perform, in which we consider him as a God of infinite perfection, and ourselves dependent on him, and desirous to receive all those blessings from him, which we stand in need of; and particularly faith, in the various acts thereof, is a branch of religious worship, as connoting its object to be a divine Person; as also supreme love, and universal obedience; and, indeed, it contains in it the whole of religion, in which we have a due regard to that infinite distance

that there is between him and the best of creatures; and religious worship is no where taken in a lower sense than this in scripture.

2. Religious worship, as thus described, is to be given to none but a divine Person, according to our Saviour's words, in *Matth. iv. 10. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* This is evident, from the idea we have of religion in general, which is a giving that glory, or ascribing those perfections to God, which belong to him, as being founded in his nature; and therefore it is the highest instance of blasphemy and profaneness to apply them to any creature, since it is in effect to say that he is equal with God.

3. It plainly appears, from Scripture, that Christ is the object of religious worship, and consequently that the argument we are maintaining is just, namely, that, for this reason, he must be concluded to be a divine Person. Now that he is the object of religious worship, is evident, from many examples in scripture of such worship being given to him, when, at the same time, they, who have given it, have not been reproved or restrained, but rather commended, for performing it. We have various instances of this nature in the Old Testament, of which I shall mention two or three, *viz.* in *Gen. xlviii. 15, 16. God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.* When he speaks of Abraham and Isaac's walking before him, it implies, that, in their whole conversation, they considered themselves as under his all-seeing eye; and Jacob acknowledges him as the God, who had sustained, preserved, and provided for him hitherto, the support of his life, and his Deliverer, or Redeemer, from all evil. This divine Person he addresses himself to, in a way of supplication, for a blessing on the posterity of Joseph; and that he intends our Saviour hereby, is evident, because he has a reference to his appearance in the form of an angel, and therefore describes him under that character. Now we cannot suppose that this holy patriarch is here represented as praying to a created angel, for that would be to charge him with idolatry. Moreover, this is the same description that is given of Christ elsewhere, in *Isa. lxiii. 9. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them; in his love, and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old;* and in *Mal. iii. 1. The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the Messenger, or Angel, of the covenant; whom ye delight in;* which contains a very plain prediction of our Saviour's incarnation, whose way is said to be prepared by John the Baptist, who is spoken of in the words immediately foregoing. Now it is certain, that

God the Father is never called an angel in scripture, inasmuch as this is a peculiar description of the Mediator, who, as such, is never mentioned as the Person sending, but sent; in which he is considered as one that was to be incarnate, and, in our nature, to execute those offices, which he was therein obliged to perform. This is the Person then whom Jacob adored and prayed to.

We have another instance, not only of his being worshipped, but of his demanding this divine honour of him that performed it, in Josh. v. 14, 15. where he appeared as the *Captain of the host of the Lord*; upon which, *Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy; and Joshua did so.* It cannot be supposed that it was any other than a divine Person that appeared; not only because Joshua fell on his face and worshipped him, and expressed his willingness to fulfil his command, but because he bid him loose his shoe from his foot, since the place on which he stood was holy; which expression is no where used in any other text of scripture, except in Exod. iii. 5. in which our Saviour, as we before considered, appeared to Moses, with the majesty and glory of a divine Person, whose immediate presence made the place relatively holy, which the presence of a creature never did. Moreover, the character which he here gives of himself to Joshua, as the *Captain of the Lord's host*, not only implies, that all his success was owing to his conduct and blessing, on his warlike enterprises; but this is also agreeable to the description which is elsewhere given of our Saviour, in Isa. lv. 4. in which he is said to be a *Leader and Commander to the people*; and he is called in Heb. ii. 10. *The Captain of our salvation*; and elsewhere, *The Prince of life*; and, *The Prince of the kings of the earth*.

Moreover, there are various instances in the New Testament of worship given to Christ; in which, by several circumstances contained in it, it is evident, that it was divine or religious. Thus he had divine honour given him by the wise men from the East, in Matth. ii. 11. who *fell down and worshipped him*, &c. and, in Luke xxiv. 52. when he ascended up into heaven, his disciples *worshipped him*; where there is nothing in the mode of expression that distinguishes this from that worship that is due to God. Moreover, there is a very illustrious instance of his being thus worshipped by a numerous assembly, represented in that vision, in Rev. v. 11—13. *I beheld, and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, saying, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive*

*power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever; in which words there are such glories ascribed, that higher expressions cannot be used by any, who adore the divine Majesty; and it is plain, that our Saviour is intended hereby, because he is described as the Lamb that was slain; and he is also considered co-ordinately with the Father, when it is said, that this glory is given to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. Now if our Saviour be thus worshipped, he must have a right to it, or else his worshippers would have been reprov'd, as guilty of idolatry; thus Peter reprov's Cornelius, or rather prevents his paying divine adoration to himself, who was no more than a man, in Acts x. 26. *Stand up, I myself also am a man; and the angel, in Rev. xix. 10. when John at first, through mistake, thinking him to be a divine person, fell at his feet to worship him, expressly forbid him, saying, See thou do it not; I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God. But our Saviour never forbids any to worship him; therefore we must conclude that he is the object thereof, and consequently a divine Person.**

We shall now proceed to consider the various branches of divine worship that are given to him, *viz.*

1. Swearing by his name, whereby an appeal is made to him, as the Judge of truth, and the Avenger of falsehood. Some think that the apostle, in Rom. ix. 1. intends as much as this, when he says, *I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, that is, I appeal to Christ, as the heart-searching God, concerning the truth of what I say. But there is also another sense of swearing, namely, when in a solemn manner, we profess subjection to him, as our God and King; which agrees with, or is taken from the custom of subjects, who swear fealty or allegiance to their king: thus it is said, in Isa. xlv. 23. Unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear; and, in doing this, they acknowledge him to be the object of faith, and to have a right to universal obedience, as well as the Fountain of blessedness. This religious worship, as the prophet foretels, was to be given to the Person here spoken of, who is particularly said to be our Saviour by the apostle, referring to it in Rom. xiv. 11.*

2. This leads us to consider another act of religious worship, which has some affinity with the former, contained in the baptismal vow; in which there is a consecration, or dedication, of the person baptized, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, according to the command given, in Matt. xxviii. 19.

or a public profession, that it is our indispensable duty to exercise an entire subjection to them, in a religious manner. This is one of the most solemn acts of worship that can be performed, wherein there is an explicit mention of the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And here we may consider, in general, that the Son is put co-ordinately with the Father, which no creature ever is: and it will be also necessary for us to enquire what is meant by being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that so it may farther appear to be an act of religious worship.

Some hereby understand nothing else but our being baptized by the authority of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, or by a warrant received from them to do it: but though this be sometimes the meaning of our acting in the name of God, yet more is intended by this expression, used in the administration of this ordinance, otherwise it is not sufficiently distinguished from all other acts of religious worship; which cannot be rightly performed without a divine warrant. According to this sense of the word, ministers may as well be said to preach the gospel, and the church to attend on their ministrations, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; for this cannot be done without a divine warrant, upon which account it may be deemed an ordinance.

Moreover, to suppose that this instituted form of administering baptism, conveys no other idea, but that of a divine warrant to do it, is to conclude that there is no determinate meaning of the action performed, contained in it; but the administrator is to intend nothing else by it, but only that he has a warrant from God to baptize; whereas its being performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, seems plainly to intimate the principal thing signified thereby, as a direction for our faith, when engaging in it: which is, that they who are baptized are consecrated, or devoted to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, devoted to God professedly, and called by his name, in the sense in which the phrase is elsewhere used in scripture; his right to them is hereby signified, and their indispensable obligation to be entirely his; and that with a peculiar acknowledgment of the distinct personal glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the concern that each of them have in our salvation. The apostle speaking of our being baptized in the name of Christ, calls it, in Gal. iii. 27. *a putting on Christ*; which seems to imply a consecration, or dedication, to him. Persons as well as things, before this ordinance was instituted, were consecrated to God by divers washings, as well as other rites, used under the ceremonial law; and this seems to be the sense in which the apostle himself explains this *putting on Christ*, in ver. 29. when he saith, from this

action, that they who had so done *were Christ's*, not only by that right, which he has to them as their Creator and Redeemer, but by another, which is the immediate result of their professed dedication to him; therefore this is such a comprehensive act of worship, that it includes in it the whole of that subjection, which is due to the Father, Son, and Spirit; and since, in particular, the Son is considered as the object thereof, together with the Father, it follows that he is God, equal with the Father.

I might here consider, that it would be not only an unwarrantable action, but an instance of the greatest profaneness, for us to be baptized in the name of any one who is not a divine Person, which farther argues that it is an act of divine worship; upon which occasion, the apostle Paul, speaking concerning some of the church of Corinth, as being disposed to pay too great a veneration to those ministers who had been instrumental in their conversion, as though, for this reason, they were to be accounted the lords of their faith; and, in particular, that some said they were of Paul, and, being apprehensive that they thought the minister, who baptized them, had a right to be thus esteemed, he not only reproves this ungrounded and pernicious mistake; but takes occasion to *thank God, that he baptized none of them, but Crispus and Gaius, together with the household of Stephanas, lest any should say he baptized in his own name*; so that while he testifies his abhorrence of his giving any just occasion to any, to conclude that he was the object of this branch of divine worship, he takes a great deal of pleasure in this reflection, that the providence of God had not led them through the ignorance and superstition that prevailed among them, to draw this false conclusion from his exercising this branch of the ministerial work, which properly they would not have inferred from any other's having baptized them, who had not so great an interest in their affections as he had. This I apprehend to be the meaning of what the apostle says, in 1 Cor. i. 12—16. which I take occasion to refer to, as a farther proof of baptism's being an act of religious worship, unalienable from the Father, Son, and Spirit, in whose name alone we are to be baptized; and I cannot but conclude, that if the Son were not a divine Person, we might as well be baptized in the name of Paul, or any other of the apostles, as in his name, which is a just consequence from its being an act of religious worship; and therefore he would never have joined his own name with the Father's when he gave forth his commission to baptize, if he had not had a right to it, as well as the Father.

Again, divine worship is due to Christ, as he is the object of faith; and that not only as we are to depend upon what-

ever he has revealed, as a matter of infallible verity, otherwise the faith of the church especially under the New Testament dispensation, would be built on an uncertain foundation; but, since I am sensible it would be objected to this, that whatever is transmitted to us by divine inspiration, is infallibly true, though the instruments made use of herein were not divine persons; and when we assert that what Christ delivered was infallible, in a higher sense than this, we rather suppose than prove his Deity; the Anti-trinitarians will not deny, that what he imparted was infallibly true, and therefore the object of faith; but they suppose at the same time, that whatever was imparted to the world by the apostles and prophets, was equally true and infallible; therefore they were the objects of faith, in the same sense that our Saviour himself was.

In answer to this I would not compare what was delivered immediately by our Saviour with what was transmitted by those who spake and wrote by divine inspiration, or suppose that one was more infallibly true than the other; and therefore that which I would principally insist on, when I speak of Christ, as the object of faith, whereby he appears to be a divine Person, is not only that we are obliged to yield an assent to what he has imparted to us, but this is to be attended with a firm reliance on him, or trusting him with all we have, or for all we expect, to make us completely happy: in this sense we are to understand the apostle's words, when he says, in 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, or trusted, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day;* this is such a faith, as no creature is the object of. Trust in man is prohibited, and called a departure from God, in Jer. xvii. 5. *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, or, by a parity of reason in any other creature, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart herein departeth from the Lord.* Trust is such an act of faith, as is appropriated to a divine Person; and I cannot but observe, that there is something peculiar in the mode of speaking, when Christ is represented as the object thereof, that is never applied to any creature; as his worshippers are said to believe *in him*; thus, in John xiv. 1. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me,** where he commands

* *Creatures are said to be believed, as our Saviour speaking concerning John the Baptist, in Mark xi. 31. says, Why did ye not believe him? διατι ουκ ειπισταθη αυτω; and, in Acts viii. 12. the Samaritans believed Philip, ειπιστασαν τω φιλιππω; and, in John v. 46. Moses is described as a person who ought to be believed; Had ye believed Moses, &c. says our Saviour, α γαρ ειπιστευθη Μωσην; but it is never said that a creature is believed in. This was Augustin's observation; upon which occasion he says, In Exposit. Evangel. Johan. Tract. 29. "Though we may be said to believe Paul and Peter, yet we are never said to believe in them." But as for our Saviour, we are not only to believe him, namely, what he has spoken, but πιστωμεν αυτω, to believe in him.*

his people to believe in him, in such a way, as that this act of faith is accompanied with other graces, which argue him a divine Person.

This leads us to consider him as the object of supreme love and universal obedience, which are also acts of religious worship; the former respects him, as our chief good and happiness; the latter as our undoubted sovereign and proprietor: we do not say, that a person's having a right to be obeyed, or loved, or trusted, in a limited degree, argues him to be a divine Person; but when these graces are to be exercised in the highest degree, without any possibility of our exceeding therein; and when the exercise thereof is inseparably connected with salvation, as it often is in scripture, and our not exercising them, is said to exclude from it, I cannot but from hence conclude, that, being thus circumstanced, is an act of religious worship; and it is certain, that our saviour is often represented, in scripture, as the object thereof.

The last thing that we shall consider, under this head, is, that he is the object of prayer and praise; and that these are parts of religious worship, needs no proof. Some think, and the conjecture is not altogether improbable, that this is intended by the Psalmist, Psal. lxxii. 15. *Prayer also shall be made for him continually*; since it might as well be rendered, continually made *to him*, which agrees with what follows, *And daily shall he be praised*; and that this Psalm respects the Messiah, who had a right to more glory than Solomon, appears from several things, which are said concerning him therein; but I will not insist on this, since we have more evident proofs thereof in other scriptures. It is also foretold concerning him in Isa. xi. 10. that *to him*, for so the words ought to be rendered, *shall the Gentiles seek*; which mode of speaking is frequently used, to signify our addressing ourselves to a divine Person with prayer and supplication, for the supplying of our wants. But we have yet more evident proofs hereof in the New Testament; the Syrophenician woman's prayer, which was directed to him, was indeed short, but very comprehensive, Matt. xv. 22. *Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David*; and, in ver. 25. *She came and worshipped him, saying, Lord help me*; and this act of religious worship was commended by our Saviour, and her prayer answered. And can we suppose any other than an act of religious worship, contained in that petition of the man who came to him to cast the devil out of his son, in Mark ix. 24? *Who said, with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief*; by which we are not to understand that he desired that his unbelief should be removed in an objective way, by our Saviour's giving him more convincing arguments to confirm his faith, but by a powerful ac-

cess to his heart, as the Author and Finisher of faith, which is the peculiar gift of God; and accordingly he is considered as a divine Person, by those who thus address themselves to him.

We shall conclude this head, with giving a few instances of short prayers directed to Christ, together with doxologies, or ascriptions of praise, in which he is sometimes joined with the Father and Holy Ghost; and he is also argued, from the subject matter thereof, to be a divine Person: thus the apostle Paul concludes his epistles with, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen*; 1 Cor. xvi. 23. Phil. iv. 23. 1 Thess. v. 28. 2 Thess. iii. 18. and, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*; Philem. ver. 25. and, *The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy Spirit*; 2 Tim. iv. 22. which is a short and comprehensive prayer directed to Christ, that he would bestow on them all those graces that are necessary to their salvation; and that this grace may so govern and influence their spirits, as to fit them for his service, which supposes him to be the God and Giver of all grace. And, in 2 Cor. x. iii. 14. he puts up a prayer to the three Persons in the God-head expressly; *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen*; desiring, that they would communicate those blessings, which accompany salvation, by which the divine perfections, and in particular the Personal glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are demonstrated; and herein the Son is as much considered as the object of prayer as the Father, and consequently hereby proved to be a divine Person.

To this we may add those doxologies whereby praise is given to Christ; and so he is farther considered as the object of divine worship; thus, in 2 Pet. iii. 18. speaking of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he says, *To him be glory, both now and for ever, Amen*; and, in Jude, ver. 24, 25. *Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now, and for ever, Amen*; where it is plain that he ascribes this divine glory to Jesus Christ; for he is spoken of in ver. 21. *Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life*, that is, for that mercy which shall preserve us unto eternal life, and then confer it upon us; which is the sense of those words, *Keeping us from falling, and presenting us faultless before the presence of his glory*, with a small variation of the phrase; and the very same thing he is expressly said to do elsewhere, in Eph. v. 27. *to present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish*, that is, that he may present it to his own view, as taking a survey of his workmanship.

when brought to perfection ; as God is said *to have taken a view of all things that he had made at first*, when he pronounced them good Gen. i. 31. and, when he has thus taken a survey of his church, or presented it to himself, then he presents it to the view of the whole world of angels and men, which, as it is said, is attended with exceeding joy ; which plainly makes it appear that our Saviour is the Person here spoken of ; which is agreeable to what follows, where he is called, as he is elsewhere, *God our Saviour*, Tit. ii. 10, 13. which character agrees with the name by which he was most known, to wit, *Jesus*.

Another doxology we have in Rev. i. 4, 5, 6. *Grace be unto you, and peace from Jesus Christ, &c. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood ; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.*

There are also two places more, in which, to me, it seems more than probable, that doxologies are directed to Christ, namely, in 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16. *Who is 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 unto : whom no man hath seen, or can see ; to whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen : All allow that nothing greater can be said of God than is here spoken ; therefore the only thing denied by the Arians is, that this is applied to any but the Father ; but to me, it seems very obvious that it is spoken of Christ, because he is mentioned immediately before : thus, in ver. 13. it is said, *I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus* * ; who, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession ; That thou keep this commandment without spot, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his times he shall shew ; Who is the blessed and only Potentate, &c. where by his times is meant that season in which his glory shall shine most brightly, when, what he witnessed before Pontius Pilate, to wit, that he was the Son of God, he will demonstrate in the highest degree, and then will eminently appear to have a right to that glory, which the apostle ascribes to him.*

Again, there is another scripture, in which a glorious doxology is ascribed to Christ, in 1 Tim. i. 17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever, Amen.* A late learned writer † puts

* The words are, *εναρτιου τε θεου τε ζηστου ωποκεινυτος τε παντα και Χριστου Ιηου* ; where *και* seems to be exegetical, according to the rule laid down, page 318. and therefore I would render the words, *God, who quickeneth all things even Jesus Christ ; and, if this be a just rendering, then the Father is not mentioned in the context ; and therefore this doxology is not ascribed to him but to our Saviour*

† See Dr. Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine*, page 58. 77.

this among those scriptures which he applies to the Father, without assigning any reason for it; which he ought to have done, inasmuch as the context seems to direct us to apply it to the Son, spoken of in the foregoing verses; thus, in ver. 12. *I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry*; and, ver. 14. *The Grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, &c.* and ver. 15. *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*; and ver. 16. *Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.* Thus having mentioned the great things which Christ did for him, it is natural to suppose that he would take occasion, from hence, to ascribe glory to him, which he does in the words immediately following, *Now, unto the King, eternal, immortal, &c.*

Having considered the force of this argument, taken from divine worship being ascribed to Christ, to prove his deity, we shall now proceed to observe the methods used by the Antitrinitarians to evade it. Some of the Socinians, as though there had been no scriptures that speak of him as the object of religious worship, have peremptorily denied that it is due to him, and thought very hardly of their brethren, as though they were involved in the common guilt of idolatry, which they suppose his worshippers to have been chargeable with. This occasioned warm debates in Transylvania and Poland, where Socinianism most prevailed towards the close of the 16 century*; and, indeed, the method of reasoning, made use of by those who denied that he was the object of worship, though it tended more to his dishonour, yet it carried in it a greater consistency with that scheme of doctrines, which both sides maintained, who denied his divinity.

As for the Arians, they do not expressly deny him to be the object of worship, but rather deviate from the true sense of the word, when they maintain his right to it: they speak of great honours that are to be ascribed to him, by which one would almost be ready to conclude that they reckoned him a divine Person; but when these honours are compared with those that are due to the Father, they very plainly discover that they mean nothing more hereby, but what in consistency with their own scheme may be applied to a creature. Thus a late writer †, in his explication of that text, in John v. 23. *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour Father,* plainly discovers his sense of divine worship, as due to our Saviour, to

* *The chief opposers of Christ's being the object of worship, were Jacobus Palæologus, Franciscus Davidus, Christianus Franken, Simon Buduæus; and, on the other hand, it was defended by Socinus, and several others, though not in the same sense in which we maintain it.* † See Dr. Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine*, page 132.

be very remote from that which is defended by those who maintain his proper deity. His explication of this text is, "That the meaning is not that the Son's authority should, like that of the Father, be looked upon as underived, absolute, supreme, and independent; but that as the Jews already believed in God, so they should also believe in Christ: as they already honoured God the Father, so they should also for the future, honour the Son of God; honour him, as having all judgment committed unto him; honour him, to the honour of the Father, which sent him; acknowledge him to be God, to the glory of the Father." Which is a very low idea of divine honour; for it is as much as to say, that as the Father is to be honoured as God, so there is a degree of honour, which he has conferred upon the Son, infinitely below that which is due to himself, but yet called divine, because it is given him by a divine warrant. Whether, in this sense, an angel might not have had a warrant to receive divine honour, I leave any one to judge; and, indeed, nothing is contained in this sense, but what rather tends to depreciate, than advance the glory of Christ. But that we may better understand how far they allow that religious worship may be given to our Saviour, as well as that we may take occasion to defend that right to divine worship, which we have proved to be due to him, we shall briefly consider, and endeavour to make some reply to the following objections.

Object. 1. To what has been said concerning a right to religious worship, being founded only in a person's having the perfections of the divine nature; and accordingly that it is an argument that our Saviour is truly and properly God, equal with the Father, because as such, he has a right to it, it is objected, that if God commands us to worship a creature, we are bound to obey him; and accordingly, without considering any right that is founded in his nature, we are to give divine worship to Christ, by divine direction, or in obedience to a command given us to that purpose; and that such a command was given, upon which Christ's right to receive divine worship is founded, appears from Heb. i. 6. *When he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him;* which supposes that they did not worship him before, nor would they have done it afterwards, without this divine intimation.

Answ. 1. As to our yielding obedience to a divine command, provided God should require us to give divine worship to a creature, it may be replied, that we do not deny but that all the divine commands are to be obeyed; but yet this supposition is groundless, inasmuch as God cannot command us to worship a creature, any more than he can discharge us from an obligation to worship himself. This, therefore, is, in effect, to suppose

what can never be ; therefore nothing can be inferred from such a supposition ; we might as well say, that if God should cease to exist, he would cease to be the object of worship ; or if a created being had divine perfection, he would have a right to equal honour with God ; which is to suppose a thing that is in itself impossible ; and it is no less absurd to suppose it warrantable for us to pay divine worship to a creature. This will farther appear, from what has been said in explaining the nature of religious worship. Adoration is a saying to a person, who is the object thereof, thou hast divine perfections, and to say this to a creature, is contrary to truth ; and therefore, certainly the God of truth can never give us a warrant to say that which is false, as this certainly would be. And if we consider worship, as it is our addressing ourselves to him, whom we worship, in such a way, as becomes a God, he cannot give us a warrant so to do, for that would be for him to divest himself of his glory : and it would also disappoint our expectations, by putting us on trusting one that cannot save us ; and such are justly reprov'd, in Isa. xlv. 20. as *having no knowledge, who pray unto a god that cannot save*. We must therefore conclude, that since God cannot give his glory to another, he cannot give any warrant to us to pay divine worship to a creature, as is supposed in the objection,

2. As for that scripture, referred to, in which God commanded the angels to worship our Saviour, when he brought him into the world, it is not to be supposed that he had no right to divine worship before his incarnation ; for if he be a divine Person, as the scriptures assert him to be, the angels, doubtless adored him as such before ; the only new discovery that was then made to them was, that the second Person in the Godhead was now God incarnate ; and therefore this instance of infinite condescension was to be considered as a motive to excite their adoration, but not the formal reason of it : thus we are sometimes commanded to adore and magnify God for the visible displays of his divine perfections in his works ; as the Psalmist says, Psal. cvii. 8. *Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!* and, in many other scriptures, where the works of God are represented, as a means or motive to excite our worship or adoration : whereas the divine perfections, which are displayed or rendered visible therein, are the great foundation or reason thereof ; we worship this God because he is infinitely perfect ; though we take occasion, from the visible display of his perfections, to worship him. In this sense we understand the worship given to Christ by the angels, when brought into the world ; they took occasion, from this amazing instance of his condescension, to adore those perfections, which

induced the Son of God to take the human nature into union with his divine; not that they supposed his right to worship was founded therein.

Object. 2. Since our worshipping Christ includes in it ascribing all that glory to him that is his due; it is enough for us, when we worship him, to confess that he has an excellency above the angels, or that he is the best of all created beings, as well as the most honourable, and the greatest blessing to mankind, as he was sent of God to instruct us in the way of salvation as a Prophet, to intercede for us as a Priest, and to give laws to us as a King, and that he has done all this faithfully, and with great compassion to us. These things, and whatever else he does for the advantage of mankind, may, and ought to be acknowledged to his praise, as a debt due to him, in which respect he is to be considered as the object of worship; nevertheless, we are not to give him that glory which is due to the Father, as though he were a Person truly and properly divine, in the same sense as he is.

Ans. 1. It is agreed, on both sides, that that glory, which is due to him, is to be ascribed; but we humbly conceive, that the ascribing to a person that honour, which he has a right to, unless we suppose it to be divine, is not religious worship; or, to confess that those works which he has done, are wonderful, and of great advantage to mankind, is no instance of adoration, unless we suppose that these works are such, as none but a Person who has the divine nature can perform; whereas all those works, which they ascribe to him, may, according to them, be performed by a finite being, or else they must allow the arguments, which have been taken from thence, to prove his proper deity.

2. If the works that are ascribed to him be considered as properly divine, as they are represented to be in scripture, it must not be concluded, from hence, that he is to be adored, as performing them; but we are rather to take occasion from thence, as was observed in our last head, to adore those divine perfections, which are evinced hereby, which render him the object of worship; as the works of God are motives to induce us to worship him, and not the formal reason of that worship; as when, in the first commandment, God lays claim to divine honour, or obliges the Israelites *to have no other gods before him, because he had brought them out of the land of Egypt*, we are to consider their deliverance from thence, indeed, as a motive to worship; but it is the divine power that was exerted therein, that was properly the object thereof; so, in Psal. cxxxvi. 1. we are *to give thanks to the Lord, whose mercy endureth for ever*; and, in the following verses, there is a particular mention made of some glorious works which God

had done, *who alone doth great wonders, who, in wisdom, made the heavens, and stretched out the earth; made the sun to rule by day, and the moon by night, &c.* These, and several other works there mentioned are all considered as motives to excite our adoration; but his being *Jehovah, the God of gods, and Lord of lords*, as in the 1st, 2d, and 3d verses, is the great foundation of his right to worship, since that is infinite; whereas his works are only the effects of infinite power, and so a demonstration of his right to divine glory. Now to apply this to those works which are done by our Saviour, if we suppose them, as we ought, to be properly divine, they are to be considered only as evincing his right to divine honour, as they are a demonstration of his deity, which is the only thing that renders him the object of divine worship.

Object. 3. But some will proceed a little farther, when they speak of Christ as the object of worship, and so will allow, that honours, truly divine, may be given to him; yet that this does not prove him to be God equal with the Father, since he is herein only considered as the Father's Representative, on whom the worship, that is immediately applied to him, must be supposed to terminate; as when an ambassador, who represents the prince that sent him, is considered as sustaining that character, and so receives some honour, which otherwise he would have no right to, or rather he is honoured as personating him whom he represents.

Ans. w. To this it may be replied, that whatever may be said to be done by an ambassador, as representing the prince that sent him, there is always something contained in the manner of his address, or in the honours ascribed to him, that denotes him to be more than a subject; and it would be ill represented, should he assume that honour to himself that is due to his master. Therefore our Saviour, were he not a divine Person, but only the Father's Representative, could not have a right to claim that divine honour that is ascribed to him; neither have we any foundation, in scripture, to distinguish concerning a supreme and a subordinate worship, or a worship given to a person that does not terminate in him, but in another, whom he represents.

If there be any apparent foundation for this supposition, it must be taken from those expressions in which Christ is represented, as Mediator, as acting in the Father's name, and not seeking his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him, or referring all the honour, that is given to him as such, to the Father. But to this it may be replied, that when our Saviour uses such a mode of speaking, he disclaims any right to divine honour due to him as Man, in which respect he received a commission from the Father, and acted in his name; but when

the honour of a divine Person is given to him as God, though considered as Mediator, he is not to be looked upon as representing the Father, or transferring the divine glory that he receives, to the Father, but as having the same right to it as the Father has, inasmuch as he has the same divine nature, otherwise we cannot account for those modes of speaking, in which the glory of a divine Person is ascribed to him, without restriction or limitation, as it oftentimes is in scripture.

Object. 4. To what has been said in defence of Christ's divinity, from our being baptized in his name, it is objected, that it does not follow, that because we are baptized in the name of the Son, as well as of the Father, that therefore he is God equal with the Father; for though this ordinance, as it respects the Father, contains, properly, an act of divine worship, in which we consider him as the great Lord of all things, to whom divine worship, in the highest sense is due; yet we consider the Son, as well as the Holy Ghost, only as having a right to an inferior kind of worship, in proportion to the respective parts which they sustain, by the will of the Father, in the work of our salvation; and, in particular, to be baptized in the name of Christ, implies in it nothing else but a declaration that we adhere to him, as the Father's Minister, delegated by him to reveal his mind and will to us, and to erect that gospel-dispensation, which we, in this ordinance, professedly submit to; and accordingly to be baptized in the name of Christ, is to be taken in the same sense, as when, in 1 Cor. x. 2. the Israelites were said to *be baptized into Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea*; as they signified thereby their consent to be governed by those laws, which Moses was appointed, by God, to give them; upon which account, they were denominated a particular church, separated from the world, and obliged to worship God in such a way, as was prescribed in the ceremonial law: even so, by baptism, we own ourselves Christians, under an obligation to adhere to Christ, as our Leader and Commander, who has revealed to us the gospel, which, by subjecting ourselves to, we are denominated Christians; and to this they also add, especially the Socinians, that as baptism was first practised as an ordinance, to initiate persons into the Jewish church, and was afterwards applied by our Saviour, to signify the initiating the heathen into the Christian church; so it was designed to be no longer in use among them, than till Christianity was generally embraced; and consequently we being a Christian nation, are not obliged to submit to it, since we are supposed to adhere to the doctrines of Christianity, and therefore it is needless to signify the same by this ordinance. It was upon this account that Socinus, and some of his follow-

ers, not only denied the baptism of infants, but that of all others, who were supposed to be Christians.

Ans. 1. As to the first part of this objection, to wit, that baptism does not signify the same thing when it is administered in the name of Christ, as when administered in the name of the Father, this is founded on a supposition, that the Son has not a right to the same honour that is due to the Father, which ought to be proved, and not taken for granted; and it altogether sets aside the consideration of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost's being herein co-ordinately represented, as the objects of this solemn dedication, which tends very much to derogate from the Father's glory. As it supposes the Son and Spirit to have a right to that glory which belongs to him, while they deny them to be divine Persons; and according to this method of reasoning, God might as well have ordained, that we should have been baptized in his name, together with the name of any of his prophets and apostles, which were appointed to be his ministers, in revealing his will to us, as in the name of the Son and Spirit, unless they were accounted worthy of having an honour infinitely superior to that which is given to any creature given to them herein.

2. When it is supposed that our professed subjection to Christ in baptism, is nothing else but our consent to be governed by those laws, which he has given us in the gospel, and so is compared with that declaration of subjection to the law of Moses, which was contained in the baptism of the Israelites into Moses;

To this it may be replied; that this supposes Christ to be no other than a Lawgiver; and that to be a Christian, is nothing else but to be professedly a member of that society, which goes under that denomination; and that to put on Christ is not to consecrate or devote ourselves to him as a divine Person; which is a very low idea of Christianity; and consequently the character of a Christian does not imply in it so much, when assumed by an Anti-trinitarian, as when applied to those who suppose that they are hereby obliged to honour him, as they honour the Father, or to submit to his government, as truly and properly divine. A Christian is not barely one, who is of Christ's party, in the same sense as a Mahometan, who adheres to the laws of Mahomet, is of his; for Christianity contains in it an obligation to perform those religious duties, of trust, universal obedience, and love, that are due to Christ as a divine Person.

3. As to the supposition, that baptism being an ordinance of Proselytism to the Christian faith, therefore a Christian nation is no longer obliged to submit to it, this is directly contrary to what our Saviour says in the words immediately fol-

lowing the institution thereof, in Matt. xxviii. 20. *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*, that is, you may expect my presence with you in administering this ordinance, as well as preaching the gospel, not only during the first age of the church, till Christianity shall obtain in the world, but as long as there shall be a society of Christians in it. And, indeed, if Christianity were nothing more than a public declaration of our obligation, to adhere to the laws of Christ; it does not follow, that because we are born in a Christian nation, therefore such a profession is no longer necessary. But since more than this is contained therein, as hath been before observed, namely, our professed subjection to Christ, in a religious way, as a divine Person, this extends the baptismal obligation much farther than to our being called Christians, and argues the necessity of our engaging in this ordinance, as long as Christ is the object of faith, or to be acknowledged to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of his church, and, as such, the object of religious worship, namely, unto the end of the world.

Object. 5. There is another objection against the argument in general, relating to Christ's being the object of divine worship, taken from his having refused to have one of the divine perfections ascribed to him, and directing the Person that gave it, to ascribe it to the Father, in Matt. xix. 17. *He said unto him, Why callest thou me good, there is none good but one, that is God; q. d. there is but one Person who is good, as goodness is properly a divine attribute, and that is the Father: therefore he alone is the object of that worship, which consists in the ascribing the perfections of the divine nature to him, in which sense we have before supposed religious worship to be understood.*

Ans. 1. As to what our Saviour says, concerning the divine unity, when he asserts, that there is none good but one, that is God; it is, doubtless to be understood in the same sense with all other scriptures, that deny a plurality of gods, in opposition to the principles and practice of idolaters; but it does not follow from hence, that the Father is the only Person who is God, or the object of divine worship. This has been before considered*, and therefore all that I shall reply to this part of the objection is; that the word God is sometimes taken for the Godhead, without a particular restriction or limitation thereof, either to Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, but may be equally applied to them all. In this sense it is to be taken, when the being of a God is demonstrated by the light of nature; as from the effects of the divine power, we argue, that there is a God, who is the Creator of all things; but this con-

* See page 322, 323. ante.

not, if we have no other light to guide us herein but that of nature, be applied to the Father, as a distinct Person in the Godhead, for the distinction that there is between the divine Persons is a matter of pure revelation; therefore all that our Saviour intends by this expression is, that no one has a right to have divine perfections ascribed to him, but he that has a divine nature, which whether it be meant of the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, he is denominated *the one only living and true God*.

It follows from hence, that when such modes of speaking are used in scripture, though the Father be called the one or only God, the Son is not excluded, as a late judicious writer well observes.*

2. As to that part of the objection, which concerns our Saviour's blaming the man for calling him good, there are two senses given of it: one is taken from a different reading of the words, namely, *Why dost thou ask me concerning good.*† But it will not be much to our purpose either to defend or disprove

* See Dr. Waterian's defence of the divinity of Christ, serm. iv. pag. 127. & seq. where he proves, that the exclusive terms of One, only, &c. do not except the Son, so as to deny him to have the same Godhead with the Father: this he proves from several scriptures, viz. Mat. xi. 27. No one knoweth the Son, but the Father; nor any one the Father, save the Son; it does not follow from hence, that the Father does not know himself nor the Son himself: and when it is said, in 1 Cor. ii. 11. The things of God knoweth no one, but the Spirit of God; this does not exclude the Son, for that would contradict the scripture but now mentioned; no more than the Son's only knowing the Father excludes the Holy Ghost, which would be contrary to this scripture; so in Rev. xix. 12. it is said, that the Son had a name written which no one knew but he himself: none ever thought that the Father was excluded by this exclusive term; so when God the Father saith, in Isa. xlv. 24. I am he that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by my self: this would contradict many other scriptures, which speak of the Son as the Creator of all things, if he were to be excluded by it. Again, when the Psalmist saith, concerning the Father, in Psal. lxxxiii. 18. that his name alone is Jehovah, we must set aside all those scriptures in which our Saviour is called Jehovah, if he is contained in this exclusive term. See more to this purpose in the said sermon, in which this argument is managed with a great deal of judgment. I shall only take leave farther to cite what is well observed in page 33. "That, perhaps the word God, in those places, namely, such in which there are these exclusive terms, is to be understood in the indefinite sense, abstracting from the particular consideration of this or that person, in like manner as the word man often stands not for any particular human person, but the whole species, or human nature; as when we say, man is frail; man is mortal, or the like."

† Τί με ερωτᾷς ἀγαθόν; Beza speaks of two or three of the most ancient copies in which this reading is found; and Crotius also adheres to it, from the credit, as he says, of the most ancient and correct copies; and it is also observed, that the vulgar Latin version renders it so; and Augustin read it so in the copy that he made use of: and whereas the evangelists, Mark and Luke, read it, Why callest thou me good, he endeavours to reconcile this different reading therewith as supposing there was a seeming contradiction between them which he might better have done, by referring to some copies which had it, as we read it, why callest thou me good; from whence, it is probable, he saw none that so rendered it in his time. Vid. Agust. de Consensu. Evan. lib. ii. cap. 63. It is also thus translated in the ancient Hebrew version of the gospel of Matthew.

this reading, since Mark and Luke read it, *Why callest thou me good*, &c. therefore, passing this over and supposing that it ought to be read, as we generally do; the common answer that is given to this objection, which, I humbly conceive, may be well acquiesced in, is; that our Saviour considers the man, as ascribing a divine perfection to him, whom, at the same time, he concluded to be no more than a creature; and therefore it is as though he should say; either, first, acknowledge me to be a divine Person, or else do not ascribe divine honours to me, for then by consequence, thou mightest as well ascribe them to any other creature. And accordingly, by the same method of reasoning, had he conversed with any Anti-trinitarian, in his day, who had given divine worship to him, and yet denied his proper deity, he would have reprov'd him for this mistake arising from an erroneous conscience, as much as he does the man, whom he reprov's, in the same sense, for styling him *good*.

That Christ does not exclude himself from having a right to this divine perfection, is not only evident, from those several scriptures, which have been before referred to, that ascribe perfections to him that are equally divine, inasmuch as he that has a right to one divine perfection, has a right to all; but he also styles himself, in John x. 14. *The good Shepherd*, which certainly imports as much as *good Master*, which expression was used by the man before-mentioned; and that his being the good Shepherd argues him to be the Fountain of blessedness, which is certainly a divine perfection, is evident, because he speaks of himself, as communicatively good in the highest sense, ver. 28. *I give unto them, viz. my sheep, eternal life.* (a)

(a) "If Dr. Priestley, in his celebrated efforts to establish the Unitarianism of the primitive church against Dr. Horsley, fell so short of "complete victory;" it may be presumed, that the failure would, in some degree, affect his greater work, *The History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ*. Many parts of that elaborate performance are merely a republication of the Letters, excluding the personalities. Their merits and their fate must, therefore, be closely interwoven.

This large and capital work was given to the world under circumstances which appeared very promising for bringing the controversy to a satisfactory issue. With great and long continued diligence the indefatigable author collected his materials. He digested and arranged them, with that lucid perspicuity for which he was so justly distinguished. He tried every method to call forth into the field of preparatory discussion, some learned and able Trinitarians and Arians. He waited for some years after the publication of the work; and then renewed his public challenge, affording an additional period for the fate of the question. It was, of course, implied, and the obligation was frankly avowed by the Doctor, that he would in proper time duly notice what any fair and candid opponents should produce.

It is to be lamented, however that the expectations thus excited have not been completely answered: and the decease of Dr. Priestley excludes every hope that they will be so.

Secondly, Having proved the deity of the Son, we proceed to consider that of the Holy Ghost, in which we are obliged to oppose the Socinians and Arians, though in different respects: As for the Socinians, they seem to be divided in their senti-

Early in the year 1790, a mild and amiable writer, Dr. Williams,* addressed to Dr. Priestley his objections to the whole structure of the argument built on the History of Early Opinions. He offered reasons to shew, that the appeal to the fathers was a method calculated to increase difficulties, and to render the controversy almost interminable; that it has been experimentally proved an insufficient mode of argument; that it has been long ago solidly refuted;† that it was plainly reprehended by Jesus Christ; that it is highly untheological in its just consequences; and that it is illogical and inconclusive. This letter breathed the sincere spirit of amicable controversy; and I cannot but think that it deserved the very candid and serious attention of your learned friend. But I believe it was never noticed in any other way than that of private compliment.

In 1794, Dr. Jamieson published a professed and minute examination of the History of Early Opinions. This elaborate and learned work was the very performance which Dr. Priestley had so long desired and challenged. It surely, then, had a just claim on his particular and public notice. At the time of this work's appearance, Dr. Priestley was occupied in the important measure of emigration to America. But when that step was accomplished, he enjoyed, for the remaining years of life, a calm and undisturbed retreat. We have, however, yet to be informed of the reason why his former pledge was not fulfilled.

As the controversy has been thus left open, it cannot be deemed illiberal in me to mention the result of personal observation in reading this large work of Dr. Priestley's. I am the more inclined to do so, since what I have remarked may be of use in answering a question of some importance; What degree of reliance can be placed on Dr. Priestley's care and accuracy in his citations of the fathers?

You, Sir, are well aware of the importance which Dr. Priestley attaches to the position, that the doctrines of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ were acknowledged by the orthodox fathers to have been most cautiously concealed, in the earlier preaching of the apostles, and not to have been clearly divulged, till John taught them at the close of the apostolic age.

Dr. Jamieson appears to me to have solidly refuted this assertion.‡ But he has, by no means, proceeded so far as he might easily have done, in shewing Dr. Priestley's remarkable inattention to rigid accuracy in the allegation of his authorities.

The instances of this kind which I have observed have given me much astonishment. If they concerned merely the literary reputation of this truly eminent character, to drag them into public notice could only be the work of a petulant and little mind. But they become cases of a very different nature, when conclusions of prime importance on a very interesting subject are inferred from egregious misconstructions of an author's meaning. In such cases regard to truth must supersede personal delicacies.

This duty becomes the more urgent when we are told, from high and respectable authority, that, "in all the most important controversies in which" Dr. Priestley "was engaged, he had studied the subject thoroughly, and was a complete master of the whole question:" and that, in his reasoning, "there was nothing artificial and ambiguous; no design to slur over difficulties and objections, or to lay greater stress upon a topic than it would well bear."§

The doctor has selected Chrysostom as the father whose evidence is most ample in support of the opinion, that John first taught the divinity of Christ.

* Letter to Dr. Priestley, in vol. i. of Dr. Williams' edition of Owen on the Hebrews.

† Dr. Williams refers only to Chillingworth by name. I would take the liberty of adding, that M. Daille's admirable work *On the Use of the Fathers in Determining Religious Controversies*, is deserving of the most careful perusal with reference to this subject.

‡ See his valuable work, *Vindication of the Primitive Faith, &c.* in Reply to Dr. Priestley's *Hist. of Early Opinions*: vol. i. p. 294-313.

§ Mr. Belsham's *Disc.* p. 24; 25.

ments about this matter, some of them considering the Holy Ghost no otherwise than as a divine power; and therefore they call him *Virtus Dei*, or the divine energy, or power of acting, seeming, by this account of it, to deny his distinct Personality, as the Sabellians do that of the Son and Spirit; though others of them, being convinced that there is sufficient proof of his Personality in scripture, to deny his deity, supposing him to be no other than a created ministring Spirit.*

As for the Arians, though this controversy was not brought upon the stage in the council at Nice, which was so much employed in defending the deity of our Saviour, by proving him to have the same essence with the Father, that they had no opportunity to proceed in the defence of the consubstantiality of the Holy Ghost; yet this is universally denied by all who give into the Arian scheme: It is true, that as they do not question his Personality, so they allow that he has many glories ascribed to him, agreeing, in words, with the scripture account thereof; but they are, notwithstanding, far from asserting his proper deity, any more than that of the Son.

We have already proved him to be a distinct Person,† and therefore nothing remains, but that we consider him as having a divine nature. And, to make this appear, we shall proceed

* *In this they agree with those who were formerly called Macedonians, from Macdonius, bishop of Constantinople, who lived about the middle of the fourth century, who entertained such sentiments of the Holy Ghost, and had a considerable party that adhered to him, who were also called Pneumatomachi.*

† See page 249, 250.

“Chrysostom,” says Dr. Priestley, “represents all the preceding writers of the New Testament as children, who heard, but did not understand things, and who were busy about cheese-cakes and childish sports, but John,” he says, “taught what the angels themselves did not know before he declared it.”

At the bottom of the page, Dr. Priestley faithfully transcribes the Greek of this passage, and no one can say that his translation is materially unfair, so far as it goes. The sentence is exactly thus: “All the rest, like little children, hear indeed, yet do not understand what they hear, but are captivated with cakes and childish sports.” The omission of the clause “all the rest,” (*οι γε αλλοι παντες*) does not appear of much consequence. The insertion of it would only have led the reader to inquire for the antecedent, and Dr. Priestley has provided a ready answer: “all the preceding writers of the New Testament.”

Do me the favour, my dear Sir, to take down the volume of Chrysostom, and turn to the passage. Will you find the antecedent to this relative clause to be any “writers of the New Testament,” or any persons at all connected with the New Testament? No, Sir. You will find it to be *the effeminate and dissipated spectators of athletic games, and the auditors of musicians and oratorical sophists!*†

SMITH'S LETTERS TO BELSHAM.

* Hist. of Early Op. vol. iii. p. 128, 129.

† Mr. Belsham denies that these characters are the antecedent to the exceptive clause in question, and conceives that it refers to the mass of unlearned christians, who are placed in opposition to “the spectators and auditors of John, men that are become angels, or are desirous of becoming such.” But the Greek fathers give some additional features of their character. “These,” he says, “are devoted to merriment and luxuriousness, living in riches, honours, and gluttony.” The candid reader will judge whether this description be more applicable to plain and honest christians, than to the gay and dissipated persons mentioned in a preceding part of the discourse.

in the same method, in which we have proved the divinity of the Son, namely, from those divine names, attributes, works, and worship, which are ascribed to him; though we have no occasion here to insist on the proof of that proposition, that he who is thus described is God, as having done that already under each of those distinct heads, in defence of our Saviour's deity; and therefore we need only consider them as applied to the Holy Ghost. And,

1. It appears that he is God, equal with the Father and Son, inasmuch as the same divine names are given to him that are given to them; particularly,

(1.) He is called *God*, without any thing tending to detract, or diminish, from the proper sense of the word, when applied to the Father or the Son: thus, in Acts v. 3, 4. *Peter said, Ananias, Why hath satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God*, where he is not only called *God*, but put in opposition to the creature; and it is as though the apostle should say, thou hast endeavoured to deceive him, by whom I am inspired, which is a greater crime, than if thou hadst only lied to me.

Object. It is objected, that it is not the Holy Ghost who is here called *God*, but the Father; in defence of which sense of the text it is supposed, that though the lie was immediately designed to deceive the apostles, or the Holy Ghost, by whom they were known to be inspired, yet this was interpreted by God the Father, as an attempt to impose upon him, whose Minister the objectors suppose the Holy Spirit to be, as well as the apostles; and accordingly they thus argue; he that does any thing against God's ministers, to wit, the Father's, may be said to do the same against him. And here they refer to some scriptures, which, they think, give countenance to this argument namely, Exod. xvi. 8. where Moses tells the Israelites, when they murmured against him, *Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord*; and, in 1 Sam. viii. 7. where God says to Samuel, speaking concerning the Israelites, *They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me*; and also our Saviour's words to his disciples, in Luke x. 16. *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me*; and, in 1 Thes. iv. 8. *He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.**

Answer. How plausible soever this objection may seem to be, yet, if duly considered, it will not appear sufficient to overthrow the argument we are maintaining; it is true, indeed, that what

* See Woltzen, and other Socinian writers, in loc. and Dr. Clarke's *Scripture-doctrine*, page 13. where he inserts this among those scriptures; in all which he supposes that the word *God* is applied to the Father.

is done against any one, who acts by a commission, as a servant to another, is interpreted to be done against him that gives him the commission; as he that affronts a judge, or an ambassador, in this respect, affronts the king, whom he represents; or if an inferior servant is ill treated, in delivering a message from his master, this is always supposed to contain a reflection on him who sent him; But, I humbly conceive, this cannot be applied, as it is in the objection, to Ananias's *not lying unto men, but unto God*. And, to make this appear, let it be considered; that here are two terms of opposition; and these either respect God the Father and the apostles; or God the Father and the Holy Ghost; or else God the Holy Ghost and the apostles.

1. God the Father cannot be said here to be opposed to the apostles, so as to give countenance to this phrase, or mode of speaking used, *Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God*, because it is said, in the foregoing verse, that *they had lied to the Holy Ghost*: if the Holy Ghost had not been mentioned, indeed, then there might have been more ground to conclude, that Peter opposed himself to God the Father, or intimated hereby, that Ananias, in attempting to deceive him, attempted to deceive God that sent him; but even then it would not have fully corresponded with the sense of those scriptures but now referred to; for though he that despises a servant, despises him that sent him; and, accordingly, he that despises a minister, when he is preaching the gospel, or despises the message that he brings, may be said to despise God, whose message it is; yet it does not follow, that if a person designs to impose upon a minister, in other respects, that he imposes upon God that sent him; for he may not disown the divine authority, or commission, which he has to preach the gospel, and yet may conclude that he may deceive him, though he be sensible that he cannot deceive God, who knoweth all things: But this I need not farther insist on, since it is not supposed, in the objection; but God the Father is therein opposed to the Holy Ghost, or else there would be no appearance of any argument in it; therefore,

2. Let us consider God the Father as being here opposed to the Holy Ghost; and then it is as much as to say, *Thou hast lied to the Holy Ghost, wherein thou hast not lied to man, but to God, to wit, the Father*; to which we may answer,

That had the apostle designed to oppose the Holy Ghost to the Father, and thereby deny his deity, it ought to have been expressed thus; *Thou hast not lied unto the Holy Ghost, but unto God*; and this would effectually have determined him not to have been God, and removed any umbrage or suspicion, as though, by the expression, *Thou hast not lied unto men*, we were to understand the apostles; or since it will be objected, that this would have been contrary to matter of fact, for Anani-

as did lie both to the apostles and to the Holy Ghost; therefore it would have been better understood, had it been said, Thou hast not lied to the Holy Ghost, or to men, that is, not to them only, but thou hast, interpretatively, in lying to them, lied unto God, to wit, the Father. If it had been so expressed, the sense would have been plain and obvious, in favour of the Anti-trinitarians, as well as agreeable to the scriptures before-mentioned, as giving countenance to it; but since it is not so expressed, we must conclude,

3. That in this text there is no other opposition, but of God the Holy Ghost to the apostles; and accordingly the sense is very plain and natural, which is as though the apostle had said, Thou hast endeavoured to deceive me, who am under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which is a greater crime than if thou hadst only lied to me, at another time, when his honour was not conferred upon me; for herein thou hast committed a double crime, inasmuch as thou hast not only lied to me, which thou oughtest not to have done, but thou hast lied to the Holy Ghost, and, in so doing, hast not lied unto men, but unto God; or, as it is expressed, in ver. 9. that *Ananias and his wife had agreed together to tempt the Holy Ghost*. Which is called a *lying to him*, in one verse, is styled a *tempting him* in the other; this therefore seems to be a plain and easy sense of the words, which any unprejudiced reader would be inclined to give into; and since the scripture is written to instruct the most injudicious Christians, as well as others, I cannot conceive that such modes of speaking would have been made use of therein, which have a tendency to lead persons out of the way, by deviating from the common sense of words, (especially in a matter of so great importance as this is) whereby some, at least, would be inclined, as we are, by adhering to the most proper sense thereof, to acknowledge the Holy Ghost to be God, if he were not so.

There is another scripture, in which the Holy Ghost is called *The God and the Rock of Israel*, in 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. Now it seems very evident, that this is applied to him, by comparing it with the foregoing and following words; in which it is said, the Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue; and then we have an account of what he said, namely, *He that ruleth over man, must be just, &c.* It cannot, with any colour of reason, be supposed that there is more than one Person here intended, who imparted this to the prophet; and inasmuch as this Person is not only called the God, but also the Rock of Israel, that is a plain intimation that he is the almighty God of Israel, which is the sense of the metaphor, taken from a rock, when applied to God in other scriptures.

Again, it is said, in 1 Cor. iii. 16. *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.*

Here it must be observed, that their being called the temple of God, who is said to dwell in them, denotes the inhabitant to be a divine Person, since a temple, according to the known acceptation of the word, always connotes a deity; and so it is called the house of God. Now he that dwelt in them, upon which account they are called his temple, is expressly said to be the Spirit of God, which is agreeable to what is said concerning him elsewhere, in chap. vi. 19. *Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which, or who, is in you?*

(2.) He is called *Lord*; this seems very evident, from Isa. vi. 8, 9. *And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not, &c.* where we observe, that the person sending speaks both in the singular number and the plural, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?* by the former expression, *Whom shall I send*, he evinces his divinity, as having a right to give a commission to the prophets, to declare his mind and will to man, which, as will be observed under a fol-head, none but a divine Person has a right to do; by the latter, *Who shall go for us*, he includes himself among the Persons in the Godhead, as it has before been observed*; viz. that when God is represented, as speaking in the plural number, a Trinity of Persons seems to be intended thereby.

But that which we shall principally consider is, that the Holy Ghost is here called *Lord*, which appears from what the apostle says, in Acts xxviii. 25, 26. *Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Esaias the prophet, unto our futhers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand, &c.*

It cannot be reasonably objected to this, that the apostle only refers to the book of Isaiah, and not to this particular part thereof; for though, indeed, these words, *Thus saith the Holy Ghost*, might be used, as a preface to any quotation from scripture, as all scripture is given by his inspiration; yet this message, referred to by the apostle, was not only transmitted by Esaias to the church, but it is distinguished from all those other things, which the Spirit of the Lord spake by him; and therefore it cannot be supposed that the apostle means, when referring to this scripture, any other than the Holy Ghost's giving him this commission, when he says, *Well spake the Holy Ghost by him*; and consequently he that gave this commission, or spake thus to him, is the Holy Ghost, who is, in the foregoing words, called *the Lord*.

Moreover, there is another scripture, in 2 Cor. iii. 18. where it is said, *We are changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*; or, as it is observed in the margin, *As by the Lord the Spirit*; which reading is certainly as proper as

* See page 358.

any other, and is preferred, by some, to it; and therefore it contains, at least, a probable argument that the Spirit is expressly called *Lord*.*

2. The Holy Ghost appears to be God, from those divine attributes that are ascribed to him. Accordingly,

(1.) He is said to be eternal, in Heb. ix. 24. Christ, *through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God*. I am sensible, many think this eternal Spirit signifies Christ's eternal Godhead; which is so called, because of the spirituality of its nature; and that, in this place, it is designed to set forth the infinite value, which the oblation that he made of himself, in his human nature to God, received from the divine nature, to which it was united; which, though it be a very great truth, yet there does not seem to be so great a propriety in the expression, when we suppose the eternal Spirit is taken for the divine nature, as if it be understood of the Holy Ghost: and Christ may be said, by him, to have offered himself, without spot, to God, as implying, that the unction, which he received from the Holy Ghost, was the means to preserve him from all sinful defilement, upon which account his oblation was without blemish; and, indeed, it was no less necessary, in order to its being accepted, that it should be spotless, than that it should be of infinite value; therefore I must conclude, that it is the Holy Ghost who is here called the eternal Spirit.

Moreover, his eternity may be evinced from his having created all things, as he that made the world, and all finite things, wherewith time began, must be before them, and consequently from everlasting; by which the eternity of Christ was proved, under a foregoing head; and that the Holy Ghost made all things, will be proved under our next argument.

(2.) His immensity or omnipresence, is a farther proof of his deity; and this seems to be plainly contained in Psal. cxxxix. 7. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?* q. d. there is no place where the Spirit is not; and it is allowed by all, that the divine immensity is here described in a very elegant manner; though, it is true, it is objected, that one part of this verse is exegetical of the other, and therefore the Psalmist, by the *Spirit*, intends nothing else but the presence of God; but it is equally, if not more probable, that the Spirit is distinguished from the presence of God, and consequently that he is a distinct Person in the Godhead; and this does not contain any strain upon the sense of the words, since the Spirit is so often spoken of in scripture as a Person, as has been before observed; † and

* Several of the Post Nicene Fathers have taken the words, *καθ' ἡμῶν πνεύματος*, in the same sense as by the *Lord, the Spirit*; and, in particular, Basil. de Spirit. Sanct. ad Amphiloc. Cap. 21. & Chrysost. in loc.

† See page 249, 250, 251.

therefore it is not strange that he should be mentioned as such in this text; and, if he be spoken of as a Person, it is beyond dispute that he is there proved to be a divine Person.

(3.) He is said to be omniscient in 1 Cor. ii. 10. *The Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God.* To search, indeed, is a word used in condescension to our common mode of speaking, as we arrive to the knowledge of things by searching, or enquiry, though this idea is to be abstracted from the word, when applied to God; for him to search, is to know all things; and, in this sense, it is used, in Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, &c.* It does not imply the manner of his knowing, but the exquisiteness of his knowledge; and so we must understand it in this scripture, when applied to the Spirit's searching all things, in which we have an account of the objects of his knowledge, namely, *the deep things of God*: thus he knows all those things, which were hid in the divine mind from all eternity, and the infinite perfections of the divine nature, which are incomprehensible to a creature, and which none can, *by searching, find out to perfection*, Job xi. 7. in which respect the highest creatures, viz. the angels, are said to *be charged with folly*, whose knowledge is comparatively imperfect, chap. iv. 18. Moreover, we may observe, that the manner of the Spirit's knowing all things, is not like ours, that is by inferring consequences from premises, in a way of reasoning; for it is said, in the verse immediately following, that *he knows the things of God*, in such a way, as *a man knoweth the things of a man*, that is, his own thoughts, by an internal principle of knowledge, not by revelation, or any external discovery: thus the Spirit knows the divine nature, as having it; therefore his omniscience is a plain proof of his Deity.

3. The Deity of the Holy Ghost may be farther evinced, from his performing those works which are proper to God alone. And,

(1.) He is said to have created all things: thus, in Gen. i. 2. *The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*; where, by the *Spirit of God*, cannot be meant, as some suppose, the air or the wind; for that was not created till the second day, when God made the firmament. Again, it is said, in Job xxvi. 13. *By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens*; and, in chap. xxiii. 4. *The Spirit of God hath made me.* Some of the Arians are so sensible that the Spirit is represented as the Creator of all things as well as the Son; that they suppose him to be an instrument to the Son in the creation thereof; which is as much as to say, he is an instrument of an instrument; and, indeed, to say the Son created all things, as an instrument, has

been considered as an indefensible notion; * but this is much more so.

(2.) Extraordinary or miraculous works, which are equivalent to creation, have been performed by the Spirit; thus the apostle, speaking concerning extraordinary gifts, subservient to the propagation of the gospel, in the first preaching thereof, attributes them to the Spirit, which he largely insists on, in 1 Cor. xii. and when he says, ver. 4, 5, 6. that *there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all;* which many who defend the doctrine of the Trinity, take for granted, that it signifies all the Persons in the Godhead, that our Saviour is called Lord, and the Father God, therein; and some of the Anti-trinitarians, from hence, would argue, that the Spirit is not God, because he is distinguished from the Father, whom they suppose to be there called God, I cannot but from hence conclude, that the Holy Spirit is set forth under all these three names; and the works attributed to him, notwithstanding the variety of expressions, are the same, and included in that general term of spiritual gifts. And so I take the meaning of the text to be this, there are diversities of gifts, or extraordinary operations, which some were enabled to put forth in the exercise of their ministry, which are all from the same Spirit, who is called Lord and God, who has an infinite sovereignty, and bestows these blessings as he pleases, as becomes a divine Person; and this agrees very well with what is said, in ver. 11. *All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

(3.) The Spirit of God commissioned and qualified ministers to preach the gospel, and thereby to gather and build up churches, determining that their ministry should be exercised in one place, and not in another; which is a peculiar branch of the divine glory, and no one has a right to do it, but a divine Person. A creature may as well pretend to command the sun to shine, or stop its course in the heavens at his pleasure, as he can commission a minister to preach the gospel, or restrain the preaching thereof. And here we may observe, that the Holy Ghost is plainly said to have called and appointed the apostles to exercise their ministry in the first preaching of the gospel, after he had, by conferring extraordinary gifts upon them, qualified them for it; and accordingly he speaks in a style truly divine, in Acts xiii. 2. *The Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them;* and, in Acts xx. 28. the apostle tells the elders, or ministers of the church at Ephesus, that *the Holy Ghost had made them over-*

* See page 359, 360.

seers. We read also of the Spirit's determining where they should exercise their ministry; thus he commanded Philip to go and preach the gospel to the eunuch, in Acts viii. 29. *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot*; and, at another time, the Spirit bade Peter to go and preach the gospel to Cornelius, when he doubted whether it were lawful for him to do it or no, in Acts x. 19, 20. *The Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee; therefore get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them*; and, at another time, it is said, in Acts xvi. 6, 7. *They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia*; and that they assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not; and, in ver. 9, 10. the apostle Paul was ordered, in a vision, to go to Macedonia; which command he obeyed, assuredly gathering that the Lord, that is, the Spirit, had called him to preach the gospel unto them. Nothing can be a greater argument of the sovereignty of the Holy Ghost, in what respects this matter, which was of the highest importance; therefore it is an evident proof of his divinity. But to this we may add,

(4.) That his divinity farther appears from the unction, which he conferred on our Saviour, to perform the work of a Mediator in his human nature: thus it is said, in Isa. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, &c.* And this is particularly referred to, as signifying our Saviour's unction by the Holy Ghost, in Luke iv. 18, 19. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me, &c.* And, indeed, it is not denied that this is spoken of the Holy Ghost, even by those who do not infer his deity from it; accordingly it is inserted, by a late writer, among those scriptures that speak particularly of the Holy Ghost; * and it would be a great strain on the sense of the text, to suppose that *he hath anointed me*, refers to the Father, and not to the Spirit. As to the meaning of the word *unction*, it is borrowed from the ceremonial law, under which the prophets, priests, and kings were publicly anointed with oil, as used to signify the warrant, or commission, they had received from God, to execute these offices, together with the qualifications which were to be expected for the discharge thereof. In this sense our Saviour is said to have been anointed by the Holy Ghost, to wit, in his human nature, in which he was obliged to yield obedience and subjection to God, and accordingly he was authorized and qualified to perform this obedience by the Holy Ghost; so that, how difficult soever it was, it might be discharged by him, without the least failure or defect therein, as we observed before, that it was

* See Dr. Clarke's *Scripture doctrine*, page 108

owing hereunto, that his oblation was without spot: the work was certainly extraordinary, and consequently the glory redounding to the Holy Ghost from hence, is such as proves him to be a divine Person.

(5.) He farther appears to be so, inasmuch as the work of grace, both as to the beginning, progress, and completing of it, in the souls of believers, is ascribed to him, as well as to the Father and the Son. That this is a work of God's almighty power, and consequently too great to be performed by any creature; and that the Holy Ghost is, in particular, the author thereof, we shall here take for granted, without attempting to prove it, which would not be a just method of reasoning, were we not led to insist on this subject, under some following answers, in which this will be more particularly proved.* And if the work appears to be the effect of the exceeding greatness of the power of God, whereby we are regenerate and sanctified, and enabled to overcome all the opposition which attends it, till we are brought to glory, then he, who is the author hereof, will evidently appear to be the God of all grace; and therefore we shall proceed to consider,

4. That the Holy Ghost appears to be God, inasmuch as he has a right to divine worship. That none but a divine Person has a right hereunto, has been already proved; and that the Spirit has a right to it, might be evinced, from his having those divine perfections, which, as has been before observed, are ascribed to him in scripture; since he has the perfections of the divine nature, which are the objects of adoration, then it follows, that he is to be adored; and if he has performed those works, which argue him to be the proprietor of all things, this must be acknowledged; and if all that grace, which is necessary to make us meet for the heavenly blessedness, be his work and gift, it follows from hence, that he is to be sought to for it, which is a great branch of religious worship. But this being only an improvement of, or a deduction from those foregoing arguments, laid down to prove his Deity, we shall enquire whether we have not something that contains in it the obligation of a command, or whether there are not some examples, which are equivalent thereunto, which will farther warrant our giving divine worship to him. Some suppose, that that prayer is directed to the Holy Ghost, which is mentioned in Acts i. 24, 25. *Thou, Lord, which knoweth the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship;* and the reason of this supposition is, because the designation of persons to the exercise of their ministry, as well as the extraordinary gifts with which they were furnished, is peculiarly applied to the

* See Quest. lix. lxxvii. lxxii. lxxv.

Holy Ghost in this book ; therefore, it is supposed, they prayed to the Holy Ghost, that he would signify whom he had chosen to the apostleship, in the room of Judas, of those two that were nominated by them ; but this being, at most, but a probable argument, I shall lay no stress upon it.

But, I humbly conceive, that we have a more evident example of prayer made to the Holy Ghost, in 2 Thess. iii. 5. *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ* ; it seems more than probable that the Holy Ghost, who is here called Lord, is prayed to ; for he is distinguished from the Father and Son ; and the apostle prays to him that he would direct them into the love of the Father, and enable them patiently, to wait for the Son.

Again, there is another instance hereof, in 1 Thess. iii. 12, 13. *The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, to the end, that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* ; where the Holy Ghost seems to be the person prayed to ; and is plainly distinguished from the Father and Son, inasmuch as what is prayed to him for, is their being holy before the Father, at the coming of the Son.

There is another scripture, in which it is still more evident, that the apostle prays to the Holy Ghost, together with the Father and Son, viz. Cor. xiii. 14. *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, amen* ; where, in that part of this prayer, which respects the Holy Ghost, is contained an humble supplication, that he would be pleased to manifest himself to them, or that he would communicate to them those graces which they stood in need of ; that so, as the church is said elsewhere, in John i. 3. to have *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ* ; here the apostle prays that they may have fellowship with the Holy Ghost ; and how can this blessing be prayed for, without supposing him addressing himself herein to the Holy Ghost ? Whenever any thing is desired, or prayed for, that can be considered no otherwise than as an effect, produced by a free agent, this prayer, or desire, is supposed more immediately to be directed to him : As suppose a person should use this mode of speaking, in presence of a disoblged friend ; Oh that he would look upon me, that he would converse with me, or that he would discover his wonted love to me ! though, according to the form of expression, it seems not be directed to him, yet every one would suppose it to be equivalent to an immediate address made to him to that purpose ; wherefore, for the apostle to desire that the Holy Ghost would have communion with, that is, converse with, and manifest himself to them, in performing all those works, which were necessary for their

edification and salvation, this desire cannot contain less than a prayer to him.

We shall now proceed to consider some objections, brought by the Anti-trinitarians, against the deity of the Holy Ghost.

Object. A divine Person cannot be the gift of God, for that supposes him to be at his disposal, and inferior to him; but the Spirit is said to be given by him, in Neh. ix. 20. *Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them;* and, in Acts xi. 17. *God gave them the like gift,* meaning the Spirit, *that he did unto us;* and, in Luke xi. 13. *God, the Father, is said to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* Again, the Spirit is said to be *sent*, and that either by the Father, as in John xiv. 26. *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name;* or by the Son, as in chap. xvi. 7. *If I depart, I will send him unto you.* Again, he is said to receive what he communicates from another, in John xvi. 14. *He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you;* which is inconsistent with the character of a divine Person, who is never said to receive what he imparts to others, as the apostle speaks concerning God, in Rom. xi. 35. *Who hath first given to him?* Again, he is said not to speak of himself, but what he hears, when he shews things to come, John xvi. 13. Accordingly he did not know that which he was to communicate before he heard it. Again, he is said to have a mind distinct from God, unless we suppose that there are a plurality of gods, and so more distinct divine minds than one; for this, they bring that scripture, in Rom. viii. 27. *He that searcheth the heart, knoweth the mind of the Spirit.* Again, he is represented as making intercession, which is an act of worship, and consequently he cannot be the object thereof; ver. 26. *The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us,* &c. this also argues that he is not possessed of the blessings which he intercedes for. Again, he is not only said to be resisted and grieved, which expressions, it is true, are sometimes applied to God, though in an improper sense, speaking after the manner of men; but the Spirit is said to be quenched, or extinguished: thus, 1 Thess. v. 19. this, together with what has been before said concerning him, is not applicable to a divine Person. These are the most material objections that are brought against the doctrine which we have been endeavouring to maintain, and the sum of them all is this; that it is inconsistent with the character of a divine Person to be thus dependent on, and subjected to the will of another, as the Spirit is supposed, by them, to be.

Ans. That we may defend the Godhead of the Holy Ghost, against such-like objections as these, we shall first premise something relating to all those scriptures which speak of the Spirit, as given or sent by the Father, and then apply it to the

sense of those in particular which are brought to support the objections, as before-mentioned.

1. It may be easily observed, that in several places of scripture, especially in the New Testament, the Holy Ghost is often taken for the gifts or graces of the Spirit; and more particularly for that extraordinary dispensation, in which the apostles were endowed with those spiritual gifts, which were necessary for the propagation and success of the gospel: these, by a *Metonymy*, are called the *Spirit*; and, I humbly conceive, all those scriptures, which speak of the Spirit's *being poured forth*, as in Prov. i. 23. and Joel ii. 28. compared with Acts ii. 17. and elsewhere, are to be understood in this sense; and thus it is explained, in Acts x. 44, 45. *The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word*; upon which occasion it is said, that *upon the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost*. Thus we are to understand that scripture, in Acts xix. 2. *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*; and another in John vii. 39. *the Holy Ghost was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified*; the word *given* is supplied by our translators, probably, to fence against a weak argument of some Anti-trinitarians, taken from that text, to overthrow the eternity of the Spirit; but whether the word be supplied or no, the sense of the text is plainly this, that the gifts of the Holy Ghost were not conferred before Christ's ascension into heaven; which is a farther confirmation of this acceptation of the word, or of this figurative way of speaking, being used in this, and several other places of scripture, to the same purpose.

2. All those scriptures which seem to represent the Holy Ghost, as inferior to the Father and Son, some of which are contained in the objection, may be understood as denoting the subserviency of the works of the Spirit, which are also called the *Holy Ghost*, to those works which are said to be performed by the Father and Son: Now it is certain that the subserviency of one work unto another, performed by different persons, does not necessarily infer the inferiority of one person to the other: accordingly we must distinguish between the Spirit, as subsisting, and as acting; in the former sense, he is a divine Person, equal with the Father and Son; in the latter, he may be said to be subservient to them.

But now we shall proceed to consider the sense of those scriptures, brought to support the objection, in consistency with what has been premised. The first scripture mentioned, is that in which it is said, *Thou gavest them thy good Spirit to instruct them*; where the Holy Ghost is described with a personal character, and probably it is not to be understood metonymically for his gifts and graces; accordingly the meaning of it seems to be this; that the Spirit's efficiency, in guiding

and instructing them, was a special gift of God conferred upon them; and, in this respect, though he was a sovereign Agent, yet he is said to act by the will of the Father, which is the same with his own will: for though the Persons in the God-head are distinct, yet they have not distinct wills; and it is no improper way of speaking to say, that when a divine Person displays his glory, and therein confers a blessing upon men, that this is given; as when God is said to give himself to his people, when he promises to be a God to them. There is, indeed, in this mode of speaking, a discriminating act of favour conferred on men, upon which account it is called a gift; but this does not militate against the divinity of the Holy Ghost, though he is said to be given to them.

As for the other scripture, in which it is said, *God gave them the like gift, as he gave to us*, meaning the Holy Ghost, that is plainly taken for the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, the conferring whereof is called, in the foregoing words, a being *baptized with the Holy Ghost*; as it is particularly explained in that scripture, referred to, in Acts x. 45, 46. where it is said, that *on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost*; what this gift is, we may learn from the following words, *They spake with tongues, and magnified God*.

Again, when it is said, in Luke xi. 13. that *your heavenly Father shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*; this is explained by another evangelist, in Matt. vii. 11. where it is taken for good things in general, and so includes the graces of the Spirit, that accompany salvation, when it is said, your Father, that is in heaven, shall give *good things* to them that ask him; so that here the Spirit is taken for all those blessings which he bestows upon his people, in answer of prayer.

As for those scriptures before mentioned, in which the Spirit is said to be sent, either by the Father, or the Son, they are not, indeed, to be understood in the same sense, as when the Son is said to be sent in his human nature, appearing in the form of a servant, to fulfil the will of God; but when God is said to send his Spirit, the word is to be taken in a metaphorical sense; in which, sending imports as much as giving; and when the Spirit is said to be given, it has a peculiar reference to the grace which he was to bestow upon them. If we enquire into the reason of this metaphorical way of speaking, it may probably be this; that we may understand hereby that the Spirit, which was to produce these effects, was a divine Person, and that the effects themselves were subservient to those works which were performed, by which the Personal glories of the Father and Son were demonstrated.

Again, when it is farther said by our Saviour, in John xvi. 14. that *the Spirit shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you*;

his plainly intends the Spirit's applying to them those blessings which Christ had purchased by his blood, which tended to his glory; and still it signifies only the subserviency of the Spirit to the Son, in working, as the application of redemption tends to render the purchase thereof effectual, to answer its designed end.

As to the next scripture, before mentioned, in John xvi. 13. where *the Spirit* is said *not to speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak*; this does not argue, in the least, that the Spirit receives what he communicates, as dependent on the Father, for the knowledge of those things he is to impart, or that he has ideas impressed on his mind, as creatures are said to have; for that is inconsistent with what has been before proved from scripture, viz. *That the Spirit knoweth the deep things of God, even as the spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man*; or, as an intelligent being, is conscious of his own thoughts, or actions, not by information, but by an immediate internal perception. The sense therefore of this text is this; that the Spirit shall communicate no other doctrines, or give no other laws, but what Christ had before given in the gospel; or that what he revealeth, is the same that Christ had given them ground to expect: accordingly, it is so far from militating against the Spirit's divinity, that it proves the harmony and consent of what is suggested by one divine Person, with what had been before delivered by another; and as to the mode of expression here used, concerning the Spirit's speaking what he had heard; this is spoken after the manner of men, and is no more inconsistent with his divine omniscience, or the independence thereof, than when God is said, in other scriptures, to know things by searching them, or, as it were, by enquiry, as hath been before observed, in considering omniscience, as attributed to the Holy Ghost. These, and such-like expressions, by which God is represented, by words, accommodated to our usual way of speaking, when applied to men, are to be understood, notwithstanding, in a way agreeable to the divine perfections, by abstracting from them every thing that argues the least imperfection in him, when applied to the Holy Ghost; as when some expressions, agreeable to human modes of speaking, are elsewhere used, with a particular application to the Father, without detracting from his divine glory.

Again, when it is objected, that the Spirit hath a distinct mind from God, as when it is said, *God knoweth the mind of the Spirit*; and, as though he were represented as engaged in an act of worship, he is, in the following words, described, as *praying, or, making intercession for us, according to the will of God*; as, in Rom. viii. 26, 27. it is plain, that, by the *mind*

of the Spirit, we are to understand those secret desires in prayer, which are wrought in believers by the Spirit, when they want words to express them; instead of which, they address themselves to God, as it is said, *with groanings that cannot be uttered*, which are from the Spirit, as the Author of these secret desires, which are only known to the heart-searching God, who knows the meaning of them, what it is we want, in which respect, this is called the mind of the Spirit, as the Author thereof, though it is subjectively our own mind or desires, which we want words to express; and when the Spirit is said to make intercession for us, it implies nothing else but his enabling us, whether in more or less proper modes of speaking, to plead with God for ourselves.

Lastly, As to those expressions, by which the Spirit is represented, as *quenched*, or *extinguished*, these are to be understood in the same sense as when by a *metonymy*, as before mentioned, the gifts of the Spirit; as when those extraordinary gifts were first promised, they were led to expect that they should be *baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire*, that is, they should have the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost conferred upon them, which were to be signified by the emblem of *fiery tongues, that sat on them*, in Acts ii. 3. the reason of which emblem might probably be this; that as a necessary qualification from their preaching the gospel, they should be filled with an holy flame of love to God, and zeal for his glory, as well as with the gift of tongues, by which they might communicate his mind to the world. This privilege, which they had received, the apostle exhorts them not to forfeit, abuse, or provoke the Holy Ghost to take from them, which is called a quenching the Spirit; therefore this metaphorical way of speaking, accommodated hereunto, must not be supposed to be inconsistent with his divinity.

I shall conclude with some inferences, which more especially respect the practical improvement of the doctrine of the Trinity. And,

1. We may take occasion, from hence, to observe the difference that there is between natural and revealed religion. As the former respects the knowledge of God so far, as it may be attained without the help of divine revelation, and that worship, which the heathen, who have nothing else to guide them but the light of nature, are obliged to give to the divine Being; the latter, which is founded on scripture, contains a display of the Personal glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which is necessary to be known and believed, as being the foundation of all revealed religion; so that the sum of Christianity consists in our subjection to, and adoring the Godhead, as subsisting in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. As this doctrine is eminently displayed in the work of redemption, it is necessary for us to consider how it is accommodated to, and demonstrated by all the branches thereof. The price that was given, by our great Redeemer, has a value put upon it, in proportion to the dignity of his Person, and lays a sure foundation for our hope of being accepted in the sight of God, on account of his obedience and sacrifice, which was of infinite value: and the application of redemption being a work which the Spirit, who is a divine Person, has undertaken to perform, encourages us to expect that it shall be brought to perfection; so that they, who are the objects of redeeming love and sanctifying grace, shall, in the end, be completely saved.

3. As it is necessary for us to adore and magnify the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the hope which we have of this inestimable privilege in the gospel; so we must observe the distinct glory that is to be given to each of these divine Persons for this work; to the Father, in that whatever is done by the Mediator, to procure this privilege for us, is considered, in scripture, as taking its rise from him, 1 Cor. i. 30. *Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:* And whatever was done in the human nature, or by God incarnate; that is, in a peculiar manner, the work of the Son, and a revenue of glory is due to him for it, who gave his life a ransom for many, and herein expressed the highest instance of condescension, which is enhanced by the infinite dignity of his Person. Moreover, whatever work is performed in subserviency to the Mediator's glory, whereby the Spirit demonstrates his distinct Personal glory; this gives us occasion to adore him, in all the displays of his power, in beginning, carrying on, and completing the work of grace in the souls of men.

4. As to what respects that fellowship or communion, which believers have with the Father, Son, and Spirit, this depends on the account we have, in scripture, of the distinct methods, in which their Personal glory is set forth therein: Thus we have access to God the Father, through the Mediation of the Son, by the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, as the apostle says, in Eph. ii. 18. *Through him we have an access, by one Spirit unto the Father;* and our hope of blessedness proceeds this way, as it is the gift of the Father, who has prepared an inheritance for us, the purchase of the Son, on whose death it is founded, and the work of the Holy Ghost, as bringing us to and putting us into the possession of it.

5. This directs us as to the way of performing the great duty of self-dedication, to the Father, Son, and Spirit; to the Father, as our covenant God in Christ; to the Son, as the Mediator, Head, and Surety of this covenant; and to the Spirit,

by whom we are made partakers of the blessings promised therein; in all these, and many other respects, we are to have a particular regard to the persons in the Godhead, in such a way, as their Personal glory is set forth in scripture.

6. Since the Father, Son, and Spirit, are one, though we distinguish them as Persons, yet we must consider them as having the same divine perfections, the same divine understanding and will, lest, while we give glory to each of the Persons in the Godhead, we should suppose that there are more Gods than one; therefore, though the Person of the Father is distinct from that of the Son and the Holy Ghost, we are not to suppose the power, wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, or any other divine perfections, belong, in a more or less proper sense, to one Person than another.

7. This doctrine is of use to direct us how we are to address ourselves to God in prayer: thus, when therein we call him our Father, we are not to consider him in the same sense, as when he is represented as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we address ourselves to him, as the Author of our being, the God of all grace, and the Fountain of blessedness; in which respect, the Son and the Holy Ghost are not to be excluded, especially unless we consider him as our Father in Christ, and so express our faith with respect to his distinct Personality, from that of the Son and the Spirit. And though only one divine Person be particularly mentioned in prayer, the blessed Trinity is to be adored; or whatever Personal glory we ascribe to one, as subsisting distinctly from the other, we must, notwithstanding, consider the Father, Son, and Spirit, as the one only living and true God.

Thus we have gone through this great and important subject, and therein have taken occasion, particularly, to insist on the chief matters in controversy relating to the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, and consider the various methods taken to oppose it both by the Socinians and Arians, and endeavoured, not only to defend the Deity of our Saviour, and the Holy Ghost by enquiring into the sense of those many scriptures, in which our faith therein is founded, but to answer the most material objections that are brought against it; and our enlarging more on it, than we shall do on several following answers, cannot be reckoned a needless work, inasmuch as a great deal hath been written in opposition to it, whereby the faith of some has not only been shaken, but overthrown. I would never attempt to speak of this doctrine, or any of the divine perfections, without being sensible of the difficulty of the subject, it being such as is not to be comprehended by a finite mind. I hope nothing will appear to have been suggested inconsistent with the essential, or Personal glory of the Father, Son, or

Spirit; and it may reasonably be expected that there should be allowances made for great defects, since it is but a little of God than can be known by us; therefore, when we pretend to speak concerning him, it will not be thought strange if we give occasion to any to say, that we have the greatest reason to acknowledge, that, in many instances, we cannot order our words, by reason of darkness.

QUEST. XII. *What are the decrees of God?*

ANSW. God's decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will; whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass in time; especially concerning angels and men.

QUEST. XIII. *What hath God especially decreed concerning angels and men?*

ANSW. God, by an eternal and immutable decree out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory, and, in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof; and also, according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby he extendeth, or with-holdeth favour, as he pleaseth) hath passed by, and fore-ordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice.

HAVING considered the perfections of the divine nature, and the Personal glories of the Father, Son, and Spirit, the next thing to be insisted on is, what God has purposed to do from eternity, or does, or will do, in pursuance thereof; the former we call his decrees; the latter, the execution of them. The object of his decree is whatever comes to pass, which is the most large and comprehensive sense of his purpose: but whereas his determinations, in a particular manner, respect angels and men, or the intelligent part of the creation, and more especially the eternal happiness of some, or the display of his righteous judgments against others; in these respects, they being taken in a more limited sense, are called as relating to the former, election, and, with respect to the latter, reprobation, which is the subject matter of these two answers. And, before we proceed to insist on this sublime and difficult subject, it may not be inexpedient for us to premise some things concerning it in general.

1. It is well known that there is no doctrine, contained in

scripture, which is more contested than this, which lies before us; and it is not only denied by some, but treated with the utmost dislike or detestation, and that to such a degree, that we must either wholly forbear to mention it in public discourses, or writings, or else must be liable to the hard fate of being censured by those who will not do that justice to the argument, to consider what may be advanced in defence thereof, as though it were to be taken for granted that we are maintaining a doctrine that is not only indefensible, but injurious to mankind, and subversive of all religion.

2. If there be any who give just occasion to these prejudices, by the methods which they have used in explaining, as well as the weakness of their arguments in defending it, or by laying themselves open to those popular objections, which are usually brought against it, we cannot but conclude that they are highly to blame; and therefore we are far from approving of any unguarded expressions, which are to be met with in some writings, whereby a stumbling-block is laid in the way of those who are disposed to make men offenders for a word, rather than to judge impartially of the main drift of their discourse: it is to be owned, that this has done dis-service to the cause, which might have been better defended.

3. If these prejudices against this doctrine are ill grounded, and the objections only founded on the popular cry, by which it is endeavoured to be run down, and condemned with reproach and censure; and if persons know not, nor desire to know what may be said in defence thereof, how such-like objections may be answered; the disgust and opposition is both unreasonable and uncharitable, and contains a capricious resolution not to be undeceived, and consequently renders the person thus prejudiced, highly culpable in the sight of God, especially if there be any ground to conclude that his cause is therein maintained.

4. Let it be farther considered, that it is not a new doctrine, or such as was altogether unheard of in the world before; nor has it been only defended by the more ignorant or licentious part of mankind, or those who have been bold and presumptuous in affirming that for truth, which they had not duly weighed, or been convinced of, from the strongest evidence. Whether it be as ancient as scripture, and, indeed, founded upon it, we shall leave others to judge, when we have considered what may be said from it in defence thereof.

5. It was generally asserted, and publicly owned in most of the confessions of faith of the reformed churches in the last age, and, in particular, in the church of England, as contained in one of the articles thereof, and there is no apparent ambiguity in the words themselves, however, some have endeavour-

ed, of late, to strain the sense thereof, and put such a meaning on them, as is very different from the writings of those who compiled them, which might serve as a comment on them.

And to this we may add, that it was maintained by far the greatest number of divines, in their public discourses and writings in the last century, how much soever the contrary doctrines are maintained at this day : however, we do not insist on this as a proof of the truth thereof, as though it needed to be supported by numbers of advocates for it, or were founded thereon ; nor do we suppose, that when it has been most strenuously, and almost universally defended, there were not at the same time, others who opposed it. This I only mention, that I may, if possible, remove those prejudices that are inconsistent with persons judging impartially of it.

Since we are considering the head of prejudices against this doctrine, we think it necessary to add, that we shall endeavour to vindicate it, from the reproach that is generally cast on it, by those who suppose that it cannot be defended, without asserting God to be the author of sin, or supposing him to be severe, cruel, and unjust to his creatures, as some conclude we represent him to be, by unjust consequences deduced from it. We are far from asserting, as will hereafter appear, that God from all eternity, purposed to damn a great part of the world, as the result of his mere sovereign will, without the foresight of sin, which would render them liable to that condemnation.

Moreover, we shall endeavour to make it appear, in opposition to the calumnies of some, that the decree of God does not destroy, or take away, the liberty of man's will, with respect to things, within its own sphere ; or that considered in itself, it doth not lay a natural necessity on him, to rush into inevitable damnation, as though the destruction of sinners were only to be resolved into the divine purpose, and not their own wickedness. In considering which, we shall maintain, that the decree of God does not lay any force on the will of man, nor preclude the means of grace, as ordained by him, for the salvation of them that do, or shall hereafter, believe unto life everlasting ; nor does it obstruct the preaching of the gospel, and therein proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation, to those who set under the sound thereof, as an ordinance for their faith.

And inasmuch as many are prejudiced against this doctrine, as being influenced by that popular out-cry, which is made by some, as though it were of a very pernicious tendency, either, on the one hand, to lead men to presumption, as giving occasion to persons to conclude that they may be saved as being elected though they live as they list ; or, on the other hand, that it leads to despair, as supposing, that if there be such a decree, as that of reprobation, they must necessarily be included in it,

and, by this means, instead of promoting holiness of life, it is inconsistent therewith: if we cannot maintain this doctrine, without giving just ground for such exceptions, we shall not only think our labour lost, but condemn it as pernicious and unscriptural, as much as they do, as it must of necessity be, if it cannot be defended from such-like exceptions; which, I hope, we shall be able to do, and at the same time, make it appear, that it is not only consistent with, but a very great motive and inducement to practical godliness: and, if this can be made to appear, the greatest part of the censorious prejudices, that are entertained against it, will be removed, and persons will be better able to judge whether truth lies on that side of the question, which we shall endeavour to defend, or the contrary.

I could not but premise these things in our entrance on this subject, as being sensible that such-like reproaches, as these we have mentioned, are brought by many, without duly weighing whether they are well grounded or no; so that this doctrine is often opposed, in such a way of reasoning, that the premises, as well as the conclusions drawn from them, are rather their own than ours; or, at least, if some ideas thereof may be found in the writings, or taken from the unguarded expressions, which some who have defended this doctrine, have made use of; yet they have appeared in such a dress that even they, who are supposed to have advanced them, would have disowned and rejected them. If persons who are in another way of thinking, resolve not to lay aside these misrepresentations, it plainly appears that they are not disposed to lie open to conviction, and then all attempts to defend this doctrine will be to no purpose; the preventing whereof has rendered these prefatory cautions needful.

We shall only add, to what has been said, some rules, by which we desire that the truth, either of this or the opposite doctrine, may be judged of.

1. If we do not confirm what we assert, by proofs taken from scripture, let it not be received; but if we do, whatever may be said of our method of managing this controversy, the greatest deference ought to be paid to the sacred oracles: But since it is very common for persons to answer the arguments taken from one scripture, by producing other scriptures, which seems to assert the contrary, as desirous to shift aside in the dispute, and put us upon solving the difficulties which they suppose to be contained in them; though this is not to be declined, yet a more direct answer must be given before the doctrine itself is overthrown. Whether our explication of those scriptures, on which our faith therein is founded, be just, we shall leave others to judge; and also whether the sense we give of other scriptures that are brought as objections against it, be not equally

probable with that of those that bring them; which is all that need be insisted on in such cases.

2. Let that doctrine be received, and the contrary rejected, on which side of the question soever it lies, that is most agreeable to the divine perfections, and explains those scriptures, brought in defence of it, most consistently therewith; which is a fair proposal; and such as ought not only to be applied to this particular head of doctrine, but to the whole of religion, as founded on scripture, which is far from overthrowing the divine glory, the advancement whereof is the great end of it.

3. Let that doctrine be rejected, as inconsistent with itself, and not worthy to be believed or embraced, whether it be ours, or the contrary thereunto, that shall detract from the harmony of the divine perfection, or pretend to set up, or plead for one, and, at the same time militate against the glory of another; and I desire nothing more than that our whole method of reasoning on this subject may be tried by these rules, and be deemed true or false, agreeably to what is contained therein.

In considering this subject, relating to the decrees of God, as in the two answers, which we are explaining, we shall proceed in the following method; and shew,

I. What we are to understand, by God's fore-ordaining whatever comes to pass, according to the counsel of his own will; wherein we shall compare the decree with the execution thereof, and observe how one exactly answers to the other, and is to be a rule for our judging concerning it.

II. We shall prove the truth of that proposition, that God hath fore-ordained whatever shall come to pass, either in time, or to eternity.

III. We shall then particularly consider intelligent creatures, such as angels and men, and that both good and bad, with respect to their present, or future state, as the objects of God's eternal decree or purpose, and so shall proceed to speak concerning the decree of election, and reprobation, as contained in the latter of these answers.

IV. We shall lay down some propositions concerning each of these, tending to explain and prove them, and that more especially as to what respects the election and reprobation of men.

V. We shall consider the properties thereof, and how the divine perfections are displayed therein, and endeavour to make it appear, in various instances, that the account we shall give thereof is agreeable thereunto, as well as founded on scripture.

VI. We shall enquire whether the contrary doctrine defended by those who deny election and reprobation, be not derogatory to, and subversive of the divine perfections, or, at least, inconsistent with the harmony thereof; or whether it doth not,

in many respects, make God altogether such an one as ourselves.

VII. We shall endeavour to prove that their reasoning from scripture, who maintain the contrary doctrine, is not sufficiently conclusive; and that the sense they give of those scriptures, generally brought to support it, does not so well agree with the divine perfections, as it ought to do, but that they may be explained in a different way, more consistent therewith.

VIII. We shall endeavour to answer the most material objections that are usually brought against the doctrine that we are maintaining. And,

IX. Shew how it is practically to be improved by us, to the glory of God, and our spiritual good and advantage.

I. What we are to understand by God's fore-ordaining whatever comes to pass, according to the counsel of his own will.

1. By God's fore-ordaining whatever comes to pass, we do not understand barely his fore-knowledge of all things, that are, or shall be done in time, and to eternity, although this be included in, and inseparably connected with his eternal purpose, since no one can purpose to act without the foreknowledge thereof; yet more than this is certainly contained therein; therefore,

2. God's pre-determining, or fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass, includes not only an act of the divine understanding, but an act of his sovereign will: It is not only his knowing what shall come to pass, but his determining, by his own agency, or efficiency, what he will produce in time, or to eternity. Accordingly, some call the decrees of God his eternal providence, and the execution thereof his actual providence; by the former, he determines what he will do; by the latter, he brings his determinations to pass, or effects what he before designed to do. It follows therefore,

3. That God's fore-ordaining whatsoever shall come to pass, is vastly different from his bringing things to pass: the one is an internal act of his will; the other, an external act of his almighty power: He fore-ordained that they should come to pass, and therefore, till then, they are considered as future; though this determination necessarily secures the event, unless we suppose it possible for his eternal purpose to be defeated, which is disagreeable to the divine perfections, as will farther appear under some following heads. And, on the other hand, when we consider him, as bringing all things to pass, or producing them by his power, this renders what was before future, present. With respect to the former, he decrees what shall be; and, with respect to the latter, his decree takes effect, and is executed accordingly.

They who treat of this matter, generally consider things, either as possible or future. Things are said to be possible, with

respect to the power of God, as every thing that he can do, is possible to be done, though some things, which he could have done, he never will do. As for instance: He could have made more worlds, had he pleased; or have produced more men upon earth, or more species of creatures; or have given a greater degree of perfection to creatures, than he has done, or will do; for it is certain, that he never acted to the utmost of his power, accordingly he could have done many things that he will never do; and those things are said to be possible, but not future.

Moreover, things future are rendered so, by the will of God, or his having fore-ordained, or determined to produce them; this is what we call the decree of God, which respects the event, or determines whatever shall come to pass.

We are now to consider, what we are to understand by God's fore-ordaining all things, according to the counsel of his will; which is a mode of speaking used in scripture, in Eph. i. 11. *Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*

1. We are not hereby to understand that the decrees of God are the result of deliberation, or his debating matters within himself, as reasoning in his own mind about the expediency, or inexpediency of things, or calling in the advice of others, as creatures are said to do, when acting with counsel; for he must not be supposed to determine things in such a way, since that would argue an imperfection in the divine mind; *With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the paths of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?* Isa. xl. 14. But,

2. It implies, that his decrees are infinitely wise. As what is done with counsel is said, according to human modes of speaking, to be done advisedly, in opposition to its being done rashly, or with precipitation; accordingly all the works of God are done with wisdom, therefore all his purposes and determinations to do what is done in time, are infinitely wise, which, according to our way of speaking, is called the counsel of his will: thus it is said, *He is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,* chap. xxviii. 29.

We are now to consider the object of God's decree; This, as has been before observed, is every thing that has, or shall come to pass, and it may be considered in different respects. There are some things which he has determined to effect, namely, such as are the objects of his power; or all things, which have a natural or moral goodness in them, which are becoming an infinitely holy God to produce: and this includes in it every thing but sin, which God does not produce, it not being the object of power: Nevertheless, this must be supposed to be com-

mitted by his permission, and therefore it is the consequence of his decree to permit, though not, as other things, of his decree to effect; it is one thing to suffer sin to be committed in the world, and another thing to be the author of it. But this we shall have occasion to enlarge on, under a following head.

II. We shall now proceed to prove the truth of what is laid down in this answer, namely, that God hath fore-ordained whatever comes to pass. This will evidently appear, if we consider the five following propositions in their due connexion.

1. Nothing comes to pass by chance, with respect to God, but by the direction of his providence, which we are bound to assert against the Deists, who speak of God, as though he were not the Governor of the world. This cannot be denied by any, who think, with any degree of modesty, concerning, or pay a due deference to the divine perfections, since God may as well be denied to be the Creator as the Governor of the world. (a.)

(a) "Certainly, it is not to be understood, in a literal or strict sense, that He *does*, all that is done. "Far be it from God," says Elihu, "that he should do wickedness: and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity." Doing wickedness, and committing iniquity, are synonymous phrases: but to impute to the Most High, any thing like what is commonly meant by either of these phrases, is evident blasphemy,

Nor are we to imagine, certainly, that God *makes* his creatures do, whatever is done by them, in any such manner as is inconsistent with their own proper agency. Rational creatures certainly act; and act as freely, as if there were no being above them to direct their steps, or to govern their actions. When God works in men, to will and to do that which is good; they, nevertheless will and do it themselves; and are really praise-worthy. And he does not, surely, so influence any to evil, as to render them unactive, involuntary, or undeserving of blame.

Nor do I believe it true, literally and strictly speaking, that God *creates*, whatsoever comes to pass; particularly darkness, and moral evil.

But this must not be taken for granted, nor hastily passed over: because, however indisputable, it is disputed. There are some among us, and some who are deservedly in reputation for wisdom, and general soundness in the faith; who appear to be of opinion, that God is the direct Author—the immediate Cause—the proper Creator, of all evil, as well as of all good—of all sin, as well as holiness, in heart and life—in thought, word, and deed.

This opinion, however, notwithstanding my high esteem and particular friendship for some of the holders of it, I am not yet ready to adopt, for several reasons.

1. To suppose that the actions of men, whether virtuous or vicious, are *created*, seems to confound all distinction between creation and Providence; or rather, wholly to exclude the latter.

The work of creation, we used to think, was God's making creatures and things, at first; or giving the beginning of existence to matter and minds, with their various properties, instincts and organizations. And that God's works of Providence, were his preserving things already made, and governing all their operations. But according to this new philosophy, creation is all; Providence is nothing. For what preserving and governing of creatures or actions can there be, when every creature and every action, is every moment created anew? An action, a thought, or volition, whether good or evil, is a new and strange kind of creature, or created thing. But, in a theological view, the question before us is of chief importance, as it respects moral evil. I add, therefore;

2. It appears to me, that to suppose God the Creator of sin, whether in princi-

2. It follows from hence, that nothing is done without the divine influence, or permission. The former (as was before observed) respects things that are good, which are the effects

ple or action, is hardly reconcilable with his perfect holiness. "Doth a fountain send forth, at the same place, sweet waters and bitter?" Can darkness proceed from Him, as its proper source, in whom there is no darkness at all?

It is true, God has created many things which are of a *different* nature from himself; as the bodies of men and beasts, and all parts of the world of matter; but nothing, I conceive, directly *opposite* to his own nature; as is sin. The sun is the immediate cause of the growth of vegetables; though these are essentially different from the sun itself: but it is not thus the cause of ice and darkness; which are no more of a contrary nature to it, than sin is to the nature of God.*

I am sensible it has been said, there is no more inconsistency with the holiness of God, in supposing him the efficient, immediate cause of sin, for necessary good purposes; than in supposing he only permits it, for wise ends, and so orders things that he knows it will be committed.

But these two ways of accounting for the existence of moral evil, appear to me materially different. There are supposable cases in which it would be right for a *man*, not to hinder another from sinning, when he could hinder him; and also to place him in circumstances of temptation, expecting that he would sin. For instance, a parent may leave money in the way of a child suspected of being given to theft; and may conceal himself and let the child steal it; with a view to correct him, in order to reclaim him, or as a warning to his other children. All this might be perfectly right in the parent; however certainly he might know, that the child would be guilty of the expected crime. But I question whether any case can be supposed in which it would not be wrong, directly to influence another to do evil, that good might come. Exciting one to sin by power or persuasion; and placing one in circumstances of trial, wherein he would be tempted to sin, without restraining him from it, are surely different things, although the certainty of his sinning may be the same.

3. I dare not think that God creates sin, and all kinds of evil, because this seems plainly contrary to the general current of the holy scriptures.

In the first chapter of Genesis, it is said, "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." Of his making two great lights, we are told; and that he made the stars also: but no account is there given of his creating darkness. Respecting our own species, the inspired historian particularly informs us, that "God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them." Nor do we find in that book, or in all the Bible, that he hath since ever created them otherwise. Solomon three thousand years after the fall, having made diligent search among men and wo-

* There is a vast difference between the sun's being the cause of the lightsomeness and warmth of the atmosphere, and of the brightness of gold and diamonds, by its presence and positive influence; and its being the occasion of darkness and frost in the night, by its motion whereby it descends below the horizon. The motion of the sun is the occasion of the latter kind of events; but not the proper cause, efficient, or producer of them.—No more is any action of the divine Being, the cause of the evil of men's wills. If the sun were the proper *cause* of cold and darkness, it would be the fountain of these things, as it is the fountain of light and heat: and then something might be argued from the nature of cold and darkness, to a likeness of nature in the sun; and it might be justly inferred that the sun itself is dark and cold: but from its being the cause of these, no otherwise than by its absence, no such thing can be inferred, but the contrary. It may justly be argued that the sun is a bright and hot body, if cold and darkness are found to be the consequence of its withdrawalment; and the more constantly and necessarily these effects are connected with and confined to its absence, the more strongly does it argue the sun to be the fountain of light and heat. So, in as much as sin is not the fruit of any positive influence of the Most High, but on the contrary, arises from the withdrawalment of his action and energy, and under certain circumstances, necessarily follows on the want of his influence, this is no argument that he is sinful, or his operation evil; but on the contrary, that he and his agency are altogether holy, and that he is the fountain of all holiness. It would be strange arguing indeed, because men never commit sin, but only when God leaves them to themselves; and necessarily sin when he does so, that therefore their sin is not from themselves, but from God: as strange as it would be to argue, because it is always dark when the sun is gone, and never dark when he is present, that therefore darkness is from the sun, and that his disk and beams must be black." *Edwards on the Will.*

of his power; the latter, sin. That nothing comes to pass without the divine influence, or permission, is evident; for if any thing came to pass, which is the object of power, without the

men, to find out their true character, and the cause of their so universal depravity, says; "Lo, this only have I found, that *God* made man upright; but *they* have sought out many inventions." Wicked practices, and deceitful inventions to conceal their criminality, are ever ascribed in scripture to mankind themselves, or to other fallen creatures, and never to God, as their efficient cause.

In the New-Testament, christians are said to be "created unto good works;" and we read of "the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." But no where do we read of any one that was created unto *evil* works; or after *Satan* in unrighteousness and sin. It is written, 1 Cor. xiv. 33, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." And James i. 13—17, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is led away of his own lust and enticed.—Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Can any thing be more express to teach us, that a distinction ought carefully to be made between the origin of good and evil; and that we should not conceive them both alike to come from God?

For scripture proof that God is not the efficient author of sin, I will only add, that the fruits of the Spirit, and works of the flesh, are set in contrast and spoken of as diametrical opposites: whereas, did God create sinful propensities in men, or directly influence them to evil actions, the works of the flesh would be as real and immediate fruits of the divine Spirit, as the holiest exercises of the best saints.

4. I see no occasion for the supposition of God's being thus the author of all evil, nor any good ends that it can answer.

Could it be seen how evils might be accounted for, without supposing them any part of the creation of God; and how God might have an absolute dominion over all events, without being the immediate cause of bad things; no good man, I conclude, would wish to conceive of Him as being thus the proper source of darkness and evil. And indeed, were it so, that our weak minds were unable to comprehend how God can work all things after the counsel of his own will, or how natural and moral evil could ever have been, without believing that God is as much, and as immediately, the cause of evil as of good; yet it might be more modest, and more wise, to leave these among other incomprehensibles, than to have recourse to so bold an hypothesis for the solution of them. But, I apprehend, there is no need of this hypothesis in order to account for the existence of evil, or in order to an understanding belief of the universal government of the Most High.

Evils, of most if not all kinds, are such negative things—such mere defects, in their origin at least, as do not need creation, or require a positive omnipotent cause. This is the case, evidently, with respect to natural darkness: it is only the want of light. This is the case, also, with respect to natural death: it is only the cessation, the loss, the want of life. And this may be the case, with respect to spiritual darkness, and spiritual death. It has heretofore been the orthodox opinion, that all moral evil consists radically in privation; or, that unholiness, at bottom, is the mere want of holiness. And, notwithstanding all the floods of light, from various quarters, which have come into the world in this age of new discoveries, possibly this one old opinion may yet be true. "God made man upright." That is, He formed him with a disposition impartially just and good: He created in him a principle or universal righteousness. When man fell, by eating the forbidding fruit, this principle had not been preserved in perfect strength and exercise. In consequence of that disobedience, the divine internal influence was so withdrawn, that this principle was entirely lost. But we are not told, nor need it be supposed, that any opposite principle was then created in him. Our first parents had, I believe, in their original formation, all the radical instincts of nature which they had after the fall; or which any of their posterity

divine influence, then the creature would be said to exist, or act independently on the power of God; and, if so, then it would follow, that it would exist, or act necessarily; but necessary existence is a perfection appropriate to God.

now have. Such as a principle of self-preservation, a desire of self-promotion, and a propensity to increase and multiply; together with all the more particular appetites and passions, subservient to these purposes. All these are innocent in themselves, though not in themselves virtuous. But these private instincts, when left to operate alone, without the governing influence of a public spirit, or a just regard for other beings, will naturally lead to all manner of iniquity, in heart and life. To avarice and ambition; to envy and malice; to intemperance and lewdness; to frauds and oppressions; to wars and fightings.

There is no need of supposing any other divine agency, than only to uphold in existence creatures that have lost their virtue, amidst surrounding temptations, in order to account for all the evil affections which we ever feel, and for all the external wickedness that is ever committed. Nor, in order to the holiest creatures losing their virtue, need any thing more be supposed on God's part, than only his leaving them to themselves; or not upholding in them, and constantly invigorating, a virtuous disposition.

And as, in this way, we can account for the existence of all manner of evil; so we can thus understand how it is possible for God to bring about whatsoever comes to pass, without his being the actor, or maker, or instigator, of any thing that is not perfectly good. When He does not cause light, there will be darkness. When He does not make peace, there will be evil. The darkness takes place according to his appointment, with the same exactness and certainty, as if He actually created it; and so does evil of every kind. What He determines to permit, knowing perfectly the circumstances and dispositions of every agent concerned, will as infallibly come to pass, as what he determines to do himself; or to effect by his own positive influence. The king's heart, and the rivers of water; the waves of the sea, and the tumults of the people, are in the hand of the Lord, to all important intents and purposes, if it be only true that He restrains them, or lets them run; stilleth them, or suffereth them to rage, just as he sees fit.

In this sense, I conceive, it is to be understood, that God forms the light, and creates darkness; makes peace, and creates evil. He has the absolute government—the perfect control—the entire superintendency, of all these things.

When any folly has been committed or any mischief has been done, some are ready to say, *It was so ordered*; as if therefore nobody was to be blamed. But this is a false inference, from just premises. True, it was so ordered of God; and ordered righteously and wisely: but it was so ordered by the doer of the mischief also; and ordered carelessly, perhaps, or wickedly. You will say, It must have been so, and the actor could not have done otherwise: but, I say, he might have done otherwise, if he would. It is true, there is a kind of necessity in the actions of men. They necessarily act according to their own choice; and they necessarily choose to act according to their own disposition. Under this kind of necessity God himself acts. It is impossible for him to do, because it is impossible for him to will that which is contrary to his own nature. He necessarily wills and does, what is agreeable to his moral perfections. But such a necessity as this, is so far from being inconsistent with freedom, that it is essential to all free agency. Actions which can and do take place, contrary to the inclination of the agent, are not *his* actions. He has no command over them; and therefore can deserve no praise or blame for them.

The necessity of acting according to our own minds, is all the necessity which need be supposed, when we suppose that all our actions were decreed, and are ordered of God. A creature that acts according to any laws of nature, and not at perfect random, without any self-government, acts in such a manner that He who knows what is in him, may fore-know all his actions; and in such a manner

As to what respects the latter, namely, sins being committed by divine permission, it is evident, that if it might be committed without the divine permission, it could not be restrained by God: and to suppose that he could not hinder the commission of sin, is to suppose that sin might proceed to the greatest height, without any possible check or controul, which would argue a great defect in the divine government of the world, as it is also contrary to daily experience, as well as scripture. Certainly he who sets bounds to the sea, and says to its proud waves, *Hitherto shall ye come, and no farther*, must be supposed to set bounds to the corrupt passions of wicked men: thus the Psalmist says, *Surely the wrath of men shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain*, Psal. lxxvi. 10.

Notwithstanding, this does not argue his approbation of sin, or that he is the author of it; since it is one thing to suffer, or not to hinder, and another thing to be the author of any thing. Thus it is said, *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence*, Psal. l. 21. that is, I did not restrain thee from doing them, as I could have done; so it is said, *in times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*. Acts xiv. 16.

3. God never acts or suffers any thing to be done, but he knows, beforehand, what he will do or suffer. This an intelligent creature, acting as such, is said to, therefore it must not be denied of him, who is omniscient, and infinitely wise: He who knows all things that others will do, cannot but know what himself will do, or what others will do by the interposition of his providence, or what he will suffer to be done, before it is acted.

4. Whatever God does, and consequently knows before-hand

that He in whose hand his times are, may govern all his volitions. Men follow their several courses, as freely as the rivers of water, and with a higher kind of freedom; yet, since they run agreeably to their own inclination, and cannot do otherwise, a Being omniscient and omnipotent, can calculate before hand all their motions; can keep them in the channels decreed for them, and can turn them whithersoever he will. If any do not comprehend this, yet let them not think they so fully comprehend the contrary, as to feel certain, that either man cannot be free, or God cannot govern the world. Certainly the providential government of God, over the hearts and ways of men, though most absolute, is not such but that, if they do well, they are praise-worthy; and if they do not well, the sin lieth at their own door.

Neither let it be imagined that the criminality of a bad action is taken away, or at all extenuated, because it will be over-ruled for good. Actions are good or evil, according to the nature of them, and the intention of the agent, and not according to undesigned consequences. When we act wickedly, and with a wicked mind, its being productive of happy effects, alters nothing in regard to our blame-worthiness. In the divine decrees, and in the divine providence, "Whatever is, is right:" but in the conduct of creatures, many things that are, are not at all the less wrong. God's governing all things, so as to make them subserve his wise and holy designs, should not lead us to think any more favourably of our own, or of our neighbour's foolish and sinful actions."

that he will do it, that he must be supposed to have before determined to do: This must be allowed, or else it argues him defective in wisdom. As no wise man acts precipitantly or without judgment, much less must the wise God be supposed to do so; concerning whom it is said, that *all his ways are judgment*, Deut. xxxii. 4.

5 It therefore appears, even to a demonstration, that God before determined, or fore-ordained, whatever comes to pass, which was the thing to be proved.

And inasmuch, as he never began to determine, as he never began to exist, or as he never was without purposes of what he would do; therefore it is evident, that he before ordained, from eternity, whatever should come to pass, either in time, or to eternity.

It farther appears, that God fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, otherwise he did not determine to create all things before he gave being to them; and then it could not be said, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all*, Psal. civ. 24. There are, indeed, many admirable discoveries of wisdom, as well as power, in the effects produced; but to suppose that all this was done without fore-thought, or that there was no eternal purpose relating thereunto, would be such a reflection on the glory of this perfection, as is inconsistent with the idea of a God. Moreover, if herein he designed his own glory, as he certainly did, since every intelligent being designs some end, and the highest and most excellent end must be designed by a God of infinite wisdom; and, if he did all this for his own glory, then it must be allowed, that it was the result of an eternal purpose: all which, I am persuaded, will not be denied by those on the other side of the question, who defend their own cause with any measure of judgment.

To this we may farther add, that to deny that God fore-ordained whatever comes to pass, is, in effect, to deny a providence, or, at least, that God governs the world in such a way, as that what he does therein was pre-concerted. And herein we expect to meet with no opposition from any but the Deists, or those who deny a God; and if it be taken for granted that there is a providence, or that God is the Governor of the world, we cannot but conclude from hence, that all the displays of his glory therein, are the the result of his eternal purpose. This is also agreeable to what is said concerning him, that *he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth*, Dan. iv. 35. the meaning of which is not barely this, (which is a great truth) that he acts without controul, inasmuch as his power is infinite: But that all he does is pursuant to his will; and, indeed, it cannot be otherwise, if we suppose that the divine power, and will, are so inseparably

connected, that he cannot be said to produce any thing, but by the word of his power; or when he willeth that any thing should come to pass, it is not in an efficacious will, as ours is, for want of power, to effect what we have done. Therefore for God to will the present existence of things, is to effect them, which seems to be the reason of that mode of speaking, which was used when he produced all things at first; he said, let them exist in that form, or perfection, which he had before designed to give them, and the effect immediately followed, Gen. i. 3, 6, 9, &c.

Hitherto, I presume, our argument will not be much contested; for the main thing in controversy is what relates to the divine determination respecting intelligent creatures, which will be considered under a following head: What I have hitherto attempted to prove is, the proposition in general, namely, that whatever God brings to pass, or is the effect of power, is the result of his determinate purpose. And herein, I think, I have carefully distinguished between God's will to effect, and his will to permit; but that will be farther explained, when we speak of the decrees of God, with a particular application to angels and men, under the head of election.

Having endeavoured to prove that God hath fore-ordained whatever comes to pass, we shall lay down the following propositions relating to his end and design in all his purposes, together with the nature of things, as coming to pass pursuant thereunto, and the method in which we are to conceive of the decree, when compared with the execution thereof.

1. God cannot design any thing, in his eternal purpose, as the highest end, but his own glory, which is here assigned, as the end of his decrees. As this is the principal motive, or reason, inducing him to produce whatever comes to pass; so it must be considered as the end of his purpose relating thereunto: This is very evident; for since the divine glory is the most excellent of all things, he cannot, as an infinitely wise God, design any thing short of it, as the great motive or inducement for him to act; therefore, whatever lower ends are designed by him, they are all resolved into this as the principal, to wit, the advancement of his divine perfections. Though God designs his own glory as the highest end, yet he has purposed not only that this should be brought about, by means conducive thereunto, but that there should be a subserviency of one thing to another, all which are the objects of his decree, as well as the highest end, namely, his own glory. As, for instance, he determines that the life and health of man shall be maintained by the use of proper means and medicine, or that grace shall be wrought instrumentally by those means, which he has ordained, in order thereunto: thus his purpose respects the end and means, together with the connexion that there is between them.

2. According to the natural order of things, the divine purpose is antecedent to the execution thereof. Therefore it seems very absurd to distinguish the decree of God, as some do, into antecedent and consequent, one going before the use of means, the other following, of which more hereafter: It is certain, that every intelligent being first determines to act, and then executes his determinations; so that nothing can be more absurd, than to say, that a person determines to do a thing which is already done. Therefore we conclude, that God first decreed what shall come to pass, and then brings it to pass: Accordingly he first determined to create the world, and then created it; he first determined to bestow the means of grace on men, and to render them effectual to the salvation of all who shall be saved, and then he does this accordingly; so, with respect to his judicial actings, he first determined by a permissive decree, not to prevent the commission of sin, though infinitely opposite to his holiness, and then, knowing the consequence of this permissive decree, or that men, through the mutability or corruption of their nature, would rebel against him, he determined to punish sin after it should be committed. Thus the decree of God is, in all respects, antecedent to the execution of it; or his eternal providence, as his decrees are sometimes called, is antecedent to, and the ground and reason of, his actual providence.

3. Though the purpose of God be before the execution thereof, yet the execution of it is first known by us; and so it is by this that we are to judge of his decree and purpose, which is altogether secret, with respect to us, till he reveals it; therefore we first observe the discoveries thereof, as contained in his word, or made visible in his actual providence, and from thence we infer his eternal purpose relating thereunto. Every thing that is first in the order of nature, is not first with respect to the order of our knowing it: thus the cause is before the effect, but the effect is often known before the cause; the sun is, in the order of nature, before the enlightening the world by it; but we first see the light, and then we know there is a sun, which is the fountain thereof: or, to illustrate it by another similitude, which comes nearer the matter before us; A legislator determines first to make a law, which determination is antecedent to the making, and that to the promulgation of it, whereby his subjects come to the knowledge thereof, and act in conformity thereunto; but, according to our method of judging concerning it, we must first know that there is such a law, and from thence we conclude, that there was a purpose relating to it, in him that gave it; Thus we conclude, that though the decree of God be the ground and reason of the execution thereof, yet we know that there was such a decree by its execution, or, at least, by some other way designed to discover this to us.

These things being duly considered, may obviate an objection, which is no other than a misrepresentation of the doctrine we are maintaining, as though we asserted, that our conduct of life, and the judgment we are to pass concerning ourselves, relating to our hope of future blessedness, were to be principally, if not altogether regulated, by God's secret purpose or decree; as though we were first to consider him as determining the event, that is, as having chosen or rejected us, and, from this supposition, to encourage ourselves to attend upon the means of grace; or otherwise that we should take occasion to neglect them; since it is a preposterous thing for a man, who considers himself as reprobated, to attend on any of those means, which are ordained to salvation.

What has been said under the foregoing heads, is sufficient to take away the force of this objection; but this will be more particularly considered, when we come to answer several objections against the doctrine of election: Therefore all I shall add at present is, that since our conduct and hope is to be governed by the appearances of things, and not by God's secret purpose relating to the event thereof, we are to act as those who have not, nor can have, any knowledge of what is decreed, with relation thereunto, till it is evinced by the execution thereof; or, at least, those graces wrought in us, which are the objects of God's purpose, as well as our future blessedness; and our right to one is to be judged of by the other.

This leads us to consider the properties of these decrees of God, as mentioned in the former of the answers we are now considering; in which it is said, they are *wise, free, and holy*. This is very evident, from the wisdom, sovereignty, and holiness, which appear in the execution of them; for whatever perfections are demonstrated in the dispensations of providence, or grace, these God designed to glorify in his eternal purpose; therefore if his works, in time, are wise, free, sovereign, and holy, his decree, with respect thereunto, which is fulfilled thereby, must be said to be so likewise. These things we shall have occasion to speak more particularly to, under a following head, when we consider the properties of election, and particularly that it is wise, sovereign, and holy; I shall therefore, at present, only add, that whatever perfections belong to the nature of God, they are demonstrated by his works, since he cannot act unbecoming himself; for that would give occasion to the world to deny him to be infinitely perfect, that is, to be God. If we pass a judgment on creatures by what they do, and so determine him to be a wise man, who acts wisely, or a holy man, who acts holily, or a free and sovereign agent, who acts without constraint, certainly the same must be said of the divine Majesty; and consequently, since whatever he does has

the marks of infinite wisdom, holiness, and sovereignty, impressed upon it, it is evident that these properties, or perfections, belong to all his purposes. If all his works are performed in wisdom, as the Psalmist observes, Psal. civ. 24. then we have reason to admire that wisdom which appears, from hence, to be contained in all his purposes relating thereunto, as the apostle doth, Rom. xi. 33. *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* If he be *righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*, Psal. cxlv. 17. and therein demonstrates a divine sovereignty, as acting without any obligation, or constraint laid upon him to bestow the favours he confers on mankind; then we must certainly conclude, that his eternal purpose which is executed hereby, is free and sovereign. This leads us to consider,

III. That intelligent creatures, such as angels and men, with respect to their present or future state, are the objects of God's eternal decree, or purpose, which is generally called *predestination*. And this, as it relates to the happiness of some, or misery of others, is distinguished into election or reprobation, which is a very awful subject, and ought never to be thought of, or mentioned, but with the utmost caution and reverence, lest we speak those things that are not right concerning God, and thereby dishonour him, or give just occasion to any to deny or reproach this doctrine, as though it were not founded on scripture.

Hitherto we have considered the purpose of God, as including in it all things future, as the objects thereof; and now we are to speak of it in particular, as it relates to angels and men. When we confine the objects of God's purpose to those things that come to pass, which have no dependence on the free-will of angels or men, we do not meet with much opposition from those, who are in other respects, in the contrary scheme of doctrine; for most of them, who are masters of their own argument, and consider what may be allowed without weakening their cause, do not deny that God fore-ordained whatever comes to pass, nor that he did this from all eternity, if we except what respects the actions of free agents. Thus they will grant that God, from all eternity, determined to create the world, and then to govern it, and to give laws to men, as the rule of government, and a free-will, or power to yield obedience thereunto: but when we consider men's free actions, as the objects of a divine decree, and the final state of men, as being determined by it, here we are like to meet with the greatest opposition, and therefore must endeavour to maintain our ground in the following part of this argument.

The decree of God, respecting intelligent creatures, is to be considered as containing in it two branches, namely, *election* and *reprobation*: the former of which is contained in those words, that God, out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, hath elected some to glory in Christ, and also to the means thereof; and as for reprobation, that is described in the following words; that according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will, he hath passed by, and fore-ordained the rest to dishonour and wrath, to be, for their sin, inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice. Both these are to be considered; and,

First, What respects the doctrine of election. To elect, or choose, according to the common use, or acceptation of the word, signifies the taking a small number out of a greater, or a part out of the whole; and this is applied, either to things or persons.

(1.) To things. As when a person has a great many things to choose out of, he sets aside some of them for his own use, and rejects the others, as refuse, that he will have nothing to do with.

(2.) To persons. As when a king chooses, out of his subjects, some whom he will advance to great honours; or when a master chooses, out of a number of servants offered to him, one, or more, whom he will employ in his service; this from the nature of the thing, implies, that all are not chosen, but only a part, in which there is a discrimination, or a difference put between one and another.

But we are more particularly to consider the meaning of the word *election*, as we find it in scripture, wherein it is used in several senses.

To elect or choose, according to the acceptation of the word, does not connote the particular thing that a person is chosen to, but that is to be understood by what is farther added to determine the sense thereof; as sometimes we read of persons being chosen to partake of some privileges, short of salvation; at other times, of their being chosen to salvation; sometimes it is to be understood as signifying their being chosen to things of a lower nature, at other times their being chosen to perform those duties, and exercise those graces that accompany salvation; and we may, very easily, understand the sense of it by the context.

Again, it is sometimes taken for the execution of God's purpose, or for his actual providence, making choice of persons to fulfil his pleasure, in their various capacities; at other times, as we are here to understand it, for his fixing his love upon his people, and purposing to bring them to glory, making choice of some out of the rest of mankind, as the monuments of his

discriminating grace ; we have instances of all these senses of the word in scripture ; and,

1. It is sometimes taken for God's actual separation of persons, for some peculiar instances of service, which is a branch of his providential dispensation, in time : thus we sometimes read in scripture, of persons being chosen, or set apart, by God, to an office, and that either civil or sacred : thus, upon the occasion of Saul's being made king, by God's special appointment, Samuel says, *See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen*, 1 Sam. x. 24. so it is said elsewhere, *He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-fold ; from following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob, his people, and Israel his inheritance*. Psal. lxxviii. 70, 71.

It also signifies his actual appointment of persons to perform some sacred office : thus it is said, concerning the Levites, that *the Lord had chosen them to carry the ark, and to minister unto him*, 1 Chron. xv. 2. and our Saviour says, to his disciples, *Have not I chosen you*, namely, to be my disciples, and as such to be employed in preaching the gospel, *and one of you is a devil*, John vi. 70.

2. It is sometimes taken for God's providential designation of a people, to be made partakers of those external privileges of the covenant of grace, which belong to them as a church, which, as such, is the peculiar object of the divine regard : thus the people of Israel are said to have been chosen, or separated, from the world, to enjoy the external blessings of the covenant of grace, as Moses tells them, *Because the Lord loved your fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them*, Deut. iv. 37. and elsewhere, *Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God ; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth*, chap. vii. 6, 7. And, in many other places in the Old Testament, the word *election* is taken in this sense, though something more than this seems to be included in some particular scriptures in the prophetic writings, in which the Jews are described, as God's chosen people, as we shall endeavour to shew under a following head.

3. It also signifies God's bestowing special grace on some, who are highly favoured by him, above others, as having called, or set them apart for himself, to have communion with him, to bear a testimony to him, and to be employed in eminent service, for his name and glory in the world. Thus it seems to be taken, in 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. where the apostle speaks of their *calling*, which imports some special privileges, that they were made partakers of, as the objects of divine power, and grace, to whom Christ was *made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption* ; which therefore signifies the powerful, internal.

effectual call, and not barely the external call of the Gospel, as appears, by the foregoing and following verses, ver. 24. compared with 30. and they, whose calling he speaks of, are said to be chosen: *You see your calling, how that not many wise men, &c. are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world, &c.* so that to be chosen, and effectually called there, seem to import the same thing.

And sometimes it is taken, for some peculiar excellency, which one Christian has above another; as that hospitable, or public-spirited person, to whom the apostle John directs his second epistle, is called by him, *The elect lady*, ver. 1. as an excellent person is sometimes styled a choice person.

But, though the word is taken, in scripture, in these various senses above mentioned, yet it is not confined to any, or all of them; for we shall endeavour to make it appear, that it is often taken, in scripture, as it is expressed in this answer; for God's having fore-ordained particular persons, as monuments of his special love, to be made partakers of grace here, and glory hereafter, as it is styled, their being chosen to eternal life, and the means thereof. This is what we shall endeavour to prove, and accordingly shall consider the objects thereof, namely, angels and men, and that it is only a part of mankind that is chosen to salvation, to wit, that remnant which shall be eventually saved; and that these are chosen to the means thereof, as well as the end; and how this is said to be in Christ.

The objects of election are *angels* and *men*. A few words may be said concerning the election of angels, as being particularly mentioned in this answer; we have not, indeed, much delivered concerning this matter in scripture, though the apostle calls those who remain in their state of holiness and happiness, in which they were created, *elect angels*, 1 Tim. v. 21. But, had we no mention of their election in scripture, their being confirmed in their present state of blessedness, must, from the foregoing method of reasoning, be supposed to be the result of a divine purpose, or the execution of a decree relating thereunto; though there is this difference between their election, and that of men, in that the latter are chosen unto salvation, which the angels are not subjects capable of, inasmuch as they were never in a lost, undone state; neither are they said to be chosen in Christ, as men are.

But we shall proceed, to that which more immediately concerns us, to consider men as the objects of election. This is variously expressed in scripture; sometimes it is called their being *appointed to attain salvation*, or being *ordained to eternal life* or their names being *written in the book of life*; and it is also called, *the purpose of God, according to election*, or his having

loved them before the foundation of the world, or his having predestinated them, (who have been blessed with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ) unto the adoption of children, by him, according to the good pleasure of his will. That the scriptures speak of persons as elect, and that this is always represented as a great instance of divine favour and goodness, is not denied: But the main thing in controversy is, whether this relates to the purpose of God, or his providence; and whether it respects particular persons, or the church of God in general, as distinguished from the world; and, if it be supposed to relate to particular persons, how these are considered in God's purpose, or what is the order and reason of his determination to save them.

That election sometimes respects the disposing providence of God, in time, has been already considered, and some particular instances thereof, in scripture, referred to; but when they, on the other side of the question, maintain, that this is the only, or principal sense in which it is used therein, we must take leave to differ from them. There is a late writer *, who sometimes misrepresents, and at other times, opposes this doctrine, with more assurance and insult, than the strength of his reasoning will well allow of; and his performance on this head, and others, that have some affinity with it, is concluded, by many of his admirers, to be unanswerable; and the sense that he has given of several scriptures therein, as well as in his paraphrase on the New Testament, in which he studiously endeavours to explain every text, in conformity to his own scheme, has tended to prejudice many in favour thereof; and therefore we shall take occasion sometimes to consider what he advances against the doctrine that we are maintaining; and particularly, as to this head of election, he supposes, "1. That the election, mentioned, in scripture, is not of particular persons, but only that of churches and nations, or their being chosen to the enjoyment of the means of grace, rather than a certainty of their being saved by those means; that it does not contain any absolute assurance of their salvation, or of any such grace, as shall infallibly, and without any possibility of frustration, procure their salvation. 2. That the election to salvation, mentioned in scripture, is only conditional, upon our perseverance in a life of holiness †; and he attempts to prove, that election, in the Old Testament, belongs not to the righteous and obedient persons only, but the whole nation of the Jews, good and bad; and that, in the New Testament, it is applied to those who embrace the Christian faith, without any regard had to their eternal happiness." These things ought to be

* *Dr. Whitby, in his discourse of election, &c.*

† *See his discourse concerning election, page 36. 37. &c.*

particularly considered, and therefore we shall endeavour to prove,

1. That though election oftentimes, in the Old Testament, respects the church of the Jews, as enjoying the external means of grace, yet it does not sufficiently appear that it is never to be taken in any other sense; especially when there are some of those privileges which accompany salvation mentioned in the context, and applied to some of them, who are thus described; or when there are some promises made to them, which respect more than the external means of grace; therefore if there were but one scripture that is to be taken in this sense, it would be a sufficient answer to the universal negative, in which it is supposed, that the Old Testament never intends by it, any privilege, but such as is external, and has no immediate reference to salvation. Here I might refer to some places in the evangelical prophecy of Isaiah, which are not foreign to our purpose; as when it is said, *Thou Israel, art my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen; and I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away*, Isa. xli. 8, 9. that this respects more than the continuance of their political and religious state, as enjoying the external means of grace, seems to be implied in those promises that are made to them, in the following words, which not only speak of their deliverance from captivity, after they had continued sometime therein, but their being made partakers of Gods special love, which had an immediate reference to their salvation: thus it is said, in the following, *Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness*; and elsewhere God, speaking to the Jews, says, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and I will not remember thy sins*, chap. xliii. 25. and, *Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end*, chap. xlv. 17. There are also many other promises, which seem to import a great deal more than the external privileges of the covenant of grace, which many very excellent Christians have applied to themselves, as supposing that they contain those blessings which have a more immediate reference to salvation; and it would detract very much from the spirituality and usefulness of such-like scriptures, to say that they have no relation to us, as having nothing to do with the Jewish nation, to whom these promises were made.

Object. To this it may be objected, that these promises are directed to the church of the Jews, as a chosen people; and therefore to suppose that there were a number elected out of them to eternal salvation, is to extend the sense of the word beyond the design of the context, to destroy the determinate sense thereof, and to suppose an election out of an election.

Answ. Since the word *election*, denotes persons being chosen to enjoy the external means of grace, and to attain salvation by and under them, it may, without any impropriety of expression, be applied in these different senses, in the same text; so that Israel may be described as a chosen people in the former sense, and yet there might be a number elected out of them, who were chosen to eternal life, to whom this promise of salvation more especially belonged, who are distinguished from the general body of the Jewish nation, who are called, in the other sense, God's elect; as when it is said, *I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord; the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, &c.* Zeph. iii. 12, 13. So that as Israel was an elect people, chosen out of the world to enjoy the external privileges conferred upon them, as a church, which they are supposed to have mis-improved, for which they were to be carried captive into Babylon; there was a remnant chosen out of them to be made partakers of the blessings that accompany salvation, such as are here promised; these are not considered as a church, governed by distinct laws, from those that Israel was governed by; and therefore not as a church selected out of that church, but as a number of people among them whom God had kept faithful, as having chosen them to enjoy better privileges than those which they had as a professing people; or as a number elected to be made partakers of special grace, out of those which had been made partakers of common grace, which they had miserably abused, and were punished for it.

2. Our Saviour speaking concerning the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army, and a great time of distress that should ensue hereupon, tells them, in Matt. xxiv. 22. that those days should be shortened *for the elect's sake*, that is, those who were chosen to eternal life, and accordingly should be converted to the Christian faith, not from among the heathen, but out of the Jewish nation; for it is to them that he more particularly directs his discourse, forewarning them of this desolating judgment; and he advises them to pray that their *flight be not on the Sabbath-day*, ver. 20. intimating thereby, that that nation deemed it unlawful to defend themselves from the assaults of an enemy on the Sabbath-day, though their immediate death would be the consequence thereof; therefore this advice was suited to the temper of the Jews, and none else: No people in the world, except them, entertained this superstitious opinion concerning the prohibition of self-defence on the Sabbath-day; from whence it may therefore be inferred, that our Saviour speaks of them in particular, and not of the Christians, which were amongst them; upon which account it seems probable, that these are not intended by *the elect*, namely, that small number for whose sake those days of distress and tribu-

lation were to be shortened;* therefore there were an elect people whom God had a peculiar regard to, who should afterwards be converted to Christianity, namely, a number elected to eternal life out of that people, who were elected to the external privileges of the covenant of grace. And this farther appears from what follows, where our Saviour speaks concerning *false Christs, and false prophets, that should shew great signs, and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect*, Matt. xxiv. 24. Now it cannot be supposed of them that are called false Christs, that they would attempt to pervert the Christians, by pretending to be the Messiah; for that would be impracticable, inasmuch as they did not expect any other to come with that character since our Saviour; whereas the Jews did, and many of them were perverted thereby to their own ruin; but it is intimated here, that the elect people, which was among them, should be kept from being deceived by them, inasmuch as they were chosen to obtain salvation, and therefore should believe in Christ by the gospel.

There is also another scripture, which seems to give countenance hereunto, where the apostle shews, that *God had not cast away his people*, Rom. xi. 2. to wit, the Jews, that is, he had not rejected the whole nation, but had made a reserve of some who were the objects of his special love, as chosen to salvation; and these are called, *A remnant according to the election of grace*, ver. 5. and this seems still more plain from what follows, ver. 7. *What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for*, that is, righteousness and life, which they sought after, as it were, by the works of the law, which, as is mentioned in the foregoing verse, is inconsistent with the attaining it by grace; but the election, that is, the elect among that people have obtained it; for they sought after it in another way, and the rest were blinded, that is, the other part of the Jewish nation, which were not interested in this privilege, were left to the blindness of their own minds, which was their ruin.

To this let me add one scripture more, Rom. ix. 6, 7. where the apostle, speaking concerning the nation of the Jews, distinguishes between the natural and spiritual seed of Abraham, when he says, *All are not Israel that are of Israel*, that is, there was a remnant according to the election of grace, who were chosen to eternal life out of that people, who were in other respects, chosen to be made partakers of the external privileges that belonged to them, as God's peculiar people. The sum of this argument is, that though, it is true, there are some scriptures that speak of the church of the Jews, as separated from the world, by the peculiar hand of divine providence, and favoured with the external means of grace, yet there are others

* See the contrary opinion defended by Whitby in loc.

in which they are said to be chosen to partake of privileges of an higher nature, even those which accompany salvation; therefore election, in the Old Testament, sometimes signifies God's purpose, relating to the salvation of his people.

2. We shall proceed to consider how *election* is taken in the New Testament, in opposition to those who suppose that it is there used only to signify God's bringing persons to be members of the Christian church, as being instructed in the doctrines relating thereunto by the apostles:* The principal ground of this opinion is, because sometimes whole churches are said to be elected, as the apostle speaks of the church at Babylon, as elected together with them, to whom he directs his epistle, 1 Pet. i. 2. compared with chap. v. 13. by which it is supposed that nothing is intended, but that they were both of them Christian churches. If this be the sense of every scripture in the New Testament, that treats of election, then we must not pretend that the doctrine we are maintaining is founded on it: But on the other hand, we think we have reason to conclude, that when we meet with the word in the New Testament, it is to be understood, in most places, for God's eternal purpose relating to the salvation of his people. I will not pretend to prove an universal negative, viz. that it is never taken otherwise, but shall refer to some scriptures, in which it is plainly understood so, and endeavour to defend this sense thereof.

The first scripture that we shall refer to, is in Eph. i. 4. *He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*; and, in ver. 5. he speaks of their being *predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ*; that this respects not the external dispensation of God's providence, in constituting them a Christian church, or giving them the knowledge of those doctrines, on which it was founded; but their being chosen to salvation and grace, as the means thereof, according to God's eternal purpose, will very evidently appear from the context, if we consider that they who are thus chosen, are called *faithful in Christ Jesus*, which implies much more than barely to be in him by external profession: they are farther described, as *blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ*, in ver. 3. or blessed with all those blessings which respect heavenly things; grace, which they had in possession, and glory, which they had in expectation; and they are farther described, as having *obtained redemption through the blood of Christ, and forgiveness of sins*; and all this is said to be done, *according to the riches of his grace, and the good pleasure of his will, who worketh all things after the counsel thereof*; and certainly all this must contain much more than the external dispensation of providence

* See Whitby's discourse, &c. page 40, & seq.

relating to this privilege, which they enjoyed as a church of Christ.

Again, in 1 Thess. i. 4. the apostle says concerning them, to whom he writes, that *he knew their election of God*. That this is to be understood of their election to eternal life, is very evident; and, indeed, he explains it in this sense, when he says, *God hath, from the beginning, chosen you unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth, Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. the gospel is considered as the means of their attaining that salvation, which they are said to be chosen to; so that their election contains more than their professed subjection thereunto as a church of Christ: Besides, the apostle gives those marks and evidences of this matter, which plainly discover that it is their election to salvation that he intends; accordingly he speaks of their *work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ*, and of *the gospel's coming not in word only, but also in power*, 1 Thess. i. 3, 5. by which he means not the power that was exerted in working miracles, for that would be no evidence of their being a church, or of their adhering to the doctrines that were confirmed thereby, since every one, who saw miracles wrought, did not believe; therefore he means, that by the powerful internal influence of the Holy Ghost, they were persuaded to become followers of the apostles, and the Lord, and were examples to others, and public-spirited, in endeavouring to propagate the gospel in the world. Certainly this argues that they were effectually called by the grace of God, and so proves that they were chosen to be made partakers of this grace, and of that salvation, that is the consequence thereof.

There is another scripture, in which it is very plain that the apostle speaks of election to eternal life inasmuch as there are several privileges connected with it, which the Christian church, as such, cannot lay claim to: thus, in Rom. viii. 33. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth*. Now if justification or freedom from condemnation, accompanied with their being effectually called here, which shall end in their being glorified hereafter, be the result of their election, as in ver. 30. then certainly this includes in it more than the external privileges of the covenant of grace, which all who adhere to the Christian faith are possessed of, and consequently it is an election to salvation that the apostle here intends.

Object. It is objected, that it is more than probable, when we find, as we sometimes do, whole churches styled elect in the New testament, that some among them were hypocrites; particularly those to whom the apostle Peter writes, who were con-

verted from Judaism to Christianity, whom he calls elect, according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father: notwithstanding they had some in communion with them, concerning whom it might be said, that they had only a name to live, but yet were dead; and he advises them, to lay aside all malice, guile, and hypocrisy, envies, and evil speaking, and, as new born babes, to receive the word, if so be they had tasted that the Lord is gracious, 1 Pet. ii. 1. which makes it more than probable, that there were some among them who had not, in reality, experienced the grace of God; so when he says, that there should be false teachers among them, whose practice should be as vile as their doctrine, and that many amongst them should follow their pernicious ways. 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2. it seems to argue that the whole church he writes to, were not chosen to salvation; therefore their election only signifies their being chosen to enjoy the privileges, which they had, as a professing society of Christians.

Ans. It is certain that there was a very considerable number among them who were not only Christians in name; but they were very eminent for the exercise of those graces, which evinced their election to eternal life; and particularly he says concerning them, *Whom having not seen, ye love; and in whom believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls,* 1 Pet. i 8, 9. which agrees very well with the other character given them of their being elect, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, ver. 2. Therefore the only thing that seems to affect our argument is, that this character did not belong to every individual. But supposing this should be allowed, might not the church be here described as chosen to salvation, inasmuch as the far greater number of them were so? Nothing is more common, in scripture, than for a whole body of men to be denominated from the greatest part of them, whether their character be good or bad: thus when the greatest part of the Jewish church were revolted from God, and guilty of the most notorious crimes, they are described as though their apostacy had been universal, *They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders,* Jer. vi. 28. whereas it is certain, there were some who had not apostatized: some of them were slandered and reproached for the sake of God, and therefore were not included in the number of them that walked with slanders, though their number were very small; as God says by the prophet Ezekiel, *I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land that I should not destroy it, but I found none,* Ezek. xxii. 30. whereas at that time, in which the people were most degenerate, there were found some who sighed and cryed for all the abomination that were done in the

midst of them, chap. ix. 4. So on the other hand, when the greater number of them kept their integrity, and walked before God in holiness of life, the whole church is thus characterized, *I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness; Israel was holiness to the Lord*, Jer. ii. 2, 3. whereas it is certain, that, at that time, there were a great many who rebelled, murmured, and revolted from God, and were plagued for their iniquities; yet because the greater number of them were upright and sincere, this character is given in general terms, as if there had been no exception. And the prophet looked back to some age of the church, in which a great number of them were faithful; and therefore he speaks of the people in general, at that time, as such, and accordingly calls them, *The faithful city*, Isa. i. 21. and the prophet Jeremiah calls them, *The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold*, Lam. iv. 2. yet there never was a time when there were none among them that rebelled against God. Therefore may not this be supposed concerning the first gospel churches that were planted by the apostles; and accordingly, when they are styled elect, to whom the apostle Peter writes, 1 Pet. v. 13. as well as the church at Babylon, why may not this be supposed to signify, that the greatest part of them were really sanctified, and therefore chosen to sanctification? And consequently their character, as elect, does not barely signify their being chosen to be made partakers of the external privileges of the gospel. We might also consider, that it is very agreeable to our common mode of speaking, to denominate a city, or a kingdom, from the greater number thereof, whether we call them a rich, or a wise or a valiant people, we never suppose there are no exceptions to this character; therefore why may we not, in this instance, conclude, that the apostle Peter, when he describes this church as elected, intends their election to salvation? Thus we have endeavoured to prove that election, in scripture, is not always taken, in the Old Testament, for the external privileges which the Jewish nation had, as a church; nor in the New Testament for those who belonged to the churches, namely, such as professed the Christian faith. And probably that learned author, before mentioned, was apprehensive that this observation of his would not hold universally true; and therefore he has another provisional objection against the doctrine of particular election of persons to eternal life, and says, as Arminius and his contemporaries before did, that all those scriptures, which speak of this doctrine, contain nothing more than God's conditional purpose, that if a person believes, he shall be saved. It is necessary for us to consider what may be said in answer hereunto; but inasmuch as we shall have occasion to speak to this when we consider the properties of

election, under a following head, we shall rather chuse to reserve it to that place, than be obliged to repeat what might be here said concerning it.

Thus having premised something concerning election in general, and the sense in which it is to be understood, in scripture, we shall briefly mention a matter in dispute, among divines relating to the objects thereof, as they are considered in God's eternal purpose: and here we shall take notice of some different opinions relating thereunto, without making use of those scholastic modes of speaking, which render this subject much more difficult, than otherwise it would be: and shall take occasion to avoid, and fence against those extremes, which have only had a tendency to prejudice persons against the doctrine in general.

The object of election is variously considered by divines, who treat of this subject.

1. There are some who, though they agree in the most material things in their defence of this doctrine yet they are divided in their sentiments about some nice metaphysical speculations, relating to the manner how man is to be considered, as the object of predestination: accordingly some, who are generally styled Supralapsarians, seem to proceed in this way of explaining it, namely that God from all eternity, designed to glorify his divine perfections, in some objects out of himself, which he could not then be said to have done, inasmuch as they did not exist; and the perfections, which he designed to glorify, were, more especially, his sovereignty and absolute dominion, as having a right to do what he will with the work of his hands: and also his goodness, whereby he would render himself the object of their delight; and, as a means conducive to this end, he designed to create man an intelligent creature, in whom he might be glorified; and since a creature, as such, could not be the object of the display of his mercy, or justice, he farther designed to permit man to fall into a state of sin and misery, that so, when fallen, he might recover some out of that state, and leave others to perish in it: the former of which are said to be loved, the other hated; and when some extend the absoluteness of God's purpose, not only to election but reprobation, and do not take care to guard their modes of speaking, as they ought to do, but conclude reprobation, at least predamnation, to be, not an act of justice, but rather of sovereignty; they lay themselves open to exception, and give occasion to those, who oppose this doctrine, to conclude, that they represent God as delighting in the misery of his creatures, and with that view giving being to them. It is true, several, who have given into this way of thinking, have endeavoured to extricate themselves out of this difficulty, and denied this and other consequences of the like nature, which many have thought to be necessary deductions

from this scheme; whether they have done this effectually, or no, may be judged of by those who are conversant in their writings *. I cannot but profess myself to set a very high value on them in other respects, yet I am not bound to give into some nice speculations, contained in their method of treating this subject, which renders it exceptionable; particularly, I cannot approve of any thing advanced by them, which seems to represent God as purposing to create man, and then to suffer him to fall, as a means by which he designed to demonstrate the glory of his vindictive justice, which hath given occasion to many to entertain rooted prejudices against the doctrine of predestination, as though it necessarily involved in it this supposition, that God made man to damn him.

There are others, who are generally styled *Sublapsarians* †, who suppose, that God considered men as made and fallen, and then designed to glorify his grace in the recovery of those who were chosen, by him, to eternal life; and his justice in them, whom he designed to condemn, as a punishment for their sins, which he foreknew that they would commit, and purposed not to hinder; and he designed to glorify his sovereignty, in that one should be an object of grace, rather than another, whereas he might have left the whole world in that state of misery, into which he foresaw they would plunge themselves.

That which is principally objected, by those who are in the other way of thinking, against this scheme, is, that the *Sublapsarians* suppose that God's creating men, and permitting them to fall, was not the object of his eternal purpose. But this they universally deny, and distinguish between God's purpose to create and suffer men to fall; and his purposes being considered as a means to advance his sovereignty, grace, and justice, in which the principal difference between them consists. We shall enter no farther into this controversy, but shall only add, that whatever may be considered, in God's eternal purpose, as a means to bring about other ends; yet it seems evident, from the nature of the thing, that God cannot be said to choose men to salvation, without herein considering them as fallen; for

* See *Twiss. Vind. Grat. & de Prædest. and his riches of God's love, against Hord; and also that part of the writings of some others, in which they treat of predestination, viz. Beza, Gomarus, Piscator, Maccovius, Rutherford, Whitaker, and Perkins.*

† Among these were *bishop Davenant, and other divines, who met in the synod of Dort; also Calvin, P. Du Moulin, Turretin, and, indeed, the greater number of those who have defended the doctrine of predestination; and there are many others, who, when they treat of it, seem to wave the particular matter in controversy, as thinking it of no great importance or that this doctrine may be as well defended, without confining themselves to certain moles of speaking, which have been the ground of many prejudices against it, whose prudence and conduct herein cannot be justly blamed.*

as no one is a subject capable of salvation, but one who is fallen into a state of sin and misery; so when God purposed to save such, they could not be considered as to be created, or created and not fallen, but as sinners.

2. There are others who deny particular election of persons to eternal life, and explain those scriptures, which speak of it, in a very different way: these suppose, that God designed, from all eternity, to create man, and foreknew that he would fall, and, that, pursuant to this eternal foreknowledge, he designed to give him sufficient means for his recovery, which, by the use of his free will, he might improve, or not, to the best purposes; and also, fore-knowing who would improve, and who would reject, the means of grace, which he purposed to bestow, he determined, as the consequence thereof, to save some, and condemn others. This method of explaining God's eternal purpose is exceptionable, as will farther appear, in the method we shall take, in prosecuting this subject, in two respects.

(1.) As they suppose that the salvation of men depends on their own conduct, or the right use of their free will, without giving the glory which is due to God, for that powerful, efficacious grace, which enables them to improve the means of grace, and brings them into a state of salvation,

(2.) As the result of the former, they suppose that nothing absolute is contained in the decree of God, but his fore-knowledge, which is rather an act of his understanding, than his will; and therefore it seems to militate against his sovereignty and grace, and, to make his decrees depend on some conditions, founded in the free-will of man, which, according to them, are not the object of a peremptory decree. Thus having considered intelligent creatures, and more particularly men, as the objects of predestination.

IV. We proceed to the farther proof and explication of this doctrine; and, in order thereto, shall insist on the following propositions.

1. That it is only a part of mankind that were chosen to salvation.

2. That they who were chosen to it, as the end, were also chosen to sanctification, as the means thereof, And,

3. That they were chosen in Christ; which propositions are contained in that part of this answer, in which it is said, that God has chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof.

1. That some were chosen to salvation; not the whole race of mankind, but only those that shall be eventually saved: that the whole world is not the object of election appears from the known acceptance of the word, both in scripture, and in our

common modes of speaking; since to choose, as has been before observed, is to take, prefer, or esteem, one thing before another, or to separate a part from the whole, for our own proper use, and what remains is treated with neglect and disregard: accordingly it is not a proper way of speaking, to say that the whole is chosen; and therefore it follows, that if all mankind had been fore-ordained to eternal life, which God might have done if he had pleased, this would not have been called a purpose, according to election.

But there are other arguments more conclusive, than what results barely from the known sense of the word, which we shall proceed to consider, and therein make use of the same method of reasoning, which we observed, in proving that God fore-ordained whatever comes to pass, with a particular application thereof to the eternal state of believers. As we before observed, that the decree of God is to be judged of by the execution of it, in time; so it will appear, that those whom God in his actual providence and grace, prepares for, and brings to glory, he also before designed for it. Were I only to treat of those particular points in controversy, between us and the Pelagians, I would first consider the method which God takes in saving his people, and prove that salvation is of grace, or that it is the effect of the power of God, and not to be ascribed to the free-will of man, as separate from the divine influence; and then I would proceed to speak concerning the decree of God relating hereunto, which might then, without much difficulty, be proved: but being obliged to pursue the same method in which things are laid down, in their respective connexion, we must sometimes defer the more particular proof of some doctrines, on which our arguments depend, to a following head, to avoid the repetition of things; therefore, inasmuch as the execution of God's decree, and his power and grace manifested therein, will be insisted on in some following answers, we shall, at present, take this for granted, or shall speak but very briefly to it.

(1.) It appears that it is only a part of mankind that are chosen to be made partakers of grace and glory, inasmuch as these invaluable privileges are conferred upon, or applied to no more than a part of mankind: if all shall not be saved, then all were not chosen to salvation; for we are not to suppose that God's purpose, relating hereunto, can be frustrated, or not take effect; or if there be a manifest display of discriminating grace in the execution of God's decree relating thereunto, there is, doubtless, a discrimination in his purpose, and that is what we call election. This farther appears from some scriptures, which represent those who are saved as a remnant: thus when the apostle is speaking of God's casting away the

greatest part of the Jewish nation, he says of some of them notwithstanding, that *at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace*, Rom. xi. 5. that is, there are some among them who are brought to embrace the faith of the gospel, and to be made partakers of the privileges that accompany salvation: these are called a remnant; as when it is said, in Rom. ix. 27. *Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is no more than a remnant of them that shall be saved.* He doubtless speaks in this and other scriptures, concerning the eternal salvation of those who are described as a remnant, according to the election of grace.

Here it will be necessary for us to consider, that this remnant signifies only a small part of the Jewish church, selected, by divine grace, out of that nation, of whom the greater number were rejected by God; and that the salvation, here spoken of, is to be taken not for any temporal deliverance, but for that salvation which the believing Jews should be made partakers of in the gospel day, when the rejection of the others had its full accomplishment. That this may appear, we shall not only compare this scripture with the context, but with that in Hosea, from whence it is taken: as to what respects the context, the apostle, in ver. 2. expresses his *great heaviness, and continual sorrow of heart*, for the rejection of that nation in general, which they had brought upon themselves; but yet he encourages himself, in ver. 6. with this thought, that *the word of God*, that is, the promise made to Abraham relating to his spiritual seed, who were given to expect greater blessings, than those which were contained in the external dispensation of the covenant of grace, should not *take none effect*, since, though the whole nation of the Jews, who were of Israel, that is, Abraham's natural seed, did not attain those privileges; yet a part of them, who are here called Israel, and elsewhere a remnant, chosen out of that nation, should be made partakers thereof; the former are called *The children of the flesh*, in ver. 8. the latter, by way of eminence, *The children of the promise*; these are styled, in ver. 23, 24. *The vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, to whom he designed to make known the riches of his glory, namely, those whom he had called; not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, which he intends by that remnant, which were chosen out of each of them, for so the word properly signifies.** And this sense is farther confirmed, by the quotation out of the prophecy of Hosea, chap. i. 10. compared with another taken out of the prophecy of Isaiah, chap. x. 22. both which speak only of a remnant that shall be saved, when the righteous judgments

* Οὐ μόνον ἐξ Ἰσραηλιν. non solum ex Judæis; that is, those who are called for, not among the Jews, as distinguished from the rest of them that were rejected

of God were poured forth, on that nation in general; and the prophet Hosea adds another promise relating to them, which the apostle takes notice of, namely, that *in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God*, which plainly respects this remnant; for he had before prophesied concerning the nation in general, *Ye are not*, that is, ye shall not be my people, and *I will not be your God*; so that here is a great salvation foretold, which, they, among the Jews, should be made partakers of, who were fore-ordained to eternal life, when the rest were rejected.

Object. The prophet seems to speak, in this scripture, of a temporal salvation, inasmuch as it is said, in the words immediately following, *Then shall the children of Judah, and the children of Israel, be gathered together, and shall appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land, viz. of Babylon, for great shall be the day of Jezreel.* Therefore this remnant, here spoken of, which should be called the sons of the living God, respects only such as should return out of captivity, and consequently not the election of a part, to wit, the believing Jews, to eternal life: for it is plain, that, when this prediction was fulfilled, they were to *appoint themselves one head*, or governor, namely, Zerubbabel, or some other, that should be at the head of affairs, and help forward their flourishing state, in, or after their return from captivity.

Answer. It seems very evident, that part of this prophecy, viz. chap. iii. 5. respects the happiness of Israel, at that time, when *they should seek the Lord their God, and David their King, and should fear the Lord and his goodness, in the latter days*; therefore why may not this verse also, in chap. i. in which it is said, that they shall be called the sons of the living God, have its accomplishment in the gospel-day, when they should adhere to Christ, who is called, *David their King*? The only difficulty which affects this sense of the text is, its being said, that they shall return to their own land, under the conduct of a *Head*, or governor, whom they should *appoint over them*, which seems to favour the sense contained in the objection: but the sense of the words would be more plain, if we render the text, instead of [THEN] *And the children of Judah, &c.* as it is rendered in most translations, and is most agreeable to the sense of the Hebrew word.* According to our translation, it seems to intimate, that the prophet is speaking of something mentioned in the foregoing verse; and inasmuch as the latter respects their return from the captivity, therefore the former must do so: whereas if we put *and*, instead of *then*,

the meaning of both verses together is this: there are two blessings which God promised, namely, that a part of the Jewish nation should be made partakers of the saving blessings of the covenant of grace, which was to have its accomplishment when they were brought to believe in Christ, by the gospel, or when this remnant, taken out from them, should be saved; and there is also another blessing promised to the whole nation, which should be conferred upon them, when they returned from the Babylonish captivity.

If it be objected, to this sense of the text, that their return from captivity is mentioned after that promise, of their being called the *sons of the living God*, therefore it cannot be supposed to relate to a providence that should happen before it; I need only reply to this, that it is very usual, in scripture, for the Holy Ghost, when speaking concerning the privileges which the church should be made partakers of, not to lay them down in the same order in which they were to be accomplished; and therefore, why may we not suppose, that this rule may be applied to this text? And accordingly the sense is this: the prophet had been speaking, in the tenth verse, of that great salvation, which this remnant of the Jews, converted to Christianity, should be made partakers of in the gospel-day; and then he obviates an objection, as though it should be said, How can this be, since the Jews are to be carried into captivity, and there broken, scattered, and, as it were ruined? In answer to this, the prophet adds, that the Jews should not be destroyed in the captivity, but should be delivered, and return to their own land, and so should remain a people, till this remnant was gathered out of them, who were to be made partakers of these spiritual privileges under the gospel-dispensation, as mentioned in the foregoing words.

Thus having endeavoured to prove, that this remnant, spoken of in Rom. xi. are such as should be made partakers of eternal salvation, we may now apply this to our present argument. If that salvation, which this remnant was to be made partakers of, be the effect of divine power, as the apostle says, in Rom. ix. 16. *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God, that sheweth mercy*; and if it be the gift of divine grace, as he says elsewhere, in Eph. ii. 8. *By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*; then it follows from hence, that God designed, before-hand, to give them these blessings; and if he designed them only for this remnant, then it is not all, but a part of mankind, to wit, those that shall be eventually saved, that were chosen to salvation.

(2.) The doctrine of election may be farther proved, from God's having foreknown whom he will sanctify and save. If

will be allowed, that God knows all things, and consequently that he knows all things that are future, and so not only those whom he has saved, but whom he will save. We need not prove that God fore-knew all things, for that is not denied by those who are on the other side of the question, or, at least, by very few of them; and, indeed, if this were not an undoubted truth, we could not depend on those predictions, which respect things that shall come to pass; and these not only such as are the effects of necessary causes, or things produced according to the common course, or laws of nature, but those which are contingent, or the result of the free-will of man, which have been foretold, and consequently were fore-known by God; and if it be allowed that he fore-knew whatever men would be, and do, let me farther add, that this foreknowledge is not barely an act of the divine mind, taking a fore-view of, or observing what others will be, or do, without determining that his actual providence should interest itself therein; therefore it follows, that if he fore-knew the salvation of those who shall be eventually saved, he fore-knew what he would do for them, as a means conducive thereunto; and if so, then he determined, before-hand, that he would bring them to glory; but this respects only a part of mankind, who were chosen by him to eternal life.

In this sense we are to understand those scriptures that set forth God's eternal purpose to save his people, as an act of fore-knowledge: thus, in Rom. xi. 2. *God hath not cast away his people, whom he fore-knew*, that is, he hath not cast them all away, but has reserved to himself a *remnant, according to the election of grace*. That he either had, or soon designed, to cast away the greatest number of the Jewish nation, seems very plain, from several passages in this chapter: thus, in verses 17, 19. he speaks of *some of the branches being broken off*, and ver. 22. of God's *severity*, by which we are to understand his vindictive justice in this dispensation: But yet we are not to suppose, says the apostle, that God has cast them all away, as in ver. 1. and so he mentions himself, as an instance of the contrary, as though he should say, *I am called, and sanctified, and chosen, though I am an Israelite*.

Moreover, God's not casting away his remnant of the Israelites, being the result of his fore-knowledge, does not barely respect his knowing what they should be, or do, whom he had chosen to eternal life, for it is represented as a discriminating act of favour; whereas, in other respects, they, who are rejected by him, are as much the objects of his knowledge, as any others, since the omniscience of God is not the result of his will; but it is a perfection founded in his nature, and therefore not arbitrary, but necessary.

Again, the apostle, in 1 Pet. i. 2. speaks of some who were *elect*, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, unto obedience, &c. that is, not chosen, because of any obedience performed by them, which God foreknew; for this is considered, as the result of his fore-knowledge, not the cause of it; and this word is yet farther explained in another place, where it is used, when the apostle says, in 2 Tim. ii. 19. *The Lord knoweth them that are his.* He had before been speaking of the faith of some, who professed the gospel, being overthrown; nevertheless, says he, that *foundation* of hope, which God has laid in the gospel, is not hereby shaken, but *stands sure*; the faithful shall not be overthrown, for *the Lord knoweth them that are his*, that is, he knows who are the objects of his love, who shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation; so that God's fore-knowledge, considered as a distinguishing privilege, is not to be understood barely of his knowing how men will behave themselves, and so, taking his measures from thence, as though he first knew what they would do, and then resolved to bestow his grace; but he knows whom he has set apart for himself, or designed to save, and, with respect to them, his providence will influence their conduct, and prevent their apostasy.

God's knowledge, in scripture, is sometimes taken for his approving, or loving, those who are the objects thereof: thus he says unto Moses, in Exod. xxxiii. 17. *Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name*, where one expression explains the other, and so it imports a knowledge of approbation; and, on the other hand, when our Saviour says to some, in Matt. vii. 23. *I will profess unto you, I never knew you*, it is not to be supposed that he did not know they would behave themselves, or what they would do against his name and interest in the world; but *I never knew you*, that is, I never approved of you, and accordingly, it follows, *Depart from me, ye that work iniquity*; and when it is said concerning knowledge, as applied to man, in John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God*; no one supposes that a speculative knowledge of divine truths will give any one ground to conclude his right to eternal life; therefore to know God, is to love, to delight in him: and the same is applied, by the apostle, to God's loving man, when he says, in 1 Cor. viii. 3. *If any man love God, the same is known of him*, that is, beloved by him. Now if God's knowing his people signifies his loving them, then his fore-knowing them must signify his determining to do them good, and to bestow grace and glory upon them, which is the same as to choose them to eternal life: he fore-knew what he designed to confer upon them; for he *prepared a kingdom for them, from the foundation of the world*.

Matt. xxv. 34. which is the same with his having, from the beginning, chosen them to salvation.

Object. As all actions, performed by intelligent creatures, as such, suppose knowledge, so their determinations are the result of fore-knowledge, for the will follows the dictates of the understanding; therefore we must suppose God's fore-knowledge, to be antecedent to, and the ground and reason of his determinations. This the apostle seems to intimate, when he says, in Rom. viii. 29. *Whom he did fore-know, he did predestinate*, that is, he had a perfect knowledge of their future conduct, and therefore determined to save them.

Answ. I do not deny that, according to the nature of things, we first consider God as knowing, and then as willing: but this does not hold good, with respect to his knowing all things future; for we are not to suppose that he first knows that a thing shall come to pass, and then wills that it shall. It is true, he first knows what he will do, and then does it; but, to speak of a knowledge in God, as conversant about the future state, or actions of his people, without considering them as connected with his power and providence, (which is the immediate cause thereof) I cannot think consistent with the divine perfections.

As for this scripture, *Whom he did fore-know, them he did predestinate*, we are not to suppose, that the meaning is, that God fore-knew that they, whom he speaks of, would be conformed to the image of his Son, and then as the result hereof, determined that they should; for their being conformed to Christ's image, consists in their exercising those graces which are agreeable to the temper and disposition of his children, or brethren, as they are here called; and this conformity to his image is certainly the result of their being called: but their calling as well as justification and glorification, is the consequence of their being fore-known; therefore God's fore-knowing here, must be taken in the same sense as it is in the scriptures, but now referred to; for his having loved them before the foundation of the world, or chosen them to enjoy those privileges which are here mentioned.

(3.) It farther appears, that there is a number chosen out of the world to eternal life, from the means which God has ordained for the gathering a people out of it, to be made partakers of the blessings which he has reserved for them in heaven. This is what we generally call the means of grace; and from hence it appears, that there is a chosen people, whose advantage is designed hereby. For the making out of this argument, let it be considered,

1st. That there always has been a number of persons, whom God, by his distinguishing providence, has separated from the world, who have enjoyed the ordinances, or means of grace,

and to whom the promises of eternal life have been made. We do not say that these are all chosen to eternal life; but it appears, from the design of providence herein, that there have been some, among them who were ordained to eternal life. If God gives the means of grace to the church, it is an evident token that some are designed to have grace bestowed upon them, and consequently brought to glory.

2dly. They who have been favoured with these means of grace, have had some peculiar marks of the divine regard to them. Thus we read, in the early ages of the world, of the distinction between those, who had the special presence of God among them, and others, who were deprived of it; as Cain is said, *to go out from the presence of the Lord*, Gen. iv. 16. as one, who, together with his posterity, was deprived of the means of grace, and also of God's covenant, in which he promised to be a God to some, from which privilege others were excluded: thus he was called the *God of Shem*, chap. ix. 16. and afterwards of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, Exod. iii. 6. whose descendants were hereby given to expect the ordinances and means of grace, and many instances of that special grace, which a part of them should be made partakers of: and would he have made this provision, for a peculiar people, in so discriminating a way, if there had not been a remnant among them, according to the election of grace, to whom he designed to manifest himself here, and bring to glory hereafter? No, he would have neglected, or over-looked them as he did the world; whereas both they and their seed had the promises of the covenant of grace made to them which argues, that there was a remnant among them, whom God designed hereby to bring into a state of grace and salvation, and, in this respect, they are said to be the objects of divine love.

This leads us to consider the meaning of that text, which is generally insisted on, as a very plain proof of this doctrine, in Rom. ix. 11, 12, 13. *The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election, might stand; not of works, but of him that calleth: It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* Here is an express mention of the purpose of God, according to election, and Jacob is, pursuant thereunto, said to be the object of divine love. For the understanding of which, let us consider the sense that is given of it, by those on the other side of the question; and how far it may be allowed of, and what there is in the words to prove this doctrine, and wherein our sense of them differs from their's.

It is supposed, by those who deny particular election, that Jacob and Esau are not here considered in a personal capacity,

but that the apostle speaks of their respective descendants, as referring to two divine predictions; in one of which, Gen. xxv. 23. God told Rebekah, before her two sons were born, that *two nations were in her womb; and the elder, that is, the posterity of Esau, should serve the younger, namely, that of Jacob; and in the other, Mal. i. 2, 3. he says, I loved Jacob, and hated Esau, and laid his mountains waste; so that if, in both these scriptures, referred to by the apostle, nothing else be intended but the difference that should be put between them as to the external dispensations of providence, or that Jacob's family, in future ages should be in a more flourishing state than that of Esau, we must not suppose that he designed thereby to represent them as chosen to, or excluded from eternal life.*

This seems a very plausible sense of the text; but yet the apostle's words may very well be reconciled with those two scriptures, cited to enervate the force of the argument taken from it; and at the same time, it will not follow from thence, that there is no reference had to the doctrine of eternal election therein. Therefore,

1. We will not deny, when it is said, *Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated*, that their respective descendants were intended in this prediction, yet it will not follow from hence, that Jacob and Esau, personally considered, were not also included. Whoever reads their history, in the book of Genesis, will evidently find in one the marks and characters of a person chosen to eternal life; whereas, in the other, we have no account of any regard which he expressed to God or religion, therefore he appears to have been rejected; yet,

2. So far as it respects the posterity of Jacob and Esau we are not to suppose that God's having loved the one, and rejected the other, implies nothing else, but that Jacob's posterity had a better country allotted for them, or exceeded Esau's in those secular advantages, or honours, which were conferred upon them. This seems to be the principal sense, which they, on the other side of the question, give of the apostle's words; when comparing them with those of the prophet Malachi, who, speaking concerning Esau's being hated, explains it, as relating *to his lands being laid waste for the dragons of the wilderness.* This had been foretold by some other prophets, Jer. xlix. 17, 18. Ezek. xxxv. 7, 9. Obed. ver. 10. and had its accomplishment soon after the Jews were carried captive into Babylon, from which time they ceased to be a nation; but, certainly, though this be that particular instance of hatred, which the prophet Malachi refers to, yet there is more contained in the word, as applied to them by the apostle Paul. It is true, the prophet designs, in particular to obviate an objection which the Jews are represented as making, against the divine dispensa-

tions towards them, as though they had not such an appearance of love, as he supposes them to have had, therefore they are brought in as speaking to this purpose: how canst thou say, that God has loved us, who have continued seventy years captives in Babylon, and since our return from thence, have been exposed to many adverse dispensations of providence? The prophet's reply is to this effect: that, notwithstanding, they still remained a nation, and therefore were in this respect, more the objects of the divine regard, than the posterity of Esau were, which is represented as hated, for they never returned unto their former state; or what attempts soever they made to recover it, they were all to no purpose. This the prophet alleges, as a sufficient answer to the Jews' objection, in the same sense in which they understood the words, *love* or *hatred*; but, doubtless more than this was contained in the prediction before Jacob and Esau were born, and in the apostle's application of it, in the text before-mentioned. If nothing were intended but outward prosperity, or their vying with each other in worldly grandeur, Esau's posterity, in this respect, might be concluded to have been preferable to Jacob's; thus when they are reckoned, by their genealogies, Gen. xxxvi. they are many of them described as dukes and kings who made a considerable figure in the world. When Jacob's posterity were few in number, and bondmen in the land of Egypt, and when the Israelites were carried captive into Babylon, the Edomites are represented by the prophet, as looking on, and rejoicing in their destruction, as being, at that time, in all appearance, secure, and enjoying their former liberty.

Neither could this love or hatred signify nothing else but the descendants of Jacob being planted in a more fruitful soil; for there is little difference put between them, in this respect, in the patriarchal benediction pronounced by their father, who tells Jacob, that God *would give him the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine*; and to Esau he says, *Thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above*, chap. xxvii. 28, compared with 39. therefore, when one is described, in the prediction, as loved, and the other as hated, we are not to suppose, that outward prosperity on the one hand, or adversity on the other, are principally intended thereby, for that might be said of both of them by turns; therefore let me add,

3. That God's loving or hating, as applied to the posterity of Jacob or Esau, principally respects his determining to give or deny the external blessings of the covenant of grace, or the means of grace, and therewith many special tokens of his favour. In Jacob's line the church was established, out of which, as has been before observed, there was a remnant chosen, and

brought to eternal life ; how far this may be said of Esau's, is hard to determine.

Object. 1. But to this it will be objected, that Job and his friends were of Esau's posterity, as is more than probable ; but these were far from being rejected of God.

Answ. To this it may be replied, that a few single instances are not sufficient to overthrow the sense we have given of this divine oracle, since the rejection of Esau's posterity may take its denomination from the far greater number thereof, without including in it every individual, as it is very agreeable to the sense of many scriptures. Moreover, we may consider, that these lived, as we have sufficient ground to conclude, before the seed of Jacob were increased, and advanced to be a distinct nation, as they were after their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage ; as also before that idolatry, which first overspread the land of Chaldea, in Abraham's time, had universally extended itself over the country of Idumea, where Esau's family was situate ; so that it doth not follow from hence, because this prediction did not take place in a very considerable degree, in the first descendants from him, that therefore it does not respect their rejection, as to what concerns the spiritual privileges of that people afterwards. And, indeed, idolatry seems to have had some footing in the country where Job lived, even in his time, which gave him occasion to exculpate himself from the charge thereof, when he signifies, that *he had not beheld the sun when it shineth, or the moon walking in brightness, and his heart had not been secretly enticed, or his mouth kissed his hand*, Job xxxi. 26, 27. alluding to some modes of worship, practised by idolaters in his day, who gave divine honour to the sun and moon ; and, soon after his time, before Israel had taken possession of Canaan, there seems to have been an universal defection of the Edomites from the true religion, otherwise, doubtless, Moses might, without any difficulty, have got leave to have passed through their country, in his way to the land of Canaan, which he requested in a most friendly and obliging manner, but to no purpose, Numb. xx. 14—21. especially considering they had no reason to fear that they would do any thing against them in a hostile manner ; therefore the unfriendly treatment they met with from them, proceeded from the same spring with that of the Amalekites, and other bordering nations, namely, they had all revolted from the God and religion of their father Abraham ; so that this prediction seems to have been fulfilled, before the promise, respecting Jacob's posterity, in any considerable degree, began to take place.

Having briefly considered this objection, we return to the argument, namely, that God's loving or hating, in this scripture, as it has a relation to the distinct nations that descended

from Jacob and Esau, includes in it his determining to give or deny the external privileges of the covenant of grace, which we generally call the ordinances, or means of grace. These were the spiritual and more distinguishing instances of divine favour, which Jacob was given to expect, when he obtained the blessing. As for the double portion, or the greatest part of the paternal estate, that descended with it, together with the honour of having dominion over their brethren, or a right (as it is probable they had) to act as civil magistrates in their respective families, these were all small things, if compared with those spiritual privileges, wherein God's love to Jacob, and his posterity, was principally expressed; it was this which is so often signified by God's being the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: In other respects, Esau was blessed as well as Jacob; for the apostle, speaking concerning that part of Isaac's prediction, which respected the temporal advantage of their posterity, says, that *he blessed Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come*, Heb. xi. 20. yet Esau was rejected, as to what concerns the spiritual part of the blessing, which was his birth-right, that he is said to have *despised*, Gen. xxv. 34. and, for this reason, he is styled, by the apostle, a *profane person*, Heb. xii. 16. If it had been only a temporal privilege that he contemned, it might have been a sin; but it could not then have been properly said to have been an instance of profaneness, for that has respect only to things sacred; therefore it evidently appears, that the blessings which Esau despised, and God had before designed to confer on Jacob, and his seed, as a peculiar instance of his love, were of a spiritual nature.

Object. 2. It will be farther objected, that men's enjoying the external privileges of the covenant of grace, has no immediate reference to their salvation, or election to it.

Answ. Since salvation is not to be attained, but by and under these means of grace, we must conclude, that whenever God bestows and continues them, to a church or nation, he has a farther view therein, namely, the calling some, by his grace, to partake of those privileges that accompany salvation. If there were no such blessings to be conferred on the world, there would be no means of grace, and consequently no external dispensation of the covenant of grace; for it is absurd to suppose that any thing can be called a means, where all are excluded from the end which they refer to; therefore the sum of this argument is, that God had a peculiar love to the posterity of Jacob, and accordingly he designed to give them those privileges which were denied to others, namely, the means of grace, which he would not have done, had he not intended to make them effectual to the salvation of some of them; and this purpose, relating hereunto, is what is called election, which, though

it be not applicable to all the seed of Jacob ; for all, as the apostle says elsewhere, are not Israel who are of Israel ; yet, inasmuch as there was a remnant of them, to whom it was applied, they are that happy seed, who are represented, by the apostle, as the objects of God's compassion, or *vessels unto honour, in whom he designed to make known the riches of his glory, having, in this respect, afore prepared them unto glory*, Rom. ix. 15, 21, 23.

Thus having considered that God has chosen a part of mankind to salvation, we may, without being charged with a vain curiosity, enquire whether this privilege belongs to the greater or smaller part of mankind, since the scripture goes before us in this matter. If we judge of the purpose of God by the execution thereof, it must be observed, that hitherto the number of those, who have been made partakers of the special privileges of the gospel, has been comparatively small. If we look back to those ages before our Saviour's incarnation, what a very inconsiderable proportion did Israel bear to the rest of the world, who were left in darkness and ignorance ! And, after this, our Saviour observes, that *many were called, in his time, but few were chosen*, Matt. xx. 16. and he advises to *enter in at the strait gate*, chap. vii. 13, 14. by which he means the way to eternal life, concerning which he says, that *there are, comparatively, few that find it*. And when the gospel had a greater spread, and wonderful success attended the preaching thereof, by the apostles, and many nations embraced the Christian faith, in the most flourishing ages of the church, the number of Christians, and much more of those who were converted, and effectually called, was comparatively small. Whether the number of true believers shall be greater, when there is a greater spread of the gospel, and a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, to render it more successful, as we hope and pray for that time, and that not altogether without scripture-warrant ; I say, whether then the fewness of those who have hitherto been chosen and sanctified, shall not be compensated, by a far greater number, who shall live in that happy age of the church, it is not for us to be over-curious in our enquiries about : However, we may determine this from scripture, that, in the great day, when all the elect shall be gathered together, their number shall be exceeding great, if what the apostle says refers to this matter, as some suppose it does, when he speaks of a *great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, who stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands*, Rev. vii. 9. But these things are no farther to be searched into, than as we may take occasion, from thence, to enquire whether we are of that number : and, if we are, we ought to bless God for

his discriminating grace, which he has magnified therein. And this leads us to consider,

2. That they who are chosen to salvation, are also chosen to sanctification, as the means thereof: As the end and means are not to be separated in the execution of God's decree, so they are not to be separated in our conception of the decree itself; for, since God brings none to glory, but in a way of holiness, the same he determined to do from all eternity, that is, to make his people holy, as well as happy; or first to give them faith and repentance, and then, the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls.

There are many scriptures, in which the purpose of God, relating hereunto, is plainly intended; as when it is said, *He hath chosen us that we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love*, Eph. i. 4. and elsewhere the apostle tells others, that *God had, from the beginning, chosen them unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*, 2 Thes. ii. 13. and the apostle James saith, that *God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*. James ii. 5. and elsewhere the apostle Paul speaks of persons being *predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son*, which he explains of their being *called, justified, and glorified*, Rom. viii. 29. and it is also said, speaking of those who were converted under the apostle Paul's ministry, *as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed*, Acts xiii. 48. accordingly they were ordained to one as well as the other.

The argument, which seems very plainly contained in these, and such-like scriptures, is, that God's eternal purpose respects the grace that his people are made partakers of here, as well as the glory that they expect hereafter, which are inseparably connected; this cannot reasonably be denied by those who are not willing to give into the doctrine of election: But if the inseparable connexion between faith and salvation be allowed, as having respect to the execution of God's purpose, it will be no difficult matter to prove that this was determined by him, or that his purpose respects faith, as well as salvation. Therefore the main thing in controversy between us is, whether this grace, that accompanies salvation, is wrought by the power of God, or whether it depends on the free-will of man. That which induces them to deny that God has chosen persons to faith, is this supposition; that that which is the result of man's free-will, cannot be the object of God's unchangeable purpose, and consequently that God has not chosen men to it. This is the hinge on which the whole controversy turns, and if the doctrine of special efficacious grace be maintained, all the prejudices against that of election would soon be removed; but this we must refer to its proper place, being obliged to insist on that

subject in some following answers;* and, what may be farther considered, concerning the absoluteness of election, as one of the properties that belong to it, under a following head, will add some strength to our present argument. All that we shall do, at present, shall be to defend our sense of the scriptures, but now referred to, to prove that election respects sanctification, as well as salvation; and that it does so, is plain from the first of them, in Eph. i. 4. which proves that holiness is the end of election, or the thing that persons are chosen to, as appears from the grammatical construction of the words: It is not said he had chosen us, considered as holy, and without blame, but that we should be holy; † that which is plainly intended, as the result of election, cannot be the cause and reason of it.

As to what the apostle says, in 2 Thess. ii. 13. *God hath, from the beginning, chosen you unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*, that plainly intimates, that sanctification is the end of election; and therefore the principal answer that some give to it, which appears to be an evasion, is, that the apostle does not speak of eternal election, because God is said to have done this from the beginning, that is, as one explains the words, from the beginning of the apostle's preaching to them: But if we can prove that there is such a thing as a purpose to save, it will be no difficult matter to prove the eternity of the divine purpose; and this is not disagreeable to the sense, in which the words, *From the beginning*, are elsewhere used. ‡

As for that other scripture, in James ii. 5. where it is said, *God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*; here the words, *That they may be*, § (which are inserted by the apostle, in the scripture but now mentioned) may, without any strain on the sense thereof, be supplied, and so the meaning is, *God hath chosen them, that they might be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*: But if it will not be allowed, that these words ought to be supplied, the sense is the same, as though they were these, "God has chosen the poor of this world, who are described as rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom;" and so we distinguish between election's being founded upon faith, and faith's being a character by which the elect are described; and, if faith be a character by which they are described, then he who enabled them to believe, purposed to give them this grace, that is, he chose them to faith, as well as to be heirs of the kingdom.

As for that other text, in Rom. viii. 29. *He hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son*; these words, *to be*, are supplied by our translators, as I apprehend they ought,

* See Questions lxxvii, lxxviii, lxxii, lxxv, lxxvi. † *ma iustis agitur*. ‡ See Prov. viii. 23. § *ma iustis agitur*.

for the reason but now mentioned, taken from the parallel scripture, in Eph. i. 4. But, to evade the force of the argument, to prove that we are predestinated to grace, as well as to glory, they who deny this doctrine, give a very different turn to the sense of this text, as though the apostle only intended hereby, that the persons, whom he speaks of, were predestinated to an afflicted state in this life, a state of persecution, in which they are said to be conformed to the image of Christ;* But though it is true that believers are said to be made partakers of the sufferings of Christ, and, by consequence, are predestinated thereunto, yet that does not appear to be the sense of this text, as not well agreeing with the context; for the apostle had been describing those, whom he speaks of, as loving God, and called according to his purpose, and then considers them as predestinated, to be conformed to the image of his Son, which must be meant of their being made partakers of those graces, in which their conformity to Christ consists, as well as in sufferings; and then he considers them, in the following verse, as *called, justified, and glorified*; and all this is the result of their being predestinated.

As for that scripture, in Acts xiii. 48. *As many as were ordained to eternal life believed*; their faith is here considered as the result of their being ordained to eternal life, or they are represented as predestinated to the means, as well as the end.

Object. 1. But it will be objected by some, that this is not agreeable to the sense of the Greek word here used; † partly, because it is not said they were fore-ordained to eternal life, but *ordained*; and the genuine sense thereof is, that they were disposed to eternal life, and consequently to faith, as the means thereof. And this is also taken in a different sense; some suppose that it imports a being disposed, by the providence of God, or set in order, or prepared for eternal life; others, agreeably to the exposition which Socinus, and some of his followers, give of the text, (which sense a late learned writer falls in with ‡) understand the words, as signifying their having an internal disposition, or being well inclined, as having an earnest desire after eternal life, for which reason they believed; or were fitted and prepared for eternal life, by the temper of their minds, and accordingly they believed.

Ans. 1. If the word, which we render *ordained*, be justly translated, the thing which they were ordained to, being something that was future, it is, in effect, the same, as though it were said they were fore-ordained to it, as Beza observes. §

2. Suppose the word ought rather to be translated, they were disposed unto eternal life; that seems to contain in it a

* *Vid. Grot. in loc.* † *Tetragramm.* ‡ *Vid. Whitby in loc.* § *Vid. Beza in loc.*

Answ. When the apostle says, as many as were ordained to eternal life believed, we are not hereby led into this hidden mystery of the divine will, so as to be able to judge, whether more than they that then believed, were ordained to it in that place; but the meaning is, that there were many that believed, and that all of them were ordained to eternal life; and so it is as though he should say, that God has a people in this place, whom he has ordained to eternal life, who were to be converted, some at one time, others at another: some of them were converted at this time, to wit, a part of those who were ordained to eternal life, if more were ordained to it; so that the objection supposes that the words, which we render, *as many as*, imports the whole number of the elect in that place; whereas, we think that the meaning is, that there were many who believed, and these were only such who were ordained to eternal life, of which there might be many more, who then did not believe, but hereafter should; but this remained a secret, which the inspired writer was not led into, nor we by him.

Object. 3. There is another objection, which the learned author,* (whose paraphrase on the New Testament, and discourse on election, I am sometimes obliged to refer to in considering the objections that are made against this doctrine) proposes with a great deal of warmth; and if no reply can be given to it, it will be no wonder to find many prejudiced against it; his words are these: "If the reason why these men believed he only this, that they were men ordained to eternal life, the reason why the rest believed not, can be this only, that they were not ordained by God to eternal life: and, if so, what necessity could there be that the word of God should be first preached to them, as we read, ver. 46. was it only that their damnation might be the greater? This seems to charge that Lover of souls, whose tender mercies are over all his works, with the greatest cruelty, seeing it makes him determine, from all eternity, not only that so many souls as capable of salvation as any other, shall perish everlastingly; but also to determine, that the dispensations of his providence shall be such towards them, as necessarily tends to the aggravation, of their condemnation; and what could, even their most malicious and enraged enemy, do more? What is it the very devil aims at, by all his temptations, but this very end, viz. the aggravation of our future punishment? And therefore to assert that God had determined that his word should be spoken to these Jews, for this very end, is to make God as instrumental to their ruin, as the very devil, and seemeth wholly irreconcilable with his declarations, that he would

* See Dr. Whistler in loc

“ have all men to be saved, and would not that any man should “ perish.”

Ans. According to this author, we must either quit the doctrine we are maintaining, provided it be the same as he represents it to be, or else must be charged by all mankind, with such horrid blasphemy, as is shocking to any one that reads it, as charging the Lover of souls with the greatest cruelty, and with acting in such a way, as their greatest enemy is said to do; determining, that the dispensations of his providence should tend to aggravate their condemnation, and that the gospel should be preached for this end, and no other. But let the blasphemy rest on his misrepresentation, and far be it from us to advance any such doctrine; therefore that which may be considered, in answer to it, is,

1. The immediate reason why men believe to eternal life, is, because God exerts the exceeding greatness of his power, whereby he works faith; and the reason of his exerting this power, is, because he determined to do it, as it is the execution of his purpose.

2. It does not follow, from hence, that the only reason why others do not believe, is, because they were not ordained to eternal life. It is true, indeed, that their not having been ordained to eternal life, or God's not having purposed to save them, is the reason why he does not exert that power that is necessary to work faith: and unbelief will certainly be the consequence thereof, unless man could believe without the divine energy; yet the immediate spring and cause of unbelief, is the corruption and perverseness of human nature which is chargeable on none else but man himself. We must certainly distinguish between unbelief's being the consequence of God's not working faith, whereby corrupt nature takes occasion to exert itself, as being destitute of preventing grace; and its being the effect hereof. Is God's denying the revengeful person, or the murderer, that grace, which would prevent his executing his bloody designs, the cause thereof? Or his denying to others the necessary supply of their present exigencies, the cause of their making use of unlawful means, by plundering others to subsist themselves? No more is his denying special grace, which he was not obliged to give to any, the cause of men's unbelief and impenitency; for that is to be assigned only to that wicked propensity of nature, which inclines us to sin, and not to the divine efficiency; and how farsoever this may be the result of God's determining to deny his grace, it is not to be reckoned the effect of that determination.

3. The design of the word's being preached, is not to aggravate the damnation of those that shall not believe, according to this vile suggestion; but that men might be hereby led to know

their duty and that the sovereignty of God, and the holiness of his law, which requires faith and repentance, as well as man's obligation hereunto might be made known to the world. I do not deny, but that unbelief, and the condemnation consequent thereupon, is aggravated by the giving of the gospel, for that appears from many scriptures, Matt. xi. 21. Luke x. 13. as when our Saviour upbraids Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, and other places, amongst whom he was conversant, with their unbelief, and represents their condemnation as greater than that of others, who were destitute of those privileges: But yet it is a malicious insinuation, to suppose we conclude that the gospel was given for this end; and we must still distinguish between the greater aggravation of condemnation's being the result of giving the gospel, or the remote consequence thereof, and its being the effect of it in those that reject the gospel, and much less the design of God in giving it.

4. God's denying that grace, which would have enabled men to believe, is not to be charged as an instance of cruelty, any more than his denying it to fallen angels, but it is rather a display of his justice. He was not obliged to give grace to any of the apostate race of man; shall therefore his denying the grace of faith be reckoned an instance of cruelty, when we consider the forfeiture that was before made thereof, and man's propensity to sin, which is chargeable only on himself?

5. God's purpose to deny the grace of faith to those whom he has not ordained to eternal life, is not inconsistent with that scripture, 1 Tim. ii. 4. in which it is said, that *he will have all men to be saved*; so that, as will be farther observed elsewhere,* it respects either God's determining that salvation should be applied to all sorts of men, or else his declaring by his revealed will, that it is the duty of all men to believe, and to acknowledge the truth, as made known to them in the gospel.

3. They who are elected to salvation, are chosen in Christ: thus it is expressly said, in Eph. i. 4. *He hath chosen us in him, before the foundations of the world*. We are not to suppose that the apostle intends hereby, that we are chosen for the sake of Christ, as though any of his mediatorial acts were the ground and reason thereof; for election is an act of sovereign grace, or is resolved into the good pleasure of the will of God, and is not to be accounted a purchased blessing; therefore when we speak of the concern of the Mediator, with relation hereunto, this is to be considered as a means ordained by God, to bring his elect to salvation rather than the foundation of their election. This proposition necessarily follows from the former; for if they, who are chosen to the end, are chosen to the means, then Christ's mediatorial acts being the highest and first means

* See *Quest. xlv, lxxiii.*

of salvation, God's eternal purpose respects this, as subservient thereunto.

There are some very considerable divines,* who distinguish between our being chosen in Christ, as an Head, and being chosen in him as a Redeemer; and accordingly, they conclude, that there are two distinct relations, in which the elect are said to stand to Christ, both which are mentioned by the apostle, when he says, *Christ is the Head of the church, and the Saviour of the body*, Eph. v. 23. and they are also mentioned distinctly elsewhere, *He is the Head of the body, the church*, and then it follows, that he *made peace through the blood of the cross*, Col. i. 18, 19, 20. and they add, that the elect are considered as his members, without any regard had to their fallen state; and that the blessings contained therein, are such as render their condition more honourable and glorious, than otherwise it would have been, had they been only considered as creatures, without any relation to him as their Head; and this Headship of Christ they extend not only to men, but to the holy angels, whom they suppose to be chosen, in this respect, in Christ, as well as men, and that it is owing hereunto that they have the grace of confirmation conferred upon them; and it also follows, from hence, that Christ would have been the Head of the election of grace, though man had not fallen, and that our fallen state rendered that other relation of Christ to his elect necessary; so that as they are chosen to salvation, they are chosen in him as a Redeemer, designed to bring about his great work for them, and, for this end, set up, as it is expressed, *from everlasting*, Prov. viii. 23.

This distinction of Christ's double relation to the elect, is, doubtless, designed by those who thus explain this doctrine to advance his glory; notwithstanding it remains still a matter of doubt to me, whether Christ's Headship over his church be not a branch of his Mediatorial glory; and, if so, it will be very difficult to prove that a Mediator respects any other than man, and him more particularly considered as fallen; and accordingly, God did not design hereby to advance him to an higher condition, than what was barely the result of his being a creature, but to deliver him from that state of sin and misery, into which he foresaw that he would plunge himself. Therefore, in considering the order of God's eternal purpose, relating to the salvation of his people, we must suppose that he first designed to glorify all his perfections in their redemption and salvation; and, in order hereunto, he fore-ordained, or appointed Christ to be their great Mediator, in whom he would be glorified, and by whom this work was to be brought about: He appointed him to be their Head, Surety, and Redeemer; first, to purchase

* See Dr Goodwin, vol. 2. of election.

salvation for them ; and then, to make them meet for it, in the same, order in which it is brought about by him in the execution thereof ; so that, as the glory of God, in the salvation of the elect, was the end, Christ's redemption was the means more immediately conducive thereunto, and, as such, he is said to be fore-ordained, to wit, to perform those offices that he executes as Mediator, 1 Pet. i. 20. and as Christ, when he was manifested in the flesh, did all things for his people, that were necessary to bring them to glory, he is, in God's purpose, considered as the great Mediator, by whom he designed this work should be brought about : thus he is set forth in the gospel, as a propitiation for sin ; and the apostle seems to speak of it, as what was the result of God's purpose, in Rom. iii. 25. whom God hath *set forth* to be a propitiation ; the Greek word * properly signifies, as it is observed in the marginal reference, *fore-ordained* so to be ; and accordingly, we must consider him as from all eternity in God's purpose, appointed to be the federal Head of those who are said to be chosen in him, and to have all the concerns of the divine glory, relating to their salvation, committed to his management.

V. We shall now consider the properties of election, and how the divine perfections are displayed therein, agreeably to what is said concerning it in scripture.

1. As it is taken for the purpose of God, relating to the sanctification or salvation of men, as distinguished from the execution thereof, it is eternal : This is evident, because God is eternal, his purposes must be concluded to be of equal duration with his existence ; for we cannot suppose that an infinitely wise and sovereign Being existed from all eternity, without any fore-thought, or resolution what to do, for that would be to suppose him to have been undetermined, or unresolved, when he first gave being to all things ; nor is it to be supposed that there are any new determinations in the divine will, for that would argue him to be imperfect, since this would be an instance of mutability in him, as much as it would be for him to alter his purpose ; but neither of these are agreeable to the idea of an infinitely perfect Being.

Moreover, if God's purpose, with respect to the salvation of men were not eternal, then it must be considered as a new after-thought arising in the divine mind, which, as to its first rise, is but, as it were, of yesterday, and consequently he would have something in him that is finite. If it be contrary to his omniscience to have new ideas of things, it is equally contrary to the sovereignty of his will to have new determinations, therefore all his purposes were eternal.

2. God's purpose relating to election, is infinitely wise and

* προθετο.

holy. This appears from the footsteps of infinite wisdom, and holiness, which are visible in the execution thereof, namely, in bringing men to grace and glory; nothing is more conspicuous than the glory of these perfections in the work of redemption, and the application thereof; as hereby the salvation of man is brought about in such a way, that the glory of all the divine perfections is secured, and the means made use of, as conducive thereunto, the most proper that could have been used, therefore it is a work of infinite wisdom. And inasmuch as herein God discovers the infinite opposition of his nature to sin, and thereby advances the glory of his holiness, it follows from hence, that these perfections of the divine nature had their respective concern, if we may so express it, in the purpose relating hereunto; for whatever glory is demonstrated in the execution of his purpose, that was certainly before included in the purpose itself.

3. The purpose of God, relating to the final state of man, is secret, or cannot be known, till he is pleased to discover it. Nothing is more obvious than this; for even the purposes or resolutions of creatures are secret, till they are made known by them: thus the apostle says, *What man knoweth the things of a man, that is, what he designs to do, save the spirit of a man, which is in him?* and infers, in the following words, *so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. and elsewhere he says, *Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?* Rom. xi. 34. And, for this reason, it is called, *The mystery of his will*, Eph. i. 9. and this also follows from its being eternal, therefore it was hid in God, from before the foundation of the world, and consequently would for ever have been so, had he not, by his works, or word, made some discoveries thereof, to those whom he first brought into being, and then gave some intimations of his purpose to them.

Therefore it could not have been known that God had purposed to save any, had he not revealed this in the gospel: much less have any particular persons ground to conclude themselves to be elected, without first observing those intimations which God has given, whereby they may arrive at the knowledge thereof. This head ought to be duly considered, by those who deny, and are prejudiced against this doctrine, though it be generally neglected in the methods they take to oppose it; for they will not consider the distinction we make between God's having chosen a person to eternal life, and a person's having a right to conclude that he is thus chosen; but take it for granted, that if there be such a thing as election, that we must necessarily determine ourselves to be the objects thereof, and ought to regulate our future conduct accordingly. It is from thence they

conclude, that the doctrine of election leads men to presumption, or gives them occasion to say, that they may live as they list; whereas we suppose that it is an instance of presumption in any one to determine that he is elected, unless there be some discovery hereof made to him; and this discovery cannot take its rise from God, unless it be accompanied with that holiness, which is, from the nature of the thing, inconsistent with our being led hereby to licentiousness. And here we take occasion to consider, that God does not make known his secret purpose, relating to this matter, to any, by inspiration, especially since that extraordinary dispensation of providence is ceased; and, indeed, it never was his ordinary way to discover it hereby to those, who, in other instances, were favoured with the gift of inspiration. The means therefore by which we come to the knowledge hereof, is, by God's giving certain marks, or evidences of grace, or by shewing us the effects of the divine power, in calling and sanctifying us, whereby we have a warrant to conclude that we were chosen to eternal life; and, whilst we make a right improvement thereof, and conclude that our judgment, concerning our state, is rightly founded, or not, by the holiness of our lives, we are in no danger of abusing this great and important doctrine, to the dishonour of God, or our own destruction.

This leads us to consider a distinction, which we are often obliged to make use of, when we speak concerning the will of God, as secret or revealed, by which we account for the sense of many scriptures, and take occasion from it to answer several objections that are brought against this doctrine. I am sensible that there is nothing advanced in defence thereof, which they, who are in the other way of thinking, are more prejudiced against, than this distinction, which they suppose to contain a reproachful idea of the divine Majesty, and is the foundation of many popular prejudices against the doctrine we are defending, as though we hereby intended that God has a secret meaning, different from what he reveals; or that we are not to judge of his intentions by those discoveries which he makes thereof, which it would be the highest reproach to charge any creature with, and contrary to that sincerity which he cannot be destitute of, but he is hereby rendered the object of detestation; therefore no one, who conceives of an holy God, in such a way as he ought to do, can entertain a thought, as though the least appearance thereof were applicable to him. However, this is the common misrepresentation that is made of this distinction. Whether it arises from its being not sufficiently explained by some; or a fixed resolution to decry the doctrine of election, and render it odious, as it must certainly be, if supported by a distinction, understood in so vile a sense, I will not determine. However, that we may remove this prejudice, and consider how it

is to be understood, in a sense more agreeable to the divine perfections, we shall proceed to explain it; and here we may observe,

First, That the will of God is sometimes taken, in scripture, for that which he has, from all eternity, determined, which is unchangeable, and shall certainly come to pass, which is impossible for any creature to disannul, resist, or render ineffectual; and it is such a branch of divine sovereignty, that to deny it, would be, in effect, to deny him to be God. This the apostle intends, when he represents the malicious and obstinate sinner as replying against God, and defending himself in his bold crimes, by saying, *Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?* Rom. ix. 19, 20, 21, 22. In answer to which, he asserts the sovereignty of God, and that he is not accountable to any for what he does, nor to be controuled by them; and this is also intended in another scripture, in Eph. i. 11. where it is said, that *God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*; and elsewhere he says, *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*, Isa. xlv. 10. This will of God is the rule of his own acting, and, as it determines the event of things, it is impossible for him to act contrary to it; and it is equally disagreeable to his perfections, to signify to his creatures, that he determines to do one thing, but will do another; therefore, in this sense, we are far from asserting that there is a revealed will of God, which contradicts his secret.

Secondly, We often read, in scripture, of the will of God, as taken for what he has prescribed to us, as a rule of duty; and also of our judging concerning the apparent event of things.

(1.) The will of God may be considered as a rule of duty, which is a well-known and proper sense of his revealed will: thus our Saviour teaches us to pray, *Let thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*; by which he principally intends his revealed will, or law. Enable us to yield obedience to thy law, in our measure, as thou art perfectly obeyed in heaven. So our Saviour says, *Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother*, Mark iii. 35. which can be meant of no other than his revealed will, or of his law, in which it is contained; because no one can act contrary to God's determination, which is that sense of his will, contained in the foregoing head; and, consequently, a doing his will, in that sense, would not have been laid down as a distinguishing character of those whom Christ preferred above all, who were related to him in the bonds of nature.

Again the apostle understands the will of God in this sense, when he says, *Thou knowest his will*, Rom. ii. 18. where he speaks to the Jews, who were instructed out of the law, in which it is contained; and elsewhere, Eph. vi. 6. he speaks of his will, as what is to be obeyed, and therefore gives this description of

faithful servants, that they *do the will of God*, namely, what he has commanded, *from the heart*. And there are many other scriptures thus to be understood; and this we call his revealed will, as it is the rule of duty and obedience.

(2.) The revealed will of God may be considered as a rule which he has given us, whereby we are to judge of the apparent event of things. I make this a branch of God's revealed will, inasmuch as sometimes he condescends to discover future events to his creatures, which otherwise they could never have known; but yet there is a difference, as to the manner of their judging thereof, pursuant to the intimations which he has given them. Accordingly, when God has told us expressly, that this or that particular thing shall come to pass, then we are infallibly sure concerning the event, and need no other rule to judge of it, but by considering it as revealed: As when God has said, that there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, and that Christ shall come to judgment, and receive his redeemed, and sanctified ones, to heaven, to behold his glory, we are infallibly assured of these events, because they are expressly revealed; and, when we speak of the secret and revealed will of God, as applicable to things of this nature, we intend nothing else hereby but what all will allow of, *viz.* that what would have been for ever a secret, had it not been discovered, is now revealed, and therefore ceases to be so; and in that sense, the revealed will of God, in all respects, agrees with his secret; in this case, we suppose that God expressly revealed the event.

But there are other instances, in which the event of things is not expressly revealed; as when God has only discovered to us what is the rule of our duty. Nevertheless, since it is natural for man, when any duty is commanded, to pass some judgment concerning the event thereof; and, inasmuch as we suppose the event not expressly revealed, it follows, that the judgment, which we pass concerning it, is only what appears to us, or what, according to our rule of judging, seems to be the probable event of things. In this case we are not infallibly assured concerning it; and when we pass a judgment relating thereunto, we may conclude that some consequences may attend our present duty, which, perhaps, will never come to pass. As if a general of an army gives forth a command to his soldiers, to march towards the enemy, they will readily conclude, that he designs, by this command, that they should enter on some action, which, had he expressly told them, he must either change his purpose, or else the event must certainly happen; but, inasmuch as he has not discovered this to them, all the judgment that they can form, at present, concerning it, is only such, as is founded on the appearance of things, and the event might probably afterwards shew, without any impeachment of his veracity or conduct here-

in, that his only design was to try whether his soldiers would obey the word of command, or not. Or if a king should order a number of malefactors to the place of execution, without discovering the event thereof, the apparent event is their immediate death; but if, pursuant to his secret purpose, he resolved, there to give forth a pardon to them, it cannot be supposed that he changed his purpose; but the event makes it appear, that his purpose was not then known; whatever the apparent event might be, his real design was to humble them for their crimes, and afterwards to pardon them.

It is only in such-like instances as these, that we apply this distinction to the doctrine that we are maintaining; and therefore it must be a very great stretch, of malicious insinuation, for any one to suppose, that hereby we charge God with insincerity in those declarations of his revealed will, by which we pass a probable judgment concerning the event of things. But to apply this to particular instances. God commanded Abraham to offer up his son Isaac, Gen. xxii. 2. whereas it is certain, unless we suppose that he altered his purpose, that he intended, not that he should lay his hand upon him, but, when Isaac was upon the altar, to forbid him to do it. Here was a great and a difficult duty, which Abraham was to perform pursuant to God's revealed will, which was the rule of his obedience; had Abraham known, before this, that God designed to hold his hand, and prevent him from striking the fatal blow, it had been no trial of his faith; for it would have been no difficult matter for him to have done every thing else. The holy patriarch knew well enough that God could prevent him from doing it; but this he had no ground to conclude, because he had no divine intimation concerning it; therefore that which appeared to him to be the event, was the loss of his son, and he reconciled this with the truth of the promise before given him, that *in Isaac his seed should be called*, by supposing that God, at some time or other, would *raise him from the dead*, as the apostle observes, Heb. xi. 19. therefore that which Abraham concluded as judging, not by an express revelation, but by the voice of providence, was, that Isaac must be slain by his hand: But this was contrary to the real event, as is evident, from the account thereof in scripture; and, consequently since the real event was agreeable to the divine determination, as all events are, it follows, that there is a difference between the will of God, determining the event of things, which shall certainly come to pass accordingly; and the revelation of his will, relating to what is the creatures present duty, which may, at the same time, appear to them, when judging only by the command, which is the rule of duty, and some circumstances that attend it, to be contrary to what will afterwards appear to have been

the real design of God therein. God's real design was to try Abraham's faith, and to prevent him from slaying his son, when he had given a proof of his readiness to obey him; but this remained, at first, a secret to Abraham, and the apparent design was, that he should slay him. Therefore there is a foundation for this distinction, as thus explained, concerning the secret and revealed will of God; the former belongs not to us, nor are we to take our measures from it, as being unknown: and, when the latter appears contrary to it, we must distinguish between two things, that are contrary in the same, and different respects; or between the judgment which we pass concerning events, which are apparent to us, and, at most, are only probable and conjectural, as we judge of the consequence of a duty commanded; and those events, which, though they are infallibly certain, yet are not revealed, nor can be known, till they come to pass. In this sense we understand the distinction between God's secret and revealed will, when they seem to oppose each other; which it was necessary for us thus to explain, inasmuch as we shall frequently have occasion to mention, and apply it, when we account for the difference that there seems to be, between the purpose of God, relating to the event of things, and our present views thereof, whereby we may understand and account for the difficulties contained in several scriptures, which I would have mentioned in this place, for the farther illustration hereof, had it been necessary. But this is sufficient to explain and vindicate it from the prejudices entertained against it, by those who are disposed to misrepresent what is said in defence of this doctrine.

From what has been said, concerning God's secret and revealed will, we may infer,

1st, That it is a great boldness, and unwarrantable instance of presumption, for any one to enter into, or judge of God's secret purpose, so as peremptorily to determine, beyond the present appearance of things, that this or that shall certainly come to pass, till he makes them known; for *secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever*, Duet. xxiv. 29. Therefore no one ought to determine that he is elected to salvation, before the work of grace is wrought, and, some way or other, made visible to him; or, on the other hand, to determine that he is rejected or reprobated, when he has no other ground to go upon, but uncertain conjecture, which would be a means to drive him to despair: that some are, indeed, elected, and others rejected, is no secret because God has revealed this in his word; so that we may assert it as a proposition, undoubtedly true, when we do not apply it to particular persons; and therefore this doctrine has not that pernicious tendency, which many pretend that it has.

2^{dly}, The first act of saving faith does not consist in our believing that we are elected; neither is it the duty of unregenerate persons, as such to apply this privilege to themselves any more than to conclude themselves rejected: But our business, is, so long as the purpose of God remains a secret to us, to attend on the means of grace, hoping and waiting for the display of divine power, in effectually calling us; and afterwards for the Spirit's testimony, or seal, to be set to it, whereby he discovers his own work; and then it may, in some measure, be reckoned a branch of his revealed will and will afford us matter of thanksgiving and praise to him, and a foundation of peace and comfort in our own souls. But this may be farther insisted on, when we come to consider the improvement we ought to make of this doctrine. We proceed to consider the next property of election.

4. It is free, and sovereign, or absolute, and unconditional; for that which would be a reflection on the divine perfections, if applied to God's method of working, is, by no means, to be said concerning his purpose to work, or, (which is the same) his decree of election; therefore if there are no obligations laid on him by his creatures, to display or perform any of his works of grace, but they are all free and sovereign, then it follows, that the fore-sight of any thing that shall be done by them, in time, could not be the motive, or reason of his purpose, or decree, to save them, or of his choosing them to salvation.

This may be farther argued, from the independence of the divine nature: if his nature and perfections are independent, his will must be so. But more particularly,

(1.) The displays of God's grace, in time, are expressly resolved into his sovereign pleasure, in scripture, in Rom. ix. 15. *He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.* And there are many other scriptures, which might be referred to, where all merit, or motives, taken from the creature, which might be supposed to induce him to bestow spiritual and saving blessings, are entirely excluded, and the whole is resolved in to the glory of his own name, and in particular, of those perfections which he designed herein to illustrate. This is applied, even to the common blessings of providence; *Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known,* Psal. cvi. 8. and it is also applied to sparing mercy, or the exercise of God's patience, *For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off,* Isa. lviii. 9. and to pardoning mercy, *For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great,* Psal. xxv. 11. And when he is represented as doing great things for his people, he puts

them in mind, at the same time, of their own vileness and unworthiness, that the freeness and sovereignty of his grace, to them, might be more conspicuous: Thus, when he tells them how he delivered Israel out of Egypt, he puts them in mind of their idolatry in that land; therefore no motive could be taken, from their behaviour towards him, which could induce him to do this for them; as it is said, *But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me; they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt; then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them, in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought, for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt,* Ezek. xx. 8, 9.

(2.) If the grace of God, and consequently his purpose relating thereunto, were not absolute, free, and sovereign, then all the glory thereof could not be attributed to him, neither would boasting be excluded; but as the creature might be said to be a worker together with God, so he would lay claim to a share, if not to the greatest part of the honour, that will redound to him from it; which is directly contrary to the divine perfections, and the great design of the gospel. This will farther appear, if we consider,

1st. That a conditional purpose to bestow a benefit, cannot take effect till the condition be performed, and accordingly it is said to depend on it. This is obvious, from the known idea affixed to the word *condition*, and the common signification thereof; it follows therefore,

2dly. That the performance of the condition is the next, or immediate cause of a conditional purpose's taking effect; and, to apply this to the case before us,

3dly. If, on our performing the condition of God's purpose to save us, it be rendered effectual, which otherwise it would not have been, (agreeably to the nature of a conditional purpose) then we are more beholden to our own conduct, than the divine purpose, and so the glory thereof will be due to ourselves; which would not only cast the highest dishonour on the divine perfections, but it is contrary to the design of the gospel, which is to stain the pride of all flesh, and take away all occasions of glorying, from the creature. Thus the prophet Isaiah, fore-telling the glory of the gospel-state, considers its tendency to humble the pride of man, when he says, *The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day,* Isa. ii. 17. and the apostle, describing the nature of faith, considers its tendency to exclude boasting; Rom. iii. 27. and

our Saviour, speaking concerning the discriminating grace of God, that appears in election, either in his purpose relating to it, or in the execution thereof, says, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*, John xv. 16. that is, you have done nothing that has laid any obligation on me to choose you by that act of faith, whereby you are inclined to prefer me to all others; for this is the consequence and result of my discriminating grace.

We shall now proceed to consider those arguments, which are generally made use of by those, who are in the other way of thinking, to support the conditionality of God's purpose, as well as of his works of grace, in opposition to what has been said concerning the freeness and sovereignty thereof. They generally allege those scriptures for that purpose, that are laid down in a conditional form; as when the apostle speaks of such a confession of Christ *with the mouth*, as is attended with *believing in the heart*, that God raised him from the dead, and calling on the name of the Lord, as connected with salvation, Rom. x. 9, 13. and our Saviour says, that *whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life*, John iii. 15. and that *he that believeth shall be saved*, Mark xvi. 16. and elsewhere, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3. and many other scriptures of the like nature; from whence they argue, that since the dispensations of God's providence, the gifts of his grace, and the execution of his purpose are all conditional, the purpose itself must be so. Were it but allowed that election is conditional whether it respects the purpose or providence of God, we should meet with no opposition from those who are on the other side of the question; but as such a purpose to save, as is not absolute, peremptory, or independent on the will of man, has many absurd consequences attending it, which are derogatory to the glory of the divine sovereignty, as has been already considered; so this cannot be the sense of those scriptures, that are laid down in a conditional form, as those and such-like are, that we have but now mentioned; for no sense of scripture can be true or just, that has the least tendency to militate against any of the divine perfections; so that there may without any strain or violence offered to the sense of words, be another sense put upon these, and all other scriptures, in which we have the like mode of speaking, whereby they may be explained, agreeably to the analogy of faith; therefore let us consider,

1. That all such scriptures are to be understood as importing the necessary connexion of things, so that one shall not be brought about without the other; accordingly, repentance, faith, and all other graces, are herein no otherwise considered, than as inseparably connected with salvation; which depends upon one of those propositions, which was before laid down, viz. that

God having chosen to the end has also chosen to the means. We are far from denying that faith and repentance are necessary to salvation, as God never gives one without the other, and consequently they are inseparably connected in his eternal purpose relating thereunto. If nothing else were intended by a conditional purpose than this, we would not offer any thing against it; but certainly this would be to use words without their known or proper ideas; and the word *condition*, as applicable to other things, is never to be understood in this sense. There is a necessary connection between God's creating the world, and his upholding it, or between his creating an intelligent creature, and his giving laws to him; but none ever supposed one to be properly a condition of the other: so a king's determining to pardon a malefactor, is inseparably connected with his pardoning him, and his pardon given forth, with his having a right to his forfeited life; but it is not proper to say, one is a condition of the other; so a person's seeing is inseparably connected with his opening his eyes; and speaking, with the motion of his lips; but we do not say, when he determines to do both of them, that one is a condition of the other. A condition, properly speaking is that which is not only connected with the privilege that follows upon the performance thereof, but it must be performed by a subject acting independently on him who made the conditional overture, or promise.

If it be said, that a duty, which we are enabled to perform by God, who promised the blessing connected with it, is properly a condition, we will not contend about the propriety, or impropriety, of the word; but inasmuch as it is taken by many, when applied to divine things, in the same sense as in matters of a lower nature, and so used to signify the dependence of the blessings promised, or the efficacy of the divine purpose, relating thereunto, on our performance of the condition, which is supposed to be in our own power, whereby we come to have a right and title to eternal life; it is this that we principally militate against, when we assert the absoluteness of God's purpose.

2. Whatever ideas there may be contained in those scriptures, which are brought to support the doctrine we are opposing, that contain in them the nature of a condition, nothing more is intended thereby, but that what is connected with salvation is a condition of our claim to it, or expectation of it: In this sense, we will not deny faith and repentance to be conditions of salvation, inasmuch as it would be an unwarrantable instance of presumption, for impenitent and unbelieving sinners, to pretend that they have a right to it, or to expect the end without the means, since these are inseparably connected in God's purpose, as well as in all his dispensations of grace. This being laid down, as a general rule for our understanding

all those scriptures, which are usually brought to prove that God's purposes are sometimes conditional, we shall farther illustrate it, by applying it to three or four other scriptures, that are often brought in defence thereof, which we shall endeavour to explain, consistently with the doctrine we are maintaining.

One is taken from Gen. xix. 22. where the angel bade Lot *escape to Zoar*, telling him, that *he could not do any thing till he came thither*. If we suppose this to have been a created angel, as most divines do, yet he must be considered as fulfilling the purpose of God, or acting pursuant to his commission; and therefore it is all one, to our present argument, as though God had told Lot, that he could do nothing till he was gone from that place. It is plain, that he had given him to understand, that he should be preserved from the flames of Sodom, and that, in order thereunto, he must flee for his life; and adds, that he could do nothing, that is, he could not destroy Sodom, consistently with the divine purpose to save him, till he was escaped out of the place; for God did not design to preserve him alive (as he did the three Hebrew captives, in Daniel) in the fire, but by his escaping from it; one was as much fore-ordained as the other, or was designed as a means conducive to it; and therefore the meaning of the text is, not that God's purpose, relating to Sodom's destruction, was founded on Lot's escape, as an uncertain and dubious condition, depending on his own will, abstracted from the divine determination relating to it; but he designed that those two things should be connected together, and that one should be antecedent to the other; and both of them, as well as their respective connection, were the object of God's absolute and peremptory determination.

There is another scripture, sometimes brought to the same purpose, in Gen. xxxii. 26. where the angel says to Jacob, *Let me go, for the day breaketh*; and Jacob replies, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*, which does not infer, that God's determinations were dependent on Jacob's endeavour to detain him, or his willingness to let him depart; but we must consider Jacob as an humble, yet importunate suppliant, as it is said elsewhere, *Weeping and making supplication*, Hos. xii. 4. *Let me go*, says God, appearing in the form of an angel, and speaking after the manner of men, that he might give occasion to Jacob to express a more ardent desire of his presence and blessing, as well as to signify how unworthy he was of it; not as though he was undetermined before-hand what to do, but since the grace which Jacob exercised, as well as the blessing which he received, was God's gift, and both were connected in the execution of his purpose, we must conclude that the purpose itself was free, sovereign, and unconditional.

Again, there is another scripture, in which God condescends

to use a mode of speaking, not much unlike to the other, in which he says to Moses, speaking concerning Israel, in Exod. xxxii. 10. *This is a stiff-necked people; now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them*; we are not to suppose that the whole event was to turn upon Moses's prayer, as though God's purposing to save his people were dependent on it; or that that grace, which inclined him to be importunate with God, did not take its rise from him. Moses, indeed, when first he began to plead with God, knew not whether his prayer would be prevalent or no; however, he addresses himself, with an uncommon degree of importunity, for sparing mercy; and, when God says, *Let me alone*, it signifies, that his people were unworthy that any one should plead their cause; and, if God should mark iniquity, then Moses's intercession would be altogether in vain, and so he might as well let him alone, in that respect, as ask for his mercy. He does not, indeed, at first, tell him what he designed to do, that he might aggravate their crime, but afterwards he answers his prayer in Israel's favour, and signifies that he would work, not for their sakes, but for his own name's sake; so that he takes occasion, on the one hand, to set forth the people's desert of punishment; and, on the other, the freeness of his own grace.

There is but one scripture more that I shall mention, among many that might have been brought, and that is what is said concerning our Saviour, in Matt. xiii. 58. that *he could not do many mighty works there, at that time, in his own country, because of their unbelief?* where he speaks either of their not having a faith of miracles that was sometimes required, in those for whom they were wrought: or else of the unaccountable stupidity of that people, who were not convinced, by many others that he had wrought before them; therefore he resolves to put a stop to his hand, and not, for the present, to work so many miracles amongst them, as otherways might have been expected: If we suppose that their want of faith prevented his working them, this is not to be considered as an unforeseen event. And as he had determined not to confer this privilege upon them, or to continue to work miracles amongst them, if those, which he had already wrought, were disregarded and despised by their unbelief, we must conclude that he had a perfect knowledge of this before-hand, and that his determinations were not dependent on uncertain conditions, though he had resolved to act in such a way, as was most for his own glory; and that there should be an inseparable connexion between that faith, which was their duty, and his continuing to exert divine power, as an ordinance adapted to excite it.

5. God's purpose concerning election is unchangeable; this

is the result of his being infinitely perfect. Mutability is an imperfection that belongs only to creatures : As it would be an instance of imperfection, if there were the least change in God's understanding, so as to know more or less than he did from all eternity ; the same must be said with respect to his will, which cannot admit of any new determinations. There are, indeed, many changes in the external dispensations of his providence, which are the result of his will, as well as the effects of his power ; yet there is not the least appearance of mutability in his purpose. We have before considered, in speaking concerning the immutability of the divine nature *, that whatever may be a reason obliging men to alter their purposes, it cannot, in the least, take place, so that God hereby should be obliged to alter his : No unforeseen occurrence can render it expedient for him to change his mind, nor can any superior power oblige him to do it ; nor can any defect of power, to bring about what he had designed, induce him to alter his purpose.

If it be objected to this, that the obstinacy of man's will may do it ; that is to suppose his will exempted from the governing influence of divine providence, and the contrary force, that offers resistance, superior to it, which cannot be supposed, without detracting from the glory of the divine perfections. It would be a very unworthy thought for any one to conclude that God is one day of one mind, and another day forced to be of the contrary ; how far this is a necessary consequence from that scheme of doctrine that we are opposing, let any one judge. It will be very hard to clear it of this entanglement, which they are obliged to do, or else all the absurdities that they fasten on the doctrine of election, which are far from being unanswerable, will not be sufficient to justify their prejudices against it.

They who are on the other side of the question, are sensible that they have one difficulty to conflict with, namely, the inconsistency of God's infallible knowledge of future events, with a mutability of will relating thereunto ; or how the independency of the divine fore-knowledge is consistent with the dependence and mutability of his will. To fence against this, some have ventured to deny the divine prescience ; but that is to split against one rock, whilst endeavouring to avoid another. Therefore others distinguish concerning the objects of the divine prescience, and consider them, either as they are necessary or contingent, and accordingly suppose that God has a certain fore-knowledge of the former ; but his knowledge of the latter, (from the nature of the things known) is uncertain, and consequently the determination of his will is not unalterable. But this is to set bounds to the fore-knowledge of God, with respect to its object, and, indeed, to exclude the free actions of the creature

* See page 137.

from being the objects thereof, which is a limiting and lessening of this perfection, and is directly contrary to the idea of omniscience; and therefore we must insist on their proving this to be consistent with the infinite perfection of God, which they will find it very difficult to do; and to suppose, on the other hand, that any thing is the object of God's certain fore-knowledge, about which his will is no way conversant, or only so, in such a way, as that it is subject to change, according to the mutability of things, is altogether as indefensible, and equally subversive of the independency, wisdom, and sovereignty thereof.

Object. The most material objection against this doctrine, is taken from some scriptures, which seem to represent God as repenting, and therein, as it is supposed, changing his purpose. Thus he is sometimes said to repent, that he had bestowed some blessings upon men, when he perceives how they have been abused by them, and accordingly he purposes to bring evil on them; as we read, in Gen. vi. 6, 7. *It repented the Lord that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart; and the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created;* and, at other times he is said to repent of the evil that he designed to bring upon them, and alter his purpose in their favour; thus it is said, in Deut. xxxii. 36. *The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left;* and in Joel ii. 13. *Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil;* and in Psal. xc. 13, *Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants;* and in Jer. xviii. 8. *If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I have thought to do unto them.* And we have a very remarkable instance of this, in God's sparing Nineveh, on their repentance, after he had threatened, by the prophet Jonah, that *within forty days they should be destroyed.*

Ans. It is true, there are many scriptures, in which repentance is ascribed to God, which, if we consider nothing else but the grammatical sense of the words, seem to favour the objection; but we are bound to conclude, that such a sense of repentance, as that on which it is founded, is inconsistent with the divine perfections, and therefore those scriptures, referred to therein, cannot imply a change in God's purpose. And, indeed, there are other scriptures, which assert what is directly contrary thereunto; as when it is said, in Numb. xxiii. 19. *God is not a man, that he should lye, neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* And elsewhere, in 1

Sam. xv. 29. it is said, *The strength of Israel will not lye, nor repent ; for he is not a man that he should repent.*

But we must have recourse to some methods to reconcile this seeming contradiction, and so consider the sense thereof, in different respects, as applicable to them both ; in some scriptures, God is said to repent ; in others, it is said that he cannot repent. That these may not appear inconsistent with one another, nor either of them infer any imperfection in God, let it be considered, that God is sometimes represented, in scripture, in condescension to our common mode of speaking, as though he had human passions, as in others, he is described, as though he had a body, or bodily parts : But such expressions are always to be taken in a metaphorical sense, without the least supposition, that he is subject to any such imperfections ; and particularly we must not conclude, that repentance is ever ascribed to God in the same sense as it is to men, *viz.* as implying a change in his purpose, occasioned by an unforeseen occurrence, which is the sense contained in the objection. Such a repentance, as this, is a passion peculiarly belonging to the creature, and therefore in this sense we must understand those words ; *God is not a man, that he should lye, nor the son of man, that he should repent ;* accordingly, he is said to repent, not by changing his purpose, but by changing his work. Thus when it is said, that *he repented that he had made man,* nothing is meant by it, but that he determined to destroy him, as he did afterwards by the flood. And this was no new determination arising from any thing in the creature, which God did not foresee ; he knew before-hand that all flesh would corrupt their way, and therefore his determination to punish them for it, was not a new resolve of the divine will, after the sin was committed ; but God determined things in their respective order, first to permit sin, and then knowing what would be the consequence thereof, namely, that they would rebel against him, he determined to punish it, or to destroy the old world, which is, in effect, the same, as though he had repented that he made it. He cannot be said to repent as we do, by wishing that he had not done that which he is said to repent of, but by denying us the advantage, which we might have otherwise expected from it. In this sense we are to understand all those scriptures that speak of God, as repenting of the good that he had bestowed on man.

And, on the other hand, when he is said to repent of the evil which he threatened to bring on men, as in the case of Nineveh, this does not argue any change in his purpose ; for he determined that Nineveh should be destroyed, provided they did not repent, and it was not uncertain to him whether they would repent or no ; for, at the same time, he determined to give them

repentance, as appears by the event, and so not to inflict the judgment threatened; and therefore when Jonah was sent to make a public proclamation to the people, that in forty days they should be destroyed, it is plain that they understood the threatening in this sense, that they had no ground to expect any thing else, except they repented, which accordingly they did, and so were spared, without having any reason to conclude that God changed his purpose relating thereunto.

If it be objected hereunto, that this is nothing less than to establish a conditional purpose in God, and so overthrows the argument that we are maintaining; the reply that may be made to it, is, that we distinguish between a conditional purpose, in God's secret will, and a conditional proposition, which was to be the subject of the prophet's ministry: The prophet, it is plain, was not told, when he received his commission to go to Nineveh, that God would give them repentance, but only, that, without repentance, they should be destroyed; whereas God, as the event makes it appear, determined that they should repent, and therefore that they should not be destroyed; and, consequently, we must not suppose, that, when God sent him, he was undetermined, in his own purpose, whether to destroy them or not, or that there was any thing conditional in the divine mind, that rendered the event uncertain to God, though there was a condition contained in the subject-matter of the prophet's message, which the Ninevites very well understood, namely, that they had no ground to expect deliverance without repentance, and therefore they repented, in hope of obtaining mercy, which they supposed would be connected with their repentance; and it is evident, that Jonah himself suspected that this might be the event, though God had not told him that it would be so, and therefore says, in chap. iv. 2. *For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.*

6. The purpose of God, in choosing men to eternal life, renders their salvation necessary; so that nothing shall defeat, or disannul it. What God says concerning Israel's deliverance from the Babylonish captivity, may be applied to all his other determinations, and particularly to what relates to the eternal salvation of his people; *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure; yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it,* Isa. xlvi. 10, 11. The purposes of God, indeed, are distinguished from his bringing them to pass; it is one thing to design to bring his people to glory, and another thing to bring them to it. It is not to be supposed that the decree of God has, in itself, a proper efficiency to produce the thing decreed: * for then there would be no difference

* This is what is meant by that axiom, used by the school-men, *Decretum Dei, nihil ponit in esse.*

between an eternal decree, and an eternal production of things; whereas the apostle plainly distinguishes between man's being predestinated to glory, and brought to it, when he says, *Those whom he predestinated, them he glorified*, Rom. viii. 30.

The purpose of God, is, indeed, the internal moving cause, or the first ground and reason of the salvation of those who are elected to it; but his power is the more immediate cause of it, so that his purpose is the reason of his exerting this power, and both concurring to the salvation of men, render it certain and necessary. Therefore some distinguish, for the explaining of this, between the determining and powerful will of God; the latter of which, is sometimes called the word of his power, and renders the former effectual; this it must certainly do, otherwise God would be said to will the existence of things, that shall never have a being. In this respect, the purpose of God renders things necessary, which are in themselves contingent, or arbitrary, and would otherwise never come to pass.*

This is a great encouragement to those who are enabled to make their calling and election sure; for their perseverance in grace, notwithstanding all the opposition that they meet with, is the necessary consequence of their election to eternal life. Thus, as we before distinguished predestination into election and reprobation, we have considered the former of these, and we proceed,

Secondly, To speak concerning the doctrine of reprobation; (a) which is become obnoxious to those on the other side of the question, almost to a proverb; so that if any doctrine is considered as shocking, and to be answered no otherwise than by testifying their abhorrence of it, it is compared to this of reprobation; and, indeed, if it were not a consequence from the doctrine of election to eternal life, that doctrine would not be so much opposed by them. How far some unguarded expressions, or exceptionable methods of explication, may have given

* *Thus the school-men distinguish between necessitas consequentis, and consequentia; so that that, which is not in itself necessary, is rendered eventually so, as the consequence of God's purpose, that it shall be.*

(a) "There is no necessity for supposing a predestination to death, in the same sense as unto life, that is to the means and the consequent end: For the occurrence of sin may be satisfactorily accounted for on other principles; though without pretending to the removal of every difficulty in a subject the entire comprehension of which is probably unsuited to our present state and faculties.*"

* It is acknowledged that this view of the subject is different from that which most Calvinistic writers have given. Yet several eminent divines have laid down the fundamental principles, at least of this sentiment, and have opened the way to it: particularly Augustine, Theophilus Gale, and a class of German Theologians who may be termed the school of Leibnitz. A short time ago an attempt was made to excite the attention of thinking men to his doctrine, by a *Sermon on the Divine glory, displayed by the Permission of Sin*. But, since the publication of that pamphlet, the subject has been more ably and fully treated by my reverend tutor, the Rev. Dr. Williams, in his *Discourse on Predestination to Life*, published very lately.

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occasion for this prejudice, it is not to our present purpose to enquire; but we shall take occasion, from thence, to explain it in such a way, as that a fair and unprejudiced disputant will not see just reason to except against it, at least to reproach it, as though it were a doctrine subversive of the divine glory, and to be defended by none but those who seem to have a design to raise prejudices, in the minds of men, against religion in general.

And here we shall take occasion to consider the meaning of the word, as it is contained in, or deduced from scripture, where the same word that is used to signify the execution of this decree, may be applied to express the decree itself. Thus we read of God's rejecting, or disregarding men, as a punishment of their rebellion against him: and these are compared by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. vi. 30. *To reprobate silver, because the Lord hath rejected them*; or, as it is in the margin, *The refuse of silver*; and, in the New Testament, the same word* is sometimes translated reprobates; at other times, disapproved or rejected, 1 Cor. iv. 27. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Heb. vi. 8. and when this disapprobation, or rejection, respects not only their actions, as contrary to the holy nature of God, but their persons, as punished for their iniquities; and when this punishment is considered as what respects their eternal state, as the objects of vindictive justice, the purpose of God, relating hereunto, is what we call reprobation.

But, that we may more particularly consider the sense of the word, it seems, in scripture, to contain in it two ideas.

1. God's determining to leave a part of the world in that state of sin and misery, which he from all eternity, fore-knew that they would bring themselves into, or his decreeing not to save them; and, since all will allow that a part of mankind shall not be saved, it cannot reasonably be denied that this was determined by him before-hand; and this is what divines generally call preterition.

2. There is another idea in the word *reprobation*, which is also contained in scripture, or deducible from it, and that respects the purpose of God to punish those for their iniquities, whom he will not save. Not to be saved, is the same as to be *punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power*. And God's purpose, relating hereunto, is expressed in scripture by his *appointing them to wrath*, 1 Thess. v. 9. for those sins which he fore-saw they would commit. This is what some call *pre-damnation*, as taken from that expression of the apostle, Jude, ver. 4, 13. concerning some who had *crept into the church unawares*, whom he describes as *ungodly men*, that is, notoriously so, *who turned*

* ἀπορριπτείν.

the grace of God into lasciviousness, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever; of these he says, that they were before of old, ordained to this condemnation, where God is represented as punishing sinners, in proportion to their crimes; and this is considered as the result of that eternal purpose, which was founded on his fore-sight of their contracting that guilt whereby they would render themselves liable to it.

If this doctrine be thus explained, it will appear agreeable, not only to scripture, but to the divine perfections, and therefore too great a truth to be treated with that abhorrence, with which it generally is, without explaining, distinguishing or fairly entering into the merits of the cause. It is a very easy matter to render any doctrine odious, by misrepresentation, as they on the other side of the question, have done this of reprobation, which we shall briefly consider, and therein take leave to explain it in a different manner, whereby it will appear not only worthy to be defended, as redounding to the glory of God, but a plain and evident truth, founded on scripture.

If this doctrine were to be considered no otherwise, than as it is often represented by them, we should dislike it, as much as they do; for when they pretend that we herein suppose God to be severe and cruel to his creatures, delighting himself in, and triumphing over them, in their misery: and that he decreed, from all eternity, to damn the greatest part of mankind, without any consideration of their sin, as the result of his arbitrary will, or dominion, as he has a right to dispose of his creatures, according to his pleasure, and that as a means to attain this end, as though it were in itself desirable, he leaves them to themselves, blinds their minds, and hardens their hearts, and offers these occasions of, and inducements to sin, which are as stumbling-blocks in their way, and that he determined that his providence should be so conversant about the will of man, as that it should be under a natural necessity, or kind of compulsion, to what is evil, without considering the corruption and depravity of nature, as a vicious habit, which they had contracted; and that all this is done in pursuance of this decree of reprobation.

It is very probable that many who give this account of this doctrine, have no other foundation for it, but the popular outcry of those who are not apprised of the methods that are generally taken to explain and defend it; or else they suppose that it cannot be defended, without being exposed to those exceptions which are contained in the account they give of it. But we shall take no farther notice of this, but proceed to explain and defend it another way. And,

1. As to the former branch thereof, namely, preterition, or God's passing by, or rejecting those whom he hath not chosen

to salvation, let it be premised; that God, in his eternal purpose, considered all mankind as fallen, which must be supposed to have been foreknown by him, otherwise he would not be said to be omniscient, and the result of his fore-knowledge is his determining to leave a part of them in their fallen state, in which he might have left the whole world to perish without being liable to the least charge of injustice. This is what we call his rejecting them, and accordingly it is opposed to his having chosen the rest to eternal life. These terms of opposition are plainly contained in scripture: thus it is said, *The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded*, Rom. xi. 7. not by God's leading them into mistakes, or giving them false ideas of things, but they were left to the blindness of their minds, which was the result of their apostasy from God; and elsewhere our Saviour says, *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*, Matt. xi. 25. Thou hast hid, that is, not revealed them; and that either objectively, as respecting those who are destitute of the light of the gospel; or subjectively, as he did not effectually, or savingly enlighten them with the light of life, by *revealing Christ in them*, as the apostle calls it, Gal. i. 16. and therefore it is as though he had said, thou hast determined not to give to some the means of grace, nor to others the saving efficacy thereof, such as they are partakers of, who are chosen to salvation. Accordingly, he is said *to have suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*, Acts xiv. 16. that is, not to restrain or prevent the breaking forth of corruption, as he might have done; and elsewhere, to have *winked at*, chap. xvii. 30. that is, as it may be rendered, *over-looked* the greatest part of the world, which is no other than his rejecting or passing them by; and in this sense we are to understand that difficult mode of speaking used by the apostle, *Whom he will he hardeneth*, Rom. ix. 18. by which nothing else is intended but his purposing to leave many to the hardness of their own hearts. God forbid that any one should think that there is a positive act contained in those words, as though God infused hardness into the hearts of any; for the meaning is only this, that he determined to deny heart-softening grace to that part of mankind, whom he had not fore-ordained to eternal life. That there was such a purpose relating hereunto, is evident, because whatever God does in the methods of his providence, is the result of an eternal purpose. This no one, who observes the dispensations of God's providence, and allows as every one must do, that all that he does was pre-concerted by him, can justly deny.

But that which must be farther enquired into, as to this matter, is, whether God's determining to pass by a part of mankind, be an act of sovereignty or of justice. And this may also be judged of, by the external dispensation of his providence; so

far as there is sovereignty, or justice, visible in them, we are to conclude that this purpose, relating thereunto, was the result of one or other of these perfections. In some respects it is an act of sovereignty: As, for instance, that God should give one nation the gospel, or the means of grace, and deny it to another; it is not because he sees any thing in one part of the world, that obliges him thereunto, more than in the other; but the reason is, as was observed in the scripture but now mentioned, *because it seemed good in his sight*, Matt. xi. 26. Moreover, his giving special grace, whereby some are effectually called and sanctified; and denying it to others, is an act of sovereign pleasure.

But on the other hand, God is said sometimes, in the external dispensations of his providence, to leave men to themselves, to give them up to their own hearts lust, in a judicial way, which supposes not only the commission of sin, but persons being obstinate and resolutely determined to continue in it. Thus God saith concerning his people; *Israel would none of me; so I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels*, Psal. lxxxix. 11, 12. and the Psalmist says elsewhere, *Add iniquity to their iniquity*, Psal. lxxxix. 27. which words I would rather consider as a prediction than a prayer, or as an expression of the church's acquiescence in God's righteous judgments, which they had ground to conclude, that he would inflict on an impenitent, incorrigible people; these are expressed, by *adding iniquity to iniquity*, not as though he designed to infuse any habit of sin into them, for that is inconsistent with the holiness of his nature; but that he would reject, and leave them to themselves, in a judicial way, as a punishment inflicted on them for their iniquities, the consequence whereof would be their own adding iniquity to iniquity. Thus, in different respects, the purpose of God, in passing by a part of mankind, may be considered, either as the result of his sovereign pleasure, or as an act of justice.

2. We shall now proceed to consider the other branch of reprobation, which some call *pre-damnation*, or (to use the scripture-expression before referred to) God's fore-ordaining those who shall not be saved, to that condemnation, which they shall fall under, as exposing themselves to it by their own wickedness; which is nothing else but his determining, from all eternity, to punish those, as a judge, who should, by their own crimes, deserve it, and thereby to vindicate the holiness of his nature and law. Here let it be observed, that when this doctrine is reproached or misrepresented, it is described as an act of divine sovereignty, but that we are as ready to deny and oppose as they are, since, according to the description we have given of it, it can be no other than an act of justice; for, if to

condemn, or punish, be an act of justice, then the decree, relating hereunto, must be equally so, for one is to be judged of by the other. If God cannot punish creatures as such, but as criminals and rebels, then he must be supposed to have considered them as such, when, in his eternal purpose, he determined to punish them. No man can style this an act of cruelty, or severity in God, but those who reckon the punishing of sin to be so, and are disposed to charge the Judge of all with not doing right, or offering an injury to his creatures, when he pours forth the vials of his wrath on them, who, by their bold and wilful crimes, render themselves obnoxious thereunto.

Here let it be considered, that God, in his actual providence, is not the author of sin, though he suffer it to be committed in the world. And, since his permitting, or not hindering it, cannot be said to be the cause of its being committed, there being no cause thereof, but the will of man; it follows, from hence, that God's punishing sin, is not to be resolved into his permission of it, as the cause thereof, but into the rebellion of man's will, as refusing to be subject to the divine law; and thus God considered men, when, in his eternal purpose, he determined to condemn those, whose desert of this punishment was foreseen, by him, from all eternity. And is this a doctrine to be so much decried?

I cannot but wonder the learned author, whom I have before referred to, as opposing this doctrine,* should so far give into the common and popular way of misrepresenting it, unless he designed, by this way of opposing it to render it detested; when he speaks concerning them, mentioned in Jude, ver. 4. *who were before, of old, ordained to this condemnation*, he says, "This cannot be meant of any divine ordination, or appointment of them, to eternal condemnation, because it cannot be thought, without horror, that God doth thus ordain men to perdition, before they had a being." If he had expressed his horror and resentment against God's ordaining men to perdition, as creatures, it had been just; but to express this detestation against God's ordaining men to perdition, who are described as these are, is to expose this doctrine without reason; and it is still more strange that he should cast this censure upon it, when he owns in his farther explication of this text, "That God ordaineth none to punishment but sinners, and ungodly men, as these persons here are styled, and that these were men of whom it was before written, or prophesied, that they should be condemned for their wickedness;" since there is not much difference in the method of reasoning, between saying that the condemnation of sinners, for their wickedness, was before written, or prophesied, and saying, that God fore-ordained them to eternal punishment.

* See *Whitby's Paraphrase, &c. on Jude, ver. 4.*

I am sensible that many are led into this mistake, by supposing that we give a very injurious and perverse sense of that text, in which the doctrine of reprobation is contained, which, it may be, has occasioned this reproach to be cast upon it. For when the apostle says, in Rom. ix. 22. *What if God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,* some suppose that we understand this text, as though these vessels of wrath were, from all eternity, prepared for destruction by God, and that his eternal purpose, is his fitting them for it, as intending to bring about that end, *viz.* his destroying them. But if any have expressed themselves in such a way, as is equivalent thereunto, let them be accountable for their own sense of the text; though this I may say, that some, even of them, who give into the Supralapsarian way of explaining the doctrine of predestination, have not understood it in this sense;* and the sense which I would give of it is this, that those, whom the apostle speaks of as vessels of wrath, are persons whom God had rejected, and from the foresight of the sins which they would commit, he had *appointed them to wrath*, which is an expression the apostle uses elsewhere, 1 Thess. v. 9. but they were appointed to wrath, not as creatures, but as sinners; they are described as fitted to destruction, not by God's act, but their own, and that is the reason of their being fore-ordained to it.†

There is another scripture, which is generally cited by those who treat on this subject, that we are to use the utmost caution in explaining, lest we give just occasion, to those who oppose it, to express their abhorrence of it, as inconsistent with the divine perfections, namely, what the apostle says concerning those that were not elected, whom he calls *the rest of the Jewish nation*, in Rom. xi. 7—10. that *they were blinded*, and that *God had given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear*; and he speaks of *their table*

* Thus Beza in loc. calls them vessels, because, as creatures, they are the workmanship of God, the great potter, but vessels prepared for destruction by themselves, and therefore adds, *Exitii veras causas minime negem in ipsis vasis hæere juxta illud perditio, tua ex te est.*

† It ought to be observed, that the word here used, is *κατηρτισμενα εις απολειαν*, and not *προκατηρτισμενα*; nor is there any thing added to the word, that signifies, that this preparation thereunto was antecedent to their being; or as though it took its rise from God, as the cause of that sin for which he designed to punish them; whereas, on the other hand when the apostle in the following verse, speaks of God's making known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, to wit, the elect, they are described as those whom he had afore prepared unto glory, a *προπαρασκευασεν εις δοξαν*. What should be the reason that the apostle alters the phrase, but that we may hereby be led to consider, that when God chose the elect to glory they are considered in his purpose as those whom he designed, by his grace, to make meet for it! So that the vessels of wrath are considered as fitting themselves for destruction; the vessels of mercy, as persons whom God would first prepare for, and then bring to glory.

being made a snare, and a trap and a stumbling-block, and a recompense to them; let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always. The sense which they, who misrepresent this doctrine, suppose that we put upon this scripture, is, that they, who are reprobated, have, as a consequence thereof, occasions of sin laid in their way, some things designed to blind their minds, cast a mist before their eyes, and so lead them out of the way, and other things, that prove a snare to them, a trap, and occasion of sin, and all this with a design to bring about that damnation which God had ordained for them, in this decree of reprobation; which sense of this scripture never was, nor could be given, by any one, who has a due regard to the divine perfections.

And shall this doctrine be judged of hereby, when it is very hard to find any, how unguarded soever they are in their modes of speaking, that understand this text as they represent it? We shall therefore consider what is probably the meaning of this scripture, with which the doctrine we have laid down is very consistent. It is not to be understood as though God were the author of these sins, which they are said to be charged with; but this blindness and stupidity, which is called, *A spirit of slumber* as it is connected with the idea of their being rejected of God, and his determining not to give them the contrary graces, is considered, as the consequence, not the effect thereof, and that not the immediate, but the remote consequence thereof, in the same sense as stealing is the consequence of poverty, in those who have a vicious inclination thereunto. Thus when a person, who has contracted those habits of sin, that tend to turn men aside from God, is destitute of preventing and restraining grace, the consequence thereof, is, that these corruptions will break forth with greater violence; and God is not obliged to give this grace to an apostate, fallen creature, much less to one who has misimproved the means of grace, by which a multitude of sins might have been prevented; so that nothing is intended hereby but this, that they are left to themselves, and permitted to stumble and fall, and to commit those abominations, which, if they had not been thus judicially left, would have been prevented, and as the consequence thereof, they run into many sins, which they might have avoided; for though we suppose that it is not in a man's own power, as destitute of the grace of God, to bring himself into a regenerate or converted state, (as will be farther considered, in its proper place) nevertheless, we do not deny but that men might, in the right use of the gifts of nature, avoid many sins, which they, who are said to be thus blinded, and hardened, run into, and so increase their guilt and misery, especially where they are not prevented by the grace of God, which he may, without any impeachment of

his providence, deny to those whom he has not chosen to eternal life, as he might, had he pleased, have denied it to the whole world, and much more to those who have not improved the common grace, which they received, but have, through the wickedness of their nature, proceeded from one degree of sin unto another.

There is another scripture, which, some suppose we understand in such a sense, as gives the like occasion of prejudice to many against this doctrine, in 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. *For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*; the meaning whereof is this, that God suffered them to be deluded, who, in the following verse, are represented as not receiving *the love of the truth*; not that God was the author of these delusions, or deceived them by a false representation of things to them, or by exciting or inclining them to adhere to the suggestions of those who lie in wait to deceive; but, since he did not design to give them grace under the means of grace, or to enable them to receive the truth in the love thereof, which he was not obliged to do to any, much less to those who rebelled against the light that had been already given them; hereupon, through the blindness of their own minds, they became an easy prey to those who endeavoured to ensnare or delude them; so that the decree of God only respects his denying preventing grace to those, who, through the corruption of their own nature, took occasion, from thence, to run greater lengths in their apostasy from, and rebellion against God. And as for that mode of speaking here used, that *God shall send them strong delusions*, that only respects his will to permit it, and not his design to delude them.

There is another scripture to the same purpose, in Psal. lxxxii. 12. *So I gave them up unto their own heart's lust, and they walked in their own counsels*; the meaning of which is, that God left them to themselves, and then lust, or the corrupt habits of sin, which they had acquired, conceived, and, as the apostle James speaks, *brought forth sin*, chap. i. 15. or greater acts of sin, which exposed them to a greater degree of condemnation; and all this is to be resolved into God's permissive will, or purpose, to leave man, in his fallen state, to himself, which he might do, without giving occasion to any to say, on the one hand, that he is the author of sin; or, on the other, that he deals injuriously with the sinful creature.

And to this we may add our Saviour's words concerning the Jews, in John xii. 39, 40. *Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should*

heal them. The sense which they, who misrepresent this doctrine, suppose we put upon them, and conclude, that no other is consistent with the argument we are maintaining, is, that the unbelief, which the Jews are charged with, was principally, if not altogether, resolved into God's eternal purpose, to blind their eyes, and harden their hearts, namely, by some positive act, as a cause producing this effect, with this view, that they should not be converted, and saved, that thereby his decree to condemn them, might take effect. It is no wonder to find persons prejudiced against this doctrine, when set in such a light; but as this is very remote from the explication we have given thereof, so our Saviour's design, in this text, is to give an account why those miracles, which he wrought before the Jews, were ineffectual for their conviction; the more immediate cause whereof was the blindness of their mind, and the hardness of their hearts, inasmuch as they had shut their eyes against the light, and, through the corruption of their nature, had hardened their own hearts. As to what God is said to have done, in a judicial way, agreeable to the mode of speaking here used, when it is said, *He hath hardened their hearts*, it imports nothing else but his leaving them to the hardness of their own hearts, or denying them heart-softening grace, which would have been an effectual remedy against it. And may not God deny his grace to sinners, without being charged as the author of sin, or the blame thereof devolved on him, and not themselves? And, since this judicial act of providence cannot but be the result of an eternal purpose, is there any thing, in this decree, that reflects on his perfections, any more than there is in the execution thereof?

There is another scripture, in Prov. xvi. 4. *The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil*; from whence they infer, that the doctrine of reprobation, which they suppose to be founded on a perverse sense given of it, includes in it the divine purpose to make man to damn him; for they conclude that we understand it in that sense; and they proceed a little farther than this, and pretend that we infer from it, that God made men wicked, or that he made them wicked for his glory, as if he had need of sinful man for that end. I should never have thought that so vile a consequence could be drawn from this doctrine, if the learned writer, before mentioned, had not told the world that we infer this from it; * and, to give countenance to this suggestion, he quotes a passage out of Dr. Twiss; † his words are these: "That all, besides the elect, God hath ordained to bring them forth into the world in their corrupt mass, and to permit them to them-

* See *Whitby's Discourse, &c.* page 10.

† See his *Riches of God's love, against Herd. Part II.* page 59

“ selves, to go on in their own ways, and so finally to persevere in sin; and, lastly, to damn them for their sin, for the manifestation of the glory of his justice on them.”

I am not ashamed to own my very great esteem of this excellently learned and pious writer, who was as considerable for that part of learning, which his works discover him to have been conversant in, as most in his day; though I cannot think myself obliged, in every respect, to explain this doctrine as he does; and Dr. Whitby knew very well, that if such an inference, as what we have been speaking of, were to be deduced from the writings of any, who maintain the doctrine of reprobation, it must be from one who gives into the Supralapsarian way of explaining it; and this expression, which, it may be, was a little unguarded, seems to bid as fair for it as any other he could have found out: But any one that reads it, without prejudice, and especially that compares it with what is connected therewith, would not suppose that any thing is intended hereby, that gives the least ground to conclude that God made men wicked for the manifestation of his justice. The most obnoxious part of this quotation, is, *God ordained to bring forth into the world the non-elect, in their corrupt mass*, that is, that persons, who are every day born into the world, are the seed of corrupt and fallen man, and so have the habits of sin propagated with their nature, which many other divines have endeavoured to maintain. What my sentiments are concerning this matter, I shall rather choose to insist on, under a following answer, in which we shall be lead to speak of the doctrine of original sin, and of that corruption of nature, which is the consequence of it; therefore, passing this by, there is nothing, in what remains of this quotation, but what is very defensible, and far from making God the author of sin; for we may observe, that all he says, concerning the providence of God relating to this matter, is only, that he permits, or leaves them to themselves, and he supposes them finally to persevere in sin, without which they cannot be liable to damnation, or the display of the justice of God therein; and if the author, who brings this quotation, had duly considered the words immediately before, he might have seen the reason to have saved himself the trouble of making this reflection upon it; for Dr. Twiss, who, though a Supralapsarian, says, “ That he reckons that controversy, relating to the order of God’s decrees, to be merely *Apex Logicus*, as he calls it, *a logical nicety* ;” and adds, “ That his opinion about it is well known, namely, that God doth not ordain any man to damnation, before the consideration of sin ;” and, a few lines after, he says, “ That God, of his mere pleasure, created all, but, of his mere pleasure, he dammeth none; but every one that is damned, is damned for his sin, and that wilfully committed, and contumaciously

“ continued in by them that come to ripe years.” And if nothing more than this is intended by the doctrine of reprobation, it ought not to be so misrepresented, with a design to cast an odium upon it.

But to return to the scripture but now mentioned: When God is said to *have made the wicked for the day of evil*, the meaning is not that man’s damnation was the end designed by God, in creating him, for there are some other ideas that intervene between God’s purpose to create and condemn him; he must be considered not barely as a creature, but as a sinner; now, as God did not create man that he might sin, he could not be said to create him, that he might condemn him. Accordingly, the sense which some give of this text, is, that God is said to have *made all things for himself*, to wit, for his own glory. And inasmuch as some will be ready to object, that God will have no glory from the wicked, who oppose his name and interest in the world; the answer to this is, that in them, from whom he shall have no glory, as a Saviour, he will, notwithstanding, be glorified as a Judge; which judicial act, though it be deferred for a time, while his long-suffering waits upon them, yet it shall fall heavily on them, in the day of evil: which is very remote from that supposition, that God made man to damn him. And there is a sense given of it by some, who are on the other side of the question, which seems equally probable, or agreeable to the mind of the Holy Ghost, and is not in the least subversive of the doctrine we are maintaining, namely, “ That the Lord disposeth all things throughout the world, to serve such ends as he thinks fit to design, which they cannot refuse to comply withal; for if any man be so wicked as to oppose his will, he will not lose their service; but when he brings a public calamity upon a country, employ them to be the executioners of his wrath: Of this there was a remarkable instance in the destruction of Jerusalem, by the Roman soldiers, whom our Saviour used, to punish his crucifiers, not that they undertook that war out of any design or desire to do our blessed Saviour right, but out of an ambition to enslave the world; yet God made use of them for another design, as public executioners, by whom he punished the ungodly*.” So the Assyrian is said, in Isa. x. 5, 6. to be *the rod of God’s anger*, and to be *sent against the people of Israel, and to lead them captive, and therein to tread them down, like the mire in the streets* †. And as to what concerns the purpose

* See Bishop Patrick in loc. † This agrees with the sense given of it by Grot. in loc. and Whitby in his discourse, &c. page 11. and it agrees very well with the sense of the Hebrew words, פּינָה לְמַעַנְהוּ, which does not so much signify to make, as to dispose, and adapt one thing to another, which the lxx. render, φουλασσειται ο̅ α̅σ̅ε̅β̅ε̅ς, &c. the wicked is reserved to the day of evil.

of God, on which these judicial proceedings depend, this is to be judged of by the execution thereof, as is evidently to be inferred from thence. And this is the sense in which we understand the doctrine of *reprobation*, as in the foregoing argument.

Thus we have endeavoured to prove the doctrine of *election* and *reprobation*, and defend it from the reproaches and misrepresentations cast upon it by considering it, not only as agreeable to the divine perfections, but as founded on scripture. We shall therefore proceed,

VI. To enquire, whether the contrary doctrine as defended by some, be not derogatory to the divine perfections, and therefore does not contain greater absurdities; or, if expressions of detestation were a sufficient argument to set it aside, whether we have not as much reason to testify our dislike that way, as they have against the doctrine we are maintaining? As to that part of the charge brought against us, as though we represented God as severe and cruel to his creatures; or that it is inconsistent with his goodness to suppose that he leaves any to themselves in their fallen state, so as not to give them the means of grace, when he knew that being destitute thereof, they could not believe, and so would fall short of salvation, pursuant to his eternal purpose relating thereunto: can this be said to be inconsistent with his goodness. any more than all his other displays of vindictive justice? If they suppose that it is, we might easily retort the argument upon them since they will not assert, that the whole race of fallen man shall be saved; and, if so, must we not suppose that God certainly fore-knew this, otherwise where is his infinite understanding? And if he knew that this would be the consequence of their being born, and living in the world, where is his goodness in bringing them into it? If it be said that they have a free-will to choose what is good, and so had a power to attain salvation; therefore their not attaining it, is wholly owing to themselves. Suppose this were taken for granted, without entering on that subject at present; yet it must be farther enquired whether they will allow that God fore-knew that they would abuse this freedom of will, or power to make themselves holy or happy; and, if so, could he not have prevented this? Did he make a will that he could not govern or restrain? Could he not have prevented the sin that he knew they would commit? And, if he could, why did he not do it, and thereby prevent their ruin, which he knew would be the consequence hereof? So that if men are disposed to find fault with the divine dispensation, it is no difficult matter to invent some methods of reasoning to give umbrage to it; and, indeed this objection is not so much against God's fore-ordaining what comes to pass, as it is a spurning at his judicial hand, and finding fault with the equity of his proceedings, when he

takes vengeance on sinners for their iniquities ; or charging severity on God, because all mankind are not the objects of his goodness, and consequently not elected to eternal life.

But passing by this, we shall proceed to consider how, in several instances, the methods used to oppose the doctrine, which we are maintaining, are attended with many absurd consequences, derogatory to the divine perfections ; which farther discovers the unreasonableness of their opposition to it ; particularly,

1. It represents God as indeterminate, or unresolved what to do, which is the plain sense of their asserting that he has not fore-ordained whatever comes to pass. To suppose him destitute of any determination, is directly contrary to his wisdom and sovereignty, and it would argue that there are some excellencies and perfections belonging to intelligent creatures, which are to be denied to him, who is a God of infinite perfection : but if, on the other hand, they suppose that every thing, which comes to pass, is determined by him ; nevertheless, that his determinations, as they respect the actions of intelligent creatures, are not certain and peremptory, but such as may be disannulled, or rendered ineffectual as taking his measures from the uncertain determinations of man's will ; this is, in effect to say, that they are not determined by God ; for an uncertain determination, or a conditional purpose, cannot properly be called a determination. Thus for God to determine, that he that believes shall be saved, without resolving to give that faith which is necessary to salvation, is, in effect, not to determine that any shall be saved ; for, since they suppose that it is left to man's free-will to believe or not, and liberty is generally explained by them, as implying that a person might, had he pleased, have done the contrary to that which he is said to do freely ; it follows that all mankind might not have believed, and repented, and consequently that they might have missed of salvation, and then the purpose of God, relating thereunto, is the same as though he had been indeterminate, as to that matter. But, if, on the other hand, they suppose that to prevent this disappointment, God over-rules the free actions of men, in order to the accomplishment of his own purpose, then they give up their own cause, and allow us all that we contend for ; but this they are not disposed to do ; therefore we cannot see how the independency of the divine will can be defended by them, consistently with their method of opposing this doctrine.

Again, if it be supposed, as an expedient to fence against this absurd consequence, that God fore-knew what his creatures would do, and that his determinations were the result thereof, and, consequently, that the event is as certain as the divine fore-knowledge, this is what is not universally allowed of by

them; for many are sensible that it is as hard to prove, that God fore-knew what must certainly come to pass, without inferring the inevitable necessity of things, as it is to assert that he willed or determined them, whereby they are rendered eventually necessary. And if they suppose that God fore-knew what his creatures would do, and, particularly, that they would convert themselves, and improve the liberty of their will, so as to render themselves objects fit for divine grace, without supposing that he determined to exert that power and grace, which was necessary thereunto; this is to exclude his providence from having a hand in the government of the world, or to assert that his determinations rather respect what others will do, than what he will enable them to do, which farther appears to be inconsistent with the divine perfections.

2. There are some things, in their method of reasoning, which seem to infer a mutability in God's purpose which is all one as to suppose, that he had no purpose at all relating to the event of things: Thus, in opposing the doctrine of election, they refer to such-like scriptures as these, namely, that *God will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth*, 1 Tim. ii. 4. applying this act of the divine will to every individual, even to those who shall not be saved, or come to the knowledge of the truth; and they understand our Saviour's words, *How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Behold your house is left unto you desolate*, Mat. xxiii. 37, 38. as implying, that God purposed to save them, but was obliged afterwards, by the perverseness of their actions, to change his purpose. What is this, but to assert him to be dependent and mutable?

3. They, who suppose that salvation is not to be resolved into the power and will of God, must ascribe it to the will of man, by which we determine ourselves to perform those duties, which render us the objects of divine mercy; and then what the apostle says, *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*, Rom. ix. 16. would hardly be intelligible, or a defensible proposition; and when it is said, *We love him, because he first loved us*, 1 John iv. 19. the proposition ought to be inverted, and it should rather be said, *He loved us, because we first loved him*; and that humbling question, which the apostle proposes, *Who maketh thee to differ*, 1 Cor. iv. 7. should be answered, as one proudly did, *I make myself to differ*.

4. As to what concerns the doctrine of discriminating grace, which cannot well be maintained, without asserting a discrimination in God's purpose relating thereunto, which is what we call election; if this be denied, there would not be so

great a foundation for admiration, or thankfulness, as there is, or for any to say, as one of Christ's disciples did, speaking the sense of all the rest, *Lord, how is it, that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world*, John xiv. 22. Nor is there so great an inducement to humility, as what will arise from the firm belief, that, when no eye pitied the poor helpless and miserable sinner, he was singled out of a ruined and undone world, among that remnant whom God first designed for, and then brought to glory.

VII. We shall now consider those methods of reasoning, by which the contrary doctrine is defended, and enquire into the sense of those scriptures, which are generally brought for that purpose; and shall endeavour to make it appear, that they may be explained, in a different way, more consistently with the divine perfections. It is plain that the main design of those, who oppose the doctrine of election, is to advance the goodness of God; and, since all mankind cannot be said to be equally partakers of the effects of this goodness, inasmuch as all shall not be saved, they suppose that God has put all mankind into a salvable state; and, accordingly, as the gospel-overture is universal, so God's purpose to save, includes all to whom it is made; but the event, and consequently the efficacy of the divine purpose relating hereunto, depends on the will of man; and, that there may be no obstruction which may hinder this design from taking effect, God has given him a power to yield obedience to his law, which, though it be not altogether so perfect as it was at first, but is somewhat weakened by the fall; yet it is sufficient to answer the end and design of the gospel, that is to bring him to salvation if he will, and the event of things is wholly put on this issue; so that, though there be not an universal salvation, there is a determination in God to save all upon this condition. How far this is inconsistent with the divine perfections has been already considered; and we are farther to enquire, whether there be any foundation for it in scripture, and what is the sense of some texts, which are often brought in defence thereof.

One text referred to, is, those words of the apostle, in 1 Tim. ii. 4. *Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth*; and another scripture, to the same purpose, in 2 Pet. iii. 9. *The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*; and several others, from whence they argue the universality of the divine purpose relating to the salvation of mankind, or that none are rejected, or excluded from it, by any act of God's will, and consequently that the doctrine of election and reprobation is to be exploded, as contrary hereunto.

That the sense of these scriptures cannot be, that God de-

signed that all men should be eventually saved, or come to the knowledge of the truth, so that none of them should perish, is evident, from many other scriptures, that speak of the destruction of ungodly men, which, doubtless, will be allowed by all; therefore it follows, that the meaning of these two scriptures, is not that God purposed, or determined, what shall never come to pass, which is inconsistent with the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty, as has been before observed; but they are to be understood with those limitations, which the word *all*, which refers to the persons mentioned, as designed to be saved, is subject to in other scriptures; as will be more particularly considered, when we treat of universal and particular redemption, under a following answer*. And therefore, at present, we need only observe, that these scriptures may be set in a true light, that the word *all* is oftentimes taken for all sorts of men, or things; as when it is said, that *of every thing that creepeth upon the earth, there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark*, Gen. vii. 8, 9. that is all the *species* of living creatures, not every individual; so, Acts x. 12. in the vision that Peter saw of the sheet let down from heaven, in which *there were all manner of four-footed beasts* †, &c. and it is said concerning our Saviour, that he *went about, healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people* ‡; and elsewhere God promises, that *he will pour out his Spirit on all flesh*, Acts ii. 17. that is, persons of all ages and conditions, young and old.

There are many instances of the like nature in scripture, which justify this sense of the word *all*; and it seems plain, from the context, that it is to be so taken in the former of the scriptures, but now referred to, when it is said, *God will have all men to be saved*; for he exhorts, in ver. 1. that *prayer and supplication should be made for all men*, that is, for men of all characters and conditions in the world, and, in particular, for *kings, and all that are in authority*, and thereby he takes occasion to resolve a matter in dispute among them, whether those kings that were tyrants and oppressors, ought to be prayed for, when he tells them, that all sorts of men are to be prayed for; and the reason of this is assigned, namely, *because God will have all men*, that is, all sorts of men, *to be saved*.

Moreover, they whom God will save, are said to be such as *shall come*, that is, as he will bring *to the knowledge of the truth*. Now it is certain, that God never designed to bring every individual to the knowledge of the truth; for, if he did, his purpose is not fulfilled, or his providence runs counter to

* See Quest. xlv.

† The words are, *πᾶσι τετραπόδοις*, that is, all four-footed beasts.

‡ Matt. iv. 23. The words are, *θεραπεύων πάσαν νόσον καὶ πάσαν μαλακίαν*, every sickness, and every disease; and so the same words are translated, in Matt. ix. 35.

it, for every individual of mankind have not the gospel; therefore it follows, that since God did not purpose that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth, the foregoing words, *Who will have all men to be saved*, are not to be understood in any other sense, but as signifying *all sorts of men*. Neither can it well be proved, whatever may be attempted in order thereto, that the following words, which speak of Christ's being a *Mediator between God and men*, intend, that he performs this office for every individual man, even for those that shall not be saved; for then it would be executed in vain for a great part of them, as will be farther considered in its proper place; therefore we must conclude, that, in the former of these scriptures, nothing else is intended, but that God determined to give saving grace to all sorts of men.

And as for the latter, in which the apostle Peter says, that *God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*; there the word *all* is expressly limited, in the context, as referring only to those who are elect and faithful; and therefore he says, including himself among them, that *the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward*. Now if we observe the character which he gives of the church, to which he writes, in the beginning of both his epistles, (which, as he says, in ver. 1. of this chapter, were directed to the same persons) it is as great as is given of any in scripture; and they are distinguished from those profane *scorners, who walked after their own lusts*, and other ungodly men, whose perdition he speaks of, as what would befall them in the dissolution of the world, by fire, in the day of Judgment; and they are described not only as *elect unto obedience*, and as having *obtained like precious faith with the apostles*, but they were such as God would *keep, through faith, unto salvation*; therefore the apostle might well say, concerning them, that God determined that none of them should perish, without advancing any thing that militates against the doctrine we are maintaining.

Object. The apostle, in this verse, speaks of God, as willing that *all should come to repentance*; therefore they are distinguished from that part of the church, who had obtained like precious faith, and were included in the character that he gives of some of them, in both his epistles, which infers their being then in a state of salvation; therefore the word, *all*, in this text, is not subject to the limitation before mentioned, but must be applied to *all the world*, and consequently the meaning is, that God is not willing that any of mankind should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Ans. The apostle, in this text, speaks of God's deferring the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men, and so exercising his long-suffering towards the world in general; not

that he designed to bring them all to repentance hereby, for that would be to intend a thing which he knew should never come to pass: But the end of his patience, to the world in general, is, that all whom he designed to bring to repentance, or who were chosen to it, as well as to obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, should be brought to it.

There are other arguments, which they bring in defence of their sense of the doctrine of election, as supposing that it is not peremptory, determinate, or unchangeable, and such as infers the salvation of those who are the objects thereof, taken from those scriptures, which, as they apprehend, ascribe a kind of disappointment to God; as when he says, in Isa. v. 4. concerning his vineyard, to wit, the church of the Jews, *Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?* and our Saviour's words, in Luke xiii. 6. *that he sought fruit on the fig-tree*, meaning the church of the Jews in his day, *but found none*; and, speaking concerning Jerusalem, he says, in Matth. xxiii. 37, 38. *How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*; therefore they conclude, that God's purpose, or design of grace, may be defeated; so that these, and many other scriptures, not unlike to them, are inconsistent with the doctrine of election, as ascertaining the event, to wit, the salvation of those who are chosen to eternal life; which leads us, particularly to consider the sense thereof.

As to the first of them, in which God says, by the prophet, *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?* He condescends therein to speak of himself after the manner of men, as he often does in scripture, and is said to look for what might reasonably have been expected, as the consequence of all the means of grace, which he had vouchsafed to them; the reasonableness of the thing is called his looking for it, as though he should say, it might have been expected, from the nature of the thing, that they, who had been laid under such obligations, should express some gratitude for them, and so have brought forth some fruit, to the glory of God. And those words, which seem to attribute disappointment to him, when it is said, *I looked*, &c. signifying nothing else but the ingratitude of the people, that they did not walk agreeably to the obligations they were under; not that God was really disappointed, for that would militate against his omniscience. He knew, before he laid these obligations on them, what their behaviour would be; therefore, had he eyes of flesh, or seen as man seeth, their behaviour would have tended to disappoint him; but there is no

disappointment in the divine mind, though the sin reprov'd in the people be the same as though it had had a tendency to defeat the divine purpose, or disappoint his expectation.

As for that other scripture, in which it is said, that *he sought fruit on the fig-tree, but found none*, that is to be explained in the same way, *he sought fruit*, that is, it might reasonably have been expected, but *he found none*, that is, they did not act agreeably to the means of grace which they enjoyed. Therefore neither this, nor the other scripture, does in the least argue, that the purpose of God was not concerned about the event, or that he did not know what it would be; for, as his providential dispensation gives us ground to conclude, that he determin'd to leave them to themselves, so he knew beforehand that this, through the corruption of their nature, would issue in their unfruitfulness, otherwise he is not omniscient. Therefore it follows, that neither of these scriptures have the least tendency to overthrow the doctrine of the certainty and peremptoriness of the divine purpose.

As to what our Saviour says, relating to his willingness, to *have gathered Jerusalem, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would not*, it may be taken, without the least absurdity attending the sense thereof, as referring to the end and design of his ministry among them; and it is as though he should say, your nation shall be broken, and you scattered, as a punishment inflicted on you for your iniquities, and this destruction would have been prevented, had you believed in me; so that all that can be inferred from hence, is, that Christ's ministry and doctrine were attended with that convincing evidence, being confirmed by so many undoubted miracles, that their unbelief was not only charged on them as a crime, but was the occasion of their ruin; or (as it is said in the following words) of their *houses being left unto them desolate*. And this might have been prevented, by their making a right improvement of that common grace, which they had; for though it be not in man's power, (a) without the special influence of divine grace, to believe to the saving of the soul; yet I know no one who denies that it is in his power to do more good, and avoid more evil, than he does, or so far to attend to the preaching of the gospel, as not to oppose it with that malice and envy as the Jews did; and, had they paid such a deference to Christ's ministry, as this amounted to, they would not have been exposed to those judgments which afterwards befel them; for it is one thing to say, that men, by improving common grace, can attain salvation, and another thing to conclude, that they might have escaped temporal judgments thereby.

(a) It is improper to say we have no power, when we can do the thing if we will; and criminal to take the glory, which is God's.

Therefore, if it be enquired, what was God's intention in giving them the gospel? the answer is very plain: It was not that hereby he might bring them all into a state of salvation, for then it would have taken effect; but it was, as appears by the event, to bring those, that should be saved among them, to that salvation, and to let others know, whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear, that God had a right to their obedience, and therefore that the message which the Redeemer brought to them, ought to have met with better entertainment from them, than it did. And if it be farther enquired, whether, provided they had believed, their ruin would have been prevented? This is an undoubted consequence, from our Saviour's words; but yet it does not follow, from hence, that it was a matter of uncertainty with God, whether they should believe or no; for it is one thing to say, that he would not have punished them, unless they rejected our Saviour; and another thing to suppose that he could not well determine whether they would reject him or no. So that the purpose of God must be considered, as agreeing with the event of things, and the design of Christ's ministry, as being what it really was; yet he might, notwithstanding, take occasion to charge the Jews' destruction upon their own obstinacy.

There are many other scriptures, which they bring to the like purpose, which I pass over, because the sense they give of them differs not much from that, in which they understand the scriptures before-mentioned, and their reasoning from them, in opposition to this doctrine is the same, and the same answer may be given to it.

However, I cannot but observe, that as, from some scriptures, they attribute disappointment to God, they represent him, from others, as wishing, but in vain, that it had happened otherwise, and as being grieved at the disappointment; so they understand those words, in Psal. lxxxii. 13, 14. *Oh! that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries;* and that, in Luke xix. 42. *If, or, Oh! that thou hadst known, even thou at least, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

As for the sense of these, and such-like scriptures, it is no more than this, that the thing which they refused to perform, was, in itself, most desirable, or a matter to be wished for, and not that God can be said to wish for a thing that cannot be attained. And when our Saviour laments over Jerusalem, as apprehending their destruction near at hand, whether the words are to be considered in the form of a wish, that it had been otherwise, or an intimation, that if they had known the things of their peace, their destruction would not have ensued, it is

only to be understood as a representation of the deplorableness of their condition, which, with a tenderness of human compassion, he could not speak of, without tears : Yet we are not to suppose that this mode of expression is applicable to the divine will ; so that, when the misery of that people is hereby set forth, we are not to strain the sense of words, taken from human modes of speaking, so far, as to suppose that the judicial acts of God, in punishing a sinful people, are not the execution of his purpose relating thereunto.

Again, when the Spirit is said to be *grieved*, Eph. iv. 30. or *resisted*, Acts vii. 15. nothing else is intended hereby, but that men act in such a way, as that, had the Spirit of God been subject to human passions, it would have been matter of grief to him. But far be it from us to suppose that the divine nature is liable hereunto, or that any disappointment can attend his purposes, which has a tendency to excite this passion in men. And when he is said to be resisted, it is not meant as though his will, or design, could be rendered ineffectual, but it only implies, that men oppose what the Spirit communicated by the prophets, or in his word. This a person may do, and yet it may be truly said, that *the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations*, Psal. xxxiii. 11.

VIII. We shall proceed to consider several objections that are made against the doctrine we have endeavoured to maintain, and what reply may be given to them. Some have been occasionally mentioned under several foregoing heads, and there are others which require a distinct reply.

Object. 1. That the doctrine of absolute Election and Reprobation was altogether unknown by the Fathers in the three first centuries, and that it was first brought into the Christian world by Augustin ; before whose time, the only account we have of it, is, that God foreknowing who would live piously, or believe and persevere to the end, accordingly predestinated them to eternal life, or determined to pass them by, and so is said to have rejected them.*

Answ. This objection, were it literally true, cannot have any tendency to overthrow this doctrine, in the opinion of those, who depend not on the credit of Augustin, as defending it, on the one hand, nor are staggered by the opposition made to it by some of the Fathers, who lived before his time, on the other ; and therefore we might have passed it by, without making any reply to it. However, since it contains a kind of insult, or boast, which will have its weight with some, it may be expected that a few things should be said, in answer to it.

We will not deny but that the Fathers, before the Pelagian heresy was broached in the world, expressed themselves, in many parts of their writings, in so lax and unguarded a manner

* See *Whitby of Election, Chap. 5. Limborch. Amic. Collat. page 242.*

concerning the doctrines of predestination, free-will, and grace, that, had they lived after those doctrines began to be publicly contested, one would have thought that they had verged too much towards Pelagius's side; but, since they were not the subject-matter of controversy in those ages, it is no wonder to find them less cautious in their modes of expressing themselves, than they might otherwise have been; and therefore it is a just observation, which one* makes of this matter, that they had to do with the Manichees, and some of the heathen, who supposed that men sinned by a fatal necessity of nature, as though there were no wicked action committed in the world, but some would be ready to excuse it, from the impotency or propensity of human nature to sin, which rendered it, as they supposed, unavoidable; and others took occasion, from hence, to charge God with being the author of sin. It is very probable the Fathers, in those ages, were afraid of giving countenance to this vile opinion, and therefore they were less on their guard, in some respects, than they would have been, had they been to encounter with Pelagius, or his followers.

And indeed, Augustin himself, before he took occasion to enquire more diligently into the state of this controversy, gave into the same way of expressing his sentiments about the power of nature, or the grace of God, as some others of the Fathers had done, and concluded that faith was in our power, as well a duty incumbent on us, but afterwards retracted such modes of speaking as the result of more mature deliberation.† But notwithstanding though he expressed himself in a different way from them, yet he often takes occasion, from some passages which he purposely refers to in their writings, to vindicate them as holding the same faith, though not always using the same phrases. And, after he had thus defended Cyprian and Ambrose, in that respect, he puts a very charitable construction on their unguarded way of expressing themselves, and says, that this arose from their not having any occasion to engage in that controversy, which was on foot in his day.‡ The same might be said to Gregory Nazianzen, Basil, Chrysostom, and several others, whom some modern writers defend from the charge of favouring the Pelagian scheme, by referring to some places in their writings, in which they acknowledge, that the

* *Vid. Sixt Senens. Bibliothec. Lib. V. Annotat 101. Annotavit quidam Chrysostomum interdum naturæ nostræ vires plus æquo extulisse ex contentione discipulandi cum Manichæis & Gentilibus, qui hominem asserebant, vel natura malum vel fati violentia ad peccandum compelli.*

† *Vid. Aug. Retrac. l. Cap. 25.*

‡ *Vid. Aug. de Prædest. Sanct. Cap. 14. Quid igitur opus est, ut eorum scrutemur opuscula, qui prius quam ista hæresis oriretur, non habuerunt necessitatem in hac difficili ad solvendum questione versari: quod proculdubio ficerent, si responderet talibus cohererentur.*

salvation of men is owing to the grace of God, whereby all occasions of glorying are taken away from the creature,* or expressions used by them to the like purpose. And the learned Vossius, though he acknowledges, that the Fathers, before Augustin, expressed themselves in such a way, as is represented in the objection, yet he vindicates them from the charge of verging towards the Pelagian, or Semi-Pelagian heresy; inasmuch as he concludes, that when they speak of God's predestinating men to eternal life, on the foresight of good works, they only intend those good works, which God would enable them to perform; and this will clear many of those expressions which they use, from this imputation.† But if all these endeavours to establish our claim to those Fathers, who lived before Augustin, as not being opposers of this doctrine, appear to be to no purpose, yet this will not weaken the truth thereof; for we suppose it to be founded on scripture, and several consequences plainly deduced from it, and therefore it doth not want the suffrage of human testimony to support it.

But if it be said, that this is a very desirable thing as doubtless it is, we might consider this doctrine, as obtaining very much in, and after Augustin's time, being examined and defended by very considerable numbers of men, who have transmitted it down to posterity, throughout the various ages of the church. Notwithstanding, by whomsoever it is defended, or opposed, we lay no great stress on human authority, as a judicious divine well observes ‡. We shall therefore proceed to consider some other objections, which it will be more necessary for us to give a particular answer to.

Object. 2. To the doctrine of God's purpose's ascertaining all events, it is objected that he has not determined the bounds of the life of man, but that it may be lengthened, or shortened, by the intervention of second causes. This is nothing else but the applying one branch of this controversy, relating to the decrees of God, to a particular instance. And it was very warmly debated in the Netherlands, towards the beginning of the last century.§ This objection is managed in a popular way, and is principally adapted to give prejudice to those who are disposed to pass over, or set aside, those necessary distinctions, which, if duly considered, would not only shorten the debate, but set the matter in a clearer light, which we shall endeavour to do; but shall first consider their method of reasoning on

* *Vid. Fobes. Instruct. Historico-Theol. Lib. VIII. Cap. 28. § 16, &c. & Joh. Jacobi Hottingeri, Fata Doctrinae de Prædestinat. Lib. I. § 35, &c.*

† *Vid. G. J. Vossii Hist. Pelag. Lib. VI. Thes. 8, 9, 10.*

‡ *Vid. Calv. Institut. Lib. III. Cap. 22. § 1. Certior est hic Dei veritas, quam ut concutitur, clarior quam ut obruat hominum autoritate.*

§ *See the epistles that passed between Beryers, a physician at Dort, and several Divines at that time, in Lib. de Term. vite*

this subject, and the sense they give of some scriptures, which as they suppose, give countenance to this objection.

They therefore thus argue, that if the term of life be immoveably fixed by God, then it is a vain thing for any one to use those means that are necessary to preserve it, and the skill of the physician, as well as the virtue of medicine, is altogether needless; and the good advice which is often given to persons, to take heed that they do not shorten their lives by intemperance, will be to no purpose; for they have a reply ready at hand, namely, that they shall live their appointed time, do what they will. And that, which is still more absurd, is, that if a person attempts to lay violent hands upon himself, it will be to no purpose, if God has determined that he shall live longer; or if he has determined that he shall die, then he is guilty of no crime, for he only fulfils the divine purpose.

They add, moreover, that this not only renders all our supplications to God to preserve our lives, or to restore us from sickness, when we are in danger of death, needless; but our conduct herein is a practical denial of the argument we maintain; for what is this, but to suppose that the bounds of life are unalterably fixed.

As to what concerns the countenance, which they suppose, scripture gives to this objection, they refer us to those places in which the life of man is said to be lengthened or shortened; accordingly, there are promises of *long life given to the righteous who love God, and keep his commandments*, Exod. xx. 12. Deut. iv. 40. 1 Kings iii. 14. and Solomon says expressly, *The fear of the Lord longeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened*, Prov. x. 27. and elsewhere he speaks of the *wicked's dying before their time*, Eccl. vii. 17. and the Psalmist says, that *bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days*, Psal. lv. 23.

They also refer to that scripture in which Martha tells our Saviour, that *if he had been with her brother Lazarus, before his death, he had not died*, John xi. 21. which either contradicts the argument we are maintaining, or else Martha was mistaken; which, had she been, our Saviour would have reproved her, for asserting that which was false.

Moreover, they add, that when the old world was destroyed in the deluge, and so died before their time, they might have prolonged their lives, had they repented in that space of time, wherein *Noah as a preacher of righteousness*, gave them warning of this desolating judgment, and Christ, *by his Spirit*, in him, *preached to them*, as the apostle says, 1 Pet. iii. 20. which, doubtless, was with a design to bring them to repentance, and save them from this destruction.

And when Abraham pleaded with God in the behalf of So-

dom, God tells him, that *if he found but ten righteous persons in the city, he would spare it for their sake*, Gen. xviii. 32. which is inconsistent with his determination, that they should all die by an untimely death, if the bounds of their lives had been fixed.

And lastly, they refer to that scripture, in which God first told Hezekiah, that *he should die, and not live*, and afterwards, that he would *add to his days fifteen years*, Isa. xxxviii. 1. compared with 5.

Ans. To prepare our way for a reply to this objection, let us consider that the contrary side of the question, which we are maintaining, is equally supported by express texts of scripture: thus it is said *His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed him bounds that he cannot pass*, Job xiv. 5. than which, nothing can be more express, where he speaks concerning that decree of God, which respects all mankind, without exception, and sets forth his absolute sovereignty, and the irreversibleness of his purpose herein; and the apostle Paul, in reasoning with the Athenians concerning the decree and providence of God in whom we live, move, and have our being says, that *he hath determined the times before appointed, and fixed the bounds of their habitation*, Acts xvii. 26. As he has placed men upon the earth, by his decree and providence, so he has determined not only the place where they should live, but the time of their continuance in the world. This was no new doctrine; for the heathen had been instructed in it by their own philosophers and therefore the apostle speaks their sense, especially that of the *stoicks*, about this matter.* When he mentions the times are determined, it is not to be understood of the seasons of the year, which God has fixed to return in their certain courses, but the seasons appointed for every work, or for every occurrence of life; and, among the rest, the time of life, and of serving our generation therein, as Solomon expressly says, in Eccl. iii. 1, 2. *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose; a time to be born, and a time to die.* Several other scriptures might be brought to the same purpose, as a farther proof hereof, namely, those in which God has foretold the death of particular persons, 2 Sam. xii. 14. 1 Kings xiv. 12. chap. xxii. 28.

Moreover, if the providence of God is conversant about all the actions of men, and *the hairs of their head are all numbered*, Matt. x. 30. so that the smallest changes in life do not come by chance, but are subject thereto; then certainly the time of

* *Seneca de Consol. ad Marciam, cap. 20. Nemo nimis cito moritur, qui victurus diutius quam vixit non fuit, fixus est cuique terminus, manebit semper ubi positus est, nec illum ulterius diligentia aut gratia promovebit. Et Cicero de Senect. Quod cuique temporis ad vivendum datum, eo debet contentus esse. Virg. Æn. X. Stat una cuique dies. Sero. Fixum est tempus vite.*

life must be subjected to his providence, who is styled, *Our life, and the length of our days*, Deut. xxx. 20. He must therefore certainly be considered as the sovereign Arbiter thereof, which doctrine none that own a providence, can, with any shadow of reason, gainsay; so that this doctrine is agreeable not only to several scriptures, but to the very nature and perfections of God.

This being premised we return to the arguments laid down against it, and the scriptures cited to give countenance to them. It is certain, that two contradictory propositions cannot be both true in the same sense; and the scriptures, which are exactly harmonious, as well as infallibly true, no where contradict themselves. Therefore we must consider what answer may be given to the objections before-mentioned; and, that our work herein may be shortened, we may observe, that the bounds of life are twofold; either such as men might have lived to, according to the common course of nature if nothing had intervened to ruin the constitution, or no disease, or violent death, had broken the thread of life before; or that time which God has ordained that men shall live, whether it be longer or shorter: the former of these respects the lengthening or shortening of life, by the influence of second causes; and, in this respect, we do not suppose that the terms of life are immoveably fixed, but that in some, it is longer, and, in others shorter; for it is certain, that by intemperance, or other methods, men may shorten their days; or, by laying violent hands on themselves, not live the time that otherwise they would have done. But if we consider the over-ruling, or disposing providence of God, as conversant about this matter, there is nothing happens without the concurrence thereof. Therefore persons, who shorten their days by intemperance, do this by the permissive providence of God; though he be not the author of their intemperance, which is sinful, yet he permits, or determines not to hinder it, and consequently though he has fixed the bounds of life, which can neither be lengthened or shortened, yet knowing what men will do, in a natural way, to shorten them, he determines that this shall put an end to their lives. (a) And when we read, in scripture, of God's *delivering* him, who dies a violent death, *into his hands*, who is the immediate cause of it, Exod. xxi. 13. God is not the author of the sin of the murderer; yet providence is not wholly to be exempted from that action, so far as it is not sinful, but purely natural, or the effect of power; and, when this is said to have a tendency to shorten the life of man, it does not detract from the time that he had

(a) Evil as well as good actions are links in the chain of providence, and yet do not impeach Divine holiness.

in his own purpose affixed to it. We must also consider, that his decree and providence respects the means, as well as the end, which are always inseparably connected, and equally subject thereunto.

These things being premised, we proceed more particularly to answer the arguments brought against this doctrine. And,

1. When it is said, that God's fixing the bounds of life, renders all means for the preservation thereof unnecessary, that depends upon a false supposition, namely, that God does not ordain the means as well as the end. If God had determined that persons shall live, he has determined to give them the supports of life, and to prevent every thing that might tend to destroy it; so, on the other hand, when he takes them away, by a disease, this is ordained by him, as a means conducive thereunto. If health is to be supported, or recovered, by means, and thereby life preserved, God has ordained that these means shall be used, as well as the end attained.

2. As to persons shortening their lives by intemperance, this has a natural tendency to do it; so that, though God be not the author of the sin, he certainly knows, before-hand, what methods the sinner will take to hasten his end, and leaves him to himself; so that, though the sin be not from God, the punishment, which is the consequence thereof, may truly be said to be from him, and therefore this was determined by him.

And when it is farther objected, that they, who destroy their health, or lay violent hands on themselves, cannot be said to sin in so doing, because they do that which tends to fulfil the divine will, provided God has determined the fatal event; herein they oppose this doctrine, without taking the words in the same sense in which it is maintained; for it is well known, that the will of God is sometimes taken for that prescribed rule that he has given us, which is the matter of our duty, in which sense we readily allow, that he that fulfils it, cannot be said to sin. But, besides this, it is sometimes taken for his purpose to permit sin; or, to give the sinner up to his own heart's lusts, to act that which he hates, and is resolved to punish. In this sense, the sinner is said to do that which God would not have suffered him to do, had he willed the contrary; but it is a very groundless insinuation, to suppose that this exempts him from the guilt of sin.

3. To say, that God's fixing the bounds of life, is inconsistent with our praying, that our lives may be prolonged, or that we may be delivered from sickness, or death, when we are apprehensive that we are drawing nigh to it, is no just consequence; for as we do not pray that God would alter his purpose, when we desire any blessing of him, but suppose this to be hid from us, and expect not to know it any otherwise than by the

event; so a person, who prays to be delivered from sickness, or death, is not to address the divine Majesty, as one who presumptuously, and without ground, supposes that God has decreed that he shall immediately die, but as one who hopes, or who has no ground to conclude otherwise, but that he will make it appear, by answering his prayer, that he has determined to spare his life. For the secret purpose of God, relating to the event of things, is no more to be a rule of duty, inasmuch as it is secret, than if there had been no purpose relating thereunto; but yet it does not follow from hence, that this matter is not determined by him.

4. As to those scriptures, that seem to give countenance to this objection, they may, without the least absurdity, be understood consistently with other scriptures, which have been before produced, whereby it is proved, that God has fixed, or determined the bounds of life. As for those *promises*, which God has made of a long life, *to those that love him, and keep his commandments*, the meaning thereof is this, that he will certainly bestow this blessing, either in kind or value, on those whose conversation is such as is therein described; this none can deny, who rightly understand the meaning of that scripture, in which it is said, that *godliness hath the promise of the life that now is*, as well as of *that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. But, so far as it affects the argument we are maintaining, we must consider, that that efficacious grace, whereby we are enabled to love God, and keep his commandments, is as much his gift, and consequently the result of his purpose, as the blessing connected with it; therefore if he has determined that we shall enjoy a long and happy life in this world, and to enable us to live a holy life therein; if both the end and the means are connected together, and are equally the objects of God's purpose, then it cannot justly be inferred from hence, that the event, relating to the lengthening or shortening our lives, is not determined by him.

As for those scriptures that speak of the wickeds' *dying before their time*, or *not living half their days*, these are to be understood agreeably to that distinction before-mentioned, between men's dying sooner, than they would have done according to the course of nature, or the concurrence of second causes thereunto, in which sense it is literally true, that many do not live out half their days; and their dying sooner than God had before determined. May not the sovereign Disposer of all things inflict a sudden and immediate death, as the punishment of sin, without giving us reason to conclude that this was not pre-concerted, if we may so express it, or determined beforehand?

As for that other scripture, referred to in the objection, in which Martha tells our Saviour, that if he had been with Laza-

rus, when sick, *he had not died*, she does not suppose Christ's being there, would have frustrated the divine purpose, for then he would, doubtless, have reproved her for it; whereas, in reality, he did not come to visit him, because he knew that God had purposed that he should die, and be afterwards raised from the dead; so that this does not argue that he has not fixed the bounds, or term of life.

Again, as for that argument, to support this objection, taken from the destruction of the world in the flood, or that of Sodom, by fire from heaven, that they might have prolonged their lives, had they repented, we do not deny but that this would have been the consequence thereof, but then their repentance would have been as much determined by God, as their deliverance from that untimely death, which befel them.

The last scripture mentioned, in which God, by the prophet Isaiah, tells Hezekiah, that *he should die, and not live*; notwithstanding which, fifteen years were added to his life, which is very frequently insisted on, by those who deny the unalterable decree of God, relating to life and death, as that which they apprehend to be an unanswerable argument to support it: to this it may be replied, that when God says, *Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live*, he gave Hezekiah to understand, that his disease was what we call mortal, namely, such as no skill of the physician, or natural virtue of medicine, could cure, and therefore that he must expect to die, unless God recovered him by a miracle; and Hezekiah, doubtless, took the warning in this sense, otherwise it would have been a preposterous thing for him to have prayed for life, as it would have been an affront to God, to have desired to have changed his purpose. But God, on the other hand, designed, by this warning, to put him upon importunate prayer for life; therefore when he says, *I will add to thy days fifteen years*, the meaning is only this, though thou mightest before have expected death, my design in giving thee that intimation, was, that thou shouldest pray for life, which might be given thee by a miracle, and now I will work a miracle, and fulfil, in this respect, what I before purposed in adding to thy life fifteen years.

Object. 3. It is farther objected, against the doctrine of election and reprobation, and particularly the immutability of God's purpose therein, that it tends to establish a fatal necessity of things, and overthrow that known distinction that there is between things, as necessary, or contingent, as though nothing in the whole series of causes and effects could happen otherwise than it does, and God himself were confined to such a method of acting, that it was impossible for him to have done the contrary; which is nothing else but the Stoical doctrine of fate applied to, and defended by some scriptures, though it be contrary to others, which speak of the uncertainty of future events.

Thus God speaks of the Jews, turning from their iniquities, and his bestowing pardoning mercy, as the result thereof, as an uncertain event, when he says, in Jer. xxxvi. 3. *It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil, which I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.* So when God gave the Jews a sign, immediately before the captivity, taken from the prophet Ezekiel's personating one that was removing his stuff, or household-goods, as signifying, that the nation in general should soon remove to other habitations, when carried captive into Babylon, he adds, upon this occasion, *It may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house,* Ezek. xii. 3. And the prophet Zephaniah exhorts the people *to seek righteousness and meekness,* and, as the consequence thereof, says, *It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger,* Zeph. ii. 3. And the apostle speaks of the uncertainty of the divine dispensations of grace, when he advises Timothy, *in meekness, to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth,* 2 Tim. ii. 25. which is directly contrary to the unalterable necessity of events, depending upon the divine purpose, according to the doctrine of election.

Answe. 1. As to the former part of this objection, in which this doctrine is pretended to have taken its rise from, and to be agreeable to, that of the Stoicks, concerning fate and destiny, it will not be much to our purpose to enquire what was the opinion of that sect of philosophers concerning it; and, indeed, it will be difficult to fix on a just sense thereof, in which they all agree. Some are of opinion, that many of them intended nothing else thereby, but the immutability of God's purposes, but the dispensation of his providence, being a necessary execution thereof; and when he is said to be bound by the laws of fate, they mean, that he cannot act contrary to what himself has determined.* And, had it been universally explained by them in this sense, it would not have done them much service, who oppose the doctrine of election, to have compared it therewith; for it would only have proved the agreeableness of the doctrine of the immutability of God's purpose, relating to all events, to the light of nature, as some of the heathen were thereby instructed in it. But since this does not appear to be the sense of all the Stoicks about the doctrine of fate, but some of them understood it in the same sense as it is represented in the objection, this we cannot but militate against, and assert the doctrine of election to be very remote from it.

Therefore we need only, in answer to this part of the objec-

* *Vid. Senac. de Prov. cap. 5. August. de Civ. Dei, Lib. V. cap. 1, & 8. Lips. Phys. Stoic. Lib. I. Diss. 12.*

tion, explain what we mean, when we maintain the necessity of events, as founded on the will of God. We are far from asserting that there is a necessary connexion between second causes, and their respective effects, in which some are produced arbitrarily, by the will of intelligent creatures; and when we call any thing a necessary cause, producing effects, according to its own nature, we suppose that this is agreeable to the order, or course of nature, which was fixed by God. All that we pretend to prove, is the dependence of things on the divine will, and the necessity of God's purposes taking effect; so that that which is arbitrary or contingent, which might be, or not be, as depending on, or relating to second causes, is eventually necessary, as it is an accomplishment of the divine purpose. Therefore we always distinguish between things being contingent, with respect to us, and their being so, with respect to God; and, consequently, though *it may be*, or *peradventure*, may be applied to the apparent event of things, these words can never be applied to the fulfilling of the divine will; and this leads us to consider the latter part of the objection; therefore,

2. As to the scripture's speaking concerning the uncertainty of future events, in those places mentioned in the objection, these, and all others of the like nature, in which such a mode of speaking is used, may be explained, by distinguishing between what might reasonably have been expected to be the event of things, supposing men had not been given up to the blindness of their mind, and hearts, to act below the dictates of reason, without consulting their own safety and happiness, or expressing their gratitude to God; and what would be the real event of things, which God was not pleased to reveal, and therefore was unknown to them. Thus, when the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel represented the repentance and reformation of Israel as an uncertain event, as well as their forgiveness, and deliverance from the captivity, connected with it, in such dubious terms, *It may be they will consider and return, every man from his evil way*; it implies, that this was what might have been reasonably expected by men, though it was no matter of uncertainty to the heart-searching God, who knoweth the end from the beginning, and perfectly foresees what will be the event of things, which, in various respects, are under the direction of his providence. Though it could hardly be thought, by men, that such an admonition should be treated with such contempt, yet God knew how they would behave themselves; there was no *peradventure* with respect to his judgment thereof; he knew that they would not repent, otherwise he would have inclined their wills, and effectually have persuaded them to exercise this grace, and thereby have prevented his expectation, or determination, from being disappointed, or frustrated.

If it be objected, that, according to this sense of the text, the prophet's message to the people would have been to no purpose, and his ministry, among them, exercised in vain; or that it was contrary to the wisdom and goodness of God to make this overture to them, when he knew it would not be complied with.

To this it may be replied, that the great God is not bound to decline the asserting his right to man's obedience, or requiring that which is a just debt to him, though he knew that they would not comply with his demand thereof; and, indeed, this objection cannot be maintained, without supposing, that, when the gospel is preached to man, the glory of the divine wisdom and goodness therein cannot be secured, unless we conclude either that God doth not know whether man will embrace it, or no, which is contrary to his omniscience; or that he determines, that all, to whom the gospel is preached, shall embrace it, which is contrary to matter of fact. But there may be a medium between both these, which vindicates the divine perfections, in ordering that the gospel should be preached, and thereby asserting his sovereignty, and unalienable right to their obedience; accordingly, there might be a small remnant among them, in whom God designed that this message should take effect. And will any one say, that because the goodness of God was not herein demonstrated to all, that therefore no glory was brought to that perfection?

And if it be farther said, that supposing there were some who turned from their evil ways, the captivity, which was threatened, was not hereby prevented, and therefore the promise, relating thereunto, did not take place; to this it may be replied; that as God did not give them ground to expect this blessing, unless this repentance should be more universal, than it really was, so he had various ways to testify his regard to those who should receive advantage by this message, for whose sake it was principally intended.

As for that other scripture, in which God advises his people to *seek righteousness and meekness*, and, as the consequence hereof, says, *it may be ye may be hid in the day of the Lord's fierce anger*; the meaning is, that they, who were enabled to exercise these graces, should either have some instances of temporal deliverance vouchsafed to them; or if not, that they should have no reason to complain that the exercise thereof was altogether in vain.

As for that scripture, in which the apostle bids Timothy to exhort those that oppose the gospel, *if, peradventure, God would give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth*; the meaning is, that it was uncertain to Timothy whether God would give this grace or no: and therefore he must preach the

gospel, whatever were the event thereof: Nevertheless, it was no matter of uncertainty, with respect to God, who must be supposed to know what grace he designs to bestow, and therefore the event of things may be dubious to us, and yet be certain with respect to him.

Object. 4. Another objection, against the doctrine of election and reprobation, is, that it is altogether inconsistent with the preaching of the gospel; for if God has determined the final state of man, so that his purpose cannot be altered, then it is a preposterous thing, not to say illusory, for grace to be offered to the chief of sinners, which must certainly argue, that it is impossible to be attained by them; and, since the overture is universal, we must conclude that God has put all mankind into a salvable state, and consequently not excluded any from salvation by his peremptory and unchangeable decree. To what purpose are the promises of the gospel held forth, to all that sit under the sound thereof, if it be impossible for them to attain the blessings promised therein? Or what regard could men be supposed to have to the promises, if they were not a declaration of God's purpose? And, on the other hand, the threatenings denounced would be as little regarded, as an expedient to deter men from sinning, if their state were unalterably fixed by God, according to this doctrine of election, as it has been before considered.

Answ. That we may proceed with greater clearness in answering this objection, we shall first shew what we mean by preaching the gospel, which is nothing else but a declaration of God's revealed will, and our duty pursuant thereunto, which is to be made known, particularly what is contained in the word of God, relating to the salvation of men, and the way which he has ordained in order to their attaining it. Therefore,

1. When this salvation is said to be offered in the gospel, we intend nothing else thereby, but that a declaration is made to sinners, that there are many invaluable privileges which Christ has purchased for, and will, in his own time and way, apply to all those whom God has purposed to save; and, since we cannot describe them by name, and no unregenerate person has ground to conclude that he is of that number, therefore there is a farther declaration to be made, namely, that God has inseparably connected this salvation, which he has chosen them to, with faith and repentance, and the exercise of all other graces, which, as they are God's gift, and to be prayed for, and expected, in a diligent attendance on all his ordinances; so they are to be considered as the mark and evidences of their being chosen to salvation, without which, it is certainly a vain and presumptuous thing for any one to pretend that he has a right to it, as the object of God's eternal election.

2. No one, who preaches the gospel, has any warrant from God to tell any individual person that whether he repents and believes, or no, he shall be saved; or, to direct his discourse to him, as one that is chosen thereunto, much less to give the impenitent sinner occasion to conclude, that, though he obstinately, and finally, remain in a state of rebellion against God, notwithstanding he may hope to be saved, because there is a number of mankind chosen to salvation; for this is not to declare God's revealed will, but that which is directly contrary to it, and therefore not to preach the gospel. Therefore,

3. All, who sit under the sound of the gospel, ought to look upon it as a declaration of God's design to save a part of mankind, under the preaching thereof, and among them the chief of sinners, which they have a sufficient ground to conclude themselves to be; but yet a door of hope is so far opened hereby, that they have no reason to conclude that they are rejected, any more than that they are elected; and, while they wait on God's instituted means of grace, they have, at least, this encouragement, that, peradventure, they may be of the number of God's elect; and, when they find in themselves that faith, which is the evidence thereof, then they may determine their interest in, and lay claim to this privilege, when they are enabled to make their calling, and thereby their election sure.

And as for the promises and threatenings, these are to be considered by unregenerate persons, without determining their right to the one, or falling under the other, as elected or rejected; for that is still supposed to be a secret; therefore they are to regard the promise, as a declaration of God's purpose, relating to the connexion that there is between faith and salvation, as an inducement to perform the one, in expectation of the other. And as for the threatenings, though they determine the present state of impenitent sinners to be such, in which they are undone and miserable, yet they are not to be extended to those events, which are hid in the purpose of God, so as to give any one ground to conclude that he is thereby finally excluded from salvation, since such an exclusion as this is inseparably connected with final impenitency and unbelief.

Object. 5. It is farther objected, that this doctrine is, in many instances subversive of practical religion. And,

1. That it is inconsistent with the duty of prayer; for if God has determined to save a person, what need has he to ask a blessing, which is already granted? and, if he has determined to reject him, his prayer will be in vain.

2. It is farther supposed, that it leads to presumption, on the one hand, or despair, on the other; election, to presumption; reprobation, to despair. And,

3. They add, that it leads to licentiousness, as it is incon-

sistent with our using endeavours that we may be saved: for to what purpose is it for persons to strive to enter in at the strait gate, when all their endeavours will be ineffectual, if they are not elected? or to what purpose is it for persons to use any endeavours to escape the wrath of God, due to sin, if they are appointed to wrath, and so must necessarily perish?

Answ. This objection is, beyond measure, shocking; and it is no wonder, that a doctrine, that is supposed to have such consequences attending it, is treated with the utmost degree of detestation: but as the greatest part of the objections against it, are no other than misrepresentations thereof, so it is no difficult matter to reply to them, to the conviction of those who are disposed to judge impartially of the matter in controversy between us. We shall therefore proceed to reply to the several branches of this objection. And,

1. As to what concerns the duty of prayer; when we are engaged in it, we are not to suppose that we are to deal with God, in such a way, as when we have to do with men, whom we suppose to be undetermined, and that they are to be moved, by intreaties, to alter their present resolutions, and to give us what we ask for; for that is to conceive of him as altogether such an one as ourselves; accordingly, we are not to conclude, that he has not determined to grant the thing that we are to pray to him for; for that would be presumptuously to enter into his secret purpose, since he has no where told us we shall be denied the blessings we want; but rather that there is forgiveness with him, and mercy for the chief of sinners, as an encouragement to this duty; and, besides this, has given us farther ground to hope for a gracious answer of prayer, where he gives a heart to seek him. Therefore we are to behave ourselves, in this duty, as those who pretend not to know God's secret purpose, but rather desire to wait for some gracious intimation or token for good, that he will hear and answer our prayer; therefore his secret purpose is no more inconsistent with this duty, than if, with those that deny the doctrine we are maintaining, we should conclude that this matter is not determined by him.

2. As to this doctrine's leading to presumption, or despair, there is no ground to conclude that it has a tendency to either of them. It cannot lead to presumption, inasmuch as election is not discovered to any one till he believes; therefore an unconverted person has no ground to presume and conclude, that all is well with him, because he is elected; for that is boldly to determine a thing that he knows nothing of; the objection therefore, with respect to such, supposes that to be known, which remains a secret. And, on the other hand, they have no ground to despair, on a supposition that they are finally rejected: for

it is one thing to be the object of the decree of reprobation, which no one can, or ought to determine, concerning himself, so long as he is in this world, much more if we consider him as enjoying the means of grace, and a door of hope is open to him therein; and God has pleased to declare, in the gospel, that he will receive sinners that repent and believe in him, how unworthy soever they are; therefore such are not to conclude that their state is desperate, though it be exceeding dangerous, but to wait for the efficacy of the means of grace, and those blessings that accompany salvation.

And as for those that are in a converted state, this doctrine is far from having a tendency, either to lead them to presumption, or despair; but, on the other hand, to thankfulness to God, for his discriminating grace, which, when persons experience, they are not only encouraged to hope for farther blessings, but to perform those duties whereby they may express their gratitude to him. As for presumption, which is the only thing that election is pretended to lead them to, that cannot be the natural consequence or tendency thereof; for if they presume that they shall be saved, this is not to be reckoned a crime in them; for that presumption which is supposed to be so in the objection consists in a person's expecting a blessing without reason; but this is contrary to the supposition that he is a believer; and it would be a strange method of reasoning to infer, that he, who has ground to conclude that he has a right to eternal life, from those marks and evidences of grace, which he finds in himself, is guilty of a sinful presumption, when he is induced hereby to lay claim to it; and therefore the sense of the objection, must be this, that a believer having been once enabled to conclude himself elected, may, from hence, take occasion, supposing that his work is done, and his end answered, to return to his former wicked life, and yet still presume that he shall be saved; whereas that would be a certain indication that he had no ground to conclude this, but was mistaken, when he thought that he had; so that this doctrine cannot lead a believer, as such, to presumption, and consequently the objection, in which it is supposed that it does, is founded on one of these two mistakes, *viz.* that every one, who is elected to salvation, knows his interest in this privilege, as though it were immediately revealed to him, without inferring it from any marks and evidences of grace that he finds in himself; or else, that it is impossible for any one, who thinks that he believes, and, from thence, concludes that he is elected, to appear afterwards to have been mistaken in the judgment, which he then passed upon himself; but either of these contain a misrepresentation of the consequences of the doctrine of election; neither is there any regard had to that necessary distinction that there is, between a person's

being chosen to eternal life, and his being able to determine himself to be interested in this privilege ; and it is contrary to what we have before considered, that whenever God chooses to the end, he chooses to the means, which are inseparably connected with it, which is the only rule whereby we are warranted, when applying it to ourselves, to conclude that we shall be saved.

3. It cannot, in the least, be proved that this doctrine has any tendency to lead persons to licentiousness ; nor is it inconsistent with our using the utmost endeavours to attain salvation. If it be said, that many vile persons take occasion, from hence, to give the reins to their corruption ; that is not the natural, or necessary consequence thereof ; since there is no truth but what may be abused. The apostle Paul did not think the doctrine of the grace of God, which he so strenuously maintained, was less true, or glorious, because some drew this vile consequence from it, *Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound*, Rom. vi. 1.

And as for those means, which God has ordained to bring about the salvation of his people, we are obliged to attend upon them, though we know not, before-hand, what will certainly be the event thereof ; and if through the blessing of God accompanying them, we are effectually called and sanctified, and thereby enabled to know our election, this will (agreeably to the experience of all true believers,) have a tendency to promote holiness.

Object. 6. It is farther objected, that more especially against the doctrine of reprobation, that it argues God to be the author of sin ; and particularly in such instances as these, *viz.* with respect to the first entrance of sin into the world, and in God's imputing the sin of our first parents to all their posterity, and afterwards suffering it to make such a progress as it has done ever since ; and, most of all, when it is supposed that this is not only the result of the divine purpose, but that it also respects the blinding men's minds, and hardening their hearts, and so rendering their final impenitency and perdition unavoidable.

Answ. To this it may be answered,

1. As to what concerns the first entrance of sin into the world, it cannot reasonably be denied, that the purpose of God was concerned about it, before it was committed, in the same sense as his actual providence was afterwards, namely, in permitting, though not effecting it ; notwithstanding this was not the cause of the committing it, since a bare permission has no positive efficiency in order thereunto ; the not hindering, or restraining a wicked action, does not render him the author of it. It is true, God knew how man would behave, and particularly, that he would mis-improve and forfeit that original righteousness, in which he was created, and that, by this means, he

would contract that guilt, which was the consequence thereof, and thereby render himself liable to his just displeasure; to deny this, would be to deny that he foreknew that, from eternity, which he knew in time. And, so far as the actual providence of God was conversant about what was natural therein, so far his purpose determined that it should be; but neither does this argue him to be the author of sin. But this will be farther considered, when we speak concerning the actual providence of God under a following answer.*

2. As to that part of the objection, which respects the imputing the sin of our first parents to all their posterity, that is more frequently brought against this doctrine than any other; and it is generally represented in the most indefensible terms, without making any abatements as to the degree of punishment that was due to it; and, accordingly, they think that we can hardly have the front to affirm, that our arguments, in defence hereof, are agreeable to the divine perfections, as we pretend those others are, which have been brought in defence of this doctrine. But, I hope, we shall be able to maintain the doctrine of *original sin*, in consistency with the divine perfections, as well as scripture, in its proper place, to which we shall refer it.† Therefore all that I shall add, at present, is, that if the doctrine of original sin be so explained, as that it does not render God the author of sin, his purpose relating thereunto, which must be supposed, in all respects, to correspond with it, does not argue him to be the author of it.

3. As to the progress of sin in the world, and the proneness of all mankind to rebel against God; this, as before was observed, concerning sin in general, is the object of his permissive, but not his effective will; though there is this difference between God's suffering sin to enter into the world at first, and his suffering the continuance, or increase of it therein, that, at first, he dealt with man as an innocent creature, and only left him to the mutability of his own will, having before given him a power to retain his integrity. But the fallen creature is become weak, and unable to do any thing that is good in all its circumstances, and afterwards is more and more inclined to sin, by contracting vicious habits, and persisting therein. Now, though God's leaving man to himself at first, when there was no forfeiture made of his preventing grace, must be reckoned an act of mere sovereignty, his leaving sinners to themselves may be reckoned an act of justice, as a punishment of sin before committed, and neither of these argue him to be the author of it; neither does the purpose of God, relating thereunto, give the least occasion for such an inference.

* See *Quest. XVIII*

† See *Quest. XXI, XXII.*

Again, we must distinguish between the occasion and the cause of sin. God's providential dispensations, though unexceptionably holy and righteous, are often-times the occasion thereof: thus his afflictive hand sometimes occasions the corruptions of men to break forth, in repining at, and quarrelling with his providence; and his giving outward blessings to one, which he withholds from another, gives occasion, to some, to complain of the injustice of his dealings with them; and the strictness, and holiness of his law, and gives occasion, to corrupt nature to discover itself in the blackest colours; the apostle plainly evinces this truth, when he says, *Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence*, Rom. vii. 8. and, indeed, there is nothing in the whole compass of providence, or in the methods of the divine government therein, but what may be, and often is, an occasion of sin, in wicked men. But certainly it is not the cause of it; even as the clemency of a prince may occasion a rebellion among his subjects; but it is the vile ingratitude, and wickedness of their nature, that is the spring and cause thereof; so the providence, and consequently the purpose of God, which is executed thereby, may be the occasion of sin, and yet the charge brought in this objection, as though God hereby was argued to be the author of sin, is altogether groundless.

4. As to what is farther objected, relating to the purpose of God, to blind the minds, and harden the hearts of men, and that final impenitency, which is the consequence thereof, God forbid that we should assert that this is a positive act in him; and, so far as it contains nothing else but his determining to deny that grace, which would have had the contrary effect, or his providence relating thereunto, this does not give any countenance to the objection, or weaken the force of the arguments that we have before laid down, which is very consistent therewith.

Object. 7. There is another objection, which is generally laid down in so moving a way, that, whether the argument be just or no, the style is adapted to affect the minds of men with prejudice against this doctrine, and that is taken from the inconsistency thereof with God's judicial proceedings against the wicked in the day of judgment, and that it will afford the sinner a plea, in which he may say to this effect: Lord, I sinned by a fatal necessity; it was impossible for me to avoid that which thou art now offended with me for; it was what thou didst decree should come to pass. I have been told, that thy decrees are unalterable, and that it is as impossible to change the course of nature, or to remove the mountains, which thou hast fixed with thy hand, as to alter thy purpose; wilt thou then condemn one, who sinned and fell pursuant to thy will? Dost

thou wilt that men should sin and perish, and then lay the blame at their door, as though they were culpable for doing what thou hast determined should be done?

Ans. This objection supposes that the decree of God lays a necessary constraint on, and enforces the will of man to sin; which, if they could make it appear that it does, no reply could be made to it. But this is to represent the argument we are maintaining in such a way, in which no one, who has just ideas of this doctrine, would ever understand it, and it is directly contrary to the foregoing method of explaining it. We have already proved, in our answer to the third objection, that sin is not necessary in that sense, in which they suppose it to be, or that, though the decree of God renders events necessary, yet it does not take away the efficiency of second causes, and therefore the purpose of God, relating thereunto, is not to be pleaded, as an excuse for it, or as a ground of exemption from punishment. We read of the Jews, that, *with wicked hands, they crucified our Saviour*; the crime was their own; but this is expressly said to have been done by, or, in pursuance of, *the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God*, Acts ii. 23. He fore-knew what they would do, and purposed not to prevent it; but yet he did not force their will to commit it. And elsewhere God says, concerning Israel, *Thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not, from that time thine ear was not opened*; and then he adds, *I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously*, Isa. xlvi. 8. Israel might as well have pleaded, that God knew, before-hand, how they would behave themselves, and so have thrown the blame on him, for not preventing this foreseen event, but suffering them to go on in this destructive way, with as much reason, as the sinner is supposed, in the objection, to have, when taking occasion so to plead, as he is represented, as having ground to do, in the day of judgment, as a consequence from the doctrine we are maintaining.

Again, whatever has been said concerning the immutability of the divine purpose, yet this does not give the least countenance to any one's charging his sin on God; as we have, in answer to the last objection, proved that it does not render him the author of sin; and therefore man's destruction must lie at his own door. It is one thing to say, that it is in the sinner's power to save himself, and another thing to say, that the sin he commits is not wilful, and therefore that guilt is not contracted thereby; and, if so, then this affords no matter of excuse to the sinner, according to the import of the objection.

IX. We are now to consider some things that may be inferred from the doctrine we have been insisting on, and how it is to be practically improved by us, to the glory of God, and our spiritual advantage. And,

1. From the methods taken to oppose and decry it, by misrepresentations, which contain little less than blasphemy, we infer, that however unjust consequences deduced from a doctrine may be an hindrance to its obtaining in the world; yet this method of opposition will not render it less true, or defensible; nor ought it to prejudice the minds of men against the sacred writings, or religion in general. We cannot but observe, that while several scriptures are produced in defence of this doctrine and others in opposition to it, and the utmost cautions have not been used to reconcile the sense given thereof with the natural ideas which we have of the divine perfections; and many, in defending one side of the question have made use of unguarded expressions, or called that a scripture-doctrine which is remote from it; and others, in opposition hereunto, have, with too much assurance, charged the defenders thereof with those consequences, which are neither avowed by them, nor justly deduced from their method of reasoning; the unthinking and irreligious part of mankind have taken occasion, from hence, with the Deists, to set themselves against revealed religion, or to give way to scepticism, as though there were nothing certain, or defensible, in religion; and take occasion to make it the subject of satire and ridicule. But, passing this by, though it is a matter very much to be lamented we will consider this doctrine as rendered less exceptionable, or more justly represented; and, accordingly,

2. We may infer from it, that as it is agreeable to the divine perfections, so it has the greatest tendency to promote practical godliness. For,

(1.) Since God has fore-ordained whatever comes to pass; this should lead us to an humble submission to his will, in all the dispensations of his providence. When we consider that nothing, in this respect comes by chance; this should have a tendency to quiet our minds, and silence all our murmuring and uneasy thoughts, whatever afflictions we are exposed to. We are too apt to complain sometimes of second causes, as though all our miseries took their rise from thence; and, at other times, to afflict ourselves beyond measure, as apprehending that those proper means have not been used, which might have prevented them; as Martha tells our Saviour, *If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*, John xi. 21. whereas we ought rather to consider, that all this befalls us in pursuance of God's purpose: had he designed to have prevented the affliction, he would have directed to other means conducive to that end, or would have attended those that have been used, with their desired success. We use the means as not knowing what are the secret purposes of God, with respect to the event of things;

but, when this is made known to us, it should teach us to acquiesce in, and be entirely resigned to the divine will.

(2.) When we cannot see the reason, or understand the meaning of the dispensations of divine providence, and are not able to pass a judgment concerning future events, whether relating unto ourselves, or others; and, when all things look with a very dismal aspect, as to what concerns the interest and church of God in the world, we must be content to wait till he is pleased to discover them to us; what he oftentimes does, *we know not now, but shall know hereafter*, as our Saviour said to one of his disciples, John xiii. 7. It is no wonder that we are at a loss, as to God's purposes, since secret things belong to him; and therefore all that we are to do, in such a case, is, to rest satisfied, that all these things shall, in the end, appear to have a tendency to advance his own perfections, and bring about the salvation of his people.

(3.) Since the purpose of God respects the means, as well as the end, this should put us upon the use of those proper means, in which we may hope to obtain grace and glory; and therefore this doctrine does not lead us to sloth, and indifference in religion; for that is to suppose, that the ends and means are separated in God's purpose: and when, through his blessing attending them, the ordinances, or means of grace, are made effectual for the working of faith, and all other graces, these being connected, in God's purpose, with glory, it ought to encourage our hope relating to the end of faith, even the salvation of our souls.

(4.) Let us take heed that we do not peremptorily, without ground conclude ourselves elected unto eternal life, on the one hand, or rejected on the other. To determine that we are chosen to salvation, before we are effectually called, is presumptuously to enter into God's secret counsels, which we cannot, at present, have a certain and determinate knowledge of; but to lay this as a foundation, as to what concerns the conduct of our lives, is oftentimes of a very pernicious tendency. If, as the result of this conclusion made, we take encouragement to go on in sin, this will cut the sinews of all religion, and expose us to blindness of mind, and hardness of heart, and a greater degree of impenitency and unbelief, as the consequence of this bold presumption and affront to the divine Majesty.

Neither, on the other hand, are we to conclude that we are not elected; for though we may be in suspense about the event of things, and not know whether we are elected or rejected, this is not inconsistent with our using endeavours to attain a good hope, through grace; yet to determine that we are not elected, is to conclude, against ourselves that all endeavours will be to no purpose; which we have no ground to do, since

it is one thing to conclude that we are in a state of unregeneracy, and another thing to determine that we are not elected. The consequence of our concluding that we are in an unconverted state, ought to be our praying, waiting, and hoping for the efficacy of divine grace, which extends itself to the chief of sinners, as a relief against despair, though such can have no ground to say, they are elected; therefore the safest way, and that which is most conducive to the ends of religion, is to be firmly persuaded, that though the final state of man be certainly determined by God, yet this is to be no rule for an unregenerate person to take his measures from, any more than if it were a matter of uncertainty, and, in all respects, undetermined by him.

(5.) Let us, according to the apostle's advice, *Give diligence to make our calling and election sure*, 2 Pet. i. 10. It is certainly a very great privilege for us, not barely to know, that some were chosen to eternal life, but to be able to conclude that we are of that happy number; and, in order hereunto, we must not expect to have an extraordinary revelation thereof, or to find ourselves described by name in scripture, as though this were the way to attain it; for the rule by which we are to judge of this matter, is, our enquiring whether we have those marks, or evidences thereof, which are contained therein; and therefore we are, by a diligent and impartial self-examination, to endeavour to know whether we are called, or enabled, to perform the obedience of faith, which God is said to elect his people to; or whether we are holy, and without blame, before him in love? whether we have the temper and disposition of the children of God, as an evidence of our being chosen to the adoption of children, and as such, are conformed to the image of Christ?

(6.) If we have ground to conclude that we are chosen to eternal life, this ought to be improved to the glory of God, and our own spiritual advantage; it ought to put us upon admiring and adoring the riches of discriminating grace, which is herein eminently illustrated; and such are under the highest obligation to walk humbly with God, as well as thankfully; for it is owing to his grace, not only that they are chosen to eternal life, but that they are enabled to discern their interest in this privilege. (a)

(a) "When we contend for this doctrine as a *truth*, it should be viewed in connexion with its real *importance*. These two objects are extremely different in things natural, civil, and religious. There are many things true in history, in philosophy, in politics, and even in theology, which no sober person deems important. There are other things hypothetically important, whether actually true or not. And of this kind is the subject before us. Such is the nature, the connexion, and consequences of it, that *if* it be true, it cannot be of the first importance.

But how are we more particularly to estimate the importance of this subject? By the influence which the admission or the denial of it has on the very foundations of religion. For instance, if it be not true, either *man* himself or mere *chance* has the principal share in effecting our actual salvation, and investing us with eternal glory. Some indeed are so lost to modesty and self-knowledge, and so unacquainted with the leading truths of christianity, that they do not scruple to ascribe the eventual difference in our future state, whether good or bad, to man himself, but attended with some verbal, unmeaning compliment to divine mercy. Such persons should first learn the rudiments of christianity, before they have a right to expect any deference shewn to their opinions. On the other hand, if this be true, its utility is plain; it will hide pride from man; it will exclude chance from having any share in our deliverance; it will exalt the grace of God; it will render salvation a certain, and not a precarious thing; and, in a word, it will secure to them who have the Spirit of Christ the greatest consolation.

This was the view which our episcopal reformers had of the doctrine, both as to its truth, and the importance of it. "Predestination to life" say they, "is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.—The godly consideration of Predestination and our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things; as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God."—Another observation I would make is,

2. That it is highly proper, in order to investigate the present subject with success, to keep it perfectly distinct, and free from all *impure mixtures*. This is what some of our early reformers, and many of the modern defenders of this doctrine have not done. For want of this, many bitter enemies have opposed it. Dr. WARRY, for instance, and most who have written on the same side of the question since his time, place predestination to death, or reprobation to misery, as the very foundation of Calvinism, and inseparable from predestination to life. But so far is predestination to death from being true, that nothing can be more untrue. It is but an arbitrary assumption; a foreign, impure mixture, having no foundation either in the real meaning of holy writ, or in the nature of things; except indeed we mean by it, what no one questions, a determination to punish the guilty.*

* Predestination to Death or misery, as the end, and to *sin* as the means, I call "an impure mixture;" a *mixture*, because its connexion with Predestination to life is arbitrary and forced;—*impure*, because the supposition itself is a foul aspersion of the divine character. St. Augustine, Calvin, Perkins, Twisse, Rutherford, &c. &c. though highly valuable and excellent men, upon the whole, were not free from this impure mixture of doctrine. But of all modern authors, if we except the philosophical Necessarians Hobbes, Collins, Hume, Hartley, Priestly, &c. Dr. Hopkins of America seems the most open in his avowal of the sentiment, that *sin and misery* are decreed in the same manner as holiness and happiness, in order to produce the greatest general good. The substance of his reasoning is thus expressed by himself: "All future existences, events, and actions, must have a cause of their futuration, or there must be a reason why they are future, or certainly to take place, rather than not. This cause must be the *divine decree* determining their future existence, or it must be in the future existences themselves. But the future existences could not be the cause of their own futuration; for this supposes them to exist as a cause, and to have influence, before they have any existence, even from eternity.—The cause therefore can be nothing but *divine decree*, determining their future existence, without which nothing could be future, consequently nothing could be known to be future."—See his System of doctrines, 2 vol. 8vo. especially Vol. i p. 110—217.

On the sentiment itself, by whomsoever held, I would offer the following strictures:

1. It is a mere assumption, that *sin*, which the above proposition avowedly includes, has no possible cause of its futuration but either the divine decree, or the future existences themselves. For though God's decrees are the cause of our being, faculties, and volitions, none of these, nor any thing else that can be traced to divine causation, will constitute *sin*. Nor yet is it true that *sin* is the cause of itself; for then *sin* would be self-existent. It follows therefore that it must have another origin than either the divine decree or its own existence.
2. It is equally plain that the cause of *sin* is not itself morally evil; for this would involve a contradiction, making cause and effect to be the same thing. Nor yet can the cause be morally good. For as from truth nothing but truth can legitimately proceed, so from good nothing but good can flow. Evil, indeed, is related to good, but not as cause and effect. Though evil could not follow were there no infinite good, no creature, no will, no freedom, yet something else must

But is not one man's misery as *certain* as another man's happiness? Yes, *equally certain*. What then; must they therefore be *equally predestinated*? No. But how can a thing be *certain*, if it be not *predestinated*? Have a little patience and I will tell you. The previous question is, Does God predestinate to *sin* as the means, and to death or misery as the end, in the same way as he predesti-

be sought as the matrix, where the monster sin is generated and fostered, and which, morally considered, is neither good nor evil.—Therefore,

3. We assert, that the *origin of moral evil* is to be found in the *union* of two principles, neither of which considered alone partakes of a *moral* character. These two principles are *Liberty* and *Passive Power*. Liberty, it is manifest is morally neither good nor bad, but is a mere natural instrument, if I may so speak, and may be termed a *natural good* of which God is the author and decreer. On the contrary, Passive Power is a *natural evil* of which God is not the author or decreer, yet morally considered is not evil. But this term, being little understood, requires further explanation; at least it is incumbent on me to shew in what sense I use it. My design is not to vindicate the use of it by others, but I adopt it to convey a specific idea, for which I find no other word or phrase more appropriate. By "Passive Power," then, I mean, That which is of *unavoidable necessity* found in every creature, as such, in direct opposition to the self-existence, independence, and all-sufficiency of God. In other words, it is that *tendency* to inability, physically considered, and to detection, morally considered, which of *absolute necessity* belongs to every dependent or created nature. That there is such a principle is self-evident, nor is it probable that any reasonable being will ever controvert its existence. Now, it is demonstrable that this, from the definition, cannot be the object of divine decree, or of will; for it is stated to be of *absolute or unavoidable necessity*; besides, it is absurd to suppose that God has decreed, or produces, any thing the existence of which stands in *direct contrariety* to himself. That it is not a *moral evil* is plain, for the *holiest* creatures are subjects of it—God alone is exempt.

4. Let it be further observed, that the First Cause, being goodness itself, impels, whether decreatively or efficiently, to *good only*; and of this character is even our being necessitated to exercise our volitions. Yet, when the exercise of liberty, in itself innocent, *unites* with passive power, the fruit or offspring of this union is moral evil. This, I am tully persuaded, is the true solution of this question, *Whence cometh moral evil?* If any person shall think proper candidly to assign his reasons to the contrary, due regard shall be paid to them.

5. If it be asked, where lies the difference between *decreing* and *permitting* sin to take place? I answer, the difference is, that the one would be an act of *injustice*, the other is *doing nothing*. So that until it can be shewn that there is no difference between *injustice* and *doing nothing*, there is no force in the objection. That to necessitate sin decreatively would be an act of *injustice*, and therefore incompatible with the divine character, is, I think, demonstrable; for, it would be to decree to destruction *antecedently* to desert—to *annihilate* the sinfulness of any act, making its evil nature to consist in its effects—and to destroy the immutable essences of good and evil. Whereas to *permit*, or to *suffer* to take place without prevention, is *not to act, not to decree*. To "decree to permit," therefore, is a contradiction in terms.

6. But, it has been said, the *event* is the same to the sinner, whether he be hurried on to sin and misery by a decreative impulse, or these effects are not prevented when in the power of omnipotence to interpose. This objection would have some weight, if the *happiness* of the creature were the only, or even the *principal* end of God in creation. But this not being the case, its weight vanishes. To illustrate this we may suppose, that the *event* of a man's execution is well known to a judge; but, instead of proceeding on the principles of law and equity, and to effect conviction and condemnation according to legal evidence, he orders the man to be executed clandestinely without any equitable process, under pretence that it could make no difference to the sufferer, for the *event* of his execution was *certain*! Besides, the spirit of the objection reflects on God's *actual dealings* with his creatures, in every instance of their sufferings; because it is in the power of omnipotence to interpose. And in fact, it must be allowed, either that the *happiness* of the creature is not the *chief end* of creation, or that the permission of sin is an act of *injustice*. But the case is plain, that his own glory is the chief end of creation and government, and that there is no injustice in the permission of sin.

7. It may be said, If the union of liberty with passive power be the origin of moral evil, and if the holiest creatures in heaven are both free and the subjects of passive power, how is it that they do not sin! If both are united in the same persons, does the one never terminate upon, or unite itself to the other? In answer to this enquiry, we must distinguish between *having* the principle, and being under its influence without controul. Though the spirits of the just, and holy angels, have in them the principle, as the condition of their created existence, yet it is counteracted by sovereign favour. They may say, as well as Paul, by the grace of God we are what we are. The object of divine support is the *disposition*, or the *seat* of moral action; this being made good, or pure, or holy, prior to all acts of the will, effectually counteracts the influence of passive power. The Liberty and choice of a heavenly being therefore, terminating on such a disposition, no acts but such as are holy can ensue. Hence,

8. If we would know how this is consistent with the actual fall of beings who were once in this condition, we must attend to another important consideration; which is, that when God at any time deals in *mere equity* with a moral agent, without the counteracting influence of sovereign favour, the inevitable consequence is, that his liberty, or free choice, will terminate upon his passive power. Hence the *certainty* of the futuration of moral evil, in all possible degrees and circumstances, without any decreative efficiency in its production.—If it be asked, why the exercise of *equity* is assigned as the occasion of this union, rather than *sovereignty*; or, why leaving a free agent to the influence of his passive power should not be considered a sovereign rather than an equitable act? The best answer to this enquiry, is a definition of the two terms. By *equity* then I mean the principle that gives to each his due; by *sovereignty*, a right to do whatsoever is not inconsistent with equity. And from this definition it must appear that there may be a two-fold deviation from equity, viz. giving *more* than is due, or *less* than is due; more good and less evil, or more evil and less good than is equitable. The former of these, more good and less evil, must needs be for the advantage of the creature; and therefore it may be called a *gracious deviation*. Without it, there would be no room for either mercy or grace. The latter, more evil and less good than is due, is properly called *injustice*, and is such a deviation from equity as is

nates to holiness as the means, and eternal glory as the end? This we deny, as it would be infinitely unworthy of God, making him the author of sin, or doing evil that good may come. Some indeed have distinguished between being the author or the cause of sin, and being a sinner. But the distinction itself is not solid, nor could it fully satisfy those who have made it in clearing the divine character.*

not compatible with the divine character. Therefore, to do us good *beyond* our claim is an act of *sovereignty*; but to give us neither more nor less than is our due is to deal with us in *pure equity*.

9. Hence it follows, that when God deals with angels or men in *sovereignty*, according to the definitions, he does them good *beyond* their claim. But to make *this* to be the immediate cause of the sin of men and angels is absurd. On the other hand, it is incompatible with the divine character, as before observed, to give them less good and more evil than is their due; and therefore *this* cannot be the cause of sin, as sure as God is incapable of exercising injustice.—Wherefore, it remains that then alone can moral agents fall into sin when dealt with in *pure equity*. In the act of defection, or becoming sinful, they are equally free from being impelled by injustice, and upheld by sovereign favour.

COROLIARIES.

1. All the *good* and happiness in the universe of created beings are the fruit of Sovereignty and Decree.

2. All the *moral evil* and misery in the universe are the offspring of *liberty*, a natural good, terminating or acting upon, or united to *passive power*, a natural evil not counteracted by sovereignly gracious acts on the disposition, or the seat of the moral principle, which may be called analogically *the heart*.

3. As every act and degree of liberty is perfectly fore-known to God as the effect of his own decree, and every hypothetical tendency of passive power, though itself not an object of decree, is equally fore-known, it follows, that every sin is as accurately fore-known as if decreed, and has an equally infallible ground of certain futuration.

* It is allowed that there is a difference between the *cause of sin*, as a *principle*, and being a *sinner*; but when applied to an *agent*, to be the author or the cause of sin, and to be a sinner, is the same thing. Therefore, when applied to God, in no proper sense whatever can it be said that he is the *author of sin* — If by the *author of sin* is meant (says President Edwards) the permitter, or a *not hinderer* of sin, and at the same time a disposer of the state of events in such a manner, for wise, holy, and most excellent ends and purposes, that sin infallibly follows: I say, if this be all that is meant by the author of sin, I do not deny that God is the author of sin, though I dislike and reject the phrase, as that which by use and custom is apt to carry another sense." Edwards on the Will, Part iv. Sect. xi

But though this acute and excellent writer disavows the use of the phrase, he no where assigns the *true ground* why it should not be used. The truth is, he does not seem to have been aware of any alternative between the *certain futuration* of sin and its being *decreed*. And his only method of warding off the most ruinous consequences appears to have been adopted for want of a better, and not from the satisfactory nature of that method. His view, in brief, is this: God is a being of infinite goodness and wisdom; he can will nothing but good; the system he hath adopted is the best; now, says he, "if the will be good, and the object of his will be, all things considered, good and best, then the choosing and willing it, is not *willing evil*. And if so, then his ordering according to that will is not *doing evil*."

It is very seldom that this eminent author fails in his reasoning; but here certainly he does fail. The phrases *willing evil*, and *doing evil*, are not used in the same sense in both parts of the premises, from whence the conclusion is inferred. A system, all things considered, being best, is no good reason why each individual part of it is good. And it may be forcibly retorted; a system which includes an infinite evil as a part of its institution cannot be from God. Nor can it be said that this is arguing against *fact*, without begging the question, that God has *appointed the evil* which is blended with the good.—On the subject itself let the following things be considered:

1. If choosing and willing a system in which *sin is a decreed part* is not *willing evil*, because the system is good and best, all things considered then it would inevitably follow, that sin, because such a part of that system is *not an evil*. But, it may be said, It is willing it for a *good end*. Does then a good end or intention destroy the *nature of sin*? Was the sin of Paul or any other saint *annihilated* because he *sincerely aimed* at the Glory of God? Or has any *design*, however comprehensive, exalted or sincere, the *least tendency* to alter the *nature of sin*?

2. Allowing as incontrovertible that the present system of things is the best, all things considered, and that sin is actually blended with it, it does not thence follow that the sin itself is *decreed*, or is any part of divine appointment. For *not to hinder sin*, is extremely different from being the *cause* or author of it. The one is perfectly consistent with equity, the other would be an act of *injustice*.

3. It is a sentiment so repugnant to all analogical propriety, to *do evil that good may come*, that it cannot be supposed a man of Mr. Edwards's piety would have adopted any thing like it, but from what appeared to him an inevitable necessity. And indeed whoever assumes the principle, that every event comes to pass from *decretive necessity*, sin not excepted, must of course be driven to his conclusion. But this valuable author had no need to recur to that opinion, in order to establish his theory of *hypothetical necessity*; for this will stand on a rock, immovably, without such aid.

4. In reality, the certain futuration of *good*, and that of *evil*, arises from *different*, yea from *diatrically opposite* causes. The one flows from the operative will of God, and is fore-known to be future because decreed, the other flows from a deficient or privative cause, passive power, when united to liberty, as before explained, which exists only in created beings, and in all these, as a contrast to self-existence, independence, and all-sufficiency. Yet *this* is the subject of hypothetical tendencies and results no less than the good to which it stands opposed, in all the boundless varieties of its blendings; therefore no case can be so complicated, but to infinite prescience the event must appear with *equal certainty* as if decreed.

In fact, sin and holiness are not only different, but *opposite effects*, and their causes equally opposite; but as God is the sole cause, the sole exclusive cause of holiness, the creature, in some way, must be the sole and exclusive cause of sin. If you ask how? I reply, by exercising his *liberty*, which is a mere natural instrument, on *himself*, rather than on God. But how came he to do that? By his *passive power*. What is passive power? In general, it is that which distinguishes the creature from the Creator. But more particularly, it is that tendency to nothing as to being, and to defection as to well being, which is essential to every created existence. If every creature have, and must of necessity have this passive power, you will ask, how came the holy angels, and the spirits of the just, not to sin? The answer is, because divine grace upholds them. These things duly considered, though briefly stated, will shew, that as God is not the author of sin, so neither has he predestinated sin. He is the author and cause of good only. He is the author of our liberty; but that in itself is not evil. And he is the author of our nature as limited; that also of itself is no moral evil. But when our liberty unites with this limited nature, or terminates on passive power, when this latter is not controuled by grace, their offspring is imperfect, or sinfulness attaches to our moral acts.

Hence you may learn, that sin and future misery are events perfectly certain, though not predestinated. It has been often assumed, but without propriety or truth, that an event is foreknown only because it is decreed. In reality all *good* is foreknown, because it is decreed; for there is no other ground of its existence. But sin, as before shewn, has another ground of existence, namely, passive power, which can no more be an object of divine predestination or decree than its perfect opposite, the all-sufficiency of Jehovah. Yet, observe attentively, this has its *proper nature*, and God sees all things, and all essences, in their proper nature. What! Does not God foreknow the sinfulness of any event in its *deficient* cause, as well as the goodness of another in that which is efficient? Beside, passive power in union with liberty is an *adequate*, a fully adequate ground of sin and death; and therefore to introduce a predestination of sin and death, is to ascribe to God what is equally impious and needless.*—Let us, therefore, keep this doctrine free from all impure mixtures, and now proceed to a

3rd Observation, that is, When the *end* is maintained to be infallibly certain, the *means* to promote that end are included. Thus you may suppose a chain sus-

* "*Equally impious and needless.*" *Needless*, because the existence of sin is fairly and fully accounted for on another principle; *impious*, because it ascribes to God the worst of all principles, the causation of sin. That God superintends, directs, and over-rules the actions of men is worthy of him; and equally so that he does *not hinder* the existence of moral evil; but that he is a positive and efficacious cause of moral evil, or that this is consistent with either his justice or holiness can never be proved. Dr. Hopkins, indeed, says, that "the attempt to distinguish between the sinful volitions or actions of men as natural and moral actions; and making God the origin and cause of them considered as natural actions, and men the cause and authors of the *depravity* and sin which is in them, is, it is believed, *unintelligible*—unless by making this distinction it be meant, that in every sinful action, God is not the sinful cause of it." The author, however, candidly adds, "But if the contrary can be made to appear, this doctrine, with all that is implied in it, shall be given up and renounced." As the removal of this principle and the establishment of the other, appear to me of the highest importance in theology, a few remarks, in addition to those already made, may not be superfluous, as tending to exhibit the principle here maintained in different lights and connexions; and when all are properly examined, it is probable they will not be wholly "*unintelligible.*"

1. God, JEHOVAH, is the infinite and eternal Essence, which is of *absolute necessity*—the self-existent, independent, and all-sufficient Being—from eternity to eternity generating his own light and joy, called his only begotten Son; not from mere will, but of the same necessity.

2. God in his boundless all-sufficiency views all *possibles* with all their positive and privative tendencies. That all possibles have their *positive* tendencies is as plain as that two added to three make five. Were there no positive tendencies, there could be no hypothetical certainty, no law of nature, no connexion between cause and effect. And it is equally true, though not equally plain, that there are *privative* tendencies in all beings but that one who exists of *absolute necessity*. To suppose the contrary, is the same as to suppose that a creature *may be made* independent, and all-sufficient. But that is, every reasonable being must all *w. absolutely impossible*, as implying the grossest contradiction. On this demonstrated fact rests unavoidably the existence of that principle in every created nature which I call *Passive Power*. Yet,

3. It does not follow that the mere collateral existence of these two principles in the same subject must needs produce moral evil. Then alone does this take place when the one terminates upon, or is united to the other, without the interposition of sovereign favour. It is not in the power of equity to assist. For the exercise of equity is to give each his due; but to *prevent* sin is not *due* to the subject of it, otherwise no one *could ever sin* but on condition of *injustice* in God.

4. After all, it may be objected, that the *scriptures* ascribe to God the causation of moral evil; as, hardening the heart of Pharaoh—hardening whom he will—making the wicked for the day of evil—appointing to destruction—determining the death of Christ—delivering him by determi-

pended from a great height, and to the lowest link a weight is fixed, which is borne by it. You do not suppose that this link is unconnected with the next, and so on till you come to the highest. Every one of the links is equally necessary with that which is next the weight; and the whole is connected with something else which is stronger than the weight, including that of the chain also, however long and heavy.

Thus also in the cultivation of our land, though it is decreed that on such a field there shall be this very season a crop of wheat, this was not independent of providential virtue giving the increase, the genial showers, the solar warmth, and the vivifying air. It is not unconnected with the proper seed sown, needful tillage, plowing and harrowing, and the quality of the soil. And the same holds true as to the health of the body, and the prolongation of life to an appointed period. He who dies must first have life; he who grows to manhood must arrive at it through the previous stages of youth, childhood and infancy. So likewise in the education of our children; if learning be the end, that supposes the previous means of application; and if it is determined who shall be the first scholar of the age in which he lives, it is *equally* determined that he shall begin with the rudiments of letters, and diligently prosecute his literary studies. And respecting religious attainments the matter is equally plain; if life or eternal glory be the end predestinated, the previous steps of purity of heart, justification and a new birth unto righteousness, preservation in Christ, and every individual event and circumstance preceding, is included in the decree, as far as there is any

nate counsel—doing all evil in a city—making vessels to dishonour—fitting them for destruction, &c.—In reply to this objection it must be considered, that whatever the import of such representations may be, no interpretation which is *unworthy of God* can be the true meaning—that the idioms of the sacred languages ascribing cause or operation to God must be understood according to the nature of the subject—and, what is particularly to our purpose, that active verbs which denote *making, doing, causing,* and the like, often denote a *declaration* of the thing done, or that shall take place; or a *permission* of it.

Take a few specimens. Thus Acts x. 15. "What God hath *cleansed*," means, what God hath *declared* to be clean.—Isai. vi. 9, 10. The prophet is commanded to tell the people, "understand not, perceive not;" and he is ordered to "make the heart of this people fat, to make their ears heavy, and to shut their eyes." And what can this mean more than to *declare a fact*, either what they then were, or what they would be?—So Jer. i. 10. The Prophet's *declaration* of what should be, is called his *rooting out pulling down*, &c.—Ezek. xliii. 3. The prophet says, "when I came to *destroy* the city;" his meaning undoubtedly is, When I came to *prophecy or declare* that the city should be destroyed.—Exod. v. 22. "Lord, wherefore hast thou *evil entreated* this people? Moses means, Wherefore hast thou *permitted* them to be evil entreated?—Jer. iv. 10 "Lord God, thou hast greatly *deceived* this people;" that is, *permitted* or not hindered them to be deceived by the false Prophets.—Ezek. xiv. 9. "I the Lord have *deceived* that prophet." Can any thing else be meant than suffering him to deceive himself?—Matt. xi. 25. Thou hast *hid* these things" i. e. *not revealed*.—Thus also, Rom. ix. 18. "Whom he will he *hardeneth*." he suffereth to be hardened.—Rom. xi. 8. "God gave them a spirit of slumber;" i. e. permitted them to slumber. 2 Thes. ii. 11. "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie;" i. e. shall *permit* them to be deluded so that they shall believe a lie.—Exod. vii. 3. &c. "And I will *harden* Pharaoh's heart," i. e. I will *suffer* it to be hardened. Matt. x. 34, 35. "I am not come to *send* peace, but a sword; For I am come to set a man at variance against his father;" That is, my coming shall be the *innocent occasion* of wars and variance.—Jude 4. "Who were before of old *ordained* to this condemnation;" i. e. *foretold*, or *forewritten*, as the word signifies; *announced* in the sacred pages, and *prescribed* by divine law.

But the passage above all others, which appears to countenance the notion, that God is the cause of sin, is 1 Pet. ii. 8. "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even in them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, *whereunto also they were appointed*, i. e. *unto which thing, their stumbling, they were appointed because disobedient*. The Greek participle includes the cause of their falling; as Heb. ii. 3. *Neglecting* so great salvation, how shall we escape? *To which not escaping, they were appointed, for neglecting* so great salvation. A striking contrast to this we have, John vii. 17. "If any man will *do his will* he shall *know* of the doctrine;" but the *disobedient* shall, according to an awful but equitable *appointment*, "stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken."—(Isa. viii. 15.) We have a further illustration of this meaning in Heb. iii. 18. "To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that *believe not*?" i. e. Who were *appointed* to destruction? The answer is, the *disobedient*; for the original word is the same here as in Peter, under a different inflection. And it is added, ver. 19. "So they could not enter in *because of unbelief*."—Thus also Rom. xi. 7. "The rest were *blinded*, or *hardened*;" i. e. were *suffered* to be blind or hard. And that this is the meaning is decided by ver. 20. "Because of *unbelief* they were broken off."

Upon the whole, Peter intimates, that none should be offended at such characters, men of learning and eminence rejecting the Messiah and his gospel. Their end is what might be expected, as *foretold* by the prophets, according to God's *righteous* government, and his eternal *appointment*, or *determination*, respecting all such offenders. Their habitual unbelieving *disobedience* was the cause, but their actual stumbling at the word to their destruction was the natural, the *righteous*, the appointed *effect*. To this they were appointed, *placed*, or *set forth* (as Pharaoh was *raised up*) by the righteous judgment of God, who resisteth the proud and disobedient; in order to shew forth the glory of his justice in them. They were personally *appointed* to exalted situations, being civil and ecclesiastical *builders*; they were *suffered* to reject Christ, in pure *equity*; and thus were deservedly *constituted* awful warnings to others.

goodness in them. As to the evil with which any events or circumstances are blended, that has been already accounted for on another principle. Nothing can be more true or plain, God had predestinated an everlasting righteousness to be brought in by the Lord Jesus Christ. But is it not equally true and plain that the birth of Jesus, and of his virgin mother, the existence of David, the call of Abraham, the preservation of Noah, and the creation of Adam and Eve were predestinated?—Let us therefore guard against separating the end and the means; and what God joins together in his predestinating care and love, let no man put asunder.—We now come

II. To consider some proofs of this doctrine.—That the scriptures, especially those of the New Testament, *appear*, at least, to maintain the doctrine in question, no person of common modesty will deny. Thus, for instance, Rom. viii. 29, 30. “Whom he did foreknow, he also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Again, Eph. i. 4—6. “According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.” And again, ver. 11. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being *predestinated* according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Believers are said to be “called according to God’s *purpose* ;” and certain discriminations are made between man and man, between nation and nation, “that the *purpose* of God according to election, might stand, not of works but of him who calleth.” “The *election* hath obtained it.” “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

These are some of the many passages of holy writ which at least *seem* to hold this doctrine. But it is of importance to observe, that to establish this very doctrine is the main drift of the apostle Paul’s elaborate argument in a considerable part of his epistle to the Romans. See Rom. ix.—xi.—But more particularly,

1. It is evidently inconsistent with God’s infinite perfection to suppose that he has *no* purposes, designs, or aims in his operations; or, which is virtually the same thing, to suppose that he decrees or predestinates *nothing*. Wherein would he then differ from blind, unmeaning chance, which hath neither wisdom, power, nor properties? An intelligent spirit without *any* plan or purpose, is inconceivable; much less is the infinitely perfect Jehovah such a being.

But if he purposes *any thing*, what can be conceived of in this world of higher importance, or more worthy of his predestinating care, than the *salvation* of his people, that is, of those who are eventually saved? Shall he purpose from eternity to give his Son to appear in the form of a servant, to suffer an ignominious death, and to be head over all things to the church, at an *uncertainty*? Does he bestow his Holy Spirit without knowing, or without intending, who shall be ultimately changed into the divine image from glory to glory, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light? Truly, if in time he draws with loving-kindness, it is because he has loved with an everlasting love.

2. What scripture and experience teach of man’s condition as a sinner, utterly excludes every other cause of salvation but God’s predestinating love. From our very birth we are sinful, guilty, and without strength. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The graceless heart is a heart of stone; in spiritual concerns unfeeling and impenetrable. Well may our Lord say to his disciples, Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. If then those who were dead in trespasses and sins have been quickened, if persecutors have been arrested and alarmed, if those who were fully bent on rebellion have been instantly rendered humble, meek, loving and obedient, to what can we rationally ascribe it but to the discriminating and sovereign pleasure of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will? If such are not predestinated, how came they to be called, converted, and regenerated?

Consult the good man’s experience. Will he coolly and deliberately arrogate any thing to himself? Follow him to the throne of grace; what is his language before God? Listen to his most holy, happy, and animated praises in the church.

Attend to him in his happiest frames—or, when emerging from the deep waters of affliction—when restored from backslidings—or with faltering speech on the brink of eternity; and you will find him steady to one point; “Behold, God is my salvation.” My recovery from sin and woe is all of grace. Yea, follow him to heaven, when he joins the noble army of martyrs, and the countless myriads of the redeemed from among men, and there he shouts aloud in chorus, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”—“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” If we search eternally into the origin and cause of our deliverance from sin, and our exaltation to happiness and glory, none can be found but God’s predestinating love.

3. Nothing short of eternal predestination could secure that which is demonstrably the most worthy, the most glorious, the most real *end* of God in the salvation of man, that is, the praise of the glory of his grace. No end can be compared to this in excellence; it is expressly the end which God has proposed to himself in the salvation of his people; “having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace.” If there be no predestination, how can such an end ever be proposed, and how infallibly secured? Can there be any effect without an adequate cause? Or can the invention of men or angels discover any other cause than predestination?

On any other supposition, how can divine love, grace, and mercy be glorified, *infallibly* glorified? Is the honour of these glorious and blessed perfections of Jehovah to be suspended on a feeble peradventure? Or is the spiritual temple constructed of some materials which come by chance, or approach of themselves, while others are brought forth by a divine hand out of the quarry of nature, and placed on the living foundation? Is the glory of the Creator to depend upon the precarious will of man? The supposition is too absurd to admit a thought.—Again,

4. Predestination to life is essentially necessary to secure the *full end* of the *death of Christ* and the efficacy of divine influence. What though he laid down his life for his sheep, if after all he do not bring them into his fold? For him to lay down his life a *ransom* for many, and then leave it to *them* whether they should come for life, and all the benefits of his death, righteousness and grace, is to suppose them possessed of more power than Adam had before the fall. For the power he needed was only that which might keep him from falling; but the power which fallen man requires is that by which he may rise from his fallen state, and enter into the favour of God, into union with Christ, into spiritual sensibility and life, into wisdom, righteousness and holiness, and into eternal glory. Now what can be adequate to this but omnipotent power helping our infirmities?

If it be said, Though we cannot of ourselves do this, may we not through Christ and his holy Spirit assisting us? I reply, *assistance* is of two kinds; it is either affording us proper *means*, such as the holy scriptures, the ministry of the word, ordinances of religion, and precious promises by way of encouragement;—or, it is actually to *influence* the mind by supernatural agency. If this latter assistance be afforded, the event is secured; for nothing is requisite to secure the volitions, and all the exercises of the will, in faith, repentance, love, hope, and even perseverance therein unto the end, but *this kind* of influence to a certain degree. But does God impart any gracious influence without *purposing* to do so? And does he not know what influence is necessary to secure the end? Without predestination to life, what security can there be, that the death of Christ will not prove abortive and unavailing?

The notion that a *sufficient* degree of grace is given to all, but that a degree *more* than sufficient is given to the elect; that all the elect are certainly and infallibly saved, but the others left at uncertainty, with a *perhaps* that some of them may be saved in *addition* to the elect—this notion is neither founded in revealed truth, nor capable of rational consistency.*

* This notion, perhaps more than any other, has been termed *Baxterianism*, and yet it is not easy to say that Mr. Baxter ever maintained it. He says indeed “all have so much (grace) as

Without predestination to life, the influences of the Holy Spirit, which, it is confessed, are given to some, might be given in vain, or without effecting any saving purpose in any one of the human race. Where then could be the wisdom of a dispensation of the Spirit, or of communicating the influence of grace? Does God foresee that some will be so good and pliable as to improve a *common* favour in such a way and to such a degree as to constitute the difference between them and others that perish? But where is this divinity taught, and by whom is it sanctioned? It is not sanctioned by the patriarchs and prophets, by Christ and his apostles, nor is it contained in the words of inspiration, or even in the tablet of unsophisticated reason.

5. Setting aside this doctrine, or supposing it not true, what room is left for a covenant of grace between the Father, Son, and Spirit? Has not the Father given to the Son a people for whom he should be obedient unto death, for whom he should give his life a ransom, for whom he should rise, live, and reign till all his enemies be subdued, and to whom Christ has engaged to give eternal life? If we reject predestination to life, what meaning is there in his office of *surety*? Is not Jesus a surety for his people? But what is a surety? It is one who undertakes for another. What does Jesus undertake to do? He undertakes not only to become incarnate for them, to obey the law, to endure the contradiction of sinners and cope with the rigid demands of equity, but also to justify many, to give them life, to keep them from every rapacious hand, to purify them by his blood, to save them from sin and hell, and to bring them to the beatific vision of his glory.

In a word, take away this doctrine, and you take away the foundation of God—the foundation of his covenant—the foundation of his temple, the church—the foundation of the saints' hope and joy. But, blessed be God, his foundation standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. Known unto God are all his ways, and all his people from the beginning. Blind chance and impotent free will shall never be the partners of his throne.

We next come to notice

III. Some objections which may be, and often are, made to this doctrine. And

1. If this doctrine be true, it is urged by some, God would then be an arbitrary and partial being. This objection supposes that God has *no right* to be so; but on the contrary, nothing appears more worthy of him than to exercise arbitrary power, and to manifest partiality. No such right is vested in man, as to do what he pleases, while he disdains to consult any other will than his own. But whose will beside his own can the infinitely perfect God consult? Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or, who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever.

Let us appeal to facts. Are there not marks of high sovereignty and holy partiality through universal nature? Are they not visible in the heavens above, and in this lower world? Is there not a greater light that rules the day, and the lesser lights that rule the night? And does not one star differ from another star in glory? Are not these marks visible in the operations of providence, in the persons of men, their corporeal forms and mental endowments? Are they not constantly seen in the history of nations, the changes of empires, and the dispensations of grace to different tribes of men? How conspicuous is this in God's conduct towards Abraham and his posterity for a series of ages, and afterwards in the calling of the Gentiles? And how becoming in us to adopt the same language with the apostle Paul on that occasion: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways

bringeth and leaveth the success to man's will;" and this in a discourse wherein he allows that God hath "positively elected certain persons by an absolute decree to overcome all their resistances of his Spirit, and to draw them to Christ, and by Christ to himself, by such a power and way as shall *infallibly* convert and save them." He moreover says, "What if men cannot here tell how to resolve the question, whether *any* or *how many* are ever converted or saved by that *mere grace* which we call *sufficient*, or rather *necessary*, and common to those that are not converted; and whether man's will ever make a saving determining improvement of it?"—And yet," he adds, "this question itself is formed on false suppositions and is capable of a satisfactory solution." Baxter's Works, Vol. ii. p. 929.—On the subject of this Note the author begs leave to refer his readers to Deddridge's Works, Vol. v. p. 273, 274. Notes.

past finding out?" And is not the same partiality visible at this very day? Yet is he holy in all his works, and righteous in all his ways.

2. It is objected, If this doctrine be true, then is man reduced to a mere machine. No, a mere machine has no sensibility, no consciousness, no reason, and no will. But he is acted upon, they say, and therefore not an agent. Is it then essential to an agent not to be acted upon? Then there is but one agent in the universe; for every thing but the first cause is acted upon more or less. The fact is, there is no contrariety in these two things. Angels and men are acted upon, yet they are moral agents. The holy agency upon them respects chiefly their *disposition* itself, but the agency they exert is the *exercise* of their faculties, will, and disposition. Whether their disposition be good or bad, still they are agents. If this be made good, it must be by sovereign influence; and then the agency and choice will be good: but if this be bad, the agency is bad too.

But granting to the objector that the objects of predestination are, in the sense now mentioned, machines, or instruments in the hand of divine sovereignty; what then? I fain would know what better lot can be assigned us than to be instruments in the hand of a predestinating God? I solemnly protest that I desire no better, no other lot. And who can describe the nature of this high privilege! This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise. O the blessedness of being entirely passive in the hand of that God who predestinates nothing but good? Was Paul obliged to the Lord, or was he not, for arresting him in the midst of his wicked career? Has that man any reason to complain, who is restrained from wickedness, but compelled to embrace happiness? Then, say some, his will would be forced. O no! this by no means follows. My people, saith the Lord, shall be willing in the day of my power. Surely God can put his Holy Spirit in either man or child without forcing the will. And let there be but the active, regenerating renewing presence of this divine agent, the choice of good will be no more compelled, or the will no more forced, than in the most free acts of which the human mind is capable.

3. This doctrine, it is said, tends to licentiousness.—This is an assertion which has been often made, but, I apprehend, never fairly proved; for it is contrary to universal experience. Turn your eyes to a vast army, headed by experienced officers—what is the language of nature and experience? You uniformly find great generals anxious to impress the sentiment on the minds of their troops that they are *destined* to victory. What gives rise to this kind of oratory? What is the philosophy of such rhetoric? It is founded in the nature of man, and confirmed by the experience of ages, that confidence in a favourable issue animates exertion.

Consult a serious christian, who, through a long pilgrimage, has believed this doctrine. Will he deliberately tell you that it has this tendency, or that he has found this effect in his own experience? No, he will tell you nothing gives him more courage and vigour against sin.—It is not when in a dry, backsliding frame of mind, or when verging to licentiousness, that he can rest in this doctrine; but when he is most resolved for God and heaven—when most diligent in the high way of holiness. Then, indeed, he can say, I know that all things work together for my good—my predestination includes conformity to Christ, my calling, my justification, and warfare against sin. If God be for me, who can be against me? Who shall lay any thing to my charge? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, is risen, and maketh intercession. Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or persecution, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things I am more than conqueror through him that loved me. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord.

4. Some would insinuate, that though this doctrine be true, yet it should not be preached, because it is a secret in the mind of God. But I hope it has been proved, that as a *doctrine* it is not a secret, but is revealed in the holy scriptures, and supported by the soundest arguments. The objects, indeed, or the persons who are predestinated, are known to God only before they bear fruit, *By their fruits* we can come to know them, in the *ordinary* course of things;

nor is it any part of the doctrine asserted, that it belongs to man to ascertain the individual objects any farther than by character.

But there are other ends to be answered by this doctrine.—To be in the way to eternal glory is an unspeakable privilege; and it is the proper part of a christian to enquire into the cause of it. His own humility and gratitude are involved in it. The honour of God, the wisdom of his counsel, and the lustre of his grace; the offices of Christ, the surety of a better covenant, and the good Shepherd of the sheep; his powerful intercession, and his government over all things to the church—all are involved in the proper declaration of this truth.—Once more,

5. This doctrine, it may be said, is dangerous, in proportion as it is insisted upon, in that it prevents the more needful enquiry, "Am I born again?" Yes, there would be danger, if *all* the attention of ministers and people, or even a disproportionate share of it were confined to this. But, thou mistaken objector, because there are some who will take the bread of children and cast it away, are the children not to be fed? Because there were corrupt men disposed to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, would you rob any child of God of this holy triumph. He will choose our inheritance for us! The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance. For the Lord is our defence, the Holy One of Israel is our King. I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation.—For the same reason that we ought not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, we need not, we ought not to be ashamed of this doctrine.

I would now offer

IV. A few practical uses of the subject. And,

1. This doctrine is a source of great comfort, when contrasted with the fickleness of men, and the perpetual vicissitudes of the world. The lot may be cast, but the Lord is the disposer of it. He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. His counsel shall stand, and he doeth, and will do, all his pleasure. The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. All things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. He doeth all things well.

After viewing the present perturbed state of the world, the revolutions of empire, the devastations of war, the alarms of invasion, the degradation of some, and the exaltation of other characters—how pleasing and consolatory to view a steady hand over-ruling, guiding, and influencing all! Providence is "as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel."—As for their rings, they are so high that they are dreadful, and are full of eyes round about them. But how delightful to reflect, that within these perpetually revolving wheels there is an immovable centre! God's aim is steady, he is of one mind, who can turn him?

2. As the predestination for which we contend is only to *good*, it affords the most pleasing view of the divine character. God is love. In him is no such inconsistency as is but too frequently found among men. He is not a fountain sending forth at the same place both sweet water and bitter, yielding both salt water and fresh. With the utmost safety and confidence may a humble soul commit itself into the arms of such a being. No one has any thing to fear from God but the proud and rebellious, the unbelieving and impenitent. And surely bad must be the doctrine that speaks peace to the wicked.

3. As in the present case the end, and the way leading to it, are inseparable; every reason and argument, every alarming topic, every scriptural exhortation, and every obligation to duty, are in full force. They who represent these things as inconsistent with predestination, either have a wrong view of the subject, or care not what they say nor whereof they affirm. Obligation to duty is founded on widely and totally different considerations.*

God sustains, with respect to man, a twofold character, the one is that of an equitable governor, the other that of a sovereign disposer. Answerably to this,

* The nature of God, his holy will, and our peculiar relation to him, form an adamant chain of obligation to duty which cannot with impunity be broken; from which predestination is so far from releasing us, that it forms another chain of gold that shall finally prevail; and divine grace personally experienced is a silken cord to draw the soul along in the path of duty. But do these powerful ties render useless God's *reasoning* with sinners, his *exhortations* to repentance, to believing, to obedience, and to every particular branch of duty? No: for these methods are the very means to attain the end, and form a part of the decree itself.

man sustains a twofold character also; that of an accountable agent, and that of a disposable subject. As *passive* in the hand of a sovereign God, he is necessitated to good, in proportion as goodness attaches to him; and in the heirs of salvation this is predestination to life. As *active*, or a moral agent, man is treated according to the rules of reason and equity, yet mingled with undeserved favours. So that every man is, in these different respects, at once the subject of liberty and necessity.

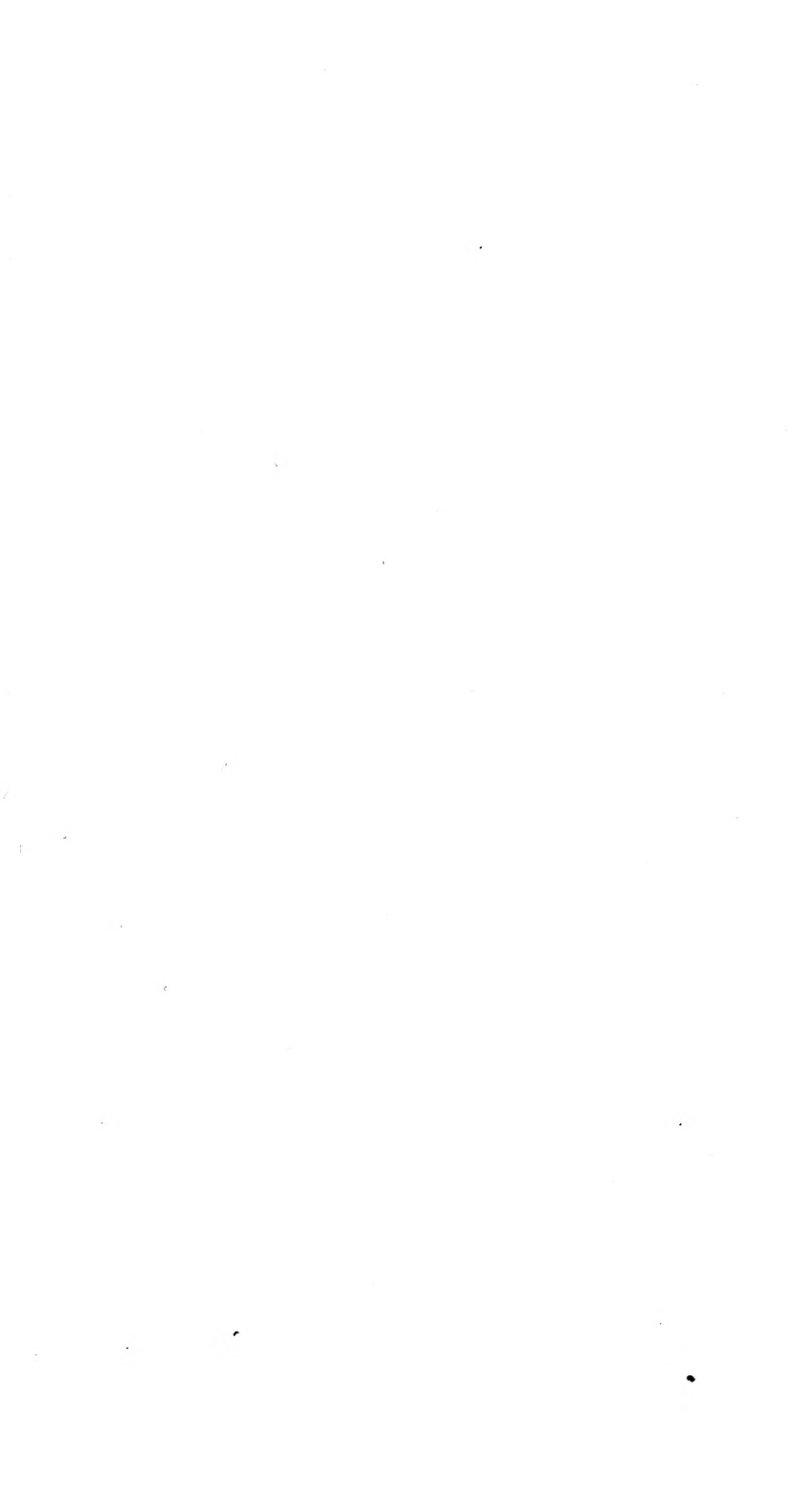
Equally vague and unprofitable, therefore, is all controversy on the subject now alluded to while one side contends for *liberty* and the other for *necessity* to the usual exclusion of the opposite. Neither can be wholly right. For, as sure as God disposes of a man for final good, the doctrine of necessity is true; and as sure as a man is a transgressor of divine law, and thus is fitted for destruction, he is *free* from all *decretive* necessity. Therefore,

4. Here is no room for the impious inference, that when we do evil we are predestinated to it. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for as God cannot be tempted with evil, so neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren; every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.—But evil, in whatever person, in whatever place, at whatever time, in whatever form or degree, is from a quarter diametrically opposite.—On the contrary,

5. When at any time we are engaged in the work of God, in any thing whatever that is morally good, then are we employed in the execution of the divine purposes; for there is no good done in time but was decreed to be done, in all its circumstances, from eternity. Even all the actions of the wicked, except the deformity or sinfulness which is in them, are also worthy of God to predestinate. This consideration, every one must allow, is a great incentive to virtue and holiness. This remark is applicable both to ministers and people. Are ministers engaged in preaching the law for conviction, the promises for encouragement, and the unsearchable riches of Christ for consolation; are they urging, according to scripture commands and example, repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ—do they enforce christian duties, teaching the disciples all things whatsoever our Lord and lawgiver has commanded; do they warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come, or invite the burdened and heavy laden to seek rest in the meek and lowly, the merciful and loving Saviour? They are in all this only the instruments of a sovereign God, or the *appointed means* whereby he executes his eternal purposes. Again, has God enjoined the necessity of repentance, faith, holiness, obedience, and perseverance; poverty of spirit, holy mourning, purity of heart, love to enemies, &c? our personal compliance, which is evermore of grace, is only the *decreed method* of bringing us to that eternal glory which is the end. Once more,

6. This doctrine properly guarded, and rightly understood, shews with peculiar force the true ground of repentance, and the obligations of gratitude and holiness.—If the sinfulness of no action is decreed, but proceeds wholly from that in us which is opposite to God and his will, whether secret or revealed, rectoral or decretive, what can be more binding and reasonable than repentance toward God? And if all good, whether natural, supernatural, moral or spiritual, in ourselves and others, in time and to eternity proceed from God's predestination, what a foundation is there laid for gratitude! Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. *Amen.*"

DR. WILLIAMS



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