









Chubb, Thomas. [A collection
of tracts on various subjects.]

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DISCOURSE

O N

MIRACLES,

Considered as EVIDENCES to prove the Divine Original of a REVELATION.

Wherein is shewn,

What Kind and Degree of EVIDENCE arises from them, and in which the various Reasonings on those Questions that relate to the Subject are fairly represented.

To which is added, an

A P P E N D I X,

C O N T A I N I N G

An ENQUIRY into this Question, *viz.* Whether the Doctrines of a future State of Existence to Men, and a future Retribution, were plainly and clearly taught by *Moses* and the Prophets? Humbly offered to the Consideration of the Rev. Dr. WARBERTON, and all others that particularly interest themselves in this Question.

By THOMAS CHUBB.

L O N D O N:

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

CONTROVERSIES in matters
of *religion*, when managed
with that *fairness* and *good*
humour as they ought, have this ad-
vantage arising from them, that they
give occasion for mens reasoning fa-
culties to be exercised with much
more *care* and *attention* than other-
wise they would be. And this tends
to *check* and *restrain* the growth of

bigotry and superstition, which, thro' mens *inattention*, are apt to prevail in the world. The points controverted, are, likewise, very often set in a much *clearer* light by this means, and the way to truth is rendered more *easy*, by a removal of those *difficulties* and *objections* which are bars to mens receiving it. And this has given occasion to some men, (*viz.* those who pursue truth in the *love* of it) to wish that all *restraints* upon mens enquiries were removed, and that all men were at *full liberty* to offer their thoughts, and their objections *freely*, upon every question with which religion is concerned; this being most *fair* and *equitable* in itself, and, likewise, the most sure and certain way for a religion which is *well grounded* to be *generally received*, and, thereby, to be more *thoroughly established*. Indeed, this is an improper way for the general re-
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ception, and, thereby, the establishment of a religion that is not well grounded, because such a method *tends* to its subversion. And,

This has encouraged me to offer, to publick consideration, the following Discourse on Miracles, considered as *evidences*, to prove the *divine original* of a revelation, wherein I have taken a view of the subject considered simply in itself, without any view or regard to any particular revelation, or to any particular miracle, wrought, or supposed to be wrought in *favour* of the divinity of any revelation; and, in which, I have introduced the *various reasonings* upon the several questions with which the subject is concerned, not intending, hereby, to *raise difficulties*, and *make objections*, these being raised and made already, but only to give a *fair representation* of what may be said
upon

vi The P R E F A C E.

upon *both sides* of those questions, without making myself a *party*, or being *interested* in what is offered on either side, that so, if any *difficulty* should arise, from such a view of the case, it might give occasion, and opportunity to some person or other of superior abilities to remove it. I am sensible it is a case but too common, when men exercise any *freedom* in reasoning about matters of religion, or when they *lay open* the difficulties which any scheme of religion is incumbered with, and the like, then they are represented to the world as *Deists*, as *enemies* to revealed religion, &c. tho', by the way, Christians are but a sect of Deists or Theists, as those are justly opposed to Atheists, and Polytheists. Yea, some Christians seem scarcely to have come up to the character of Deists, or Theists; because *Polythe-*

ism, or a plurality of deities, seem to be a *part* of the composition in their scheme of religion. However, this is what I am not solicitous about; for as I am very sensible that I am answerable to *God* for my actions, so to his *judgment*, as to the most fair and equitable Being, I chuse to *refer* myself. The present cry is, that *Deism* and *Infidelity* prevails; and if these complaints are *just*, then the question is, what should be done to *stop* the growth of it? And the answer, I think, is evident (so far as reason and argument is concerned in the case) *viz.* that *fair* and *proper answers* should be returned to those *difficulties* and *objections* which are made the *grounds* of it. But how can such answers be returned, except those *difficulties* and *objections* are *fairly* and *fully* represented? And this is what I have endeavoured

voured to do in the following Discourse, so far as the subject I treat of in a general way is concerned.

The work is intended to be a general view of the subject, and is not intended to be a treatise on any particular part of it. It is intended to be a general view of the subject, and is not intended to be a treatise on any particular part of it.

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A

DISCOURSE

O N

MIRACLES,

When considered as Evidences to prove the
Divine Original of a Revelation.

SECTION I.

I SHALL not here enter into those questions, whether God has ever given a *divine revelation* to the world; or whether ever any *miracles* have been wrought in favour of the divinity of a revelation; but admitting the supposition that a divine revelation has been, or may be given to mankind; and that miracles have been, or may be wrought in favour of the divinity of a revelation;

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lation; then my enquiry is, what *kind*, and *degree* of *evidence* arises from them. And in order to treat of this subject clearly, I shall *first* enquire what is meant by a *miracle*, as it stands related to the present question; *secondly*, what by *revelation*; *thirdly*, what by the *divinity* of a revelation; *fourthly*, what by *evidence*; and *fifthly*, what by *proof*. And,

First, Of a *miracle*. This term, I think, is used to express a *sensible effect*, which is *above* the natural ability or inherent power of man to cause or produce; which is likewise *above* or *besides* the ordinary course of nature, or of those laws by which the natural world is governed, in the course of God's general providence; and which also is produced by the agency, or cooperation of an *invisible Being*. By the natural ability of man, is meant that ability which arises from our *whole composition* with *all* its improvements, acting *in*, or *upon* matter, considered as under the direction of those laws which the God of nature hath subjected it to. As thus, supposing it to be *above* the natural ability of man, (when thoroughly acquainted with all the secrets and powers in nature, and master of all the art which human nature is capable of attaining,) to *raise himself up*, and *move through the air*, to the height, and with the swiftness of an eagle; and that this effect must be the produce, not of the ordinary course of nature, or of those laws by which the natural world is governed, but of the *immediate* interposition

tion and power of some *invisible* agent; and supposing it to be *above* the natural ability of this man to *discover* that he should be thus raised up, and moved by the power of another; admitting this to be the case; then if a man should be thus raised up, and moved through the air, as aforesaid, and if this operation so far depended upon the man's *will*, as that he *would*, or would *not* be thus moved through the air, according as he willed either; or if he only *foretold* that this effect would take place; this would be, with respect to that man, *miraculous*, or a miracle; and he upon whose *will* the operation depended, or who *foreknew*, and *foretold* it, that man might be said to work this miracle. Again, suppose a man should *will* that a particular mountain should be *removed from its place* and be *carried into the midst of the sea*; or, suppose he should only *foreknow*, and *foretel* that such an effect would take place, admitting it to be *above* his ability to cause or produce such an effect, or to *foreknow* that it would be effected, and that it was not the produce of those laws by which the natural world is governed, and suppose the mountain should be removed accordingly, this would be, with respect to that man, a *miracle*; and he upon whose *will* the operation depended, or who *foreknew* and *foretold* it, that man would be the worker of the miracle. For tho' this operation was performed, not by the power of the man, but by the power of some *in-*

sible agent; yet as the power which was exercised, in this case, was *subject* to the man's will, as to the exercise of it; or else, as it was *revealed* to, and *foretold* by him, that such an effect should take place; so *his* relation to the action, as aforesaid, would render it his, in an improper sense, and *he* would be the *worker* of the miracle. And this is supposed to be the case in all those miracles with which the present question is concerned. For, as miracles are here considered as *evidences* of the *divinity* of a revelation; and as divine revelations are delivered to the world by the *mouth*, or *pen* of some man; so no miracle can be an *evidence* of the *divinity* of a man's message, except the power exercised in working the miracle be *subject* to the man's will, as to the exercise of it; or, at least, except it be *revealed* to, and *foretold* by that man, that such an effect will take place; for, otherwise, it would not appear that the miracle was related to one man, or to his message, more than to another; and, consequently, not to any man; and, therefore, it could not be an evidence in the present case.

There are *two* other definitions of a miracle, which do not answer throughout to the definition here given; tho' when the cases are examined, they will appear in the issue to be resolved into it. As *first*, some men define a miracle to be a sensible effect, which is *wonderful* and *surprizing* to the spectators. But then it is to be remembered, that those effects
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being wonderful and surprizing, are the *ground* or *reason* to such persons to judge them to be produced, *not* by the agency of man, but by the agency, or cooperation of an *invisible* Being, and *as such* they are considered as miraculous. So that this definition, in its *last* result, is the same with that given above. *Secondly*, some men define a miracle to be a sensible effect, which is above the natural ability of man to cause or produce; and which is produced by the agency, or cooperation of *God*. But then those men take it for granted, that there is *no other* invisible agent *but God*, which *can*, or which *does*, at least, perform any operation upon this globe. So that this definition is the same with that before laid down, excepting that it ascribes, and confines all such effects as are above the natural ability of man to cause or produce, to the agency or operation of *God only*. Again,

Secondly, Of a *revelation*. This term expresses the *conveying* of ideas from one intelligent being to another, whether it be by speech, writing, or otherways; and whether the subject of such ideas be matter of *speculation*, or *practice*; and whether it relates to facts *past*, *present*, or to *come*. But lest the terms I here make use of to explain the term revelation should need themselves to be explained, therefore, to cut short this work, I observe, that the point I have now in hand is a *specimen*, and carries in it the *idea* of what I intend by the term under consideration,

tion. That is, I do put this discourse into *writing*, thereby to convey to my reader the *idea* of what I intend by the term *revelation*; and if that idea is convey'd hereby, then this is, in reality, revelation itself; because it not only contains in it, but likewise conveys to my reader, the idea which I annex to that term. Again,

Thirdly, Of the *divinity* of a *revelation*. When the term *divine* is annexed to a *revelation*, it expresses, that the ideas which it contain were *originally* and *immediately* convey'd from *God* to his creature, or creatures; tho' *secondarily* and *mediately* they are conveyed from him, *by one creature to another*. But then by *divine revelation*, in the present case, is not intended any *particular, private revelation*, the subject of which relates to particular persons, or to a particular occasion; but only such publick revelations as are given, and intended to inform the judgments, and to direct the affections and behaviour of mankind; and, as such, to be a standing rule of action to them. Again, by publick revelations, are not meant a *divine application* to the mind of *each individual* of our species, by which are *revealed* to each individual the truths intended to be made known. For tho' this may be called a *publick* revelation, as it is given universally to all, yet, strictly speaking, it would be a *particular, private* revelation, because it is given particularly to each individual. And such a revelation, whether

it be considered as publick or private, is foreign to the present enquiry; because the case of miracles, in our *present view* of them, would not come into the question. For, in that case, as every one would have the revelation at *first hand*, and no one would receive it from another, so no credit would be required, by one, from another, with respect to it; and, consequently, no miracle would be wanted to *back* or *support* any one's credit on that account. Besides, the present enquiry is not, what sort of evidence is proper to work a *rational* conviction in the mind of each individual of our species, of the divinity of those impressions which have been made upon them, and by which a divine revelation is supposed to be conveyed to each of them; but only upon a supposition that a revelation of which it is said that it is divine should at any time be given or published by the mouth, or pen of *one* man, to others, and for *their* use; and real miracles should be wrought by the *reporter*, and should be appealed to by him as *evidences* of the *divinity* of his mission; then, and in that case, the enquiry is, what *kind*, or *degree* of evidence arises, (*not* to the revealer, but to *others*;) from those miracles, in favour of the divinity of that revelation. Again,

Fourthly, Of *evidence*. This term expresses that which is the *ground* of our *assent* to, or *dissent* from a proposition; and it is of *two* kinds, namely, testimony, and deduction.

By

By *testimony* is meant, when an intelligent being, by speech, writing, or otherwise, *vouches for*, or *denies* the proposition in debate. And by *deduction* is meant, when that which is brought as evidence requires our *comparing* of ideas, and from thence we *collect* or *deduce* the truth, or falseness of the point in question. And as evidence is of *two* kinds, so it is the *latter* of these with which we are at present concerned. For as miracles are sensible effects, so they become evidences, *not* by bearing testimony, as aforesaid, but by being *reflected* upon with regard to their physical causes, and the grounds and reasons upon which the agent acts, and the like; from whence is collected or deduced the *truth*, or *falseness* of the proposition in question; and that becomes the *ground* of our *assent*, or *dissent*. Miracles are *direct* evidences, and give a *sensible* proof, not of the veracity; but only of the *power* which attends the actor; and, therefore, any other kind of evidence which may be supposed to arise from them, can be only by *deduction*, as it is the result of *just* reasoning upon the case. Again,

Fifthly, Of *proof*. This term expresses either the *correspondency* of the evidence to, and with the truth of things; or else the *prevalency* of the evidence upon the judgment. By the correspondency of the evidence to, and with the truth of things, is meant, when the evidence sets forth or witnesseth to the *truth*. And this is proof in the *most*
proper

proper sense; tho' it must be granted, it will *not* be esteemed so but where *conviction* follows. The person who is not convinced by the evidence proposed, will judge that the proposition is not proved by it; because, he thinks, the truth *does*, or *may* lay on the other side of the question. By the prevalence of the evidence upon the judgment, is meant, that it *so far* prevails, as that the judgment is *convinced* of the truth, or falseness of the proposition upon that evidence. And this is called proof in a *secondary and less proper* sense; even tho' the judgment determines *wrong* upon such evidence. And in that case, it is so only in a secondary and less proper sense; because, strictly speaking, a false proposition cannot be proved true, tho' the understanding may be so far misled as to judge it to be so. Proof, likewise, is of two kinds, namely, probable and certain. By probable is meant, when the evidence shews that it is *more likely* for the truth to be on one side of the question than on the other, but does not shew it *absolutely* to be so; that is, it does not shew that it implies a contradiction, or an impossibility in the nature of things to suppose the contrary. Again, by probable is meant, when the evidence prevails so far upon the judgment as to gain *assent*, but not so far as to *exclude* a possibility of the contrary. By certain proof is meant, when the evidence shews the truth to be on one side of the question *absolutely*, and that

it cannot be otherwise; or when the evidence so far prevails upon the judgment, as that it *determines absolutely*; and is convinced that it implies a contradiction, or an impossibility in the nature of things to suppose the contrary, tho' it may, possibly, be otherwise. And this latter case is called *certain proof*, not because it is so in itself, but because it is so esteemed by the person who is convinced by it.

S E C T I O N II.

HAVING explained the terms which immediately relate to the subject under consideration, I should now proceed to the general enquiry, were it not that there are *five* things which seem absolutely necessary to be enquired into, as *previous* to it. And these points seem proper to be taken notice of, not only for the *better*, and *more* perfect understanding of the case before us, but also, in order to keep, as *clear* as possible, from every difficulty that is liable to perplex it; which enquiries are as follow. *First*, How far the natural ability of man extends. *Secondly*, Whether there are any other invisible agents but God, which can, or which do (at least) act upon this globe. *Thirdly*, Supposing there are, then what kind or degree of
power

power they are capable of exercising. *Fourthly*, Whether God will suffer them to exert such power as they have, when it is to be employed for the delusion of his creatures. And *Fifthly*, Whether a man who may be said to work a miracle, (as before explained,) is at liberty to use such miracle-working power, well or ill, and to employ it in serving what purposes he please. And,

First, I am to enquire how far the natural ability of man extends. But this seems to be a difficulty *too great* for human understanding to surmount. We plainly see the *great difference* there is with regard to the capacities of men, and the improvement of those capacities, in the knowledge of those laws, to which matter is subjected betwixt one man and another; a difference *so great*, that, to appearance, *one* man is as much superior to *another* in these respects, as the *latter* is superior to some *brutes*. And as our own abilities come *short*, in one respect or other, to the abilities of other men, so this shews the *difficulty*, or rather the *impossibility* of fixing the point, and shewing the utmost extent of the natural ability of mankind. But then, tho' this is a point which cannot possibly be *fixed* by us, yet there are cases in which there is *just ground* for *presuming* that the effects produced *exceed* the bounds of human power; because in those cases there is a *high* degree of probability on the one side, and but a *bare* possibility on the other. Thus, as in the two

instances mentioned above, *viz.* if a man should rise up, and move thro' the air, to the height, and with the swiftness of an eagle; or, if he should command a mountain to remove out of its place, and to stand in the midst of the sea, and it should be removed accordingly, then there would be *just ground* for *presuming* that those effects *exceeded* the bounds of human power; because, as this is *greatly* superior to any power which has yet appeared to be in man, so from hence arises a *high* degree of probability, that it is *above* the natural ability of mankind; and there is *no* probability, but only a *bare* possibility, if that, of the contrary. And, therefore, admitting that in *such* cases we have no *certain* proof, that the effects produced *exceed* the bounds of human power; yet the probability, and the presumption arising from it *against* such power in man, are so exceeding *strong*, as become *almost* equal to such proof.

S E C T I O N III.

SECONDLY, I am to enquire, Whether there are any *other* invisible agents but God, which *can*, or which *do*, at least, act upon this globe. And this, likewise, is a task *exceeding difficult*, seeing we have no *footsteps* to trace, nor any thing to *guide* us
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in our search after truth, with respect to the question before us. As to any *light* or *information* which may be supposed to be derived from divine revelation, with respect to the present question, that is *naturally* and *necessarily* excluded out of the case. For as the *divinity* of a revelation is the *principal* and *ultimate* end of the general enquiry, and the *great* and *main* point sought after; so that point must not be *supposed*, nor taken for *granted*, nor must any argument, light, or information be *borrowed* from it, in any question *previous* to it. This then, *viz.* Whether there are any *other* invisible agents but God, which *can*, or which *do*, at least, act upon this globe, is a point that must remain *undetermined*; and consequently, neither the *negative*, nor the *affirmative* side of this question is to be taken for granted, in order to prove any other point; because nothing can *certainly* be concluded from either, seeing that would be to draw *certain* conclusions from *uncertain* principles.

SECTION IV.

THIRDLY, supposing there are such invisible agents as aforesaid, then I am to enquire what *kind*, or *degree* of power they are capable of exercising. And here also

also we are in the *dark*, and must leave this point under the same *uncertainty* that we find it. For as *invisible* agents are beings which we are perfect *strangers* to, so the *kinds*, or *degrees* of power which may arise from their natural constitutions, are what we have *no* possible way to discover. All, I think, which can be said upon the point, is this, namely, that as there are *various* kinds of beings which God has produced, and which come within our knowledge, so there are *various* kinds, and degrees of power which he hath communicated to those beings. And as power is *capable* of being communicated, so it is equally as *easy* for God to communicate *one* kind, or degree of power as *another*; at least, it is equally as easy for any thing we *know*, or can *shew* to the contrary. But then,

It may be urged, allowing that there are such invisible agents as aforesaid, and, likewise, that we cannot discover what kind, or degree of power may arise from their natural constitutions; yet when *several* such effects take place, as may justly be presumed to exceed the bounds of human power, and when they are produced by *several* instruments in *opposition* to each other, then the *prevailing* power proves itself to be divine.

To this it may be answered, that the *prevalency* of power is *not* a proof that it is divine. *Two* created beings may *contend* for the mastery, and he that has the *greater* power will prevail, if he exerts it with *discretion*.

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And this will be the case, whether the contending agents are *visible*, or *invisible* beings; so that the *truth*, or *goodness* of a cause, cannot be determined from the *success* of the contenders, because, sometimes, it is not he that has the *best* cause, but he that has the *greatest* power which *gains* the victory. It is true, if *God* interposes in any case, then it is to be presumed that he will give *truth* the victory; but the question will still remain, whether he *does* interpose, or *not*, seeing the *prevalency* of power is not, neither can it be a proof that it is *divine*. Again,

It may be farther urged, that the *raising* a dead person to life, is a work *above* the natural ability or inherent power of any created being; and, therefore, it must be performed by the *immediate* operation or *agency* of *God*.

To which it may be answered, that here is a point *presumed* without *sufficient* ground, and a *consequence* drawn from that presumption, which in *argument* is not to be allowed. The *animal* life (as the case appears to us) has a connexion with, and a dependence upon a *body* fitly organized, and stored with juices, and those juices in a *proper* motion, &c. so that if some of the *principal* parts of the machine are thrown into any *great* disorder, or if the *juices* are let out, or stagnate, or the like, then a *cessation* of life, which we commonly call death, will ensue, except some *speedy* remedy be applied to *correct* the disorder in the machine, or to *stop* the discharge
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of the fluids, or to *thin*, or *restore* them to their proper motion, &c. or in other words, to remove *that*, whatever it be, which would have been, if not removed, the *ground* and *cause* of the cessation of life. And as life is thus *exposed*, so it has sometimes been preserved when in the *greatest* danger. A skilful surgeon or physician, by a timely interposition, has sometimes *prevented* death, by removing a disorder which, otherwise, would speedily, and unavoidably have ended it. Yea, sometimes, by a timely, and proper application from a skilful person, life has been *restored* after a short cessation; that is, after all the marks and symptoms of life have disappeared; I say, in *some* such instances, life has *seemed*, at least, to have been restored. *Thus far* it is evident that the natural ability of man extends. But that this is the *utmost* extent of human power, ought not be said, because, we cannot tell what *farther* knowledge and experience may render men *capable* of doing. But supposing it may, possibly, be above the natural ability of man to restore life after *one*, or *two*, or *three* days cessation, or some other given time; yet it will not follow that it is above the natural ability of *every other* created being, seeing the *extent* of man's power cannot be a *rule* to us, by which we may judge of the abilities of other agents whom we are not acquainted with.

In the *history* of the deliverance of the children of *Israel* from *Egyptian* bondage,

we have an account, that the *magicians*, by their *enchancements*, that is, (as it is commonly understood,) by a power derived from evil spirits, turned their *dead rods* into *serpents*, that is, into *living, active beings*, which serpents are known, and allowed to be. And from hence it may be argued, that if an invisible *created agent* could, by his own natural ability, so *change* and *dispose* the particles of matter which constituted a *dead rod*, as that they became an organized body, stored with juices, in a proper motion, and could do whatever was farther necessary to render that dead rod a *living, active being*, (as in the instance above;) then there is a strong probability, that it is within the inherent power of some created beings, to *rectify* the disorders of an organized body, *restore* to it a proper quantity of fluids, put them in *motion*, and do what is *farther* necessary to render it again a *living, active being*, after *one, or two, or three days death*, seeing the *latter*, (as far as we can judge,) is as *easy* to be performed as the *former*. So that the proper question arising from hence will be, whether there are any created beings who can, by their *own* natural ability or inherent power, *rectify* the disorders of an organized body, *restore* to it a proper quantity of fluids, put them in *motion*, and do what is *farther* necessary to render it *again* a living creature, after *one, or two, or three days death*, or some other given time. But this is what, at

present, we have no way to discover, and, therefore, *neither* side of the question is to be taken for granted, in order to prove any other point. Tho' if we admit, as true, what is recorded, as done, by the *magicians* of *Egypt*, in turning *dead rods* into *serpents*, then the *probability* will be on the *affirmative* side of the question, as has been shewn above.

SECTION V.

FOURTHLY, Supposing there are such invisible agents as aforesaid; then I am to enquire, Whether God will *suffer* them to exert such power as they have, when it is to be exercised for the *delusion* of his creatures. And here, if we argue by *analogy*, that is, if we *infer* from his conduct in *one* case, *how* he will act in *another*, then it is plain, that God *will* suffer invisible agents to exert their power in serving what purposes they *please*. Men, we see, are at *liberty*, and do *actually* delude one another, in *every* kind of delusion, tho' it be in points of the *utmost* importance, and for each other's *hurt*, and sometimes, when they have no other advantage from it, but the *bare* pleasure of deluding; and thus they deal with the *creatures* below them; and thus, in like manner, *those*
creatures

creatures deal with one another. From whence arises a *strong* probability, that *all* invisible agents (if there are any such) are at *liberty* to exert their power in serving *what* purposes they please. But then,

It may be urged, that it is *inconsistent* with God's *moral* character, as a just and good being, to *suffer* invisible agents to exert their power for the *delusion* of mankind.

To this it may be answered, that as this *restraint* arises from the *purpose* which such power is made subservient to, namely, the delusion of mankind; so when any *kind*, or *degree* of power is to be exercised to answer the *same* end, either by a visible, or an invisible agent, it must be *equally* as *fit* in the nature of the thing, for God to *restrain* it, seeing delusion is the *same* in itself, and as *bad* in its consequences, to the *person* deluded, whether the power which is the *ground* of that delusion be *natural*, or *supernatural*; and seeing it would be *equally* as kind, and good in God, to exercise his restraining power in the *former*, as in the *latter* case. But that God *does not* exercise his *restraining* power in the *former* case, is evident from *experience*. Again,

It may be farther urged, that invisible agents, with respect to their understandings and power, are what men are not an equal match for; and that, if God should *permit* such agents to exert their power for the *delusion* of mankind, this would be to *expose*

the generality of men to such *evils* and *mischiefs* as they are not qualified to *guard* against; and, that, therefore, it becomes the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God, to interpose and *prevent* those evils, by *restraining* invisible agents from using their power as aforesaid.

To this it may be replied, that as it is a *popular* argument drawn from the *moral* perfections of God, so it may, in a multitude of instances, be turned *against* them. Almost every tribe of *animals* may take up their complaint, and say, that they are exposed to a multitude of evils and inconveniencies, through the *superior* capacities of men, which they are not an *equal* match for, and, therefore, are not *qualified* to guard against the evils men bring upon them; and that if God were a *wise* and *good* being, he would kindly interpose, and prevent their falling into those evils, or *deliver* them out of them: But he *does not* interpose, as aforesaid, and, therefore, he is *neither* wise nor good. The fly, when it is taken in the *net* the spider has spread for it, may take up its complaint, and say, O wretched, helpless creature that I am! I am now fallen into the *snare* which the *crafty* spider laid for me, whose *superior* capacity I am not an *equal* match for, and whose *mischievous* designs I am not *qualified* to guard against. Surely, if the great governor of the universe were *wise* and *good*, he would have mercifully interposed, and *prevented* my falling into so great an evil,

evil, which, by my condition in nature, I was not *qualified* to secure myself from, or he would now interpose and *deliver* me out of it; but he has not, nor does *interpose*, as aforesaid, therefore, he is not *wise* nor *good*, at least, he must be *defective* in *one*, or *other* of these. And,

As this is the case with respect to the animals below us, so it is the same with respect to our *own* species. Each *slave* who is forced to bear, or suffer many *evils* and *miseries* from the *superior* power which a tyrannical governor is possessed of, may take up his complaint, and say, that if God were *wise* and *good*, he would interpose and *restrain* the tyrant from exercising his power, as aforesaid, seeing not only *himself*, but *many* more are forced to suffer the *like* evils, it not being in *their* power to prevent them, or to deliver themselves from them. It is *equally* the *same* to a man, whether his misfortunes are brought upon him by the *superior* power, or *craft* of another; and it would be *equally* as *kind* and *good* for God to interpose and prevent, or remove them, whether they be introduced by the superior power, or craft of a *visible*, or an *invisible* agent. And,

As men are not a match for each other in a variety of cases, so, particularly, with regard to *delusion* and *imposition*; and that too in matters of *religion*. And here it may be proper to suppose that *Mahomet* was an *impostor*, tho', indeed, this may minister *just*
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ground of complaint to the *Mahometans*; because they may insist, that their prophet ought to be *proved* an impostor, and that we ought not to take it for *granted* that he was so. But this is a question which the present argument is not concerned with, and it is only supposed for argument sake, to illustrate the point now in hand. Supposing then that *Mahomet* was an *impostor*, and that no *invisible* agent was concerned, either in *contriving*, or *propagating* the imposition; yet seeing it did *succeed*, and that not only over a *great* part of the world, but also through a course of *many* ages, and is *like* to succeed through many more; therefore, the question arising from hence will be, whether it would not have been *equally* as *kind* and *good*, for God to have interposed and *prevented* the *Mahometan* delusion, as the case now stands, as it would have been, supposing it had been introduced by the *power*, or *craft* of an *invisible* agent. And the answer to this question may, possibly, appear to some, very evident; namely, that *goodness* is as *much* concerned, and would be *equally* shewn in *one* case, as in the other; and from hence they may argue, that seeing God *has not* interposed to prevent delusion in *one* case, therefore, no *good* argument can possibly be drawn from his *wisdom* and *goodness*, to shew that he would have interposed in the *other*. Again,

It may be further urged, that man is endowed with a faculty of *understanding*, by
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the *right* use and exercise of which, he is qualified to guard against the *Mahometan*, or any other *delusion*, provided it be not backed with the *power* of an *invisible* agent, in working miracles for its confirmation.

To which it may be farther answered, that if men would *rightly* use, and *follow* their understandings, they would thereby be *guarded* and *secured* from every delusion, (or, at least, from all that are *hurtful*;) tho' backed with the power of an invisible agent, as aforesaid; because then every man would be assured, from the nature and reason of the thing, that *no* power, how *great* soever, could possibly be of *God*, which *directly* and *immediately* tended to the *hurt* and *damage* of mankind. And, consequently, if this were the case, then there would be *no place* for the exercise of divine *wisdom* and *goodness*, in preventing the delusion of mankind. But this is *not* the case, seeing the generality of men are so far from using, and following their understandings in *this* particular, that, on the contrary, they are *too apt* to follow every one who takes upon him to *guide* them, and are *very easily* misled and deluded; so that the honest, plain, simple part of mankind, are not an *equal* match for the more subtile and crafty. And it is in *this* view that man is to be considered. The proper question, therefore, is this, *viz.* considering the bulk of mankind in their *present* circumstances, so *liable* to be deluded and imposed upon, whether

ther it would not be *equally* kind and good, for God to interpose and *prevent* their delusion, as well when an invisible agent *is not* concerned in promoting and forwarding it, as when *he is*. And if the divine wisdom and goodness is *equally* concerned, and would be *equally* shewn in *both* cases, (which some men think must be allowed,) then, say they; seeing God *does not* interpose to prevent delusion in *one case*, therefore, no *good* argument can be drawn from his *wisdom* and *goodness*, to *prove* that he *would* interpose in the *other*. But farther, it may be answered,

As it is most evident that delusion *does* take place, so it is alike evident that God *must* permit and suffer it, whilst there are such things as *free* creatures in being. Men will be at liberty, whilst they are *agents*, to exercise their natural abilities in serving *what purposes* they please. *Take away* that liberty, and their agency *ceases*, or is *destroyed*. And this must be the case of *all* intelligent, free beings, whether *visible*, or *invisible*, and whether their *natural* power, (that is, the power arising from their natural constitutions) be *greater*, or *less*. So that to say, it is *morally* unfit for God to *suffer* his creatures to delude or injure one another, is the same as to say, that it is *morally* unfit for God to call *free* creatures into being. But then,

It may be yet farther urged, that tho' God will suffer invisible agents (supposing there are such) to exercise their power in
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serving what purpose they please, yet seeing they do not *frequently* exercise their power upon this globe, it becomes a question, whether they do at *any time* exercise it amongst mankind. For if invisible agents *can*, and sometimes *do* exercise their power as aforesaid, then there is *just* ground to presume that they *frequently* do so, because they have *frequent* occasions and opportunities for it; but whereas it is evident they *seldom* (if ever) do; therefore it is *highly* probable that they *do not* exercise their power here at all. And though we cannot discover what may be the *motives* to invisible agents to interest themselves in human affairs, yet seeing the transactions which take place amongst mankind are generally a *round* of the *same things*; so from hence arises a probability that the *motives* to action (if there are any such) to invisible agents *frequently* take place upon this globe, and thereby become *frequently* the *grounds* and *reasons* of actions to them. So that if invisible agents do interest themselves *at all* in the affairs of this world, then it is to be presumed, that they *frequently* do so (as was observed above) because there are *frequently* *occasions* for, and *excitements* to it. But seeing they *seldom* if ever do, therefore it is *highly* probable, that they *do not* exercise their power here at all; especially if it be considered, that in *many* instances, in which it has been pretended, that such power hath been exer-

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cised, it has been shewn to be no other than *juggle*, or *imposture*.

To which it may be replied, that if this argument proves *any thing*, it proves *too much*, because it concludes as *strongly* against God's exercising his power in enabling men to work miracles at *any time*, seeing it is *seldom* (if ever) that he does; the occasions and excitements returning as *frequently*, and thereby as *frequently* becoming the grounds and reasons of action to *him*, as to *any other* invisible being. For if miracles are at *any time* used to convince men of the *divine* original of a revelation; then, when men grow *sceptical* and *incredulous*, as to the truth of those facts, and consequently are *doubtful* with regard to the divinity of that revelation; when *this* is the case, then *new* miracles become as *useful*, and serve the *same* purposes as those before, *viz.* to work the *conviction* of mankind. And it would be *equally* as *kind* and *good* in God to give them in the *latter*, as in the *former* case. But whereas he *does not* do it in the *latter*, this affords an argument *against* his having done it in the *former*. Again,

It may farther be urged, that God is not in *justice* obliged to *repeat* miracles for the conviction of mankind, when he has *once* given them for that end.

To which it may be replied, that it is *not* justice, but *goodness*, which is the *spring* of action to God in *all such* cases; and that the *kindness* is as *great* to man, and that it would

be *equally* as good in God, to exercise his power in *one* case, as in the *other*, as was observed above.

It may likewise be yet farther urged, that the *frequency* of miracles would render them *useless*.

To which it may be yet farther replied, that the *argument* from miracles is *just* the same, whether they take place *seldom*, or *often*; whether in *every* age, or only in *twenty*, or an *hundred* ages. And from the whole of what has been here offered, it may be thought *just* to infer, that if the *seldomness* of invisible agents acting upon this globe, affords an argument *against* their acting here *at all*, then as God *seldom*, if ever, interposes to enable men to work miracles, from hence arises a *probability*, that he *never* does. Again,

It may be urged, supposing there are *other* invisible agents *besides* God, which act upon this globe; then miracles prove *nothing* with respect to the *divinity* of a revelation. For as it will always be *uncertain*, whether God be the agent in producing those effects which we call miracles, or whether they are produced by the power of *some other* invisible being; so that *uncertainty* will render every *conclusion* (in argument) *weak* and *uncertain*, which is drawn from them. From which it will follow, either, *first*, that there are *no other* invisible agents *but* God, which *can*, or which *do* (at least) act upon this globe; or if there *are*, or *may* be such, then it will

follow, *secondly*, that miracles prove *nothing* in the present case; because it will be *uncertain*, with respect to every miracle, whether *God* be the agent in producing it, or *not*.

To this it may be answered, that as to the *first* of those inferences, it is a *conclusion* drawn from *doubtful* and *uncertain* premises. That is, there is *no* principle in *nature*, or *reason*, from whence the forementioned point can be *certainly* inferred; and therefore that inference (*viz.* that there is *no other* invisible agent *but God*, which *can*, or which *does* act upon this globe) must pass for a *cypher* in argument. And as to the *second* inference, *viz.* admitting that there *are*, or *may be* other invisible agents *besides* God, which *can*, or which *do* (at least) act upon this globe, then miracles prove *nothing* with respect to the divinity of a revelation; this *conclusion* may be thought *too strong* for the premises. For though with respect to any miracle, we cannot be *certain* that God is the agent in producing it, yet if the circumstances which attend the case render it *probable* that he did, then it will follow, that tho' miracles cannot afford *certain*, yet they may afford *probable proof* in favour of the divinity of a revelation. What those circumstances are, which may be judged to be a just foundation for such a probability, will be considered in their due place.

SECTION VI.

FIFTHLY and lastly, I am to enquire, Whether a man who may be said to work a miracle (as the case is explained above) is at liberty to use such miracle-working power well, or ill, and employ it in serving what purposes he pleases. This enquiry is in some measure answered in the precedent section, in which it is observed, that men will be at liberty, whilst they are *agents*, to exercise their natural ability in serving what purposes they please; for take away that liberty, and their agency *ceases*, or is *destroyed*. And, as this is the case with respect to the *natural* abilities of men; so it must be the same with regard to all *supernatural* power which may be superadded, whether it be that of working miracles, or otherwise. For, as the exercise of such power depends upon a *man's will*, or at least he is *afore* apprized of the exercise of it; so, in the very nature of the thing, it must be at his *option* to direct it this way, or that way, to make it attend the truth, or a lie. Indeed, God may, if he please, give to, or with-hold such miracle-working power from a man, or he may with-draw it when given; but then he cannot give it, and restrain a man in the use of it at the same

same time, that being a contradiction, and an impossibility in nature.

If it should be urged as above, admitting this, then miracles prove nothing with respect to the divinity of a revelation. For, if he who works a miracle is at liberty to annex it to *truth*, or *falsehood*, of which a by-stander cannot possibly be a judge, whether it be annexed to one, or the other of these; then it will follow, that miracles prove nothing in the present case,

To this it may be answered as above, *viz.* that this conclusion may be thought too strong for the premises. For, though with respect to any miracle, we cannot be *certain* that it is annexed to truth, yet if the circumstances which attend the case render it *probable* that it is, then it will follow, that though miracles cannot afford certain, yet they may afford probable proof in favour of the divinity of a revelation.

SECTION VII.

HAVING thus prepared the way, by shewing, *first*, that we cannot possibly know the utmost extent, nor fix the bounds of human power; *secondly*, that we cannot know

know whether any other invisible agent but God can, or does (at least) act upon this globe; *thirdly*, supposing there are other invisible agents besides God, which do act as aforesaid, yet we do not know what kind, or degree of power they are capable of exercising; *fourthly*, if there are other invisible agents besides God, who act upon this globe, then God will permit and suffer them to use their power in serving what purposes they please, at least he will permit them to act thus, for any thing we know, or for any grounds we have from which we may fairly and justly conclude the contrary; and *fifthly*, a man, who may be said to work a miracle, (as explained above) is at liberty to use such miracle-working power well, or ill, by annexing it either to the truth, or to a lie; these points being laid down as principles, from hence two conclusions will clearly and unavoidably follow, namely,

First, That those effects which are wonderful and surprizing, but of which we have no just grounds for presuming that they exceed the bounds of human power, and consequently cannot fairly presume that they are produced by the power of an invisible being; if such are offered as evidences to prove the divine original of a revelation, the proof (if any there be) arising from them, can be but a *low degree* of probability. For, as it is uncertain, whether the operations referred to

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be annexed to truth, or falshood, and as it is uncertain whether those operations are supernatural; so, if they are supernatural, yet it is alike uncertain whether they are divine operations, seeing they may not be performed by God, but by the agency of some other invisible being. And therefore, though all other proper circumstances concurred in favour of such evidence, yet seeing the *three* forementioned points of uncertainty attend the case, this renders the probability arising from that evidence so much the weaker, and consequently, the proof arising from it can be but a *low degree* of probability. Again,

Secondly, It will follow from the principles before laid down, that with respect to all those effects of which it may justly be presumed, that they exceed the bounds of human power, and consequently, that they are produced by the power and interposition of some invisible agent; if these are offered as evidences to prove the divine original of a revelation, the proof arising from them at most can be *but probable*, because we cannot possibly come to any certainty, whether the miracles referred to be annexed to truth, or falshood; nor whether God is the agent in those operations, or whether they be performed by the power or agency of some other invisible being. So that supposing all other proper circumstances concurred in favour of such evidence, yet as the *two* forementioned points of

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of uncertainty attend the case, therefore, the proof arising from that evidence, at most, cannot be certain, but *only probable*, seeing it does not imply a contradiction, nor an impossibility in nature to suppose the contrary. And, from hence *two* questions will arise, namely, what are those circumstances that may attend a miracle, which may make it *probable* that it is annexed to truth, rather than to a lie? And what are those circumstances which may make it *probable* that God is the agent in such an operation, rather than any other invisible being? But, as the answer to the *first* of these questions will be contained in, and may easily be collected from the answer to the *second*, therefore, I shall drop the former, and give an answer to the latter of those questions only.

But before this question can be fairly considered and answered, it is to be observed, that there are *two* or *three* things to be *supposed* or admitted as *proper* foundations for argument with respect to it, *viz.* *First*, That there is a natural and essential *difference* in things, and that *one* thing or action is really *better* or *preferable* to another in nature. *Secondly*, That there is a *rule* of *action* resulting from that difference, which *every* moral agent ought in reason to *govern* his *actions* by. *Thirdly*, That *God*, as the governor of the intelligent and moral world, makes the *reason* of things the *rule* and *measure* of his

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actions, in *all* his dealings with his creatures, and this renders him absolutely and perfectly *wise* and *good*. These points must be *presumed* or taken for *granted*, for, otherwise, there is not any principle we can *reason from*, nor any thing which will be a *proper* foundation for argument in the present case. But if it be *admitted* that God is absolutely and perfectly *wise* and *good*, as aforesaid, then it will follow, that all *divine* revelations are given for the *good* of mankind, and that in *all* God's dealings with his creatures, he will act a part which is *worthy* of, and *suitable* to such a character; and this will be a *proper* foundation for argument with respect to the question before us.

SECTION VIII.

IT being *supposed* in the precedent section, that *such* circumstances may attend a miracle, as render it *more likely* and *probable* that God is the agent in producing that effect, rather than *any other* invisible being; and it likewise being *premised* that God always acts *suitable* to his character, as a *wise* and *good* being, the present question is, *what* those circumstances are, upon which
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the aforefaid *likelihood* and *probability* can be *fairly* grounded? And the answer to this question is, that those circumstances must regard either the *fact itself*, or else the *revelation itself*, which the *fact* is brought to *vouch* for. And,

First, As to the *fact itself*, the circumstances which attend it, and which can be of any consequence in the present case, must either regard the *kind*, or *degree* of power which is exercised in that fact, or else the *good*, or *evil* which that power (considered abstractedly from the revelation) is *introductive to*, or is the *cause* of. As to the *first*, viz. the *kind*, or *degree* of power which is exercised in a miracle; nothing can be *fairly* concluded from hence, either *for*, or *against* its being wrought by *God*, rather than by *some other* invisible agent, because, (as was observed above,) it is *equally* as *easy* for *God* to communicate *one kind*, or *degree* of power, as *another*; at least, it is so for any thing *we know*, or can *shew* to the *contrary*. So that there is not *any* kind, or degree of power which may be exercised upon this globe, (that of raising the dead not excepted,) but may be *inherent to*, and be the *natural result* of the constitution of some creature, seeing *God can*, and for any thing *we know*, *may* have communicated *such kind*, or *degree* of power; I say, that this may be the case, for any thing *we know*, or can *prove* to the *con-*

trary, and, therefore, *nothing* can certainly be concluded on *either* side; because, that would be to draw *certain* conclusions from *uncertain* principles, which is *absurd*. And to say, that God *cannot* communicate this, or that *kind*, or *degree* of power, is, plainly, to *limit* and *set bounds* to the *boundless* power of God, and is *presuming* a point, without the *least ground* for it. Again,

Secondly, As the power which is exercised in a miracle may be (when considered abstractedly from the revelation) *introductive* to, or be the cause of *good*, or it may be *introductive* to, or be the cause of *evil*, so it may be judged, that *one* of these puts the *probability* on *one side*, and the *other* puts the *probability* on the *other side* of that question. That is, if the power which is exercised in a miracle is the immediate cause of, or is *introductive* to the *good* of mankind, this makes it *probable* that it was wrought by a *divine* hand, (except some *other* circumstance attends the case, which *weakens* or *destroys* that probability;) because it is *more likely* that God should thus kindly interpose for the *common good* of his creatures, than that *one creature* should thus interpose in *favour* of the rest. But if the power which is exercised in a miracle is *introductive* to, and is the cause of *evil* to mankind, this makes it *probable* that such a miracle *was not* wrought by God, but by the power of *some other* invisible agent;

gent; because, if we suppose such power to be *divine*, there would be a *preposterousness* in the divine conduct, that is, in God's giving a *revelation* to *mankind*, intending it for their *good*, and then *proving* to them that it is *divine*, by working a miracle which directly and immediately was the cause of, or was introductive to their *hurt*; such a conduct in *God* would be *preposterous*, and, therefore, the *supposition* is not to be admitted.

SECTION IX.

A GAIN, *secondly*, The *other* circumstances which come into the present question, are such as relate to the *revelation itself*, out of which the forementioned *likelihood* and *probability* must arise, that the miracles wrought in *favour* of the divinity of that revelation, are wrought by *God*, rather than by *any other* invisible being. And those circumstances must be such, in which God's *moral* character is concerned; that is, God's *wisdom* and *goodness* must be shewn in, and by the revelation, in its being subservient to *virtue* and *goodness*, and, consequently, to the *happiness* of mankind, both *here*, and *hereafter*,

hereafter, there being *no other* circumstances *but these* that can attend a revelation, out of which the forementioned *likelihood* or *probability* can arise; and when this is the case, then it may be urged, that there is a *likelihood*, or a *probability*, that those effects which are *above* the natural ability of man to cause or produce, were produced by a *divine* hand. For as God is the *common* parent of his creatures, and the *natural* guardian of their happiness, and, *as such*, it may fairly be presumed, that *he has* a much *greater* concern and regard for their *well being*, than *any other* agent, so it is *more likely* that *he* should interpose for their *common* safety, than that *one* creature should thus interpose in *favour* of the rest, as has been already observed. So that when the *subject* matter of a revelation is subservient to *virtue* and *goodness*, and, consequently, to the *present* and *future* happiness of mankind; and when the *miracles* wrought in favour of the *divinity* of that revelation, consist of *such* facts as are the immediate cause of, or are introductive to their *good*; those circumstances may be judged to render it *likely* and *probable* that *God* is the agent in producing *such* effects, rather than *any other* invisible being, except some *other* circumstances attend the case, which *weaken*, or *destroy* that probability.

SECTION X.

HAVING shewn, in the *two* precedent sections, what those *circumstances* are, which *do*, or which may be judged to render it *likely* and *probable* that God is the agent, (rather than *any other* invisible being,) in producing those effects which we call *miracles*, and which are wrought in *favour* of the *divinity* of a revelation; I now proceed to enquire what those *other* circumstances are, which *do*, or which may be judged either to *strengthen*, or else to *weaken*, or *destroy* that *probability*. *First*, If the wisdom and goodness which is shewn *in* and *by* a revelation runs thro' *all* its parts; and, *secondly*, if that revelation be communicated to *all* who *alike* stand in need of it; if *these* circumstances *attend* a revelation, then they very much *heighten* the probability that those miracles wrought in its *favour* were wrought by a *divine* hand; but if *those* circumstances, or *either* of them are *wanting*, then it very much *weakens* that probability. And,

First, If a revelation, *backed* with miracles, should naturally and apparently tend to the *good* of mankind *throughout*, and if *wisdom* and *goodness* shew themselves thro' *all* its parts, then this *heightens* the forementi-

oned probability, as a revelation *thus* constituted is so much *more* worthy of the *best* of beings, and *more* suitable to our *natural* notions of the deity. But if a revelation, *backed* with miracles, should naturally and apparently tend to the *good* of mankind in *one* branch of it, and as naturally and apparently tend to their *hurt* in *another*, then this would, at least, very much *weaken* the fore-mentioned probability: Yea, it may be urged, that it makes it *probable*, that the miracles wrought in *favour* of *such* a revelation, *were not* wrought by *God*, but by the agency of *some other* invisible being; because the natural and apparent *evil* which *springs* from *some* parts of that revelation, is an *indication* of a *defect* of *goodness* in the being it proceeded from, which *cannot* be the case with respect to *God*. But then,

It may be urged, that those branches of a revelation which naturally and apparently tend to the *hurt* of mankind, may, in their *secret* and *remote* consequences, turn to their *greater good*; of which *God* is the *only* judge, who sees things as well in their *secret* and *remote*, as in their *natural* and *apparent* consequences. And, therefore, no *good* argument can be drawn from the natural and apparent *evil* of a revelation *against* its divinity, or *against* the divinity of those *miracles* which are wrought in its *favour*.

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To which it may be answered, that if this *proves* any thing, it *proves too much*. For if we *are not* to form a judgment of *good* and *evil* in this case from what is natural and apparent, but from what is secret and remote; then the most *barbarous* and *cruel*, and the most *burdensome* institutions may be of *God*; because these, for ought we know, may in their *secret* and *remote* consequences, some way or other, turn to the *good* and *benefit* of some or other of *mankind*. So that no *good* argument can be drawn *for*, or *against* the *divinity* of a revelation; nor *for*, or *against* the *divinity* of those miracles which are wrought in its favour, from the *good*, or *evil*, which springs from it: seeing it is not the *good*, or *evil*, which is *naturally* and *apparently* the result of *any* revelation (and which alone man is *qualified* to discern) but it is such *good* and *evil* as *secretly* and *remotely* springs from it (and which man is *not* qualified to discern and reason from) that must determine the case.

Besides, if the *secret* and *remote* consequences of things are to be taken into the case, and made a *foundation* for argument, then there is *scarce any* revelation which has *hitherto* come forth under an *heavenly* character, but this kind of reasoning may be turned *against* it. For though it *cannot* be discerned at the *time* of delivery, what will be the *secret* and *remote* consequences of any re-

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velation;

velation; yet *after-times* may shew, or at least may furnish men with materials to *guess* what *those* consequences are, which *men* in former times *could not* discover. And a *sceptick*, or an *unbeliever*, may from hence raise an argument *against* the divinity of those revelations which have *hitherto* been considered as divine, by observing how many *evils* and *mischiefs* they have been the *parents* of, or are judged to be so, when considered in their *unnatural* and *latest* consequences; so that it will be exceeding difficult to make it appear, that there has been as *much* good, as evil produced by them; and consequently, if this kind of reasoning be *just*, it will furnish out an argument *against*, rather than in *favour* of the *divinity* of those revelations, which have come forth under an *heavenly* character; and *against*, rather than *for* the divinity of those miracles, which may have been wrought in their *favour*; though in truth, *nothing* can be *fairly* concluded in the present case, because a revelation cannot in reason be *justly* chargeable with any consequences, but what *visibly*, *naturally*, and *apparently* spring from it. Again,

Secondly, If a revelation which *wholly* tends to the *good* of mankind is *backed* with miracles as aforesaid, and is given to *all* who *alike* stand in need of it; then it may be urged, that *this* circumstance very much *heightens* the probability that those miracles wrought in its *favour*

favour are *divine*, as such a conduct is *worthy* of the common parent of mankind, who pities *equally* every *pitiable* object, and whose *tender mercies* are over *all* his works. But if *such* a revelation should be given to *one* nation or people only, when the *rest* of mankind stand *alike* in need of it, then it may be urged, that such a *partial* conduct makes it *probable*, that it *was not* God, but *some other* invisible agent, who wrought those miracles in favour of that revelation. For as *true goodness* disposes the being in which it resides to minister relief *alike* to *all* in distress, if they are *alike* objects of pity, and if there is *equal* power to relieve *all* as *some*; so when relief is ministered *partially* as aforesaid, then the question is, whether this be not an indication of *want* of goodness in the administrator, which surely *cannot* be the case with respect to God.

SECTION XI.

AS it is supposed in the precedent section, that the giving a revelation *partially* to some, and *not* universally to all, *destroys*, or at least very much *weakens* the probability that those miracles wrought in favour

of the divinity of that revelation are wrought by a divine hand, supposing *all* other circumstances concurred in its *favour*; so it seems proper here to take notice of the *various* reasonings which may be offered on *either* side of that question. As thus,

It may be urged, though our great and kind Creator *intended*; that *all* his creatures should be *happy*, and therefore, made a suitable and proper *provision* that they might attain it; yet he *did not* intend, and therefore *did not* provide that *all* should attain the *same* degree of happiness, much less that they should *all* attain to the *highest* degree of it. This is abundantly evident from the *various* species of creatures which God hath called into being, who are very *differently* qualified to obtain happiness, and whose happiness, when attained, admits of *degrees*, some *greater*, some *less*. All are not made *angels*, all are not made *men*; but there are a *great variety* of species of beings who are *intended* for happiness, and yet they *are not* designed, and therefore *are not* qualified to attain to *so high* a degree of it, as men and angels are *capable* of attaining. Again,

As God *did not* intend, that *every* species of creatures should attain to *equal* degrees of happiness; so he *did not* intend, and therefore *has not* provided that *all* and *every* individual of any species should attain to the *same* degree of it. This is abundantly evident

dent from the *great difference* there is with respect to the *capacities*, and the *circumstances* of men, by which they are very *differently* qualified to obtain happiness, and which probably will occasion a very *great* difference in the happiness they shall attain. And as the difference of *capacities* and *circumstances* amongst mankind, by which they are *qualified* for attaining *different* degrees of happiness, is what God could not but *foresee*, as it results from the original frame and constitution of things, and yet has not *provided* against; so he could not *but intend*, that such *different* capacities and circumstances should take place amongst mankind, and consequently, that *different* degrees of happiness should be obtained by them. And,

As divine revelation is *only* intended to render those who enjoy it capable of attaining to a *greater* degree of happiness, which otherwise they would be in *danger* of *not* attaining; and as all those who are *destitute* of divine revelation are *capable* of attaining to *happiness*, though of a *much* lower degree, and this is *all* which justice and equity require that God should do for them: so if God gives a revelation *only* to *part* of mankind, and thereby renders them *only* capable of attaining to such *greater* degrees of happiness, as that revelation becomes *subservient* to, and leaves the *rest* of our species under a *disability* to attain to such *greater* degrees of

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happi-

happiness, but still with *ability* to obtain a *lesser* degree of it, then he is not *more partial*, nor *less benevolent* in *this*, than in the *two former* cases; that is, if God's *not* giving a revelation to *all*, but *only* to a *part* of mankind, when all stood *alike* in need of it, be an instance of his acting *partially* with his creatures, and renders him *defective* in point of benevolence, toward those who *have not* the advantage of that revelation; then he is *alike partial*, and also *defective* in point of *benevolence*, in not making *all* his creatures *capable* of attaining to *equal* degrees of happiness, and likewise in his *not* giving *equal* capacities to *all* men, and *not* putting them under the *same* advantageous circumstances, as might render them *capable* of attaining to the *highest* happiness which human nature is capable of attaining. But God cannot *fairly* be charged with *partiality*, nor with a *defect* in point of benevolence in the *two* latter cases; and therefore, he cannot *fairly* be charged with these in the *former*.

To which it may be answered, *first*, that as to angels, we know *nothing* about them, either as to their *capacities*, or to the *degree* of their happiness; and therefore, they ought not to be brought into the question. And as to the *various* species of beings, which take place upon this globe, and which are qualified for *different* degrees of happiness, these were not called into being for the sake of *variety*,

riety, but that a *much greater good* might be carried on thereby. Suppose *all* the various species of beings below us had been made *men*, then this *globe* could not have afforded *provision*, nor would it have been a *proper* habitation for them. And suppose God had made *none* but men, and had left all the *other* species of beings in *non-existence*, then *all* the *good* which is exercised upon, and which is now shewn to the *several* species of beings *below* us, would have been *sunk* and *lost*. And as to our *own* species, our condition in life, *without* the other creatures, would have been *much worse* than it is *now* with them. And as it was not for the sake of *variety*, that God made so *many* different species of beings, but that a *much greater good* might be carried on thereby; so if a *more general good* would be carried on, by a revelation's being given *partially* to *some*, than it would be by its being given *generally* to *all*, if *this* were the case, then the *cases* under consideration would be *parallel*; but this does not *appear* to be the case, and therefore, *those cases* in point of argument admit of *no* comparison; that is, there is the *appearance* at least of great partiality, and a defect of benevolence in *one* case; whereas, there is *no such* appearance with respect to the other. Again,

It may be answered, *secondly*, that the present constitution of things is the *best* which nature would admit of, to answer the great design

design intended to be carried on thereby, *viz.* a *publick* or *general* good. For if things *could* have been *better* constituted for the answering that end, then we have *just* ground to presume, that they *would* have been so, as God will *most certainly* pursue such a *valuable* end, by the *best*, and *most effectual* means for its attainment. And as the difference betwixt the capacities, and circumstances of men, which differently qualifies them to attain happiness, results from the *original* frame and constitution of things, and is perfectly *accidental* with respect to *each* individual; so this is an *evil* which *could not* be provided against, without the introduction of some other *equal*, or *greater* evil; and therefore, if a *more* general good would be carried on by a revelation's being given *partially* to *some*, than would be by its being given *generally* to *all*; and if the giving of it generally to all would be introductive of some *equal*, or *greater* evil than what results from its being given *partially* to *some*, if this *appeared* to be the case, then the *cases* under consideration must be allowed to be *parallel*; but this *does not* appear to be the case, and therefore, they admit of *no* comparison; that is, there is the *appearance* at least of great *partiality*, and a *defect* of *benevolence* in *one* case; whereas, there is *no such* appearance with respect to the *other*. Again,

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It may be answered, *thirdly*, that to consider divine revelation as *only* intended to *qualify* men for attaining *greater* degrees of happiness, than otherwise they are in great danger of not attaining, is a very *defective* and *partial* representation of the *purposes* which it may *justly* be expected such a revelation would be intended to serve. Man is an accountable creature, who is answerable to God for his actions, and who will be rewarded or punished in another world, according as he behaves himself in this; and the *generality* of mankind (spread up and down upon the face of the earth) when considered without a divine revelation, are supposed to be attended with such *great difficulties* and *impediments*, which stand in the way of their *future* safety, as that they are in *great* danger, not *only* of *not* attaining to the *highest* degree of happiness which human nature is capable of, but *also* of *not* attaining unto *any* degree of happiness at all; yea they are in *great* danger of falling into a state of *great* and *lasting* misery. This either *is*, or is judged to be the deplorable state of the *generality* of mankind *without* a revelation. So that it may *justly* be expected, that the *purpose* which a *divine* revelation would be intended to serve, would be, not *barely* to qualify men for obtaining a *higher* degree of happiness than otherwise they are in danger of not obtaining; but also to engage them

to attain happiness *itself* in opposition to its *contrary*, and to *prevent* their being *greatly* and *lastingly* miserable, which misery they are in *great* danger of bringing upon themselves. Now the proper question arising from hence is, not what God in strict justice is *obliged* to do for a species of creatures fallen into such deplorable circumstances, but what *pity* and *kindness* would dispose him to do towards their relief. And, if God out of a tender regard for the well-being of his creatures, kindly interposed for the relief of some, then the question is, whether *that regard* for his creatures well-being would not *equally* dispose him to interpose for the relief of *all* in *those* circumstances.

To which it may be added, that if a revelation's being given partially to some, and not universally to all, be for the sake of that *beauty* which arises from *variety*, and that it might give *occasion* to God to communicate *different* degrees of happiness to his creatures; then that *end* will as *effectually* be obtained by God's giving *no* revelation at all, or by his making that revelation *universal*, as it will by his giving it *partially*, as aforesaid: for in *each* case, there will be *different* abilities, opportunities, improvements, and attainments among mankind, which will introduce that *beauty* that arises from *variety*, and there will be *occasion* given to God to communicate *different* degrees of happiness to his creatures, as

well

well in *either* of the *two* former cases, as in the *latter*. However, if the giving of a revelation partially, as aforesaid, does not *destroy* the probability arising from such evidences as are offered in favour of its divinity; yet it may be urged, that it very much *weakens* that probability, except the *difficulty* before shewn to arise from such partiality can be *removed*. But then,

It may be asked, what *motive* could induce *any other* invisible agent besides God (supposing there are such) to *back* with miracles a revelation *thus* constituted for the good of mankind, though *partially* given, as aforesaid?

To which it may be answered, that tho' *such* a procedure could not be *accounted* for, yet the question would still remain, whether such a *partial* conduct be *divine*? As to those free beings which come within our *knowledge*, we see their *actions*, but are very little *acquainted* with the *motives* they spring from. And if we are *so little* acquainted with the *springs* of action in our *own* species, how then can it be expected, that we should *account* for the conduct of those *invisible* beings, the *extent* of whose power, and the *motives* to whose actions we are *perfect* strangers to? However, in this case it may be urged, that it is more likely that a *creature*, who may have *different* motives to act from, should shew kindness to *one*, and not to *another*,

when he *can* serve them both, and both are *alike* the objects of his regard (supposing that to be the case) than that *God* should *do so*, seeing he always does good for *goodness* sake, and therefore, it is most likely, that he will dispense his favours *alike* to all, who are *alike* the objects of his goodness. Again,

It may be urged, that when a revelation which *wholly* tends to the good of mankind, and which *lays claim* to a heavenly character, is *backed* with miracles, that revelation *must* be divine, though *partially* delivered as aforesaid; because as an *evil* or *vicious* invisible agent *would not* be the author of so much *good* to others, as the recommending such a revelation might be subservient to; so a *good* or *virtuous* invisible agent *could not* recommend such a revelation as divine, and preserve his *character*, if it were not so; and therefore, he *would not* do it. For as this would be bearing *witness* to a falshood, and would be an *imposition* upon mankind; so that will be a *reason against* a good being's recommending a revelation under *such* a character, tho' ever so *kindly* intended; because it would be doing *evil*, that *good* may come of it, which surely a good being *would not* chuse to do. And if *neither* a virtuous, nor a vicious invisible agent, would exercise their power in recommending as *divine*, a revelation circumstanced, as aforesaid, if it were not so; then it will follow, that a revelation *thus* circum-

stanced, and *thus* attested to by miracles, as above, *must* be of God.

As to *vicious* invisible beings, it may be answered, that *no being* is *necessarily* vicious, that being *absurd*. And therefore, though the *generality* of a being's actions are *vicious*, and that may entitle him to the character of a *vicious* being; yet it does not follow, that he *will not*, in *any* instance, act otherwise; because, for ought *we* know, such motives may *intervene*, as may become a ground or reason to him to *do good* in *some* instances, and thereby act *contrary* to his *general* character. This is manifestly *the case* amongst our *own* species, there being instances of persons who *sometimes* act *contrary* to their *general* characters; that is, there are *bad* men, who in *some* instances perform *good* actions; and there are *good* men, who in *some* instances perform *bad* ones; and this may be the case of *invisible* agents, for any thing *we* know to the contrary. And admitting there *are*, or *may* be vicious invisible beings (that is, beings who are led on to action from *evil* or *vitiating* affections) and who in compliance with *such* temptations as are present to them do act *repugnant* to reason; yet it is *unreasonable* to suppose, that any *particular* invisible agent, or *society* of such agents, should enter into a resolution *never* to do any thing which might be for the *good* of mankind, though they should have *both* power
and

and opportunity so to do. This, I say, is an unreasonable supposition; because it does not *appear*, that our species have given *any* occasion to *any* vicious invisible agent, or society of such agents, to take up *such* a resentment against us, as *never* to do any thing for the *good* of any of us, though *ability* and *opportunity* should invite them to it. So that we have *no* assurance, that a *vicious* invisible agent *will not* exercise his power in recommending revelation as aforesaid. And,

As to *virtuous* invisible agents, it may be answered, that though in the *general* we ought to have a strict regard to *truth* in our intercourse with each other, because the *common good* is manifestly interested in it, and depends upon it; yet there may be *some* extraordinary cases; in which it may be *right* and *fit* for us to do otherwise. Suppose a man to have such an *antipathy* against *Jesuits* bark, as that he would not be prevailed upon to take it, though his *life* was in the *greatest* danger, and though the taking that medicine was the *only* means which was *likely* to preserve it: The question in this case is, whether it would be *wrong* and *unfit* for a physician to recommend *this* medicine to *such* a patient under *another* name; and if he had any jealousy about it, to endeavour to convince him, that it was *another* thing? And the answer is evident, that it would not. For though the man in this case is *deceived*, yet it

is not to his *hurt*, but for his *good*; and therefore, *that* deceit cannot properly come under the denomination of *evil*, but *good*; and this is not doing evil, that good may come of it; because, strictly speaking, there is *no* evil in the case; that is, there is none in the *end*, nor yet in the *means* by which that end is obtained. In like manner, suppose an *invisible* agent should kindly interpose and give a revelation to *some* part of mankind, which highly tended to their *good*; and suppose he should be satisfied, that this revelation *would not* be accepted, unless it came recommended as *divine*; and therefore, that it might obtain *acceptance*, and might do *that good* which he proposed by it, he endeavours to convince those to whom it was delivered that it *came from God*, by enabling the *promulger* to work a *miracle*, or *miracles*, for that purpose. In *this* case the question is, whether *such* an action be *evil*, and whether *such* a conduct be *inconsistent* with a *virtuous* character? To which it may be answered, that it *would not*; because, strictly speaking, there is *nothing* evil or vicious in it. But then, It may be said, that such an action would be *highly provoking* to Almighty God; because, it would be fathering that upon him, which would not belong to him. To which it may be answered, that as the great director of the universe is not governed

by *capricious humour*, but by the *reason of things*, so, in the present case, there could not be any *just* ground of displeasure to him, because, in reality, there would no dishonour *be done*, nor *intended* to be done to him, and his name would only be used to promote an end which he could not but approve of, *viz.* the good of his creatures. Again,

It may be said, that *truth* has an *intrinsic* goodness in it, as it stands opposed to *deceit* and *falsehood*; and, therefore, tho' God cannot but like the behaviour of his creatures when they are promoting each other's good, provided the *means* be *laudable* and *commendable* by which that *end* is obtained, yet he cannot but *dislike* it, when it is obtained by *deceit* and *falsehood*, because *such* a conduct is evil and vicious.

To this it may be answered, that *truth* and *good* are as *distinct*, and *different* in nature, as *colour* and *sound*; so that *truth*, is not good, neither is good, *truth*, these being terms which are used to express ideas that are *distinct* and *different* from each other. And, as *truth*, is not good, so it *does not* stand opposed to evil, but to *falsehood*; *falsehood* being the *opposite* to *truth*, as evil is the *opposite* to good: And, therefore, to say that *truth* is good, or that *falsehood* is evil, when these are considered *abstractedly* from that good, or evil which either of them may be *subservient* to, is, plainly, to *confound* the use of words. So
that

that *truth* and *falsehood*, when considered *abstractedly*, properly speaking, are *neither* good; nor evil, but become *so* by that good, or evil they are *productive* of. And here, surely, it will be allowed, that if a man should *report* the faults and weaknesses of his neighbour, not to answer a *good*, but an *evil purpose*, such an action would be *evil* and *vicious*, tho' he reported nothing but the *truth*. And yet, if truth has an *intrinsic* goodness in it, when considered *abstractedly* from the end it is made to serve, then the forementioned *action* would not be *evil*, but *good*. And if telling the truth to answer a *bad* purpose, be *evil* and *vicious*, which is an *allowed* case, then by parity of reason, saying a thing that is not true, to answer a *good purpose*, may, in *some extraordinary* cases, be *good* and *virtuous*. Again,

It may be said, that tho' truth is not good, strictly and properly speaking, yet it is *analogous* to it, as it has a *natural* and *intrinsic* valuableness in it, which renders it *preferable* to its contrary, and by which the understanding is as *naturally led* to pursue it, as the will is to *chuse* and pursue what is good.

To this it may be answered, that truth comes under a *twofold* consideration, *viz.* *first*, the *truth* of *things*, and, *secondly*, a *true* relation of our *opinions* concerning them. In the former case *truth* stands opposed to *error*; and in the latter to *falsehood*. And tho' with

respect to the *former*, truth has an *intrinsic* valuableness in it, as it is in nature *preferable* to its contrary, and by which the understanding is naturally led to pursue it; yet it is *otherwise* when it is considered in the *latter* case, for then *truth* commences an *action* or *fact*, and as such is the *object*, not of the understanding, but of the will. A man does not *necessarily* speak truth, or falsehood, (as he *necessarily* perceives the truth, or falseness of a proposition,) but *either* of these are the produce of his *election*, resulting from some *motive* that intervenes, and which is to him the *ground* or *reason* of his choice. And when truth thus commences an action or fact, it then becomes *good*, or *evil*, only by the good, or evil *purposes* it is made to serve. As thus, the whole is equal to all its parts; this is a proposition, the *truth* of which our understandings *qualify* us to discover, and when it is discovered, we *approve* and *value* it as *truth*, (not as *good*,) in opposition to every *error* which may be opposed to it. But if a man is to *relate* his opinion concerning the truth, or falseness of that proposition, that relation is plainly a *matter* of *fact*, and the *good*, or *evil* of that fact must, in the nature of the thing, be *deduced* from the good, or evil *purposes* which it is made to serve, and not from the *truth*, or *falseness* of what is *related* by it. Suppose he *relates* the *truth*, but does it with an *evil* intention; the

truth of the relation cannot *alter* the action, and make that *fact* good, which in the nature of the thing is evil. Again,

It may be farther said, that this opens a door to *deceit* and *falsehood*, and tends to destroy all *trust* and *confidence* amongst mankind. For if there are *cases* in which deceiving is *justifiable*, men will from thence take encouragement to deceive in *any case*, and *justify* themselves in it, and, consequently, all *ground* of confidence is taken away.

To which it may be answered, that this *kind* of reasoning proves just as much, as if it should be said, that because it is *allowed* to be justifiable in *some* extraordinary cases for a man to take away the *life* of another, (*viz.* when it is in the *defence* of his own,) men will from hence take encouragement to *murder* each other upon *all occasions*, and to *justify* themselves in it, and, consequently, all peace and safety would be *banished* from society. *This* may be urged with *equal* strength as the *former*, the reasoning being the *same* in both cases. But surely, no man will think such *reasonings*, or the *conclusions* drawn from them to be *just*. A good man will know how to distinguish *justly* in both cases, and as to *bad* men, no principle will *restrain* them. However, this is beside the point, because the proper question is, whether what has been advanced is the *truth*, and not *what use* bad men are *liable* to make

of it, who are disposed to make a *bad* use of the *best* things. Besides, what is it which renders speaking truth in *general*, and *mutual* confidence so *valuable*? Is it not, because the *good* of society *arises* from, and *depends* upon them? And if so, then their *valuableness* *results* from the good they are subservient to, which is the point contended for. From what has been said, it may be inferred, that we can have *no assurance* that a *virtuous*, invisible agent *will not* exercise his power in recommending a revelation as *divine*, which, in reality, is *not so*, when that revelation is *circumstanced* as aforesaid. Again,

It may be farther urged, that tho' God does give a revelation to *one* nation, and not to *another*, yet seeing those who have it *not*, have their *reason* and *understanding* to guide them, and seeing God will deal with them according to the light they *have*, and not according to what they have not; therefore, he cannot *fairly* be charged with *want* of kindness, nor with *partiality* in the case.

To which it may be answered, that what is said of the *latter*, is *equally* the case of *both*, supposing *no* revelation had been given at all: And, therefore, if a revelation is useful, or necessary, or a kindness to *one* nation, it must be alike useful, or necessary, or a kindness to *all*, or, at least, to all in *like* circumstances; and, consequently, the question is, whether the giving it to one, and not

to all, has not in it the *appearance*, at least, of *great partiality*? If *one* man should overtake *two* men upon the road, carrying *each* of them a *heavy* burden, who were *equally* wearied with their journey, were both at the *same* distance from their home, and who were, in *all* respects, *equally* the objects of his pity, and if he should *assist* one, and *leave* the other to wrestle with his difficulty, when it was *equally* in his power, and as easy for him to assist them both, this would be an instance of *great partiality*, and an indication that it was not *true goodness*, but some other motive which excited to the action. The application is easy. Again,

It may be farther urged, that God is at liberty to dispense his favours *to whom*, and in *what manner* he pleases, and that it is not fit for his creatures to say, why? Or, what doest thou?

To which it may be answered, it is granted that God is *at liberty* to dispense his favours arbitrarily, or, as he pleases, with regard to any *physical necessity* he is under to the contrary; and he is likewise at *liberty* to act thus, as he is *above* controul. But if he be a *wise* and *good* being, which *most certainly* he is, then he will *always* direct his actions by the *rules* of wisdom and goodness; and, consequently, it may be urged, that he *will not* dispense his favours *arbitrarily* and *partially*, as the objection supposes. Again,

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It may yet be farther urged, that God may give a revelation thus constituted for the *common good*, to one nation or people *only*, and lay it upon them, as their duty, to *publish* it to the rest; and so it may be given, not only *intentionally*, but *eventually* to *all*; in which case, as his kindness will be *universal*, so it clears him from *all* appearance of partiality.

To which it may be answered, that if God was a *perfect stranger* to mankind, then it might more easily be admitted, that he might *intend* a general good by such a revelation, and might leave it in the hands of a *few men* to make it so. But when we consider what *long experience* hath shewn mankind to be, how *apt* they are to betray the trust reposed in them, and, thereby, to *frustrate* the kind intentions of their Maker; how *liable* to corrupt whatever is put into their hands, to turn it to their *private advantage*, and to make it subservient to quite *contrary* purposes than what it was intended; and that no *threatnings* nor *promises* are *sufficient* to keep some men to their duty; and that *all this* is perfectly *well known* to God; when this is taken into the case, then the question is, whether it is not *unlikely* that God should intend a revelation for the *good of all*, and yet should leave it in the hands of a *few men* to make it so, seeing it is *equally* as easy for him to give it *universally* to

to all, as to give it to one nation or 'people only? Add to this, the *opposition* that a revelation, which is given in this way, is *liable* to, and that it is *likely* to meet with, so that it may be a course of *many ages* before it makes its way thro' the world, if it does at all, and, consequently, the *greatest* part of mankind may *lose* the benefit of it. So that the question is, whether this does not *heighten* the improbability, that God would give a revelation designed, and constituted for a general good, in the way above mentioned? This, however, must be allowed, that when a revelation is given by God to men, it will be done in a way which is *consistent* with human liberty, and then it will be the subject of every man's *free* choice, whether he will receive the *benefits* intended by it, or not. But then this does not affect the case; the present question, not being whether man is to be *over-ruled*, but whether it is *likely* that such a wise and good being as God is, should give a revelation, and *intend* it for a *general* good to mankind, and yet should give it in *such* a way, as that it will be in the *power*, and at the *pleasure* of *one*, or a *few* men, to prevent *thousands* and *millions* of others from *sharing* in the benefits of it? But then,

To what has been returned, by way of answer, as above, it may be replied, that if a revelation's being given *partially* to some, and not *universally* to all, be a *good* argument

against

against its being given by *God*, because that benevolence which disposed *God* to give it to *some*, would equally dispose him to give it universally to *all* in like circumstances; then this argument concludes as *strongly* against its being given by *any other* invisible being. For, as benevolence is supposed to be the *spring* of action in *both* cases, so that benevolence would *dispose* the benevolent agent to make his kindness *universal*, as well in *one case* as in the *other*, that is, whether the benevolent agent be *God*, or whether he be *some other* invisible being. And, if we may suppose some *secret* reason to take place, (which, if discovered, our understandings could not but *approve*,) which reason may be a *proper* motive to *some other* invisible agent to communicate his goodness to *some*, tho' not to *all*, in like circumstances, then that supposition may, with *equal* reason, be admitted with respect to *God*.

To this it may be answered, that if *all* invisible agents are *perfectly free* from all temptations, *misguided* affections, and from *every thing* that may mislead them in their conduct, which is the case with respect to *God*; then, indeed, what is urged above would be of *weight*; but we have no principle upon which *such* a presumption or supposition can be *fairly* grounded, and, therefore, the precedent argument *does not* conclude as *strongly* in *one case*, as in the *other*. Besides, the *ability* of a *virtuous* invisible agent, in
this

this case, may be *limited* and *bounded*, and, consequently, tho' it may be in the *power* of *such* an agent to serve *part* of mankind, yet it will not follow, that it is *equally* in his power to serve *all*, were he disposed so to do. Again,

With respect to the grand objection against the divinity of a revelation, mentioned above, *viz.* its being given *partially* to some, and not *universally* to all, it may be farther observed, supposing the body of mankind to be in such a *corrupt* and *degenerate* state, both as to their opinions, their affections and actions, as renders a revelation (which is fitly constituted to *reform* those abuses) *highly useful*, and, therefore, *extremely desirable* to mankind; and supposing a revelation which claims a *heavenly* character should be given, which is *excellently suited* to answer these purposes; and supposing *such effects* take place, and are offered in *favour* of the divinity of this revelation, of which it may *fairly* and *justly* be presumed that they *exceed* the bounds of human power, and, consequently, that they are produced by the agency of *some invisible* being, and that the power exercised, was subservient to the *present good* of mankind; and supposing this revelation be given *only* to some, and not to *all*, in *like* circumstances, the question would be, whether this *single* circumstance *against* the divinity of *such* a revelation, be of *less*, or *equal*, or *superior* weight,

weight, than *all* those other circumstances which are offered in *favour* of the divinity of that revelation? so that the force of all that has been offered on either side of the present question terminates in this, namely, whether this one circumstance *against* the divinity of a revelation (*viz.* its being given partially as aforesaid) or whether all the other circumstances which are supposed to concur in *favour* of the divinity of that revelation, I say, the question is, which of these ought in reason to determine our judgments either for, or against the divinity of that revelation? Again,

It may be farther observed, by way of answer to the forementioned objection, that by God's giving a revelation universally to all, must be meant either, *first*, his giving it to all, by applying immediately to the mind of every individual of our species, and thereby revealing to every individual the truths intended to be made known; or else, *secondly*, by applying immediately to the mind of some one, or more of our species, and revealing to him, or them, the truths intended to be made known, as aforesaid, and then applying mediately by him, or them to others, by requiring him, or them, to reveal or publish those truths to others, and them to others, and so on till that revelation is communicated to all; these being, I think, the only ways by which a revelation can be given universal-
ly

ly to all, as aforesaid. As to the *first*, it must be granted, that such a particular divine application to the mind of each individual, as aforesaid, would be giving of a revelation universally to all; but then such a revelation would be foreign to our present enquiry, because the case of miracles, in our present view of them, would not come into the question. For as in that case, as every one would have the revelation at *first hand*, and no one would receive it from another; so no *credit* would be required to be given to one from another, with respect to it; and consequently, no *miracle* would be wanted to back, or support any one's credit on that account. So that if a revelation was given universally to all, by a divine application to the mind of *every* individual of our species, then the case of *miracles*, in our *present view* of them, *would not* come into the question. As to the *second* way of giving a revelation to all, *viz.* by God's applying *immediately* to the mind of some *one*, or *more* of our species, and revealing to him, or them, the *truths* intended to be made known; and then, applying *mediately* by *him*, or *them*, to *others*, by requiring him, or them, to *reveal* or *publish* those truths to others, and *them* to *others*, and so on till it be given *universally* to *all*; if this were the case, then, in the nature of the thing, the revelation must lie under *all* the difficulties and disadvantages before taken no-

tice of, *viz.* it must be then in the *power* of *one* man to prevent or hinder many others from *sharing* in the benefits intended by that revelation, and the like. For as man is a *free* being, so whatever trust is reposed in him, he is *liable* to abuse; and whatever offer is made to him, he is liable to *reject*, and to act in *opposition* to it; and this is the case of *all* our species. And therefore, if a divine revelation were given, as aforesaid, then it would be absurd to ask, *why* it is not given universally to all? seeing its being communicated to all, depends upon the *virtue* and *honesty* of all our species, and supposes, that all and every one appointed to *publish* this revelation would be *faithful* and *true* in executing that trust, and that all to whom it is published, would be so *honest* and *just*, as not to *oppose* it. But this is not to be *supposed*, because if *this* were the case (which surely in fact it is not) then the world would not stand in *need* of *such* a revelation, as we have now under consideration. So that the point at last turns upon this question, *viz.* which of those *two* ways of giving a revelation to the world would *best* and *most effectually* answer the purposes of such a revelation? whether by a divine application *immediately* to the mind of *every* individual of our species? or whether by a divine application *immediately* to some *one* or *more* of our species, and *mediately* by *him*, or *them*, to *others*, and by *them*

them to others, and so on? What difficulties and disadvantages are *liable* to attend the *latter* of these ways, and what *impositions* and *frauds* may be committed under the *pretext* of it, are *easy* to be discerned, because they have taken place in *fact*. But then, what difficulties and inconveniences may *attend* the *former* of these ways, are not so *easy* to be *guessed* at, except we form our judgments in the present case, upon what has attended some *pretensions* of this kind. Thus, the enthusiasm and madness, if I may so call it, which took place in the *last age*, and which introduced great disorder, was founded on a *persuasion*, or at least a *pretence* of an *immediate* divine application to the mind of *each* individual. Every one *thought*, or *pretended*, that he was *immediately taught* of God. So that supposing mankind at any time to be in *such* circumstances, as very much to *need* a divine revelation; and supposing God were *disposed* to give them one; then the question is, which of the *two* ways beforementioned would be *liable* to the *least* difficulties and inconveniences, and which of them would *best* answer the purpose of a *publick* or *general* good? I say, this is the present question; because we may be assured God will always make use of *such* ways and means, as will *best* answer the end proposed to be obtained. But as this question *cannot* well be answered, because we *are not* very good judges in the
present

present case; so it may be urged, that this *takes off*, or at least very *much weakens* that objection against the divinity of a revelation, which arises from its *not* being given universally to all.

S E C T I O N XII.

THUS I have represented, or taken a view of the case of miracles, and have introduced the various reasonings upon those questions with which the subject is concerned, and hereby have shewn what kind and degree of evidence arises from them, under the various circumstances which may attend them; and how far, and in what respect they are capable of proving a revelation to be divine. And in the course of this argument, I think, it plainly appears, that miracles under the *most advantageous* circumstances cannot, in the nature of the thing, afford *certain*, but only *probable* proof, that a revelation is divine.

The sum of the argument is this, *viz.* When the circumstances that attend the case afford a just foundation for presuming, that the facts in question *exceed* the bounds of human power; and consequently, there is just
ground

ground to presume, that they were produced by the power of some *invisible* being; and likewise, when there are other circumstances which make it likely, that the miracles wrought were annexed to the *truth*, and not to a lie; and also, when there are such other circumstances attending the case as make it *more likely* and *probable*, that *God* is the agent in producing those effects, rather than *any other* invisible being; then miracles in *those* circumstances seem to afford *probable* proof, that the revelation they are brought to vouch for is *divine*. What those circumstances *are* which are judged to be a *just* foundation for such *likelihood* and *probability*, is shewn above; and likewise, what those circumstances *are* which seem to *perplex* the case.

S E C T I O N XIII.

AND as I have considered the case of miracles upon a supposition of the *truth* and *certainty* of the facts themselves; so surely it cannot be thought improper, if I remind my reader, that he ought carefully to examine the *grounds* upon which his *assent* to the truth of those facts is founded; because otherwise he is in *danger* of being *mistled*.
For

For though there may be cases in which we may come to a *certainty* of the truth of those facts, and in many others to a *high degree* of probability; yet there may be cases *so circumstanced*, as may render those facts very *doubtful* and *uncertain*; and therefore, the *grounds* of our assent ought carefully to be *examined*, lest our *credulity* should mislead us.

Man is a creature not only *capable* of being imposed upon by *others*, but likewise of imposing upon *himself*. He can *imagine*, that he *sees* and *hears* what in reality he does not; and so of his *other senses*. And though our senses are the *only* proper judges of *sensible* effects, yet this is not *always* an *absolute security* against delusion; because sometimes the *imagination* leads the understanding, when we think it is led by the *senses*; and then we conclude, that some *sensible* effects have taken place, when in *reality* they have not. And this is the case not only when we are *asleep*, or in the *height* of a *fever*, or in the *depth* of melancholy; but *sometimes* when *neither* of these take place. When something that is *wonderful* and *surprising* strikes the imagination strongly, and when the mind is not apprized of its *own weakness*, and the *danger* it is in of being deluded in this way, and when *nothing interposes* which instantly shews, that it cannot be fact, but merely the product of imagination; then the imagination *sometimes*

times so far prevails as to mislead the judgment; and men become as certain (with regard to the persuasion of their own minds) of what is merely fictitious, as they are of those facts which are real and certain in themselves. And as men are thus capable of being misled, so they are the more strongly disposed to it, when religion is any way interested in the case. Religion awakens the passions, and engages them in its favour; and then we are more easily led to believe those facts to be true, which we wish to be so, than otherwise we should do. When religion is to be propagated, and men consider themselves as heavenly messengers, and as those who are engaged in the cause of God, this too often intoxicates their minds, and then they are disposed to, and (without great watchfulness upon themselves) are in danger of going groundlessly into the belief of those facts, which tend to advance, or strengthen the interest they are engaged in. This may sometimes be the case; and therefore, though honesty and integrity may secure us from imposing upon others, yet these are not always a security against our imposing upon ourselves. And,

As men are thus capable of misleading themselves, so sometimes, and under some circumstances, the delusion is catching. It is but to report to others, what we imagine we see and hear; and they instantly imagine, that they see and hear the same things. And thus

it is when a nation is threatned with a *foreign* invasion, or when the peoples *fears* are any other ways alarmed with the expectation of war, if *one* man *imagines* that he *sees* armies fighting in the clouds, and if he *reports* it to others, then they are apt to imagine that *they see* the same; whereas if each of those who heard the report had been *separated* from that *company*, and those *fears*, they would not have imagined, that they had seen any such things; this, I say, may *sometimes* be the case. And though a variety of such facts, or supernatural effects may take place, the *truth* of which we may be *assured* of upon *good* grounds, and consequently, that we are not deceived by *others*, nor *ourselves*; yet there may be *many others* of which our *senses* may be supposed to be witnesses, which when they are *thoroughly* considered will appear to be very *uncertain*; and if they are brought as *evidences* to prove the *divinity* of a revelation, the proof arising from them must therefore be *doubtful* and *uncertain* also.

Thus stands the case with regard to *some* of those *facts* of which we ourselves are supposed to be witnesses. But if we are to take these, and some other facts, which may be considered as *miraculous*, upon the report of *others*, and if the story of them have passed through *several hands*, this must render *those* facts *more uncertain*. For tho' we may be assured of our *own* honesty and integrity
with

with regard to the point in hand, yet we cannot be alike assured of the *honesty* and *integrity* of *other* men. And,

Tho' it be a proper enquiry in such a case, *whether*, and *how far* the reporter's *present interest* is concerned, because if it is, then the credit of the report would be thereby *weakened*, as a man's present interest may become a *temptation* to him to *mislead* others for its sake; yet supposing the reporter has no present interest in view, this will not, in *all cases*, be a *just* foundation for relying *absolutely* on *some* mens integrity, because, notwithstanding this, they *may* deceive us. The *getting* and *preserving* worldly wealth, and the *securing* life, with its enjoyments, are not the *only* springs from which dissimulation and imposition may arise, seeing men have *other passions* which excite to action as *strongly*, and, perhaps, to persons of *some* tempers and constitutions, *more strongly* than these. The imaginary *glory* which arises from the consideration of being *heavenly* messengers, and the concern men are under to promote the cause of *God*, in which they think *themselves* engaged, are reasons sufficient to dispose *some* men to turn themselves into *every shape*, and to advance *any thing* that appears *necessary* to support that cause, even tho' it be *injurious* to their worldly interest. And,

Tho' it would, likewise, be a proper enquiry, *whether*, and *how far* the reporters

have shewn their *integrity* in *other instances*; for if it appears that they have *misled* people in *other cases*, then they are *less* to be relied upon in *this*; and if they have shewn their integrity in *many* other instances, then the grounds of confidence, in them, become so much the *stronger* in the *present* case; yet if integrity should appear to run thro' the general course of *some* persons actions, even *that* would not be a *just* ground for relying *absolutely* upon their *integrity* in all matters of *religion*, because, to some persons, religion *sanctifies* every action, and makes those facts appear *good*, which, in any *other case*, would appear to the *same* persons *exceedingly evil*. So that, tho' a *steady integrity* should appear to run thro' the *general* course of a man's actions, and tho' this would be a *proper ground* of confidence in a man in the affairs of life, yet it would not be a *like ground* of confidence in *some* such men, in the *case before us*. For when *some* men consider themselves as engaged in the cause of *God* and *religion*, this may lead them to use their endeavours to promote that cause, in *every way* in which they are *likely* to succeed, and then they are *liable*, and *disposed* to affirm and maintain whatever seems proper to *support* and *carry on* the cause in which they are religiously engaged, without regarding whether it be *strictly true*, or *not*, of which, surely, the world has furnished us with instances.

And

And, therefore, this ought to be a *check* upon our *confidence* in the *present case*, and should prevent our running *hastily* into the belief of every fact, the report of which comes from persons whose *integrity* has appeared to run thro' the *general* course of their actions. And,

Tho' diffimulation and imposition may stand *condemned* in the judgment, and by the religious principles of such men, yet that is not always a *sufficient* ground of confidence, in the case before us. For when diffimulation, and imposition are made *subservient* to the purposes of *religion*, then *some* men are apt to see them in *another* light, call them by *another* name, and some way or other render the practice of them not only easy, but *commendable* to themselves. And as miracles are made *subservient* to the purposes aforesaid, so this is a *just* ground for us to act with *caution* when we admit them, and go into the *belief* of them; especially, if the story of them have passed thro' *several* hands, because *different* persons may have *different* motives to act from, and to *dispose* them to mislead mankind, of which, in the nature of the thing, we cannot be *very good* judges.

Besides, there are various circumstances, some of which *strengthen*, and others *weaken* the credit of such reports. As thus, the fact itself may be such as renders it more *easy*, or more *difficult* to detect a fraud, if there be
any,

any. The *former* of these very much *strengthens*, and the *latter* very much *weakens* the *credit* of the report. For if it be a case in which a fraud is *easily* detected, then it becomes more *likely* that it *would* be detected, were there any such thing. But if it be a case in which it would be *difficult* to detect a fraud, then the grounds of *distrust* become so much the *stronger*, and, consequently, the grounds of *credit* become so much the *weaker*. Again, the fact may be performed in an age, and country *where*, and *when* miracles are in *reputation*, and people go *easily* into the belief of them; or, they may be performed at a time, and in a place *when*, and *where* miracles are in *disrepute*, and the belief of them *is not* easily admitted. The *former* of these *weakens*, and the *latter* *strengthens* the credit of such reports. For when miracles are in repute, and people go easily into the belief of them, then there is not *a like* disposition in the people to *examine* the case with that *care*, and *strictness*, as when the belief of miracles *is not* so easily and readily admitted, and, consequently, the *former* of these *weakens*, and the *latter* *strengthens* the credit of such reports. Again, the fact may be performed in the *open day-light*, and in the *face of society*, or it may be done in the *night*, or in a *corner*, or before *two* or *three* witnesses only. The *former* of these *strengthens*, and the *latter* *weakens* the *credit* of the report.

For

For when a fact is done before a *multitude*, and at *such* a time and place as gives a *fair opportunity* of examining it *strictly*, then it may be presumed that *some* person or other would be *disposed* to do it, and this *strengthens* the *credit* of the report of such a fact. But if it be done at a *time*, or in a *place* which would render it *difficult* to examine the case *thoroughly*, or if it be performed before a *very small* number of witnesses, who, therefore, may be more *easily* misled, or corrupted than a *multitude* can be supposed to be, this very much *weakens* the *credit* of the report. Again, the fact may be performed before persons who are well *qualified* and *disposed* to examine it *strictly*; or before *weak* and *ignorant* people who are more *easily* misled and imposed upon; or before persons who, from *other* considerations, are *disposed* to *countenance* the report of it. The *former* of these *strengthens*, and the *latter* *weakens* the *credit* of such report. For if a fact be performed before persons who are well *qualified* and *disposed* to examine it *thoroughly*, then there is a *probability* that a fraud would be *detected*, if there were any. But if it be performed before *weak* and *ignorant* people, or before persons who, from *other* considerations, are *disposed* to *countenance* the report, then there is not the *same* likelihood that a fraud would be detected, and, consequently, the *credit* of the report, under *such* circumstances,

stances, would be so much the *weaker*. Again,

If those facts are entered upon *record*, and if those records are to be *evidences* of the *truth* of those facts, in *future times*, and to *posterity*, then the credit of such records may be either *stronger*, or *weaker*, according to the *various* and *different circumstances* which may attend them. As thus, the facts may be entered upon record at the *time* of performance, and those records may be made *so* publick at the *time* and *place* of action, as may not only *dispose*, but render it very *easy* for inquisitive persons who live upon the spot, to examine the case *thoroughly*, by examining both the *record*, and the *evidences* of the facts which are to support the *credit* of that record; or the facts may be entered upon record, *ten*, or *twenty*, or *thirty* years after performance, and may be made publick in places *far distant* from the place of action, or be kept as a *sacred treasure* in the hands of *believers*. The *former* of these very much *strengthens*, and the *latter* very much *weakens* the *credit* of such records. For with respect to the *former* circumstances, there is a fair *occasion*, and an *opportunity* offered by them, to every person who lives *near* the place of action, and who may, therefore, (without much *trouble* or *inconvenience* to themselves) examine the case with the *utmost strictness*; and this renders it *more likely* that a fraud
would

would be detected, if there were any, and, consequently, *those* circumstances very much *strengthen* the *credit* of such records. But if the facts are entered upon record *ten*, or *twenty*, or *thirty* years after the performance, and are made publick at places *far distant* from the place of action, or if they are kept as a *secret treasure* in the hands of *believers*, as this would render a strict and proper scrutiny into the case exceeding *difficult*, if not *impossible*; so it would not only *discourage*, but effectually *hinder* all attempts of this kind; and consequently, a fraud under *such* circumstances would not *easily* be *detected*; and this must render the *credit* of such records so much the *weaker*. Constant experience shews how *hard* and *difficult* a thing it is to come at the *truth* of facts performed but *yesterday*, and in the *next parish*; and this difficulty of course must *increase* in proportion to the *distance* of time and place the facts may be performed in, or of their being *entered upon record*, or the *making* those records *publick*; and *other* circumstances may intervene, which may *increase* that *difficulty*. Besides, who is there that would take the *pains* of examining into the *truth* of a fact performed *ten*, or *twenty* years before, and an *hundred* or two *hundred* miles distant from him? The *troublesomeness* of the work, and the *little likelihood* of obtaining a *rational* satisfaction, are surely sufficient *bars* to *such* an undertaking. These are

circumstances (and possibly there may be *many* others) which either *strengthen* or *weaken* the *credit* of such reports and records as we have now under consideration.

Miracles, *at a distance*, more especially when they stand related to the present question, are things of which, in some instances at least, it is difficult to attain to a high degree of probability, much more to any certainty, with regard to them; that is, with respect to the truth of the facts themselves. For, tho' sometimes mens faith runs *high* in this particular, yet that does not always arise from, nor bear a proportion to the *strength* and *clearness* of the evidence upon which such faith is founded; the prejudices that arise from education, preconceived opinions, and the like, having so prevailing an influence upon the understandings of men, as that they generally govern their judgments in this particular; and men are *believers*, or *infidels*, just as their prejudices lead them to be one, or the other of these. And, tho' the *circumstances* that attend miracles ought in some measure to be our guide, yet, alas! experience shews, that the very same circumstances, at least they are the same, for any thing that appears to the contrary, at different times, and to different persons, do not become a like foundation for credit, or the contrary, with respect to them. And here, I think, it may not be amiss to acquaint my readers with

a miracle, or fact, which is said to have taken place in our *own times*, viz. in the month of *August*, 1703; which fact was declared, and attested by *John Cavalier* of *Sauve*, on *January* 31, 1706, at *London*; and which declaration was printed and published the same year, or the year following, as it is contained in Mr. *Lacy's* book, entitled, *A Cry from the Desert: Or, Testimonials of the miraculous Things lately come to pass in the Sevenses, verified upon Oath, and by other Proofs*. Take the relation in Mr. *Cavalier's* own words, pages 49, 50, 51, 52. of the forementioned book. “ Our leader, Mr. *Cavalier* my cousin, called an assembly at the “ *Tile-kilns* of *Cannes*, near *Serignau*, in the “ month of *August*, 1703. Our troop was “ between five and six hundred men, and “ there were doubtless as many more of both “ sexes, who came from the towns and vil- “ lages adjoining, to assist in religious exer- “ cises, that Lord’s day. After divers exhor- “ tations, lectures, and psalms sung, brother, “ *Clary*, who had received admirable gifts “ (and whose frequent revelations, with those “ of Mr. *Cavalier*, were the ordinary direc- “ tions of our troop) was seized with extasy “ in the midst of the assembly, his bodily “ agitations being so great, as to affect the “ audience very much. The beginning of “ his sermon he said several things relating “ to the dangers to which the assemblies of “ the faithful were ordinarily exposed, but

“ that God watched over them, and was
 “ their guard. His agitations augmenting,
 “ the spirit made him say these words, or to
 “ this effect; *I acquaint thee, my child, there*
 “ *are two men in this assembly, who are come*
 “ *only to betray you, they are sent by the enemy*
 “ *to spy what passes among you, and to give*
 “ *an account thereof to those who sent them;*
 “ *but I say unto thee, I will have them disco-*
 “ *vered, and thou thyself shalt lay hands upon*
 “ *them.* We were all attentive to what he
 “ had said, and immediately *Clary*, the agi-
 “ tations of his head and breast continuing,
 “ walked towards one of the traitors (I call
 “ them so, because they professed our reli-
 “ gion,) and laid hand upon the man’s arm.
 “ *Mr. Cavalier* seeing this, commanded the
 “ soldiery to their arms, and to surround the
 “ assembly so, that no one might escape. The
 “ other spy, who stood at a distance, made
 “ his way through the croud immediately,
 “ and came, with his comrade, to fling him-
 “ self at the feet of *Mr. Cavalier*, confessing
 “ the fault, and begging pardon of God,
 “ and of the assembly. Both of them al-
 “ leged, that extream poverty had brought
 “ them to yield to the temptation, but said,
 “ they repented it bitterly, and both of them
 “ promised, by the grace of God, to be
 “ faithful for the future, if their lives were
 “ spared. *Mr. Cavalier*, however, ordered
 “ them to be bound, and put in ward.

After

“ After this, the inspiration of *Clary* con-
 “ tinuing, with violent agitations, he cried
 “ out aloud, that many of the audience
 “ murmured within themselves, at what was
 “ done, as if the readiness and freedom
 “ wherewith the accused persons had con-
 “ fessed, was a sign of an understanding be-
 “ twixt *Clary* and them, in order to counter-
 “ feit a miracle. In that instant, said the
 “ spirit by *Clary*, *O people of little faith, do*
 “ *ye still doubt of my power among you, when*
 “ *I have made you see so many wonders of it?*
 “ *I command a fire immediately to be made,*
 “ *and I say to thee, my child, I will that thou*
 “ *put thyself into the midst of the flames, and*
 “ *they shall have no power to hurt thee, &c.*
 “ At these words, there was a shriek among
 “ the people, of those especially who had
 “ murmured, and who having not served in
 “ arms had not so much faith as we; all
 “ these cried out together, confessing their
 “ distrust, and craving pardon, saying, *Lord,*
 “ *of thy mercy withdraw this testimony of fire!*
 “ *we find that thou art he which knows the*
 “ *hearts;* but *Clary* with redoubling agita-
 “ tions insisted, it should be done. *Mr. Ca-*
 “ *valier* ordered wood to be got immediately
 “ for a pile; and as there was at hand tile-
 “ kilns, they found in a moment a deal of
 “ brush-wood, and dry, combustible stuff;
 “ this small wood, mixed with large sticks,
 “ was heaped up in the midst of the congre-
 “ gation,

“gation, on a sinking ground, so that the
“people round were above it.

“*Clary*, who had upon him a white
“streight frock, being a bricklayer by trade,
“put himself upon the top of that pile of
“wood, streight upright, with his hands
“joined and lifted above his head; he was
“still in his extasy, or agitations, and conti-
“nued to speak in the flames. I have been
“told by several what his discourse then
“was, for my part, I could not understand
“him. I have heard that *Clary* put fire to
“it himself, and that the fire mounted in an
“instant; but I did not observe that particu-
“lar, though I was very near. The troop
“under arms encompassed quite the assem-
“bly, which was almost all upon the knee
“in prayer and tears, making a circle round
“the fire. The wife of *Clary* stood by,
“with her father and two sisters, and se-
“veral of his own kindred, I cannot be po-
“sitive to name them. Every one in the
“assembly might see him stand surrounded
“with flames, that rose much above his
“head. Those that had gathered the wood
“pushed back the sticks as they happened to
“start from the fire, that all might be con-
“sumed. He did not come out of the fire
“till the wood was quite spent, and there
“was no more flame. The spirit was still
“upon him, and though he continued at
“least

“ least a quarter of an hour (as far as I am
 “ able to compute) in the flames; yet he
 “ came forth with hiccoughs and heavings of
 “ the breast upon him.

“ Mr. *Cavalier* concluded the assembly
 “ with a prayer aloud, offering up praises
 “ unto God, for that great miracle, which
 “ he had vouchsafed to perform, for the
 “ strengthening the faith of his servants. I
 “ was one of the first who embraced our
 “ precious brother *Clary*; I took notice of
 “ his clothes and hair, which the flames so
 “ much respected also, that no mark could
 “ be discerned of fire upon them. His wife
 “ and kindred were in transports of joy, and
 “ the congregation dispersed, because the
 “ night drew on, every one in a triumph of
 “ praising and blessing God. I saw and
 “ heard all these things. Mr. *Cavalier* then
 “ called for the *two* men, that were convict-
 “ ed and put in hold; he was of opinion
 “ with those about him, to shew them mer-
 “ cy, because they seemed sincerely penitent,
 “ and had really executed nothing; so that
 “ the *two* fellows being exhorted to future
 “ fidelity, were set at liberty.”

Here we have a relation of a fact which is very uncommon, and of an extraordinary nature, viz. a man who stood upon a pile of wood, when set on fire, and remaining upon it till it was consumed, without receiving any harm thereby. This was done so lately, as

to be within the compass of the last *forty* years; and likewise so near us, as in the neighbouring kingdom of *France*. This fact is of such a nature, as seems to be above, and therefore, not the produce of *juggle* or *sleight of hand*. This fact, or miracle, was performed before a great number of *witnesses*, by computation not less than *one thousand*. These witnesses were persons who suffered *persecution* for the sake of their religion; persons who were eminent for their *great piety*, or at least for their being frequent in those exercises which are made the outward signs and tokens of it; persons of reputed *honesty* and *integrity*, and who could not possibly have any *worldly advantages* in view to dispose them to engage in, or to countenance a *fraud*, as the government they lived under was very much against them, and greatly opposed that *new dispensation* they were believers in, and that *new ministry* they attended upon. And, as this fact or miracle took place, or at least is said to have taken place in *our own time*, and in *our neighbourhood* (*France* being put in competition with more distant countries) and before a *great number of witnesses*, who were well qualified to discern and judge of its reality; and, for any thing that appears to the contrary, were *disposed* to testify the *truth* of what they knew; so it was *declared*, and *attested*, and entered upon *record*, and that record was *published* within *four* years after

after the fact, which publication must have been much more *extensive* and *general* than any ancient publication of facts could be before the use of printing took place, the book in which the history of this fact is contained, having come to a *second* edition in the year 1707.

Now, though all those circumstances concur *in favour* of the miracle abovementioned, by which it may seem that a *fraud* could have been *more easily detected* in this case; if there was any, than in many other cases of like kind; yet who is there that thinks he has *proper* and *sufficient ground* to justify his giving credit to this fact, supposing it has, or should come within his notice? or that can shew *sufficient reason* why he should not? and, I think, it may be answered, perhaps, not *one in ten*, amidst the multitude of believers that are now in the world. The miracle referred to was wrought, or supposed to be wrought, in favour of a *new dispensation*, and a *new ministry* introduced to propagate it; and supposing it to have been ever so well attested, yet it would have been under a disadvantage, as the generality of believers were so strongly prejudiced in favour of *old miracles*, as not to admit of *any new*; and this will be the case of all *new dispensations*, till they get the better of those prejudices. If the new dispensation referred to, and the new ministry introduced to propagate it, *viz.* the *modern*

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prophets,

prophets, as they are called, had gained the ascendant over those prejudices which lay against them, and had succeeded by generally prevailing in the world; then, no doubt, the forementioned fact would have been admitted as *unquestionably true*, by all who *believed* in this new dispensation; and every circumstance relating to this miracle would have been *introduced*, and *imbellished*, in order to support its credit; but whereas the dispensation and ministry referred to, have not generally prevailed, but seem rather to sink and die away; so the very *knowledge* of the forementioned miracle seems likewise to die away with them.

Perhaps, it may be said, that though according to the above relation the fact forementioned was seen by a *multitude* of *spectators*; yet that circumstance, *viz.* its being *seen by many*, rests wholly upon the authority of *Mr. Cavalier's testimony*, which may seem at least to weaken its credit. For, as the great number of witnesses referred to, have not given *any testimony* concerning this fact, at least no such thing has come to our knowledge; so this renders the case the same to us as if those persons had not been witnesses; witnesses without a testimony being so many mutes, and are altogether the same with regard to this, or any other fact, as if they had not been witnesses at all. And though *Mr. Cavalier* has declared, that

this fact was seen by a *multitude of persons*; yet as this is grounded upon his *single testimony*, so the *credit* of the *whole* rests upon his *single testimony* also, and is the same to us as if he only had been witness to this fact.

To which it may be replied, that this is the case of *many other miracles*, which, notwithstanding, are deemed unquestionably true; that is, there are other facts, or miracles, whose truth are not generally doubted of, said to be done before *many witnesses*; which circumstance, *viz.* their having been performed before many witnesses, we have no other authority for, than the bare *testimony* of the *historian*, who, perhaps, may not have been a witness to those facts himself; and therefore, if this circumstance, *viz.* its having been seen by many, is of little or no weight in the present case; then, by parity of reason, it must be of little or no weight in other cases under the same circumstance. Besides, the forementioned fact has been attested, not only by Mr. *Cavalier*, but Mr. *Fage* has also declared the same, as being an eye-witness to it. And Mr. *Marion* seems likewise to refer to this fact, whose words are as followeth.

“ I am satisfied, that as God suppressed,
 “ when he pleased, the power of flames,
 “ and did other like miracles among us; so
 “ he damped the force of musket-balls, that
 “ they sometimes dropped harmless, and as
 “ rebounding from them, whom God would

“ be a shield to.” See *A Cry from the Desert*, page 94.

When men become *greatly prejudiced* in favour of, or against any fact, or miracle, they become disposed thereby to see in a favourable light, or the contrary, every thing that stands related to it; and when such prejudice becomes general, then what is offered in favour of, or against such fact, or miracle, meets with general acceptance, or general dislike, consonant to such prejudice, whether the argument be of weight, or not. An instance of this kind, I think, we have in a book, intitled, *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ*; which book met with a general acceptance; whereas, were this trial to be fairly tried, it might, perhaps, appear not to be altogether worthy of it: I mean, not as it stands related to Mr. *Woolston*, and his fictitious correspondent the *Jewish Rabbi*, but as it stands related to its *title-page*, viz. *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ*; in which view of the case, I beg leave to observe, that

To try the witnesses to any fact, or miracle, so as that the *proper purpose* of such a trial may be effectually answered by it, is, I think, to make such a fair and thorough examination of the case, as may enable the reader to form a *true judgment* whether the evidences given in afford a *proper foundation* for *credit* with respect to the *fact* those witnesses are brought to vouch for. And in
such

such a trial, I think, there are *three* things which are chiefly to be enquired into; namely, *first*, the testimonies of those witnesses; *secondly*, their ability to know the truth of what they testified; and, *thirdly*, whether there be sufficient ground for presuming that they would, or did testify the truth of what they knew. I suppose it will not be hard nor difficult for my readers to understand what I mean by the *two* last of these enquiries, and therefore, I shall not take upon me to explain them, but shall pass them by, and shall only explain myself upon the *first*, and shew what I mean by trying the testimonies of those witnesses.

This article of enquiry, I think, implies *two* things, *viz.* *first*, the producing the testimonies of those witnesses in the words of the *witnesses themselves*, and not in the words of an *artful commentator*. As thus; if *Simon*, and *Andrew*, and *Philip*, are to be considered as *witnesses* of the resurrection of Christ, and if these witnesses are to be *tried*, then, upon such trial, the testimony of *Simon* must be produced in the words of *Simon* himself, and the testimony of *Andrew* in the words of *Andrew* himself, and the testimony of *Philip* in the words of *Philip* himself, and not in the words of another. This, I say, must be done, because the case requires that it should. It is quite ridiculous to pretend to try a witness, without producing
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the testimony of that witness; seeing a witness without a testimony, is like a body without a soul, that is, it is *dead* and *useless*. And to produce the testimony of any witness, not in the words of the witness himself, but in the words of another, who takes upon him to speak the witnesses sense in his own (*viz.* the speaker's) words, this, I think, is *foul practising*, and it is the same as if no testimony had been produced at all. The several testimonies of the witnesses being thus produced in the words of the witnesses themselves, the other branch of this *first* article of enquiry is, whether those witnesses *agree* in their *testimonies*; and also, whether they are *plain*, and *clear*, and *express*, and *full*, with respect to the question in debate; or whether they have expressed themselves *weakly*, or *darkly*, or *doubtfully* upon the point.

And, if any *material failure* appears, with respect to the *first* grand article of enquiry, then the other *two* articles become of less importance. As thus; it will not be of much use to enquire, whether *Simon*, and *Andrew*, and *Philip* were *well qualified* to know the particular fact of *Christ's resurrection*; or whether we have just ground for presuming that they would *testify* the *truth* of what they knew concerning it; when, either, they have not given *any testimonies* concerning that fact, or when such testimonies are *not produced*, or when the testimonies produced are

not

not in the words of the *witnesses themselves*, or when those testimonies *disagree* in circumstances that are material, or when those witnesses have expressed themselves *weakly*, or *darkly*, or *doubtfully* upon the question, in these cases all farther enquiry seems to be but of little use.

The *three* forementioned articles of enquiry, I think, must of necessity take place, in *trying* the witnesses to any fact, if the *proper purpose* of such a trial is to be effectually answered thereby. For, though I do not pretend to understand forms of law, nor methods of proceeding in courts of judicature, yet this, I think, I may venture to say, that if the witnesses to a fact are to be *tried*, in order that a *true judgment* may be formed, whether the evidences they have given afford a proper foundation for credit, with respect to the fact they are brought to vouch for; then the *three* forementioned articles of enquiry ought to be plainly, fairly, and fully discussed, in order to answer that purpose; because a material defect in either of these, will disappoint that end. Indeed, if other purposes are to be answered, then other measures are to be taken. The use I would make of this, is, to lead my readers to *care* and *attention* in what they read, and not to follow the common cry, lest they should be misled thereby.

Possibly

Possibly it may be urged, that miracles stand upon as good a foot of credibility as any other facts of which our publick histories are composed.

To which it may be answered, that this may be the case in *some instances*, that is, where the circumstances are alike; but in *other instances*, where the circumstances are not alike, it may be quite otherwise. -The credibility of facts may be *greater*, or *less*, from the different circumstances that attend them, as I have already observed; and *different* facts may have *different* foundations for credit, tho' related in the same history. That there was such a person as *Constantine the Great*, is considered as a matter of fact; and that *he*, and his *soldiers*, saw the *figure of a cross* in the heavens, is likewise considered as a matter of fact; but then the latter of those facts does not stand upon a like foot of credibility with the former, supposing them both to be related in the same history, there being a variety of circumstances which afford a proper foundation for credit with respect to the former, whereas those circumstances are wanting with regard to the latter; and therefore, there is not a like foundation for credit with respect to it, even tho' *Constantine* and *all his army* had become *vouchers* in the case. Christianity was then *struggling* with, and lifting up its head *above* Paganism in the *Roman* empire; and *Constantine*, and his soldiers, considered them-

selves

elves as engaged in the *cause* of God, and fighting under the *banner* of their *heavenly captain*; and as their success naturally *intoxicated* their minds, by giving *too great* a briskness to their spirits, so this *prepared* and *disposed* them to *imagine* that they saw and heard any thing *prodigious* that was started, if it appeared to *favour* their cause. Again,

It may be urged, that if the proof arising from miracles, in any instance or case, is *as good* as the nature of the thing will admit; then it is very *unreasonable*, in any such instance or case, to require *better* proof than the nature of the thing will allow, and that in a case of *difficulty*, a wise man would not run any *hazard*, but would always choose the *safer* side.

To this it may be answered, it is *true* that *such* a demand would be very *unreasonable*, but then it is *alike unreasonable*, in any case, to require *assent* where there is *no* proof, or to require a *stronger* assent than *properly* arises from the evidence; so that if it be *unreasonable* on *one side* to demand *certain* proof, in a case where, in the nature of the thing, it *cannot* be given, then it must be *alike unreasonable*, on the *other side*, to demand an *absolute* assent where *that* proof is wanting. And, as this, and every other question, ought to be examined with the utmost *fairness*, so, surely, every man ought, in reason, to *submit* to evidence, and to allow the *force* of every argument,

gument, whether the proof arising from it be *certain*, or only *probable*; and whether *that* probability be *greater*, or *less*; and whether it be *for*, or *against* the question in debate. But then, if a man acts *honestly* and *uprightly*, in this case, he cannot, in reason, be supposed to run any *hazard*, as to the *favour* of God, and his *safety* in another world; because, to admit *such* a supposition, would be to paint out God in the *worst* of colours, and to represent him as acting a most *unrighteous* part by his creatures. For if it is *right* and *fit* to give our assent, where *proper* evidence appears, then it must, in the nature of the thing, be *equally* as *fit* to *with-hold* our assent, where that evidence is *wanting*. And on the other side, if it is *unfit* to *with-hold* our assent when *proper* evidence takes place, then it must, in the nature of the thing, be *equally* as *unfit* to give our assent, where there is no *such* evidence, or to give a *stronger* assent than *naturally* arises from the evidence. So that we cannot suppose any *hazard* to be run in this case, with respect to the *favour* of God, and our *future* safety, without supposing God to act a part which is most *unreasonable* and *disingenuous*.

In a tract which I formerly published, entitled, *The Case of Abraham; with regard to his offering up Isaac in sacrifice, re-examined*, I expressed myself in the following words.

“ I have but just touched upon the case of
 “ *miracles,*

“ *miracles*, because, possibly, some time or other I may treat of that subject more at large.” This *hint* raised an expectation in my readers, that I would take an opportunity for the offering my thoughts to the world on *that subject*, and it likewise has given occasion for my being several times called upon with respect to it; which expectation, I hope, I have now fully satisfied, by my publication of this discourse. Nevertheless, it is not unlikely but that our present defenders of Christianity, *viz.* the *Stebbing* * and the *Horlers* of the age, may find out something or other in this discourse, (like as in my book, intitled, *The true Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted*,) to ground the imputations of *Heathenism* and *Atheism* upon. Tho’ I readily acknowledge, it was not at all strange to me to find that my neighbour, the reverend Mr. *Horler*, should, out of the abundance of his *witticisms*, present the world with the following narrative, *viz.* that I have passed from *Arianism* to *Socinianism*, and from *Socinianism* to *Deism*, and having left *Deism*, I have removed myself into a very remote part of the universe, and have taken up my *head quarters* at the *infamous town of Atheism*. This, according to Mr. *Horler*, has been the course of my travels, if I may be allowed to use the similitude;

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tude;

* See Dr. *Stebbing*’s visitation charge to the clergy of the archdeaconry of *Wilts*; and Mr. *Horler*’s sermon preached before the *Wiltshire* society at *Bristol*.

tude; and, were I to make another, and a farther remove, then, surely, the Lord himself would not know where I should stop. However, the forementioned relation must be allowed to be a most curious piece of history, which is worthy to be transmitted to posterity, and which, no doubt, will merit, for the *wanton historian*, a garnished stall in one or other of the cathedrals. And, as to the reverend Dr. *Stebbing*, I have this to observe, that if he had thought I had offered any thing to the world which would not *bear being reasoned* upon, he was welcome to *examine* it, and to have *confuted* it, had it been in his power; but for him to come *slily behind me*, with his *back-stroke*, with his imputation of *Heathenism*, this, I think, was acting out of character, as a man of understanding. Heathens, in the estimation of the multitude, are the *most abject* of our species; see a man *sunk the lowest* in his understanding and behaviour, and he is presently characterized by the term *Heathen*, yea, he is a *mere Heathen*.

The reason why I mention this here, is, because a *very great man* has been pleased to say of me, that I am come to *personal reflexions*, with respect to Dr. *Stebbing*, and this, I apprehend, was given as a reason why Dr. *Stebbing* would have no more to say upon the subject. And here I beg leave to observe, that I have gone no farther into personal reflexions,

flexions, than I was *naturally*, and almost *unavoidably* led by the subject before me. Thus, for example. Tho' Dr. *Stebbing* had complained to the publick of Mr. *Foster's* ill usage, in making him a *mere Turk*, yet he made no scruple of using me in the *same way*, by making me a *mere Heathen*. And, as the doing as one would be done by, is a *heathenish*, as well as a *christian maxim*, so from hence I was naturally led to observe, that its being such, (*viz.* a rule of action to Heathens) might, perhaps, set it *below* Dr. *Stebbing's* notice, seeing Heathenism is *very low* in his estimation. Again, if selling all, and giving it to the poor, be, according to Dr. *Stebbing*, necessary to constitute a *disciple of Christ*, then, surely, it was very natural for me to observe, that, in this particular, Dr. *Stebbing's* conduct, as *Christ's disciple*, is *very preposterous*, as the many church preferments he has got in his possession, and continues to hold, do plainly demonstrate. Again, I observed, that the characters of Infidel, Deist, Heathen, &c. may, with as *much justness* and *propriety*, be fixed upon *other persons* as upon me, whom yet, Dr. *Stebbing* would not chuse to treat in this way; and this, I acknowledge, was charging the Dr. with *partiality*, but then, this charge I was *naturally* led into, from the subject I was treating of. For, as I then had in view, and just after refered to a *sermon* of the *bishop of Salisbury's*

Salisbury's, (who is Dr. *Stebbing's* great friend and benefactor) in which * sermon the bishop has asserted, *that Christianity is as old as the creation, and that the gospel is a republication of the law of nature*, which, according to Dr. *Stebbing*, is *rank Heathenism*, and is the very title of *Tindal's book*, even that book which has made so great a noise in the world, and has stirred up the wrath and indignation of our sons of thunder, and has led them to persecute its author with hard names, and terms of reproach, both living and dead; I say, as the bishop of *Salisbury* had thus *plainly and publickly* expressed himself, so for Dr. *Stebbing* to pass over, in silence, such an *old offender*, if it may be called an offence, and to single out me to fix the odium of *Heathenism*, &c. upon, this was *partiality* with a witness; and this *reflexion* I was thus naturally led into from the subject I had then in hand. However, Dr. *Stebbing* has made good an old proverb, *viz.* that one man may with more safety steal a horse, than another may look over a hedge. The bishop of *Salisbury* may take the liberty to say that *white* is *white* without incurring any censure; and were his lordship to say that *white* is *black*, (tho' this supposition is not to be admitted,) no doubt but it would be overlooked; where-

as,

* See a sermon preached by Dr. *Sherlocke*, now lord bishop of *Salisbury*, at *Bow-Church*, *London*, on the 17th of *Feb.* 1715.

as, if I take the liberty to say that *white* is *white*, I must be stigmatized with the characters of *Infidel*, *Heathen*, &c. Thus much for that great man's remark I now refer to, namely, that I am come to *personal reflexions*, which, I presume, are those I have mentioned, else I do not know what such a charge can be grounded upon.

To conclude, I observe, that as I have, in the precedent discourse, treated the subject under consideration with *plainness*, *fairness*, and *freedom*, so I have done it with this view, *viz.* that the *cause* of *truth* might be served thereby, whether it shall be on this, or that side of any question there treated of. Nevertheless, what I have offered, must be submitted to the judgment of my readers.

A N

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

An Enquiry into this Question, *viz.*
Whether the Doctrines of the future Existence of Men, and a future Retribution, were plainly taught by *Moses* and the Prophets.

I Do not here take upon me to support either the affirmative, or the negative side of this question; but only to shew, that our Lord Jesus Christ has declared for the former.

It is observed, by the writer of the *Acts of the Apostles*, that the *Sadducees* said there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the *Pharisees* confess both, as in *Acts* xxiii. 8. These *Sadducees* thought they had put a very
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puzzling case to our Lord, by observing, that there was a woman who had *seven husbands*, and by querying whose wife she should be at the resurrection, seeing they all had her, as in *Mark xii. 18—23. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God?* as at *ver. 24.* In this answer our Lord plainly supposes, that the doctrine of the resurrection, or at least of mens future existence, was taught in the *scriptures*, and that the *Sadducees* ignorance of the scriptures was, in part, the ground of their error in this particular. He likewise referred them to a passage in the writings of *Moses*, in which the doctrine was taught which these *Sadducees* denied (as at *verses 26, 27.*) *And as touching the dead that they rise, have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; ye therefore do greatly err.* Here, I think, it is most apparent, that in the *opinion*, and according to the *testimony* of *Jesus Christ*, the *Jews* were taught the doctrine of the *resurrection*, or at least of mens *future existence* (which, perhaps, with them was the same thing) in the writings of *Moses*. Yea, according to *St. Luke* (as in *Luke xx. 37, 38.*) our Lord saith, that this doctrine was taught by *Moses himself*.

Now

Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him.

But farther, in Luke xvi. 18, to the end of the chapter, our Lord gives the following relation, or parable. There was a certain rich man, which was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores, and desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: and he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot, neither can they pass

to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I therefore pray thee, father, that thou wilt send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent*. And he said unto them, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded tho' one rose from the dead.

In this parable there are several things which our Lord took an occasion to acquaint his followers with, such as that there will be another life after this, in which good men will be happy, and bad men miserable. For tho' the rich man is not said to be a bad man, nor is *Lazarus* said to be a good man; yet this is plainly supposed, taking all the other parts

* It is a doctrine usually taught by Christians, that the damned in hell are so intirely given up to sin and wickedness, that nothing but malice against God, and their fellow-creatures, and other vile affections take place in them: whereas, in this parable, the rich man in hell is represented as having great pity and tenderness for his brethren upon earth, and that he used his utmost endeavour to prevent their falling into the same condemnation with himself; which, surely, demonstrate great goodness to take place in him. And admitting this to be but a parable; yet, I think, what is related in it, with regard to this matter, is of much more weight than the opposite popular opinion, which has nothing in nature or reason to support it.

parts of the parable into the case. For when the rich man renewed his request, with regard to his five brethren, or rather reasoned with *Abraham* upon his denying it, he urged this reason for it, *viz.* that if one went unto them from the dead, they would *repent*; which supposes that those who suffer misery in another world are *bad men*, and that *repentance in this life*, is the way to *escape that misery*; both of which, I think, imply that they are *good men*, who will be happy in another world.

Again, our Lord not only acquainted his hearers by this parable, that there would be a future state of existence to men, and a future retribution; but also, that those doctrines were plainly and clearly taught by *Moses* and the *prophets*. This, I think, is most apparent from the *reason* which is given, why *Lazarus* should not be sent from the dead, to give warning to the rich man's five brethren, lest they also fall under the same condemnation with him. The kind office, which the rich man desired that *Lazarus* would perform to his brethren, was plainly this, *viz.* to acquaint them, that there was most certainly a life to come, in which good men will be happy, and bad men miserable, that so those men might be prevailed upon by it to repent, and amend their ways, and thereby escape that misery. But this request was denied, for this reason, *viz.* because those

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very things were taught them by *Moses* and the *prophets*; they have *Moses* and the *prophets*, let them *hear them*. The question here is, what those men were to *hear* and *learn* from *Moses* and the *prophets*; and the answer is obvious, if the reason assigned why *Lazarus* should not be sent from the dead be *pertinent*, and to the *purpose*, viz. they were to *hear* and *learn those very things* which *Lazarus* was to inform them of, and which, if attended to, would be sufficient for their *conviction*. This, I say, must be the case, if the reason beforementioned be *pertinent*, and to the *purpose*. *Moses* and the *prophets* must have *taught plainly, and clearly* what this *messenger* from the dead was to have acquainted the rich man's friends of, otherwise the reason urged against the sending such a messenger would have been *idle* and *trifling*. This is still more evident from *Abraham's farther reasoning* upon the case. For, when the rich man urged, that if one went from the dead they would repent, *Abraham* replied, that if they would not hear, would not attend to what was said to them by *Moses* and the *prophets*, *neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*; which plainly supposes, that what *Moses* and the *prophets* had taught, was *as plain and evident*, and *as proper a foundation for conviction*, as any thing that could be said by a messenger from the dead. They have *Moses* and the *prophets*,

let them hear them; for if they hear not *Moses* and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

From what I have observed, I think, it fully appears, that our Lord has declared himself to be on the affirmative side of the forementioned question. For to suppose that he would put *such a reason* into the mouth of *Abraham*, against his sending *Lazarus* from the dead, which reason he knew to be false in fact, I think, is by no means to be admitted. And from hence, I think, one, or other of these three conclusions will unavoidably follow, namely, either,

First, That those doctrines, viz. that there will be a future state of existence to men, and a future retribution, were plainly and clearly taught by *Moses* and the prophets, as our Lord hath maintained. Or else,

Secondly, That our Lord Jesus Christ did not rightly and truly understand *Moses* and the prophets touching these matters. Or else,

Thirdly, That there is, or was another *Moses* and the prophets, which our Lord referred to, who had taught those doctrines plainly and clearly; which other *Moses* and the prophets we are not acquainted with.

I say, I think, that one or other of these conclusions must of necessity follow from the premises, or principles before laid down; and therefore, I beg leave humbly to offer it to
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the consideration of the reverend Dr. *Warberton*, and all others that particularly interest themselves in the forementioned question; presuming, that one or other of them will clear up this point.

F I N I S.

A N
E N Q U I R Y
C O N C E R N I N G
R E D E M P T I O N .

Wherein the
C H R I S T I A N R E D E M P T I O N
Is particularly considered.

To which is prefixed,

A P R E F A C E ;

Wherein is shewn,

That if Christianity be not founded on Argument, but on those Divine Impressions that are made on Mens Minds concerning it, (as a late ingenious Author has attempted to prove;) then it is most uncertain and precarious, and cannot be reduced to any Standard. And in which is also shewn, that Christ's Kingdom has been so far from being supported, and established by the Interposition of Civil Power; that on the contrary it has rather been annihilated thereby.

By T H O . C H U B B .

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THE
AUTHOR
TO HIS
READERS.

S I R S,

AS I intend to publish a *second* Volume of Collection of Tracts, containing all those Tracts which have been published since the publication of my *first* Collection; so I did intend to *add to*, and *conclude* that Collection with a discourse, entitled, *The Author's Farewell to his Readers*; in which, I proposed to take my leave of the world as a writer; but this *last part* of my design, some of my readers have dissuaded me from, because they are unwilling I should *bar myself* from offering my thoughts to their consideration at any time to come, whilst my life shall be continued; and therefore in compliance with their desire, that part of my design I have *dropped*: and now I intend to *conclude* the aforesaid Collection with the *fol-*

lowing Enquiry, in which, *two points* of more principal note are insisted on, *viz. first*, That *penitence* is the *only ground* of God's mercy to sinners; and *secondly*, That *this doctrine* is true Christianity.

The *first* of these points is what *mankind at large* are concerned with; so that *Christians* are not more particularly interested in it, but only in *common* with the rest of the world; at least it is what all *vicious persons* are immediately interested in, of what denomination or profession soever, supposing man to be an *accountable creature*, who will answer for his present behaviour in *futurity*. That many of our species have *greatly departed* from that *rule* of affection and action which man, as an intelligent, active, free being, ought to direct and govern his affections and behaviour by, and thereby have rendered themselves *justly displeasing* to God, and the *proper objects* of his resentment, is a truth so obvious, as not to admit of a dispute. This being the case, it must be a matter of the greatest concern to mankind, at least to all those of our species, who have *acquired* such a *depravity* of nature, as to render themselves the *proper objects* of divine revenge, to know whether there be *any possible way* by which such creatures may render themselves the *proper objects* of God's mercy; and if there be such a way, then the next important question will be, *what that way is*. And in order to obtain proper satisfaction in the present case, it is to be observed, that

that the forementioned questions are of *moral* consideration, in which, the *character* and *conduct* of the Deity are concerned; and therefore these questions must be brought to their *proper test*, and be tried by the *standard* of *moral truth*, *viz.* by that eternal and invariable rule of right and wrong, which results from the natural and the essential difference in things, in order to obtain such satisfaction. All questions in every science must be tried by the *principles* of that *particular science* to which the question stands related, and not by the principles upon which any other science is grounded. Thus all questions in *geometry* must be tried or proved by or from those *principles* upon which *that science* is founded, and the like must be done in questions relating to gravitation or weight; it being very preposterous to pretend to try a proposition relating to *measure*, by the principles of *gravitation*, or to pretend to try a proposition relating to *weight*, by the principles of *mensuration*. In like manner, all questions of *moral* consideration, in which the *character* and *conduct* of the Deity are concerned, of which those before-mentioned are such, these must be brought to their *proper test*, it being equally absurd as in the forementioned cases to pretend to try questions in *morals* by any other rule than what is the *ground* and *foundation* of *moral truth*, *viz.* the eternal and invariable rule of right and wrong.

If it should be said, that the questions under consideration are *related to*, and are to be considered

sidered as *parts* of *Christianity*; and therefore the appeal ought to be made to the *Christian revelation* with respect to them; because the Christian revelation is the *ground* and *foundation* of the Christian religion, and consequently is the *standard* or *rule* of *truth* by which all questions are to be tried that relate thereto: Answer, All questions of *moral* consideration must of necessity be brought to the test and be tried by the *standard* of *moral truth*, because that is *all the rule* they are subject to, or can be tried by, in order to obtain proper satisfaction; and this is equally the case, whether these questions stand related to any *traditionary* religion, or not. Morality is founded in nature *independent* of any revelation or traditionary religion, and is what *mankind at large* are interested in, and therefore Christians stand upon a foot with the rest of the world with regard to all questions relating thereto, and which is the case of the questions under consideration. For, as those questions are of *universal concern* antecedent to, and independent of all revelation or traditionary religion; so the nature of the thing requires that they should be tried by a *rule* which mankind are *capable judges of*, antecedent to, and independent of any revelation or traditionary religion, a rule which is both *obvious* and *certain*, and which is *equally* so, whether any revelation or traditionary religion had ever taken place in the world, or not; and such is the rule referred to. Besides, as the natural and essential difference

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in things exhibits a rule of affection and action which is, in order of nature, *prior* to all revelations and traditionary religions; so all revelations and traditionary religions must *themselves* be brought to *this test*, and be tried by *this rule*, in order for us to form a proper and true judgment whether such revelations, such traditionary religions *are*, or *may be* of God, or not. For, as eternal reason and truth are *God's will*, or rather the rule and measure of the divine conduct; so all questions relating thereto must be brought to this test, and be tried by this rule, in order for us to form a proper Judgment concerning them. And if upon such trial, any thing, any doctrine or proposition shall appear to be *contrary*, or not *consonant* to the *eternal reason and truth of things*; then such contrariety is a *proof* that any such thing, doctrine, or proposition is not of God. So that should those questions arise, *viz.* whether the *Mosaick*, the *Christian*, or the *Mahometan revelations*, and consequently whether the respective *traditionary religions* grounded on those revelations are of God, or not, those questions must be brought to the forementioned test, and be tried by that rule; and if either of them will not abide such trial, but is found *wanting*, then it ought to be *discarded* as an unhallowed thing, whether it be one, or another, or all of these. And if all revelations and traditionary religions must *themselves* be brought to the aforesaid test, and be *tried*, and *approved* by, or from *that rule*; then,

then, surely, it must be greatly improper to set up revelation as a rule to judge of *propositions*, which are in *order of nature* before the rule itself, and which judgment concerning them, as grounded on revelation, derives *all its weight* from its *conformity* to the forementioned rule of right and wrong, without which conformity *such judgment* would be of *no weight at all*.

Thus much I thought proper to premise, in order to *assist* my readers in forming a *true judgment* with regard to the important questions referred to; questions of such importance that a *mistake* with respect to them may wound religion in *its vitals*, and thereby prove *fatal* to mankind. For, tho' the doctrines of auricular confession, purgatory, praying to Saints, bowing before an Image, transubstantiation, and the like may be of very little consequence with regard to mens future safety; because a man may be a *good man*, or a *true penitent*, whether he be on one side of any of these questions, or on the other; yet if he should be misled with regard to what is the *true ground* of God's mercy to finners, then, if he be a *vicious man*, he may by such error be *withheld*, or *prevented* from rendering himself the proper object of mercy, and thereby *fall short* of that mercy; and thus his error may prove *fatal* to him.

And, as I have in the following discourse laid down this proposition, *viz.* That *penitence* is the *only ground* of God's mercy to finners; so I have also undertaken to maintain, that this doctrine

doctrine is *true Christianity*. By its being true Christianity, I mean that it is *a part* of that revelation of God's will which was made to mankind by the *ministry* of *Jesus Christ*, who was the *founder* of Christianity. So that the question with me, is not whether the fore-mentioned doctrine be *Peterism*, or *Paulism*; but only whether it be *Christism*, or *Christianity*; that is, the question with me, is not whether the doctrine referred to was taught by *St. Peter*, or *St. Paul*, but only whether it was taught by *Jesus Christ*. If a question should arise, what is the *dispensation* of *Moses*? or what is the *dispensation* of *Mahomet*? that is, what are the doctrines which *Moses* or *Mahomet* has dispensed to the world? then, I think, recourse must be had to what *Moses himself*, or to what *Mahomet himself* has set forth, in order to obtain proper satisfaction; and not to what has been set forth and declared by their immediate disciples and followers. And the reason of this is obvious, *viz.* because *Moses* and *Mahomet* were *principals* with respect to each of their dispensations; whereas the disciples and followers of these were at most but *substitutes*, who might possibly *go beyond*, or *fall short* of the design and intention of their master. And if this is a proper way of proceeding, should a question arise, what is the dispensation of *Moses*? or what is the dispensation of *Mahomet*? (as I presume it will be allowed to be;) then should the question be, what is the *dispensation* of *Christ*? or what is *Christianity*? recourse, I

think, ought likewise to be had to what *Christ himself* hath set forth, and dispensed to the world, in order to obtain proper satisfaction, and not to what has been dispensed to the world by his immediate disciples and followers; I say, this ought to be the case, for the *reason* beforementioned. And, as the question under consideration is what *Christians* are more particularly interested in, and, as such, it may perhaps be of more consequence *to them* than to any other people in the world, as an error with respect to it may prove more fatal *to them* than to others; so for that reason, I think, it ought to be fairly and fully discussed, that if possible it may be brought to an issue. Besides, the words *infidel, unbeliever, infidelity, &c.* which are used as terms of *reproach*, are bandied about, and men throw them at each other at random without any rule or reason, and thereby *unchristianise* each other before the point is settled what *real and true Christianity* is; whereas till this point be settled upon its *proper foundation*, at least till it is plainly and justly settled in a man's *mind*, which I am afraid is seldom the case, he is scarce a judge *for himself*, much less *for other men*, whether he is with regard to true Christianity a *believer*, or an *unbeliever*, and so is in danger of erring in that respect; because if he errs with regard to the *premises*, then he is likely to err with regard to the *conclusion* drawn from them; that is, if he should judge true Christianity to be what it really is not, then he may likewise
 judge

judge himself to be a believer with respect to Christianity, when in reality that is not the case.

Indeed, if *Christianity* be not founded on *argument*, but on those *impressions* that are made on mens minds concerning it, (as a very ingenious Author has undertaken to maintain;) then it may be both *various* and *contrary*, according to the images that are pictured on mens minds, by a divine impression, concerning it. And as the *impression itself* is the only evidence of its *divinity*; so Christianity, in this view of the case, must be most *uncertain* and *precarious*, and cannot be reduced to any standard. For if *God's ways* are not as *man's ways*, nor his *thoughts* as *man's thoughts*; and if the *wisdom of men* be *foolishness with God*, and the *righteousness of men*, (or what by the exercise of their discerning faculties appears to them to be so,) be *unrighteousness with him*, (which are the *principles* this author reasons from,) so that a man is not at all a judge of divine matters; then the divine impressions made on mens minds may be both *various* and *contrary* to *different persons*, and to the same person at *different times*; and consequently that must be Christianity *for the time being* to every man, which is consonant to the divine impressions *last* made upon his own mind, whether they agree with the impressions made on *other mens* minds concerning it, or not; and whether they agree with the impressions made on his own mind at *any time preceding*, or not;

I say, this may be the case. For tho' men may suppose and expect that *unity*, *uniformity*, and *invariableness* will take place with respect to Christianity, as being consonant to *man's wisdom*; yet that may not be the case here, because what is agreeable to, and is dictated by man's wisdom may be *foolishness with God*, as well in this case as in any other, of which man is not a judge. So that *variety* and *contrariety* may take place with regard to Christianity, as being the produce of *divine* impresson, for any thing we know, or can shew to the contrary; seeing *reason*, and *argument*, and the very *exercise* of our discerning faculties are not only *excluded* out of the case, but *cannot* answer any manner of purpose in it. Tho' it must be acknowledged, that this fully accounts not only for the *variety* and *contrariety* of *shapes* Christianity has appeared in; but also for the *various* and *contrary* religions that have taken place in the world distinct from Christianity, all which may have been the produce of *divine* impresson. For tho' it may be agreeable to *man's wisdom* that there is, or can be but one true religion, and one acceptable way of worship, and one way for sinners to be reconciled to God; yet this may be all *foolishness with God*. And tho' it may be agreeable to *man's wisdom* that men should act fairly and uprightly with each other, and that God should act thus by his creatures; yet this also may be *foolishness with him*, and the *contrary to this* may be consonant to *divine wisdom*: I say, this
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may be the case, for any thing we know; seeing *man* is not a *judge* of these things. If it should be said, that God has made known his will touching these matters, by a *divine* impression on mens minds; in and by which he has declared himself *unchangeable*: Answer, As God may will *one thing to day*, and *another thing to morrow*; may declare himself *changeable to day*, and *unchangeable to morrow*; I say, as this may be the case, of which, upon the present supposition, we have no grounds from which we may fairly conclude the contrary; so nothing can certainly be concluded from *any* divine impression on mens minds in any case whatever. Besides, if Christianity be grounded on these *impressions*, that are made on mens minds concerning it, then its *divinity* seems to rest upon a precarious and uncertain foundation. For as the impressions on mens minds may be the result of the *human constitution* under the circumstances in which each individual is placed; or they may be produced by the spirit of *truth*, or the spirit of *error*; and as man has no *certain rule* to judge by, whether any impression on his mind be from one or another of these, nor indeed does the nature of the thing, in our present view of it, admit of any such rule; so of course every man must be altogether *uncertain* whether any impression on his mind be divine, or not; and consequently whether what he receives as Christianity from such impression be in reality Christianity, or not. In fine, if *God's ways* are not as *man's ways*, nor

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God's thoughts as man's thoughts; and if the wisdom of men be foolishness with God, and the righteousness of men be unrighteousness with him; then man is in a very evil case, whether with, or without divine impressions, as not having whereon to rest the sole of his foot with safety, but is with regard to religion in the utmost difficulty and distress. Upon the whole I observe, that if the author I refer to has proved his point; then, I think, the most absolute scepticism in matters of religion will follow upon it, at least so far as Christianity is concerned. However, hear what Jesus Christ saith, Matt. xii. 57. Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? These words seem at least to imply that what Christ offered to the people was level to their capacities, and was what they were capable judges of, independent of any foreign aid; and therefore he addressed himself to their understandings, and put the question to them, Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? Whereas, if Christianity is not founded on argument, but on those divine impressions that are made on mens minds concerning it; then, I think, it would have been more natural and pertinent for Christ to have addressed his audience by way of caution and advice, in these or the like words: Take heed that ye lean not to your own understandings, nor do you of yourselves form any judgment about what I shall say to you, because then you will certainly be misled; but do you carefully attend to those divine impressions that are made upon your

your minds, and do you rely on them only for your instruction and information. And indeed preaching, and all other addresses that are made to the human understanding, seem to be introduced only for *form sake*; because it is not that *outward* teaching that is addressed to, and that is received by the human understanding, but only that *inward* teaching by a *divine impression* that does the work; which inward teaching the human understanding is not at all a judge of; and which surely would be as *powerful* and *efficacious*, whether any outward teaching took place, or not. And, as neither this *author* nor his *readers* can know, or judge any thing about *Christianity*, neither *what it is*, nor *what it is not*, but by, or from a *divine impression* on each of their minds, seeing, according to this author and *St. Paul*, no man knows or understands the things of God, but by the *Spirit of God* speaking in him; so *all* address to the human understanding, whether by *preaching* or *writing*, whether by *St. Paul* or by this *author*, seems at least to be *vain* and *useless*. Nevertheless, I think, it must be allowed that the author has treated the subject with *openness* and *freedom*, and with a *masterly hand*; and has produced much more reason and argument for *excluding* reason and argument from *Christianity*, than the generality of men are masters of; and therefore, I think, the performance is by no means despicable, but is worthy the attention of our first-rate divines. Moreover, it is covertly a *proper* and *decent*

call

call to our clergy, not any longer to *play fast and loose* in an affair of such moment; but either with this author *wholly to discharge* reason and argument from Christianity, or else to be *wholly guided* by these in every thing relating thereto. And indeed there has been too much occasion given for *such a call as this*, as the conduct of some of our clergy has been most *preposterous* in this particular; for when reason and argument have been *necessary* to support the *particular scheme* of religion they have adhered to, or the *particular interest* they have been engaged in, then reason and argument have constantly been *appealed to*; but when reason and argument have answer'd the *contrary purposes*, then they have been as constantly *exploded*. As to myself, I observe, that if Christianity be not founded *on argument*, nor will bear to be *tried by it*, then, in my opinion, it cannot possibly be of *God*. For, as eternal reason and truth are God's will, or the rule and measure of the divine conduct; so consequently whatever comes from him will admit of the *strictest scrutiny* by way of *reasoning and argumentation*, seeing every thing that is of *divine original* has reason and truth for its basis.

But to return. As Christianity is allowed to be a matter of great importance to mankind, at least it is allowed to be so by *Christians*; so it must be a matter of moment to them to be *rightly informed* what *real and true Christianity* is; at least to fix the *standard* to which test
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all questions, all propositions must be brought, in order for us to form a proper judgment, whether they are true Christianity, or not. This, I think, is what the case requires. I have, in my book, entitled, *The true Gospel of Jesus Christ asserted*, shewed what I apprehend to be *true Christianity*, as it is to be collected from *Christ's ministry*; but then, this has been represented to be *deism*, * *beathenism*, &c. I therefore intreat those who think, or at least who have represented me as not having done *justice* to the subject, that they would kindly interpose for the settling this point, by shewing what the *standard is* by which all things are to be tried, in order for us to judge whether they are Christianity, or not; and also by shewing what *true Christianity is*, as built upon that foundation. Only I beg leave to observe, that it will be paying a very low compliment to Christianity, to represent it as consisting of *doctrines* which will not *tally with truth*, and which were not taught by its *founder*. Tho', I think, this is not more preposterous than for the disciples of Christ to *hector* and *bully* in their master's cause, whilst they pay no regard to the *laws* and *precepts* he has left them to govern their affections and actions by. For, tho' the *Rechabites* paid a strict regard to the commandments of *Jonadab* the Son of *Rechab*, their father, and neither drank wine, nor built

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* See the reverend Dr. *Stebbin's* visitation Charge, to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of *Wilts*.

houses, nor planted vineyards, nor sowed seed, but dwelt in tents all their days; (*Jer.* xxxv. 6.) yet in this Christ's disciples *beg leave to be excused*. The Christian scholar can, out of the abundance of his zeal, deify the person of his master, and bow down his head like a bulrush at the very mention of his name; can have faith or confidence in him out of measure, and pray to him without ceasing; can cut and slay hereticks and infidels under the pretext of his authority, and can say, and do *any thing*, and *every thing* for his sake, save governing his *affections* and *actions* by his *master's laws*; such obedience being, in his opinion, no other than *dry morality*, which is too low and mean, and fitter for a *mere heathen*, who has nothing but his *virtue* to trust to, than for an *angelick soul*, who is to be carried to heaven on the wings of his own *faith*, or perhaps in the fiery chariot of his own *zeal*, having laid *fast hold* of the *mantle* or *merits* of his *master*, which will procure an entrance for him. And, that this is the truth of the matter, a little observation will shew, by comparing the *precepts* of Christ with the *lives* of those who call themselves his followers; in which comparison *great contrariety* will appear, and that not in a few instances only, but in a multitude of cases. So that whatever *advantage* Christianity may have been to mankind in *former times*, it does not appear to turn to any *great account* to them *now*; seeing, taking mankind in general, Christians are not much better than other men. And indeed

indeed things seem to be quite reversed. For instead of the kingdoms of *this world* becoming the kingdom of *God*, and of his *Christ*; the kingdom of *Christ* is become the *kingdoms of this world*. The kingdom of *Christ* at present, at least that kingdom which is called after his name, is founded in *civil policy*, is supported by *civil or worldly power*, and is made subservient chiefly, if not wholly, to *worldly purposes*. Whereas the *real and true kingdom* of *Jesus Christ* is quite of another nature, it is a kingdom which is not *of*, nor *from this world*; it is a kingdom set up in the *hearts* of men, by which their affections and actions are *voluntarily subjected* to *Christ's laws*, independent of all *external compulsion*, and all other *authority*.

To constitute a *true disciple* of *Jesus Christ*, or a true subject of his kingdom, *two* things are absolutely necessary, *viz. first*, to *believe*, or at least to *admit* that *Jesus Christ* was appointed of *God* to make known his will to mankind touching the true way to *God's favour* and eternal life; and *secondly*, in consequence of such faith or admission to conform his *affections* and *actions* to *Christ's laws*, the latter of these being altogether as necessary to such a character as the former. *Ye are my friends*, (saith *Christ*, *John xv. 14.*) *if ye do whatsoever I command you*; by which is plainly implied, that he who does not do what *Christ* has commanded is no friend, no disciple of *Christ*, nor no subject of his kingdom. So

that it is doing what Christ *commands*, because *Christ* has commanded it; and not because it is commanded by some other authority, which constitutes a *true subject* of Christ's kingdom. *Matt. xxiii. 8, 9, 10. Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ.* Whatever authority is assumed among Christians with regard to God's favour and eternal life, in order to direct and influence the understandings and consciences, the affections and actions of Christians, whether it be called *civil or ecclesiastical, temporal or spiritual*, all such coercive power is not the *kingdom of Christ*, but the *subversion*, or rather the annihilation of it; because so far as men are directed and influenced by such authority, so far the kingdom of Christ is *sunk and lost* in them. *St. Paul* puts a question, *Rom. vi. 16. Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?* Now, tho' *St. Paul* differently applied the proposition here laid down; yet that alters not the case, because the apostle laid it down as an *universal proposition*, which holds good in all cases; and he appealed to the common sense and reason of the believers at *Rome* for the truth of it. Know ye not? which is the same as to say, that this is a thing so obvious that you all
must,

must, and *do know* it, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey. So that Christ's kingdom is so far from being *supported* and *established* by the Interposition of *civil power*, that on the contrary it is in a great measure *annihilated* thereby. Whatever *authority* is the ground of our submission, that is our *master*; and therefore to whomsoever a *man*, a *Christian* yields obedience, *his servant*, *his subject* he is to whom he yields that obedience; whether it be to *Jesus Christ*, or *Cesar*. Indeed, the blending together, or the unnatural coalition of *church* and *state*, has answered very great purposes to men in this world; such as that those who *push hard*, and *get foremost* in this pretended church and kingdom of Christ, have their *hundreds* and their *thousands per year* for now and then attending at the altar, as they affect to call it; live in palaces like kings, cloath themselves * in fine linen and costly apparel, and fare sumptuously every day; sit in the uppermost rooms at feasts, receive greetings in the markets, and are called, *Rabbi*, *Rabbi*; and, no doubt, those who *share* in such good things think them worth contending for, and say in their hearts, with the

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* *Matt. x. 24, 25. The disciple is not, (ought not to be) above his master, nor the servant above his Lord; it is enough for (or it ought to suffice) the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord; and if so, then this enquiry is very natural, viz. what resemblance is there betwixt gilded mitres, lawn sleeves, embroidered copes, or scarlet hoods, and the plain, seamless coat of Jesus Christ?*

three disciples at Christ's transfiguration, *Lord, it is good for us to be here*; for tho' heaven is allowed to be a very good place, or state, which may be fit to be *retired to*, when this world's good things can be enjoyed *no longer*; yet, according to the proverb, *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*, and therefore to make sure play, they chuse to possess themselves with as much of this world's good things as is possible to be obtained by them, and then to take their *chance* for the riches of another. But then, tho' in *some ages and countries* the *strict alliance offensive and defensive* which church and state have entered into *against poor mankind*, has been productive of such great and good things as those above mentioned; yet thereby *Christ's kingdom* has been, as it were, *jostled out of the world*; seeing so far as civil power has interposed, and has been to Christians a ground and reason of action, so far *Christ's authority*, and *Christ's kingdom* have been *depressed*. And tho' the *ordinances and ministry* founded in, and supported by civil power, may in a loose and very improper sense be called *Christian*, as those who exercise such power are *called after Christ's name*; yet strictly speaking these are not the institutions and ministry of Christ, but only of that power by which they are founded and supported. And supposing such ordinances and ministry be *like unto*, and are of the *same kind* with what was instituted by Jesus Christ; yet that alters not the case, because such likeness and similitude

makes *no alteration* with respect to the *authority* upon which it is grounded; for as that authority is *merely civil*, so consequently every thing must be *merely civil* that is grounded upon it, and supported by it. And indeed, it is but too common for men professing Christianity, to be just as good Christians as the civil power *requires* and *obliges* them to be; or perhaps as *comports* with, or is *subservient* to their worldly interest; beyond which, too often Christ's precepts stand for cyphers. For, tho' *the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works or laws of the house of Ahab, and men walk in their counsels*, Mic. vi. 16; yet *the precepts of Christ lie quite unregarded*. Hear the charge which Christ gives to his disciples, *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal*. Again, *When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours,* * *lest they bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee*. But *when thou makest a feast, call*
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* As in the eastern countries, a *loftiness* of speech was sometimes used, in which *more* was *expressed* than was intended to be *understood*; so I am willing to suppose, that in this text Christ did not intend to bar his disciples *totally* from that friendly society in eating and drinking (with their neighbours, friends and relations, whether of high or low degree) those good things which God hath prepared

the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompence thee, but thou shalt be recompenced at the resurrection of the just. These, with many others, are the precepts of Jesus Christ, which he hath given in charge that his disciples and followers should walk by, which precepts are read in our synagogues every sabbath-day; and yet not the least regard is paid to them by many of our most zealous and orthodox Christians, even whilst they are anathematizing hereticks and schismatics, deists and infidels: and the reason of this is obvious, viz. because those precepts tend to retard, rather than to promote their greatly abounding in worldly possessions and enjoyments, which with too many of them is the main point,

pared to be received with thanksgiving, and which friendly association is one of the great comforts of life; I say, I am willing to suppose Christ did not intend this; because, I think, such a precept would be wrong; tho' I am sensible the text is very plain and express, both as to the prohibition, and the injunction, and as to the reasons urged to support both. But then, surely, nothing less than this can be intended, viz. that when a Christian has made proper provision for himself and his immediate dependents, he is not to bestow the surplus of his fortune upon the rich and wealthy, because they are not the objects of his care, nor he of theirs, and therefore nothing should be expected from them one to another; but upon the poor and needy, who have it not in their power sufficiently to provide for themselves; and yet the text in this restrained and limited sense seems to be but little regarded by the rich and wealthy, either living or dying, who usually bestow much the greatest part of what they are possessed of, not to those who want, but to those who abound in worldly good things. As to the propriety of this precept in this limited sense, I must submit it to the judgment of my readers.

point, notwithstanding all their harangues about *futurity*, as their lives do plainly demonstrate. Nevertheless, it must surely be allowed to be greatly preposterous for men who call themselves *Christians*, and who would think themselves *injured* to be deemed otherwise, more especially for the *ministers of Christ*, to lay up riches *heap upon heap*, as if, like the *Babylonians* of old, they intended therewith to build a *tower* that should *reach to heaven*; when *such selfishness, such worldly-mindedness* was what Christ shewed himself chiefly concerned to *reform mankind from*. Now, if the ambassadors of Christ, (as they affect to be called) who have, or at least who pretend to have received the *Holy Ghost* by the imposition of hands, and to have been sent upon a *special message* from heaven, *viz.* to warn their brethren that they go not to the *place of torment*, if these men pay little or no regard to the commandments of Christ, but live as if they had *no such master*, which is too much the case; then surely it must be allowed, that the case of the multitude professing Christianity *is not much better*; for if these things be done in the *green tree*, then what shall be done in the *dry*? and consequently *Christ's kingdom* must be come to a *very low ebb*. From what I have observed my readers may see, that *Christendom*, or Christ's kingdom, is not of that *great extent* which it may be thought to be, as containing *all*, or *almost all Europe*, and *part of Asia, Africa, and America*, which makes a great sound; whereas

if none are the subjects of Christ's kingdom, but those who govern their affections and actions by Christ's laws, which is the truth of the case, then *Christendom* will be reduced into a *much narrower* compass.

I will add but *one* observation more, which I hope my readers will patiently attend to. As it is become fashionable to *abuse, vilify, and misrepresent* those persons, whom crafty and evil-minded men are pleased by way of reproach to characterize by the terms *freethinkers, deists, infidels, &c.* so to render those persons the more *contemptible*, they are frequently charged with refusing to assent to what they cannot comprehend in *matters of religion*; whilst at the same time (saith their accuser) those very persons do assent to what they cannot comprehend in *things natural*. This is the charge. And to illustrate such preposterousness of conduct in the freethinkers, several instances are produced, in which they are said to assent to what they do not comprehend. Tho', by the way, it is not in any man's power, whether he thinks *freely* or *otherwise*, to carry his assent farther than what he comprehends, in any case whatever. By the term *comprehend*, I think, the same is meant as by the term *understand*. If I have a just and true idea of all the terms which constitute this proposition, *viz.* That the three angles of a right-lined triangle are equal to two rectangles, then I understand the proposition, and then I comprehend it. What I comprehend I understand,

and what I understand I comprehend; and what I do not comprehend, that I do not understand, and what I do not understand, that I do not comprehend; the terms being, I think, synonymous. This being premised, I proceed to a case which is usually urged, in which it is pretended that the freethinker gives his assent to what he does not understand in *things natural*; and at the same time he refuses to give the like assent to what he does not understand in *matters of religion*. The case is this. [*That mind acts upon matter*] is the proposition laid down; this proposition, says the accuser, the freethinker assents to, and yet he does no more understand *how mind acts upon matter, than he understands the greatest mystery in religion*; and thus the freethinker, to appearance at least, stands convicted of the charge laid against him, *viz.* That in things natural he gives his assent to what he does not understand, tho' he refuses the like assent in matters of religion. This sort of legerdemain, if it may be so called, I have often known practised in the pulpit. The first proposition introduced is [*that mind acts upon matter,*] with respect to which the preacher sets forth, that this proposition the freethinker assents to. Now admitting this to be the case; yet notwithstanding the freethinker is quite clear of the charge laid against him; because with respect to this proposition his assent does not go a *tittle farther* than what he understands. He understands this proposition clearly and perfectly

well, *viz.* [*that mind acts upon matter;*] and as he thoroughly understands it, so he can assent to it, supposing he is convinced of its truth. But then, as the juggler at the stage, when he has shewn *one bag* to the spectators, and has turned it inside outward, and has done whatever else is necessary to convince them that there is nothing in it, he then *puts it by*, and introduces *another bag* like the former, out of which he takes a hen, and chickens, and whatever else it was stored with; and this change of bags is done so *artfully* and *quick*, as not to be perceived by the spectators: so that (to appearance) the same bag which appeared to be *empty*, in an instant of time as plainly appeared to be *full*, tho' it did not appear that *any thing* had been put into it: in like manner, when the preacher has shewn off with the *first* proposition, *viz.* [*that mind acts upon matter,*] and has observed that it is what the freethinker assents to; he then artfully *drops it*, and introduces another proposition in its stead, *viz.* [*how mind acts upon matter;*] which *second* proposition, tho' it varies from the *first* but in *one word*, yet they are as distinct and different as the *two bags* that were by turns in the hand of the juggler, the one empty, and the other full. The preacher having thus introduced his *second* proposition, *viz.* [*how mind acts upon matter,*] he then displays his talent, in shewing that this is what the freethinker *does not, nor cannot understand*, which is also true; but then, this is what the freethinker

does

does not, nor cannot assent to, tho' the preacher by his art leads the people to think that he does. For, tho' the freethinker assents to this proposition, viz. [that mind acts upon matter,] because he understands it, and is convinced of its truth; yet he does not give his assent to this proposition, viz. [how mind acts upon matter,] because he does not understand it. And thus the preacher, by a sudden and artful change of the propositions, (which if not attended to, may appear to be the same) leads the inattentive audience to think, that the freethinker does really give his assent to what he does not understand, and therein lies the preacher's dexterity. The cases are parallel. For as in the former case, the trickster, by a sudden and artful change of the bags, misleads and imposes upon the senses of the spectators; so in the latter, the preacher, by a like sudden and artful change of the propositions, misleads and imposes upon the understandings of his audience. I will repeat the case, that so if possible my readers may not fail of seeing through it. [That] mind acts upon matter, this, says the preacher, the freethinker assents to; and yet [how] mind acts upon matter, he no more understands, than he does the greatest mystery in religion. Here, by the sudden and artful change of the word [that] for the word [how], by which a change is made in the propositions, the audience, (at least those of them that do not see through the disguise,) are misled, and freethinkers are abused. The true

state

state of the case is this, namely, that as the *first* proposition, *viz.* [*that* mind acts upon matter] may be understood by *all thinkers*, whether *free* or *fettered*; so it may be assented to by them all, provided they are satisfied of its truth. Again, as the *second* proposition, *viz.* [*how* mind acts upon matter] is not understood by *any thinker*, whether *bound* or *free*; so it cannot possibly be assented to by any of them. Who is there among the multitudes of mankind that believes *how*, or *in what manner mind acts upon matter*? surely there is no such person. And the reason is obvious, *viz.* because *how*, or *in what manner mind acts upon matter* is not *understood* by any man, and therefore cannot possibly be *believed* or assented to by them. And this is the case in *all other instances*, with respect to which no man can carry his faith or assent a *tittle farther* than he understands; and if any man pretends that he can, he either puts a fallacy on himself, or else imposes on others. Thus I have shewn, how through *craft* and *baseness* freethinkers are abused. To think freely is to take an *impartial view* of any question, and of every thing that stands *related* to that question, whether it makes *for it*, or *against it*; and to form a judgment *agreeably* to the evidence that appears, exclusive of every *bias* that may mislead the mind in forming that judgment; this is *freethinking*, and those who act thus are *freethinkers*, and are in reality an *ornament* to human nature, and to civil society; and as such,

viz.

viz. as freethinkers, surely, are not plagues nor pests to either, however they may be maliciously represented; seeing freethinking does not dispose nor lead them thereto. Nevertheless, I am sensible that in *this age* freethinking is set forth to be most *scandalous* and *reproachful*; and perhaps my thinking so freely on the subjects treated of in the following Enquiry, may draw on me that character, which I assure my readers, I am not ashamed of; because to think freely is, in my opinion, a reputable thing. Indeed a Christian priest, *viz.* the reverend Mr. *Warburton*, in his high strain of *scandal* and *defamation*, (tho', I hope, in this respect priests of all religions are not the same) has been before-hand with me in this particular; in his preface to his *Critical and Philosophical Commentary on Mr. Pope's Essay on Man*, in which he has expressed himself in the following words.

“ As for the tribe of Freethinkers, *Toland*,
 “ *Tindal*, *Collins*, *Coward*, *Blount*, *Strut*, *Chubb*,
 “ *Dudgeon*, *Morgan*, *Tillard*, and their fel-
 “ lows, the mortal foes both of reason and
 “ religion, injured wit as well as virtue, by
 “ the mouth of one of their happiest advo-
 “ cates, long ago called for vengeance on
 “ them.

“ ————The licence of a following reign
 “ Did all the dregs of bold *Socinian* drain;
 “ Then unbelieving priests reform'd the nation,
 “ And taught more pleasant methods of sal-
 vation;

“ Where

“ Where heaven’s free subjects might their
rights dispute,

“ Left God himself should seem too absolute:

“ Encourag’d thus, wit’s *Titans* brav’d the skies,

“ And the press groan’d with licens’d blasphemies.

“ *These monsters, criticks, with your darts engage,*

“ *Here point your thunder, and exhaust your
rage.*”

Here my readers will see, that Mr. *Warburton* charges me with being a *mortal foe* both of *reason* and *religion*, *injured wit* and *virtue*; with respect to which charge I observe, that as on the one side, I have not, and I trust I shall not, join in any *religious party* or *faction* whatever against truth; so on the other side, the *cause* of reason, religion and virtue I have sincerely and uprightly endeavoured to *promote*; and if in any of my enquiries I have *erred*, from which I do not pretend to be exempt, as such error is what I have endeavoured to guard against, by examining *carefully* and *impartially* those questions that have come before me; so I am quite easy in that respect, even whilst under the expectation of *futurity*. And as to injured wit, if I have done nothing for it, I have done nothing against it; consequently, if I have not been its *friend*, I have not been its *foe*: with what face then could this *man*, this *reverend presbyter* of our church, lay the above imputation upon me? or what *principle* is there, upon which he can *justify* his
conduct

conduct in so doing? this I am at a loss to discover. As the above charge is most *heavy*; so it requires the *clearest* and *strongest proof* to support it; and yet, I know, Mr. *Warburton* has not, nor can he have wherewith *justly* to ground this his presumptive charge upon; and therefore when he bringeth his *gift* to the *altar*, when he approacheth with reverence the *holy table*, to make a publick and solemn profession of his *discipleship* to *Christ*, and, as it were, to *swear fealty* to him as his *Lord*; and also to join with the body of the faithful in offering up an *eucharistical sacrifice* to God; I hope he will then and there remember, that *I have* * *ought against him*, *Matt. v. 23, 24.* But then, whether this *great divine* does, or will think himself concerned to pay such a regard to that rule of action given by *Jesus Christ*, which is here refered to, by acting as a *Christian*, consonant to this precept given to *Christ's disciples* considered as *Jews*, the event only can shew. If † Mr. *Warburton*, by the
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* Tho' I have heard, that the *church of Rome* teacheth, that *faith* is not to be kept with *hereticks*; yet I have not heard, that the *church of England* teacheth, that *justice* is not due, nor need be paid to *freethinkers*; and therefore, I hope, Mr. *Warburton* will not plead a right of *indulgence*, nor claim an *exemption* from doing justice *even to me*, supposing he should *disown* my standing in *any brotherly* relation to him.

† In an Appendix to my Discourse on Miracles I styled the reverend Mr. *Warburton* Dr. *Warburton*, apprehending that he had obtained a title to the appellation of Doctor,

publication of the above-cited *paragraph*, intended to give the world a specimen of the *effect* that his *faith* in Christ and in the doctrine of futurity, has upon his *mind* and *life*; then, I think, every honest man will have reason to join with me in this petition, *viz.* From *such believers*, good Lord, deliver us.

whereas in this I was mistaken; but then as it was thro' *ignorance* I did it, so I trust Mr. *Warburton* will forgive me this wrong: tho', (if I have been rightly informed) *that feather* has since been denied this *great man*, by one of our universities, after much sollicitation for it.

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ENQUIRY

CONCERNING

REDEMPTION.

BEFORE I enter upon this Enquiry, *two or three* things are necessary to be premised as previous to it. As *first*, That there is a *natural*, * and an *essential* difference in things; and that *that* difference is the ground and foundation of *moral truth*: So that with respect to all questions of moral consideration, our *arguments* and *reasonings* must be grounded on *this principle*, in order to render such arguments and reasonings *pertinent*, and of any *weight*. For, were it

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* See this point more largely considered in my discourse, intitled, The Sufficiency of Reason in Matters of Religion farther considered.

to be admitted that there is a universal sameness, or indifference in things, and that one thing is not distinct from, or is not preferable to another in nature; then the consequence is clear, that the distinctions of right and wrong, of good and evil, of truth and falsehood, of just and unjust, and the like, are *idle* and *vain*, because *nature* does not admit them; or, at least, if they are admitted, it is to no manner of purpose, because right and wrong, good and evil, just and unjust, truth and falsehood, &c. are all upon an *equality* as being in themselves perfectly *indifferent*, one not being preferable to another. So that upon a supposition there is a universal sameness, or a universal indifference in nature, *all morality* is sunk and lost; and all questions of *moral* consideration become abortive; and all arguments and reasonings with regard to *moral truth* amount to just nothing at all. It will answer no manner of purpose to enquire after, or attempt to prove that a thing is right, or wrong; good, or evil; true, or false; if right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood are the *very same thing*; or if one of these is not *preferable* to another in nature. If the communication of good or happiness be the very same thing with the communication of evil or misery, or if these are so perfectly indifferent, as that one is not preferable to the other; then all argumentation with respect to them must be *vain* and *useless*. From what I have observed, I think, it plainly appears that as the natural
and

and essential difference in things is the ground and foundation of *moral truth*; so of necessity this principle must be admitted as the *foundation of argument* in all questions relating thereto. Again,

Admitting there is a natural and essential difference in things, and that one thing is really distinct from, and is preferable to another in nature; then it is God's being constantly, uniformly, and universally affected, and acting *agreeably* to such difference which constitutes the *divine rectitude* or the *moral* perfections of the Deity; that is, it denominates God to be perfectly wise, just, good, &c. So that in all questions relating to the character and conduct of the Deity, our arguments and reasonings must be grounded on this principle, (*viz.* that God's affections and actions are always perfectly conformable to the essential difference in things) in order to render such arguments and reasonings *pertinent*, and of any *weight*. For, admitting that the divine affections and the divine will and power are influenced by, and are under the direction of capricious humour and arbitrary will, which is the same as to say, that they are under no direction or guidance at all, but that God is affected, and acts at *random* without any rule or reason; I say, were this to be admitted, then the consequence is clear, that the divine rectitude or the moral perfections of God are *fictitious* things. Then it will be very improper, or rather absurd to attribute wisdom, goodness,

goodness, &c. to the Deity; because, if that were the case, then God would be affected; and would act from *mere humour*, which is the same as from no principle at all; and consequently the forementioned appellations of wise, good, just; &c. could not, with any propriety, be *applicable to him*. So that upon a supposition the Deity is affected, and acts; not consonant to that rule of affection and action which results from the natural and essential difference in things, but from arbitrary will, as aforesaid; then divine rectitude or the moral perfections of God are *sunk and lost*; and then all arguments and reasonings with respect to these, will be *idle and vain*. It will be to no manner of purpose to enquire whether any dispensation, and scheme of religion be of God, or not; because, upon the present supposition (*viz.* that God is affected and acts from sovereign pleasure) we have no principle to reason from, no foundation for argument from which any thing may *justly be concluded* in such a case. It would be very absurd to argue for, or against any dispensation or scheme of religion being of God from its being *agreeable with*, or *contrary* to wisdom, goodness, justice, &c; because wisdom and folly, good and evil, just and unjust, one of these is as *eligible*, as *consistent with*, and as *likely* to be *chosen*, or *recommended* by sovereign pleasure and arbitrary will, as another. And, on the other side, if it be admitted that the divine affections, the divine will and power are, at

all times, and in all instances and cases, *influenced by*, and are *directed* by that law or rule of affection and action which results from the natural and essential differences in things; then here is a *proper* ground and foundation for argument, from which *just* and *rational* conclusions may be drawn with regard to the conduct of the Deity in all his dispensations or dealings with his creatures. If this principle be admitted, then here is a *proper test* for all dispensations, all schemes of religion, to be brought to, and be tried by, in order for us to form a judgment whether they are *divine*, or *not*; and by which we may be guarded from *delusion* and *imposition*, at least from all that is *injurious* and *hurtful* to mankind; because whatever dispensation or scheme of religion is plainly *repugnant* to divine rectitude, such dispensation, such scheme of religion cannot possibly be of God.

And, that the Deity is constantly, uniformly, and universally affected, and acts (whenever he does act) *agreeably* to that rule of affection and action which results from the natural and essential differences in things, is most apparent. For, as God is the *most perfect intelligence*; so he must of necessity *most clearly discern* the right, or wrong; good, or evil; truth, or falsehood; &c. and also the preferableness, or non-preferableness of each of these to its contrary, which takes place in all instances and cases through the whole universal nature; I say, this *must* be the case with respect to
 God,

God, who is the most perfect intelligence. And, as the Deity does most clearly perceive as aforesaid; so the divine affections, and the divine will and power are *constantly* guided and directed by that discernment. That is, when God acts, he *always* chuses to act right, and to do good, *but never* the contrary; he *always* loves what is lovely, and hates what is hateful, *but not* their contraries; he *always* pities the proper objects of pity, and shews mercy to the proper objects of mercy, *but not* to their contraries; and so in all other cases. I say, this will *always* be the case with respect to God; not from any *fatality*, not from any *natural necessity* he is under to be affected, and to act thus, but because there is a *reason* resulting from the natural difference in things *why* he should be affected, and act thus, and a *reason against* his being affected, and acting contrarily; nor does nature afford a motive, a temptation, an excitement to the Deity to be affected, or to act otherwise, and therefore we may well be assured that that never will be the case.

Having thus prepared the way, by shewing what must be admitted as a ground or foundation for argument with respect to all questions of *moral* consideration, and all questions with which the *character* and *conduct* of the Deity is concerned; I now proceed to the Enquiry, *viz.* concerning Redemption. The words redeem and redemption are sometimes applied to *things*, and sometimes to *persons*. When one
man

man puts his goods into the possession of another, as a *pledge*, *pawn*, or *security* for a sum of money he has borrowed of that other person, till such time as he shall pay the money again; then when that money is *thus payed*, the goods pledged or pawned as aforesaid are *redeemed* thereby. Again, when a man is become a *vassal* or slave to another, and his liberty is *purchased*, then he is *redeemed*: and, as what was *paid* for the man's liberty is the *price* of that redemption, so *he* who pays that price is the *slave's* redeemer.

This is the common, obvious, and strict literal sense of the words redeem and redemption, when applied to things or persons: so that in a *literal* redemption, with respect to *persons*, (if I may be allowed to express myself thus, which perhaps may be very improper) there must be a *literal slave*, or a person in a state of *literal slavery* to a *literal master*, and also a *literal price*, or valuable consideration paid by a *literal redeemer* to that *literal master*, in order to purchase a *literal redemption* to that *literal captive*; I say, all this must take place when the words redeem and redemption are taken in a *strict literal sense*, and are applied to *persons*. So that when a person has by his misbehaviour rendered himself the *proper object* of *resentment*, and in consequence thereof is reserved or bound over to *punishment*, the being any way *instrumental in saving* that man from punishment, cannot in a strict and proper sense be called *redemption*; nor can he who is

instrumental in saving the offender from punishment, be strictly and properly called a *redeemer*, because the person thus discharged was not a vassal or slave, but a criminal. Misbehaviour or disobedience to any law does not constitute a *captive*, but a *criminal*; and consequently the being *instrumental* in saving a person from that punishment his disobedience has exposed him to, cannot *properly* be called redemption; nor can *he* who is instrumental in saving such a person, be *properly* called a redeemer; but those terms, when thus applied, must be used in a *loose, remote, improper, or figurative* sense. And,

As the terms *redeem* and *redemption* are improperly and figuratively applied, when applied to the discharging a person from the punishment his misbehaviour has exposed him to; so, I think, it will be proper to enquire what that *misbehaviour* is, which justly exposes the offender to punishment. Misbehaviour or sin may be thus briefly defined, *viz.* It is the *doing that* which in reason *ought not* to be done, or the *omitting to do* what in reason *ought to be done*. Now, tho' sin, according to this definition, is in every instance the proper object of *dislike* and *disapprobation*; yet, I think, it does not in every instance render the agent the proper object of *resentment* and *punishment*. Vengeance, revenge, resentment and punishment, as they are terms of like import; so they all suppose some *injury* or *wrong done* either to the person, character, or fortune of another, or the

the *omitting to do* what ought to have been done for the *support*, and in the *defence* of either of these. So that revenge or punishment is the *retaliation* of injury and wrong, or the rendering *evil for evil*; and therefore in those instances of misbehaviour or sin, where no *injury* or *wrong* is done, nor intended to be done to *another*, nor any *defect of benevolence* to others takes place, there can be no *reasonable ground* for vengeance or punishment; because there is *no evil*, either negative or positive, done to another, to be revenged; that is, there is no evil done to be the *ground* of revenge or punishment. Suppose a man inattentively did a thing which terminated in his *own hurt*, when he intended it for his *own good*, and no kind of good was done thereby either to himself or others; and supposing he might *easily* have discovered what would be the consequence of his action, if he had duly considered the case; in this instance his behaviour would be justly *disapproveable*, because no man ought in reason to contribute *needlessly* to his own hurt, and because every man ought in reason to *look forward*, and consider what will be the natural consequences of his actions. But then, as in this case the man's action terminated in his *own hurt only*, and no kind of injury was done, nor intended to be done to any other, nor indeed did he intend to do hurt to himself; therefore, I think, he cannot be the *proper object* of vengeance or punishment to any other intelligent being; his weakness, folly, or sin,

in this case would render him the object of *pity* rather than of *punishment*. Such sin or misbehaviour as denominates the sinner, *not base*, but *foolish only*, may render the agent worthy to be *despised*, worthy of *contempt*, but not of punishment. In fine, a *foolish sinner*, and a *base, villainous sinner*, are *two* different characters, and are worthy of different treatment. For, as sin, in these different cases, springs from *different causes*, and produces different effects; so the former merits *contempt only*, and the latter both *contempt* and *punishment*. And, if we consider God as the great governor of the intelligent and moral world, who will certainly act suitable to such a character; then, most certainly, he will execute vengeance upon none *but such* to whom vengeance and punishment is truly and properly due. Again,

Man is so constituted, and in such circumstances, as that it is *great odds* but he will be unreasonably injurious to others in some instances, even against the general bent of his mind, and the tenor of his actions. For, as the appetites and passions that take place in man, and are a part of the human constitution, are, in many cases, the *springs* of action; so those appetites and passions are, sometimes, so *suddenly* and *strongly* raised, as that men are *hurried on by them* to do what is justly blameable and injurious to others, before their attention is called in to enable them to consider what they are doing; this, I say, is sometimes

the case. And, tho' men ought to *consider first*, and *act afterwards*; yet, as I said before, it is *great odds* but in some instances the case will be otherwise with all men, nor can it well be expected that it will not. So that when a man *through* the *weakness* and *frailty* of nature becomes in some lesser instances unreasonably injurious and hurtful to others, against the general bent and disposition of his mind, and the tenor of his actions, and as soon as he is come to himself is sensible of, and sorry for his misbehaviour, and repairs the injury so far as it is in his power, and makes his miscarriage a reason to himself to be more watchful of his behaviour in time to come, I say, I think, such a sinner cannot be the *proper object* of divine revenge. For, tho' a man's fault, in such a case, when considered *abstractedly* from the circumstances which are supposed to attend it, that is, supposing those circumstances did not attend it, may render him the proper object of *divine revenge*; yet when *those circumstances* do attend the case, then, I think, such a man would rather be the object of compassion and mercy. And, were we to suppose that God would execute vengeance upon *such offenders* whose faults are circumstanced as aforesaid, it would be the same as to suppose that God does not act according to *rectitude*, or the reason of things; because the reason of things does require that *all circumstances* should be taken into the case, and that the agent should be treated accordingly. I am sensible it is a much *higher*
and

and *nobler* character, and that it must appear so to the Deity, and therefore it may be differently treated by him, for a man to pass thro' the several stages of life *without offending at all*, than to offend under the forementioned circumstances. But then, admitting this to be *possible*; yet perhaps it has *never* been the case, nor can it well be expected that it should, as I have already observed. And, were sin, under the forementioned circumstances, made the *ground* of divine revenge; then mankind would be placed in a most *hazardous* state, and it would have been *much better* for them never to have existed, because *non-existence* is certainly preferable to a state in which it would be ten thousand to one against a man, that is, it would be *ten thousand to one* for his being doomed to a state of misery, and he would scarce have a *chance* for the contrary. This, surely, would be a very *great hardship* upon mankind; and *such* a constitution of things; and *such* a conduct grounded upon it as is here supposed, would be the produce of *great unkindness*, and would, most certainly, be *contrary* to rectitude.

But then, if neither the *foolish sinner*, that is, he whose sin denominates him to be, not vicious, but weak and foolish only, nor the *injurious sinner*, when his miscarriages are circumstanced as aforesaid, are the proper objects of divine vengeance, the question still remains, *who are?* And, the answer to this question, (to me,) is most apparent; *viz.* Those who
from

from an *unreasonable selfishness* and *baseness* of mind, not only withhold their hands from doing that good to others that they ought, but also viciously and cruelly contribute to their hurt; who from a vile disposition *afflict* and *grieve* their neighbours, by injuring them in their persons, their characters, or their fortunes, without any *just ground*; and who introduce that *evil* and *misery* into the world, which they ought, in reason, according as they have power or opportunity, to prevent, or remove. These men *oppose* and *frustrate* the gracious purpose of our kind Creator in calling this world into being, by their becoming *common enemies* to the *common good*; these men are designedly and deliberately injurious and hurtful to the intelligent and moral world, and thereby render themselves the proper objects of *resentment* to every intelligent being, and consequently to the Deity as such; these are the men upon whom, in reason and equity, *evil* ought to be *retaliated*, and to whom *vengeance* or *punishment* is due. And tho' God cannot possibly be a *sufferer* by the evil that is done to his creatures, and therefore none can be the objects of punishment to him on that account; yet, as the happiness of his creatures was the great end of their creation, and in that respect God is *greatly interested* in their *weal*, or *woe*; so whoever designedly *opposes* and endeavours to *frustrate* this grand design, such men render themselves the *proper objects* of *divine revenge*. And tho', in the execution of *civil justice*, and

consequently in the distribution of *civil revenge*, the forementioned *distinction* may not always be made; because *civil governors*, to whom the distribution of civil revenge is committed; cannot in every case be able to discover; whether the *injury done* resulted wholly from the *infirmities* and *frailty* of nature, and was circumstanced as aforesaid, or whether it was the result of a *base* and *vicious* mind; yet as God, who is the *most perfect intelligence*, has a clear and perfect knowledge of every one's case, so he will certainly *take every thing* into the account, and deal with his creatures accordingly. And,

Here I beg leave to take notice of a vulgar error, (at least it appears so to me) which has prevailed among Christians, *viz.* That mankind became liable or subject to *death* and *mortality* thro' the *sin* of our *first parents*; whereas according to all the appearances of nature this was the case antecedent to, and independent of such sin. The *whole vegetable* and *animal* creation are in their *own natures mortal*, by, or from the original constitution of things. Each species of vegetables, whether produced from seed or otherwise, receive nutriment, grow up and increase, till they come to the highest perfection their natures will admit, under the circumstances in which each individual is placed; and then they *gradually decay*, and come to a *dissolution*, either sooner or later, according as that decay may be hastened by the circumstances which attend them. And, as it is

is with the vegetable, so it is with the animal creation; each species, whether produced from seed or otherwise, receive nutriment, grow up and increase till they come to the highest perfection their natures will admit, under the various circumstances in which each individual is placed; and then they *gradually decay*, and come to a *dissolution*, either sooner or later according as that decay may be hastened by the circumstances which attend them. This is apparently the case with respect to the various species of *animals* that inhabit this globe, of which the species of *mankind* are a *part*, and from which, *in this respect*, they do not appear to *differ at all*; at least, this appears to be the case of all those species of animals which come within the reach of human observation. So that had food been withheld from our first parents for a long time, or had those fluids upon which the animal life depends been totally stagnated, or totally discharged from their bodies, even whilst in a state of *innocence*; then *death* would unavoidably have ensued, according to those settled laws by which the animal creation has been governed. Besides, as man was, by the original constitution of things, designed and qualified to *increase* and *multiply*; so *mortality* seems *necessary* to such a constitution, that one generation might pass away, in order to give place to another. For, had our first parents and their posterity been *perpetuated* in their original vigorous state; then the increase of mankind

would have been so great as that this globe could not long have been a proper habitation, nor afforded a suitable provision for them; whereas if man is by, and from his original constitution a mortal creature, then the fore-mentioned inconvenience is sufficiently guarded against. I am sensible it is pretended that in a proper time each individual of our species would have been translated to some other place in the universe, in order to make way for others to succeed them here; but then this is introducing one supposition that has no sort of evidence to support it, in order to make good another supposition which is equally insupportable.

I am also sensible it may be urged that St. Paul taught this doctrine, viz. that all mankind became mortal through Adam's transgression, as in 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. To which it may be answered, admitting St. Paul did teach this doctrine in the words referred to, and also that he taught this doctrine, viz. that mankind became or were made sinners by Adam's disobedience, and were, upon that account, bound over to condemnation, as in Rom. xv. 18, 19. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by

by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous. I say, admitting that St. Paul taught those doctrines in the words referred to, (which seems to be the case, at least the latter seems to be as plainly taught as the former) then the question will be, Whether St. Paul's authority is sufficient to build those doctrines upon, seeing the latter is plainly *repugnant* to truth and reason, and the former is *contrary* to all the obvious appearances of nature. What St. Paul grounded his sentiments upon, in the cases referred to, cannot certainly be determined. To say that St. Paul received those doctrines by a *special revelation* from God, or that he wrote his epistles by *divine inspiration*, is saying what those who urge it have no authority for, have no evidence to support; and if St. Paul did teach those doctrines, then this is a plain proof of the *contrary*; because it may fairly be presumed that God has not, neither will he be the *parent* of any doctrines that are *erroneous*, and therefore not of those above-mentioned, which plainly appear to be such: I say, which plainly appear to be such, that is, erroneous. For, as the former of those doctrines is *contrary* to all the obvious appearances of nature, and therefore is erroneous; so the latter is *contrary* to truth and reason, and is therefore erroneous. It is contrary to *truth* that *Adam's* posterity became or were made sinners by *Adam's* sin, because sin is wholly personal, and cannot be transferred from one to another: and it is repugnant to *rectitude* to condemn one for

the offence of another, and therefore it is what God will not do. Now if those doctrines are erroneous, as they plainly appear to be, then we may well be assured that God has no way been concerned in the *propagation* of them.

And here, before I proceed, I think it proper to state the notion of *innocence*, in order to prevent its being over-valued. Innocence is, (if I may so speak) a *mean* betwixt *doing evil* and *doing good*, or betwixt vice and virtue; simple innocence being neither. The former of these, *viz. doing evil* justly exposes to *punishment*, except the evil done be circumstanced as before-mentioned; and the latter, *viz. doing good* merits *reward*; whereas *simple innocence* intitles to neither. If I, from a base and evil mind, take away the life of a man, which life ought to have been preserved; by such an action I become *injurious* to the intelligent world, and justly expose myself to *vengeance* or *punishment*. Again, if I should be an instrument in *saving* the life of a person, who had behaved properly in society, and therefore ought to live, which life I was not particularly interested in, by this I should become a *benefactor* to the intelligent world, and the intelligent world would become in reason obliged gratefully to *return the kindness* when power and opportunity serve, which return of kindness is properly called *reward*. But if I do *neither* of these, it not having been in my *power* to have done the latter, then I am *innocent* with respect to the former, that is, I am
not

not guilty of *murder*; which innocence, as it hath nothing of *evil* in it which would justly expose me to vengeance or punishment, so it hath nothing of *good* in it which would render me worthy of recompence or reward. And tho' (as I have already observed) God cannot receive either *good* or *evil* from his creatures, and therefore they cannot be to him the *proper objects* of reward or punishment on that account; yet, as God called this world into being on purpose that his intelligent creatures might taste pleasure of various kinds, and be made happy thereby, and in that respect he is *interested* in their weal or woe; so whoever *kindly promotes*, or *basely disappoints* that end, does thereby render himself the *proper object* of divine reward, or divine punishment: whereas in all those parts of a man's conduct, in which he is *innocent only*, or in which he has done neither *good*, nor *evil* to others, * he cannot possibly be the proper object of either. Upon the whole I observe, that as the doing good, or the doing evil to others, are the only *proper grounds* for rewards and punishments, whether these be considered as private, or publick, as human, or divine; so surely simple innocence, in which neither of these take place, cannot be a *proper foundation* for either. But to return,

Having

* When a man does good or evil to himself, as he only is interested in that good or evil; so the action itself carries with it its own reward or its own punishment, and that I think is all which, in reason and equity, the case requires.

Having before shewed what it is which renders a creature the *proper object* of divine vengeance, I now proceed to enquire whether there is any thing *in nature* that can render such a creature the *proper object* of mercy. And first, let it be admitted for argument's sake, that there is nothing in nature which can render such a creature the proper object of mercy, in order to see how the case will stand upon that supposition. And if this be admitted, *viz.* that when a creature has rendered himself the proper object of divine revenge, there is nothing in nature which can render that creature the proper object of mercy; then the consequence is clear, *viz.* that God will not shew *mercy* to such a creature; he will not *remit* neither in whole nor in part that *punishment* his sins have justly exposed him to, but will execute vengeance to the *full* according as his crimes deserve. I say this will be the case, because this is following *nature*, and acting *properly*; whereas were God to act otherwise, that is, were he to shew mercy to a creature which is not the proper object of mercy, but of vengeance and punishment, it would be altogether as *preposterous*, and as *contrary* to rectitude, as it would be for him to *love* a creature who is the proper object of his *hatred*. Again, let it be admitted on the other side, that when a creature has rendered himself the proper object of divine revenge, there is something in nature which will render that creature the proper object of mercy; I say, let this be admitted

admitted in order to see how the case will stand upon this supposition. And if this be admitted, then when such a creature has rendered himself the proper object of mercy, God will most certainly shew *mercy* to that creature; I say, this will certainly be the case; because this would be following *nature*, and acting *properly*, whereas were God to act otherwise, that is, were God to with-hold his mercy from a creature who had rendered himself the proper object of mercy, this would be as *preposterous*, and as *contrary* to rectitude, as it would be for God to *hate* the creature who had rendered himself the proper object of his love. This, I think, is as plain and evident in morals, as any proposition in mathematicks can be. By mercy, in this case, I mean the *remitting* that *punishment* in whole or in part which the offender had justly exposed himself to. Not to shew mercy to a creature who has rendered himself the proper object of mercy, is to be *unmerciful*; which is contrary to rectitude, and is justly blameable. To be unmerciful is to *with-hold* mercy *when*, and *where* mercy ought to be shewn, which is the present case.

But then, if it be admitted that there is something in nature which will render such an offender, as is here referred to, the proper object of mercy, the question will be what that something is? Whether it be something *inherent* in him, or whether it be something *external* to him: And, in order to find *satisfactory* answers

swers to these questions, it will be necessary to enquire what it is, which is the *true ground* of divine revenge? Whether it be something inherent in the creature, or something external to him? I say, this is absolutely necessary to be enquired into, because it is the *removing* or *taking away* the grounds of divine revenge, which must make *way for*, and which can only render such a creature the *proper object* of mercy; for otherwise that creature will *continue* to be the proper object of revenge, until vengeance has been *fully satisfied*. But this I have enquired into already, and have shewn what it is which renders a creature the proper object of divine revenge; namely, it is opposing the great end of creation, by becoming a common enemy to the common good, from an habitual baseness or vileness of mind; I say, from an habitual baseness or vileness of mind, because the *evil actions* referred to must not be considered abstractedly from the *bad disposition* they spring from, seeing that disposition denominates and constitutes them to be what they are, *viz. evil actions* in a moral sense, and seeing it is the evil disposition of mind those actions spring from, which renders the agent the *proper object* of divine revenge. And as the true and only ground of divine vengeance is *internal* and *personal*; so of necessity the true and only ground of the divine mercy must be *internal* and *personal* also; because it is the taking away of the *former*, which is the ground or reason of the *latter*, as I have al-

ready observed. And as the *doing good* and the *doing evil*, which are the only proper grounds of reward and punishment, are both *personal*, and cannot be *transferred* to another; so it is apparently contrary to rectitude to *afflict one* for the *offences of another*, or to shew mercy to *one* for the virtues of *another*, this being to act greatly *improper* in either case. He that does *evil* from an *evil disposition*, does thereby justly expose *himself*, and himself *only*, to *punishment*; and were *evil* to be inflicted on *another* upon that account, such evil would be inflicted from an *improper* motive, and without any *just* ground, and therefore would be wrong. In like manner, he that does *good* from a virtuous or good *disposition* of mind, does thereby render *himself*, and himself *only*, worthy of *recompence* or *reward*; and were mercy shewn to *one* on the account of, and by way of return for the good done by *another*, this would be shewing mercy to that person from an *improper* motive, and without any *just* ground, and therefore would be wrong also. And, as the ground of divine mercy must of necessity be internal and personal; so the question before us is, what it is in nature which can be the ground of that mercy? But this branch of the subject I have already largely considered, in my Enquiry concerning the ground and foundation of religion, (to which I refer my reader) and therefore I shall here only transcribe what I have there offered as the sum of the argument.

“ I have already observed, that punishment
 “ is relative to guilt, the latter of these being
 “ the ground and foundation of the former. I
 “ have likewise observed, that actions derive
 “ their guilt, not from their effects and con-
 “ sequences, but from their causes; that is,
 “ from those evil or vicious dispositions of
 “ mind, which are the ground and cause of
 “ them. I have further observed, that when
 “ once guilt is contracted, it can never be
 “ *taken away*; that is, when *once* an evil ac-
 “ tion has been committed, that action can-
 “ not be *undone*, nor can it ever be otherwise
 “ but an *evil action*, and consequently, the
 “ person who committed it must continue to
 “ *have been* guilty of that evil action to all
 “ eternity, at least, so long as he shall con-
 “ tinue to exist. And this is the case upon
 “ *all schemes*, whether the *criminal* suffers the
 “ punishment his crime deserves, or whether
 “ we admit the absurd supposition of *another's*
 “ suffering in his stead, or whether his punish-
 “ ment be *remitted*, in whole, or in part.
 “ But then, tho' an evil action cannot be *un-*
 “ *done*, but must continue to *have been* com-
 “ mitted to all eternity; yet that *evil disposi-*
 “ *tion of mind* out of which it sprang, (and
 “ which denominates and constitutes it to be
 “ an evil action in a *moral* sense) may be *put*
 “ *away*, and when that is the case, then he
 “ that before was the *proper object* of punish-
 “ ment, by this, *ceases* to be such, and be-
 “ comes thereby the *proper object* of mercy.

“ For

“ For as in things *natural*, take away the
 “ cause, and the effect *will* cease ; so in things
 “ *moral*, take away the cause, and the effect
 “ *ought* to cease. A man in a state of *po-*
 “ *verty* is the proper object of *relief*, and
 “ therefore *ought* to be relieved : but then,
 “ take away the cause, and the effect *ought* to
 “ cease ; that is, change his circumstances, by
 “ putting him into a state of *plenty*, and then
 “ he *ceases* to be the proper object of relief,
 “ and therefore *ought not* to be relieved. In
 “ like manner, a man who, from a *wicked*
 “ disposition of mind, has been guilty of a
 “ wicked action, becomes thereby the *proper*
 “ *object* of punishment : but then, take away
 “ the cause, and the effect *ought* to cease ; that
 “ is, change his circumstances by removing
 “ that *wicked* disposition of mind which took
 “ place in him, and which was the *cause* of
 “ his misbehaviour, and then he *ceases* to be
 “ the proper object of punishment, and be-
 “ comes *thereby* the proper object of mercy.
 “ For when the *grounds* of resentment and
 “ punishment *cease*, which is the case here,
 “ then, in reason and equity, resentment and
 “ punishment *ought* to *cease* also. And it would
 “ be the same absurd conduct, to *punish* a man
 “ after he is become a *penitent*, for his having
 “ *before* been guilty of an evil action, as it
 “ would be to *relieve* a man in a state of *plen-*
 “ *ty*, for his having *before* been in a state of
 “ *poverty*. This *change* of *circumstances* in an
 “ offender, changes his *character* and *relations*.

“ For, whilst he was under the power of *vi-*
 “ *cious* affections, and was *disposed* to gratify,
 “ and *did* gratify them to the publick hurt,
 “ he was then an *evil* and *vicious creature*,
 “ and an *enemy* to the intelligent and moral
 “ world, and, as such, was the *proper object*
 “ of resentment and punishment. But when
 “ he became *changed* as aforesaid, he then
 “ *ceased* to be that *evil* or *vicious creature*,
 “ and is become *virtuous* and *good*, (or at least
 “ he is prepared and disposed to be so) he is
 “ no longer an *enemy*, but is (or is disposed to
 “ be) a *friend* and a *benefactor* to the intelli-
 “ gent world as far as it is in his power, and,
 “ as such, he is no longer the proper object of
 “ *resentment* and *punishment*, but is become by
 “ the *forementioned change*, the proper object
 “ of *compassion* and *mercy*. So that if the
 “ Deity will follow nature, and be guided by
 “ it, (which he most certainly will) then he
 “ must deal with such a creature according to
 “ what *he is*, and not according to what he
 “ *has been*; he must deal with him not as an
 “ *offender* considered *simply as such*, which
 “ would render him the proper object of *pu-*
 “ *nishment*, this not being his *whole character*;
 “ but he must and will treat him as a *penitent*
 “ *offender*, that being his *whole character*, and
 “ the *present* state of his case, and, as such,
 “ he is the *proper object* of God’s *mercy*. To
 “ say, in this case, that the penitent offender
 “ *still continues* to have been guilty of the
 “ crimes he has committed, and therefore, he
 “ ought

“ ought to be *punished*, this is weakly urged ;
 “ because, (as I have already observed) that is
 “ the case upon *all schemes*, and therefore it
 “ ought not to be urged here ; and is the same
 “ kind of reasoning as to say, that the man
 “ who has been in a state of poverty, tho’ his
 “ circumstances are changed, and he is now
 “ in a state of plenty ; yet he *still continues* to
 “ be the man who has been in a state of po-
 “ verty, and therefore *still* ought to be relie-
 “ ved ; the weakness of which, I think, ap-
 “ pears at first sight. From what I have ob-
 “ served, I think, my readers cannot avoid
 “ seeing what it is which renders men, who
 “ have, by their *greatly departing* from that
 “ *rule* of action they ought to be governed by,
 “ rendered themselves *justly* displeasing to their
 “ Maker ; I say, I think, my readers cannot
 “ avoid seeing what it is which will render
 “ *such offenders* the *proper objects* of God’s mer-
 “ cy ; and consequently will be the *ground* of
 “ the divine mercy to them. Namely, it is
 “ passing through *such a change*, which, (to
 “ speak in the figurative language of the New
 “ Testament) is called a *being born again* ; be-
 “ coming a *new creature* ; being *created anew*
 “ in, or according to Christ Jesus ; and the
 “ like. Whatever offender passes through *this*
 “ *change*, he thereby *ceases* to be the *proper ob-*
 “ *ject* of punishment, and becomes the *proper*
 “ *object* of mercy ; and therefore, we may be
 “ assured, he will most certainly obtain it at
 “ God’s hand.”

I am sensible, that what I have before laid down is not admitted by a *late ingenious writer* on this subject, who, tho' he allows that *penitence* renders the offender the proper object of *mercy*; yet were God to shew mercy to him, it would be to act contrary to *rectitude*, and therefore that cannot be the case. This, I presume, it will be expected I should take notice of, in order to do *justice* to the *subject* before me. The author has observed, that were God to shew *mercy* to the *penitent offender*, this would be treating *penitence* and *innocence* alike; which as they are *different* characters, that require *different* treatment, so to treat them *alike* must be contrary to *rectitude*. To this I beg leave to add, that were God to punish the *penitent offender*, this would be treating *penitence* and *impenitence* alike; which as they are *different* characters, (*much more* different than *penitence* and *innocence*) that require *different* treatment, so to treat them *alike* must be contrary to *rectitude* also. The *latter* of these observations, I think, is as *just* as the *former*, and both of them together seem to bring the Deity under this dilemma, *viz.* that he *must act contrary to rectitude*, let him act which way he will. For, if God shews *mercy* to the *penitent*, then he acts contrary to *rectitude*, by treating *penitence* and *innocence alike*; or if he *punishes* the *penitent*, then he also acts contrary to *rectitude*, by treating *penitence* and *impenitence alike*, and this makes the case look almost desperate. . However, I am not altogether

ther without hope of clearing the divine conduct of this difficulty.

And, in order thereto, I observe, that to *admit* the supposition, that it is contrary to rectitude for God to shew mercy to the proper objects of mercy, is *greatly absurd*. To love the proper objects of love, and to *hate* the proper objects of hatred, is not only *agreeable* with rectitude, but is really *rectitude itself*. In like manner, to shew *mercy* to the proper objects of mercy, is so far from being *contrary* to rectitude, that it is perfectly *agreeable* with it; yea, it is *rectitude itself*. And tho', in this case, penitence and innocence are treated *alike*; yet it will not follow, that penitence is treated *otherwise* than it ought to be. By being treated *alike*, in the present case, must be meant being put upon the *same foot* with regard to *God's favour*; because otherwise they are not treated alike, seeing penitence is *forgiven*, whereas innocence *is not*, nor does it *stand in need* of forgiveness. I have already observed, that innocence is a *mean* betwixt *doing evil* and *doing good*, or betwixt virtue and vice; that as it does not expose a man to any *punishment*, so neither does it entitle a man to any *reward*; simple innocence therefore in point of *morality* is a mere negative; it does neither evil nor good, and rises no higher than *bare existence*. I farther observe, that *penitence*, tho' it entitles the penitent person to a discharge from *punishment*, that is, it renders him *worthy* of such a discharge; yet it does not entitle him to, or
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render him worthy of any *reward*. For, if any reward comes into the case, that reward arises wholly from the *virtue* that was *previous* to penitence, or *consequent* upon it. By reward here is meant some *positive good*, and not *forgiveness* or a discharge from *punishment*, which penitence is here supposed to render the penitent offender worthy of. And, as by *penitence* a creature is born again into a state of *innocence*, that is, innocence for the *time present*, tho' not for the time past; so their *affinity* in this respect renders it proper, that they should be treated *alike*. Penitence *changes* a bad man into a good man, at least it puts him into a state in which he is as much *disposed* to goodness, as if he were in a state of innocence, that is, as if he had never transgressed. Yea, perhaps *more*, because, (according to the proverb, A burnt child dreads the fire,) the penitent is *more likely* to be upon his *guard*, than if he were in a state of innocence, seeing he has experienced the *sad effects* of the contrary. And this observation seems to be justified by the conduct of our *first parents* when in a state of innocence, than which, surely, none were ever *more easily* betrayed into folly than they, when in their innocent state. However, I think, it may justly be said, that penitence does *as much* dispose a man to virtue and goodness as innocence, and as such they are *alike* the objects of God's favour, and as they are to make their *fortunes* as their *future virtue* shall deserve, so surely the putting them upon *such*

a foot cannot be contrary to rectitude. And; tho' the penitent person has *contracted* guilt, which the innocent person has not; and tho' penitence does not, nor cannot *undo* what has been done, it cannot *annihilate* guilt when once contracted; yet it can and does remove from the guilty person, those *evil* or *vicious dispositions* which were the ground and cause of guilt; it can and does render the offender the *proper object* of mercy; it can and does *restore* the guilty person to a *state*, which to all intents and purposes is the same as *innocence*, or at least is equal in value to it. And,

Here I beg leave to observe, that in common language we often speak of the *qualities*, or *properties* of action, as if they were real *substances*; and of what is *past*, as if it were *present*. Thus, we say that *guilt* cannot be *annihilated*, whereas guilt being only the *non-conformity* of action to *rectitude*, or to that *rule* which action ought to be conformed to, resulting from a *base* and *evil mind* as its ground and cause, it is not the subject of annihilation. And thus, we speak of guilt as *present*, whereas when the guilty action *ceases*, the *guilt* or *non-conformity* of that action to its rule *ceases* with it. It would be equally as absurd to suppose, that when an action *ceases*, the *guilt* (which is only a property) of that action *continues*, as it would be to suppose, that when a spherical body *ceases*, the *sphericalness* (which is only a mode or property) of that body *remains*: whereas the truth is, that as when a spherical

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body is *annihilated*, then *sphericalness*, and every other *property* of that body *ceases* with it; so when an action *ceases*, then *guilt*, and every other *property* of that action *ceases* also. And therefore, when a man has once been *guilty* of *murder*, tho' it will be *for ever true* that he *has*, or *did* once contract the guilt of murder, that he *has been*, or *was* guilty of murder, and that he *has been*, or *was* a murderer; yet it will not be *for ever after true*, that he *is* contracting the guilt of murder, or that he *is* a murderer; because when the *murderous action* ceased, then the *murder*, or the *non-conformity* of that action to rectitude ceased also. But then, tho' *guilt* is as *instantaneous* as the *action* it stands related to; yet the propriety and fitness of *punishing* the agent who has contracted it, *remains*, until he has *suffered* the punishment his crime deserves, or has by his *repentance* discharged himself from those vicious dispositions, which were the ground and cause of his guilt; and when *either* of these take place, he then *ceases* to be the proper object of punishment; because by the *former* a just resentment is *fully satisfied*, and by the *latter* the *grounds* of that resentment are *removed*, so that in either case the propriety and fitness of punishing ceases.

But then it may be urged, that I have used the term *innocence* in a sense *different* from what it is used by the author I refer to, who intends by it *perfect virtue*, as is evident when we take into the account all that he has said
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upon the subject. To which it may be answered, *first*, That perfect virtue, perhaps, is a *state* that none of our species have attained to, and if so, then perfect virtue does not come into the case. Man is so constituted, as that perfect virtue cannot *reasonably* be expected from him, seeing it is more than *ten thousand* to *one* that he will do amiss, in some instances, through the infirmities and frailties of nature. Nevertheless, when a man retains *such a rectitude of mind*, as not to contract any vicious dispositions, and behaves properly through the general course of his life, and in those instances in which he does amiss through inattention and the weakness of nature, as soon as he comes to himself he is sensible of, and sorry for his misconduct, and makes his miscarriage a reason to himself to be more watchful of his behaviour in time to come; I say, notwithstanding such a man *acts wrong*, in some instance; yet he behaves as well as the present constitution of things will admit, and as may reasonably be expected that he should; and therefore he will most certainly be approved of God. And, tho' such a man does not attain to *perfect virtue*; yet he does not need *that repentance* which vicious men do, because all the repentance he is capable of, and which his case requires, *attends upon*, and *tallies* with his *guilt*. And, if perfect virtue is not attainable by mankind, then, I think, it is out of the question. But farther, if it be admitted that some *one* or *more* of our species have attained

to *perfect virtue*, or admitting it might be the case, or supposing it were, then it may be answered, *secondly*, That the shewing *mercy* to penitent offenders, is not treating penitence and perfect virtue *alike*, because penitence only entitles to an *exemption from punishment*, whereas perfect virtue entitles to a *reward* suitable to the measure of that virtue which is to be rewarded; and this, surely, is very far from treating penitence and perfect virtue alike.

I am sensible it has been urged, that this is considering the penitent *abstractedly* from his *crimes*; whereas he is to be considered in his complex character, *viz.* not barely as a *penitent*, but as a *penitent offender*; and that rectitude requires he should be treated according to that *complex character*, which is the truth of his case. To which it may be answered, That this is *groundlessly* urged, because the *ideas* of penitence and guilt are *inseparable* in the present case. The idea of *guilt* is evidently contained in the idea of *penitence*, as repentance necessarily supposes an *offence committed*, which is repented of; so that where there is repentance, there must have been guilt, and where there has not been guilt, there can be no repentance; that is, there can be no place for it, because there is nothing to be repented of. Again, the idea of *guilt* is also contained in the idea of *mercy* or *forgiveness*, as forgiveness necessarily supposes an *offence committed*, which is forgiven; so that where there is mercy or forgiveness, there must have been guilt, and
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where there has been no guilt, there can be no forgiveness; that is, there can be no place for it, because there is nothing to be forgiven. And, indeed, the thing itself requires that *penitence* and *guilt* should be considered as *connected*; because it is this *complex character* only which is the *object* of *mercy*. For, could penitence be considered abstractedly from guilt, (which nature does not admit) then *forgiveness* would be *excluded*, because there is nothing in penitence to be forgiven: so that it is not penitence considered abstractedly, but penitence connected with guilt, which renders a creature the object of mercy. In fine, the case in morals, I think, stands thus; *simple innocence* is a *mere negative*, it neither exposes to punishment, nor entitles to a reward; *guilt* considered *abstractedly* renders a person the object of *punishment*; *guilt connected* with penitence renders a person the object of *mercy*; *virtue* renders a person the object of, or worthy of *reward*; and to act agreeably, in the distribution of these, is to act *right*, or according to the *truth* of each one's case; or, in other words, according to *moral rectitude*. Thus, I think, I have fully cleared the character and conduct of the Deity from that great *distress* and *difficulty* it seemed to labour under.

And, as I have *removed*, or at least have attempted to remove the forementioned *difficulty*; so I shall take the liberty to consider what the *worthy* and *ingenious author* I refer to, has
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offered for that purpose. And, in order to make way for what the author has urged in the present case, he introduces *another case* as *similar* to it. In the *former* God is considered as dispensing to his creatures *natural evils*; and in the *latter* as *discharging* them from such evils. The *former* regards *those evils* which befall, or at least which are supposed to have befallen mankind, upon the misbehaviour of our first parents in eating the forbidden fruit, namely, *mortality*, and a *depravation* of human nature upon the whole species. The *latter* not only regards a discharge from those evils inflicted as above, but also a discharge from that *condemnation* mens sins have exposed them to.

With regard to the former, the author allows, that as *Adam's sin* was *personal*, so his posterity, who were then not born, could not possibly be involved in the *guilt* of it; and consequently could not be worthy of *correction* on that account. So that had Almighty God dispensed those evils to mankind on account of *Adam's transgression*, this would be contrary to *rectitude*; because it would be *afflicting* a multitude for the *offence* of one, which offence they were no way *guilty* of, nor *accessary* to. And therefore, to keep clear of this difficulty, the author considers the great evils which befall mankind upon *Adam's sin* to be *natural grievances*, that came upon *Adam's posterity*, not by way of *punishment* for his sin, but only as *natural consequences* thereof. Upon which I observe, that the evils beforementioned are *just*
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the same, whether they be considered as punishments for *Adam's* sin, or only as natural consequences thereof, they are equally the same *in themselves*, and equally the same to those who *bear them*, and, I imagine, that the *character* and *conduct* of the Deity are equally affected thereby. The *first* man, when he came out of his Maker's hand, is supposed by our author to be naturally *immortal*; and that he had no *inclination* or *propensity* to sin. But then, *Adam's* body, and also the *fruit* which grew upon the tree of knowledge, were *so constituted*, as that the *latter*, when it had passed into the *former*, naturally introduced *so great a change* in the human constitution, as that from an *immortal*, *Adam* became a *mortal creature*, and likewise all his numberless *posterity*. And not only so, but the *effect* of this fruit was such, when it had passed into *Adam's* body, as that it naturally introduced a *depravation* of the human nature; through which depravation all our species became *disposed*, and were under a *strong propensity* to sin. By this *bias* in the constitution, tho' man's agency was not destroyed; yet the case of every individual of our species became *exceeding hazardous*, in as much as it was great odds that *every one*, in some instances, would be betrayed into *sin*, and consequently into *future misery* thereby. So that *in*, and *by* the dispensation of the fore-mentioned *natural grievances*, (as our author calls them) mankind were, not only *cut off* from the perpetual enjoyment of the blessings

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of this world, but also were *so exposed* to the miseries of another, as that there was scarce a possibility of escaping them. But then, were this the *truth* of the case, (which surely it is not) such a constitution of things must be *greatly defective*, and *greatly contrary* to the divine rectitude. For, as man is by, and from his make and constitution an *accountable creature*; so rectitude requires that he should be *equally* dealt with, and that he should have *fair play* for his life; but if men are called into being under the forementioned difficulties and disadvantages, having such a *bias* in their constitutions as naturally and almost unavoidably leads them to *sin*, and in consequence thereof to *future misery*, of which it may justly be questioned, whether *one* of our species has escaped, seeing, as St. *James* saith, that *in many things we offend all*; I say, if this be the case, which according to our author it is; then such a constitution of things must be *greatly contrary to rectitude*; and then, as mankind are very *unfairly* and *unequally* dealt with, so the disadvantages they are born under are *equally* injurious to them, and *equally* dishonourable to God, whether they be considered as *penal upon*, or only as *consequences* of *Adam's* transgression. And supposing those evils to be *more than balanced* by the benefits that accrue to mankind in and through a *redeemer*; yet what is this more, or otherwise than *breaking* the head, and then giving a *plaster* to heal it; or the being *greatly cruel*, in
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order to make way for the exercise of *mercy*. But then, that mankind became *mortal*, and that human nature became *depraved*, consequent upon *Adam's* sin, these doctrines are *contradicted* by all the obvious appearances of nature; and consequently the divine conduct in the production of the present constitution of things, stands clear of what has been thus unjustly charged upon it.

Having thus considered what our author has offered as *introductory* to what he had to urge, in order to remove the forementioned difficulty, I now come to consider what he *has urged*, for that purpose. The difficulty referred to arises from hence, *viz.* our author has observed, that were God to shew *mercy* to *penitent offenders*, whom he allows to be the *objects of mercy*, this would be treating penitence and innocence *alike*; which as they are *different* characters, that call for *different* treatment, so to treat them *alike* must be contrary to *rectitude*. To which I have added, that were God to *punish penitent offenders*, this would be treating penitence and impenitence *alike*; which as they are *different* characters, (*much more* different than penitence and innocence) that call for *different* treatment, so to treat them *alike* must be contrary to *rectitude* also. Here we see, that in the present case, the Deity seems to be surrounded with *difficulty* on every side; the *kind assistance* which our author has *offered* to help him out, I come now to consider. The expedient which our author has found out for

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removing the aforesaid difficulty, is by introducing a *redeemer* into the case; tho', by the way, the term redeemer must be used in a very *remote, improper, or figurative sense*; because when that term is used *properly*, it is not applicable to the case before us, seeing the case in hand no way *tallies* with a *literal redemption*. But admitting the term, which in the present case is merely *nominal*, the question will be, how is the forementioned difficulty removed by a redeemer? And the answer, in a few words, (without meddling with the *flourishes* and *decorations* of our author's argument) I think, is this, namely, that the redeemer has *done and suffered such things*, as have merited greatly at the hands of God, which merit God has *rewarded* the redeemer for, in a way that terminates in the *good* both of the redeemed and the redeemer; in the *good* of the redeemed by their *sins being pardoned*; and in the *good* of the redeemer by the *pleasure and satisfaction* that arises to him from a *sense* of penitent offenders being *forgiven*, and of *his* having *obtained* that forgiveness for them. This is the way in which God pardons penitent offenders, according to our author, which he thinks is agreeable with *rectitude*; and thus he thinks the forementioned difficulty is *removed*; tho', I think, a little attention to the subject will plainly shew the contrary, upon our author's principles.

Our author lays it down as a *fundamental principle* in morals, that every creature must be

be dealt with according to his *true character*, whether that character be *simple* or *compounded*; and to act otherwise is contrary to *rectitude*. And seeing penitent offenders sustain a double or complex character compounded of *guilt* and *penitence*, and innocence is a *simple uncompounded* character, this difference of course calls for *different* treatment; and therefore to treat penitence, (that is, penitence connected with guilt,) and innocence *alike*, must be contrary to *rectitude*, according to the fundamental principle before laid down. Upon which I observe, that if *rectitude* requires that *every creature* should be treated according to his *true character*, and if the *having been guilty* is a part of the character of a penitent offender, as most certainly it is, and if *pardoning* the penitent is contrary to *rectitude* as our author maintains, because it is treating penitence and innocence *alike*; then from hence it will unavoidably follow, that it will be *for ever* contrary to *rectitude* for God to *pardon* a guilty person, whether penitent, or impenitent; because the *having been guilty* will *for ever* be a part of his character. For let whatever circumstances take place; yet as those circumstances cannot possibly *alter* the guilty person's character, but *leave him* just as they found him in that respect, *viz.* a *guilty person*; so they cannot possibly *alter* the *divine conduct* with respect to him, supposing God to act agreeably with *rectitude*. It will be *for ever true*, that a person *has been guilty* of those faults which

he has been guilty of, and this will *for ever be his true character*, or at least a *part* of it; and therefore it will *always be unfit*, (let what will take place) for God to *pardon* him, because that will be treating guilt (whether connected with penitence, or impenitence) and innocence *alike*, which is contrary to *rectitude*, upon the principles before laid down; so that the introducing a redeemer makes *no alteration* in the case. And therefore, admitting that the *merits* of a redeemer were a *thousand fold greater* than they are, supposing such a thing could be; as those merits have no connection with, nor relation to the *guilt* of any foreign agent, nor is the *character* of any guilty person in the least *altered* thereby; so he cannot possibly receive any *benefit* from them, because *rectitude* requires that he should be *dealt with*, not according to the merits and true character of *another*, but according to the truth and reality of his *own case*.

Besides, the merits of a redeemer cannot possibly *alter the nature of things*, they cannot turn *wrong* into *right*, where the subject continues the same, which is the present case. And therefore, to suppose that God would *pardon* penitent offenders by way of *reward* for the *merits* of a redeemer, is the same as to suppose that God would *do evil* that *good might come of it*; that God would do what is *morally evil*, that *natural good* may accrue thereby, both to the redeemer, and the redeemed. To *pardon* penitent offenders is de-
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clared to be contrary to *rectitude*, that is, it is *morally evil*; and if so, then we may be assured this is what God *will not do*, to answer any, even the *best* of purposes. For, tho' God will most certainly reward the merits of a *redeemer*, and of every other *person*; yet, surely, he will do it in a way that is perfectly *agreeable* with *rectitude*, and not in a way that is *contrary* thereto, which the *pardoning* penitent offenders is *professed* and *declared* to be. And, tho' a *redeemer* cannot but *approve of*, and be *pleased with* the repentance and forgiveness of sinners, this being the case of every *gracious mind*, there being *joy in heaven*, *joy in the presence of the angels of God* over one sinner that *repenteth*, and much more over *multitudes* that do so; yet, surely, *such pleasure* cannot, with any propriety, be called a *reward*, because in fact it is not so. The pleasure and satisfaction that arises to every good mind from a *sense* of penitent offenders being forgiven, is most apparently the *effect* and *consequence* of such forgiveness, and not the *ground* and *reason* of it; and, the introducing the term *redeemer*, which is merely nominal, makes *no alteration* in the case. Nor is the redeemer's *merits rewarded* by God's *pardoning* penitent offenders; for if that were the case, then the *merits* of one, would be *rewarded* in the *persons of others*, which our author does not admit, because it is contrary to *rectitude*. However, to save appearances, the *pardoning* penitent offenders must be *called* rewarding the merits of a redeemer,

deemer, tho' ever so *improper*, and then all looks fair and well: like as in the forementioned case, the *great evils* that are supposed to befall mankind upon the transgression of our first parents, if those evils are considered as *afflictions* laid upon our species on account of *Adam's sin*, this is not to be admitted, because it is contrary to rectitude; but then, conjure those evils into a *consequence* of *Adam's transgression* and all is right. From what I have observed, I think, it appears, that our author, instead of *removing* the forementioned difficulty, has rather *perplexed* and *distressed* the subject.

As to our author's *similitude*, of an earthly monarch *pardoning* his rebellious *penitent* subjects, at the *request*, and on account of the *merits* of the prince his son; this is a *covering* too narrow to *hide the nakedness* of his argument. For, either those *penitent* rebels were the *proper objects* of the king's mercy and forgiveness *independent* of the intercession and merits of the prince, or they *were not*. If they *were*, then, the case is clear, that it was *fit* and *proper* for the king to forgive them *exclusive* of all other considerations; because otherwise he *would not* act properly by them, nor as their case required. If they *were not* the proper objects of the king's mercy and forgiveness *independent* of the intercession and merits of the prince, then the case is as clear, that it *would be unfit* for the king to shew mercy to them, even tho' he was importuned to do it
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by a *son* who had *merited greatly* at his hands ; because to forgive them would be to act *improperly* by them, and otherwise than their case required. And were the king to act *improperly*, by shewing mercy to those who were not the proper objects of mercy from *such motives*, this would be an instance of *great weakness* ; but then, to attribute *such weakness* to God is most intolerable, (I am sorry to say it, for the worthy author's sake.) To *tack about* here, and say, that those rebels were the *proper objects* of the king's mercy, is to *exclude* the intercession and merits of the prince out of the case ; because then it would be *right and fit* for the king to *pardon* those *penitent* rebels, because they are *penitent* rebels, *exclusive* of all other considerations. I will only add, that to *play at cups and balls* in morals, is of dangerous consequence ; as it tends to *baffle and mislead*, not the *external senses*, but the *intellectual and reasoning faculties* of mankind. But to return.

I have before shewn what it is which renders a creature the *proper object* of divine vengeance ; and also what it is which renders *such a creature* the *proper object* of God's mercy ; to which, I here add, that the being the proper object of mercy is, and must be the *only ground* or reason to the Deity for shewing mercy in any instance, because were God to shew mercy upon *any other account*, or from any other ground than the creatures being the proper object of mercy, he would then act *improperly*,

perly, or contrary to rectitude, which cannot, or rather which will not be the case. All therefore that remains is to enquire *how*, or in *what sense* the terms redeemer, and redemption are applicable to the case before us; and particularly what is to be understood by them when applied to the *Christian redemption*. I have already observed, that in a literal redemption with respect to persons, (if I may be allowed to express myself thus) there must be a *literal slave* or a person in a state of literal slavery to a literal master, and also a *literal price* or valuable consideration paid by a *literal redeemer*, to that literal master, in order to purchase a *literal redemption* to that *literal captive*. So that when those terms redemption, and redeemer are applied to the case before us, they cannot be taken in a *literal sense*, but must of necessity be used in a *loose, improper, or figurative sense*. The case, I think, stands thus. As in a *literal redemption*, the person who is redeemed, is delivered from a *great evil, viz.* a state of *slavery*, which *deliverance* is properly called *redemption*; so in the present case, the offender is also delivered from a *great evil, viz.* from that *condemnation* which by the just judgment of God he was bound over to, which *deliverance* may also by a *figure of speech* be called redemption. And as in a *literal redemption*, he who *pays the price*, which is the *ground* of the captive's deliverance, is properly called the *slave's redeemer*; so in the present case, he who is *instrumental* in bring-

ing a sinner to that repentance and reformation of his evil affections and actions, which is the *ground* of God's mercy to him, may also *by a like figure of speech* be called the sinner's redeemer. This, I think, is the *utmost* that can be expressed by those terms redeemer, and redemption, when applied to the case in hand. And,

As Jesus Christ was sent into the world on purpose to *seek* and to *save* that which was *lost*, by calling upon, or otherwise engaging sinners to repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance, and thereby to render themselves the proper objects of *God's mercy*; so whosoever are prevailed upon by *his means* to repent and turn to God as aforesaid, and thereby escape the wrath to come, all such persons may, by a *figure of speech*, be said to be *redeemed*; and Jesus Christ may, by a *like figure of speech*, be said to be their *redeemer*. This is all the redemption that the nature of the thing will admit; and this, in a few words, is the *sum* and *substance* of the Christian redemption. And, that this is the truth of the case, is most apparent from the history of Christ's life and ministry, in which, the end of Christ's coming, and the grounds of God's favour to men, and of his mercy to sinners are most expressly and fully declared. It is the *setting forth* and *exemplifying* of *these* to which Christ's discourses and parables are chiefly directed, and in which they generally terminate. For as Christ declared of, and from himself that he was come to *seek* and to *save*

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that which was lost; so he declared that *repentance* and *reformation* was the ground and foundation of God's mercy to wicked men, and that except they did repent, they would *all perish*. So that he came to seek and to save men in *this way*, and by *this means*, *viz.* in prevailing upon them to repent and turn to God, and thereby to render themselves the proper objects of God's mercy. This, I say, was the way in which Christ proposed to be a Saviour to mankind; and indeed this was the only *possible way* in which he could do it. For, as men had by their evil deeds rendered themselves *personally displeasing* to God, and the proper objects of his resentment; so of necessity Christ must, if he would be a Saviour to them, remove from them those *evil dispositions* which had been the cause of their miscarriages, and the ground of God's displeasure towards them; and he must produce in them such *good dispositions* as would render them personally pleasing to God, and the proper objects of his mercy. I say, Christ must render men personally pleasing to God, of which there was no other *possible way* but by bringing them to repentance and amendment of life: for, as to what Christ either did, or suffered, which might render him personally valuable, and personally pleasing to God, that could not possibly make *any alteration* in the sinner's case. Christ likewise declared, that the practice of *virtue* or *well-doing* was the ground of God's favour, and that the practice of *vice* or *evil-doing*

doing was the ground of God's displeasure, and this, I think I may say, he was constant and uniform in. For, tho' Christ insisted on mens *believing* in him, and represented such faith to be of the *utmost importance* to them; yet, it is plain, he did not intend by this to teach men, that *simple believing* was the ground of God's favour and mercy, but only that without such faith, the *purposes of his ministry* would not be answered upon them; they would not *do* what he taught them, if they did not *believe* in him. This very point Christ hath fully explained at the conclusion of his most excellent sermon on the mount, in which he assures us, that it is not he who cries, *Lord, Lord*, who *believes* in Christ, and professes *discipleship* to him, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but only he that *does the will of God* who is in heaven. That he who hears, who believes Christ's sayings and *doth them*, builds his house upon a *rock*, acts with *safety*, whereas he who hears, who believes Christ's sayings and *doth them not*, such a hearer, such a believer builds his house upon the *sand*, exposes himself to the *utmost danger*. So that it is not *believing*, but *doing* which is the ground of God's favour and mercy; and it is doing in a man's *own person*, and not in the *person of another*. The ground or reason why the father received, embraced, and rejoiced over his prodigal son, who had wasted his substance in riotous living, (Christ informs us) was not because he had been importuned to do it, not because some other person had behaved well and merited greatly at his hand; but because he, the

prodigal, was *personally changed*, and become a good man; this was the reason why the father received him, &c. It is *meet*, it is *fit and proper*, said the father to the elder brother, that we should make merry and be glad, for, or because, this thy brother was *dead*, and *lost* in *vice* and *wickedness*; but is *alive* and *found* again by *repentance* and *reformation*. This is what Christ's discourses and parables chiefly point at, and in which they generally terminate, as I have already observed; and this I call Christianity, or the *Christian religion*, because this is what *Christ* taught, who was the *founder* of that religion.

I have carefully read those books called the *Four Gospels*, in which books we have an account both of what Christ *did*, and *taught* in the exercise of his ministry; and through the whole, these plainly appear to me to have been the *great* and *main points* which he inculcated upon his hearers, which he had principally in view, and which he industriously pursued; namely, to prevail upon men to render themselves *personally valuable*, and thereby *personally pleasing* to God; by putting on that internal and unaffected piety, that plainness and simplicity, that uprightness and integrity, that humility, meekness and patience, that modesty, temperance and sobriety, that peace and quiet, that kindness, friendliness, love and benevolence which are the *ornament* and *perfection*, and also the *happiness* of our natures, whether man be considered in his single, or in his social capacity; and this Christ represents

as the *only ground* of God's favour, and of that great recompence of reward which is laid up in heaven for those that are worthy of it: and also to prevail upon *vicious* men to be *regenerated* and *born again*, to become *new creatures*; by putting away from them all vile affections, and every evil word and work, and by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness; and this he represents as the *only ground* of God's mercy to sinners, and as the *only way* by which they may escape the wrath to come. This, I say, is what Christ *principally* aimed at thro' the whole course of his ministry, as the histories of his life do plainly shew; there being but *one sentence*, or rather but *one single word* throughout those histories which seem to look *any other way*, and from which *any other conclusion* may be drawn. *Matt. xx. 28. Mark x. 45. Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.* Here from the word *ransom* (which, I think, is all that can be found through the whole history of Christ's life and ministry) a contrary conclusion may be drawn, *viz.* that the ground of God's mercy to sinners is not their rendering themselves the proper objects of mercy, but rather what Christ has *done* and *suffered* for their sakes; he came to give his life a *ransom* for many. But then, to put such a sense upon this word, which is *contrary* to all that Christ has said upon the subject, and which cannot possibly be *true*, this, I think, is greatly *unreasonable*, and not doing

doing *justice* to our common Master : especially, if it be considered that this term is often used in a *figurative* sense in the books of the Old Testament. For example, As God by his judgments upon the *Egyptians* prevailed upon *Pharaoh* to let the people of *Israel* go ; so by a figure of speech he is said to have redeemed or ransomed them *. In like manner, as Christ spent his time, his strength, his life, his all, (if I may so speak) not chiefly to serve himself, but to prevail upon *men* to be virtuous and good, and upon sinners to repent and turn to God, and thereby render themselves the proper objects of God's *favour* and *mercy* ; so he may, by a like figure of speech, and with equal propriety, be said to give his life a *ransom* for them ; and this, I think, is the utmost that can, with any propriety or truth, be inferred from this word. And,

As this is *true Christianity*, and the *true gospel* of *Jesus Christ*, at least as far as Christianity and the gospel of Christ are concerned with the grounds of mens acceptance with God, and of sinners obtaining the divine mercy ; so it is in this, that the Christian religion *excels* all other traditionary religions ; *viz.* in that it separates true religion from every thing that has been *annexed* to it, or *blended* with it. Christianity lays the ax to the *root* of the tree, it cuts off every *excrescence*, every *luxuriant branch*,

* Exod. vi. 6. xv. 13. Deut. vii. 8. ix. 26. xiii. 5. xv. 15. xxi. 8. xxiv. 18. 2 Sam. vii. 23. 1 Chron. xvii. 21. Nehem. i. x. Mic. vi. 4.

branch, every thing that is *supernumerary*; and reduces religion to its *native purity* and *simpli-*
city. Christianity makes *personal* valuableness,
 and that only, the *ground* of mens acceptance
 with God; and a *personal* renovation of heart
 and life, the *only ground* of vicious mens ob-
 taining the divine mercy. But then, by Chri-
 stianity, I mean only what *Christ himself* has
 set forth and declared in these respects, and not
 what his disciples and followers may have said
 touching these matters. If a dispute should arise
 concerning what is *true* Christianity, what is
 the *true* gospel of Jesus Christ, then, I think,
 as the history of Christ's ministry has been
 transmitted down to us; so the appeal must be
 made to *that history*, in order to obtain proper
 satisfaction; and not to the writings of his *dis-*
ciples and *followers*, who were liable to *fall*
short, or to *go beyond* the design and intention
 of their Master, as I have already observed.
 The *immediate* disciples and followers of Christ,
 even *after* the effusion of the Holy Ghost on
 the day of pentecost, thought, or were of
 opinion, that the gospel of Christ was to be
 preached to the *Jews only*; and that led them
 to confine their ministry to those *Jews*: but in
 this they *erred in defect*, *viz.* in limiting and
 confining the kindness and goodness of God
 (held forth by the gospel) to the *Jews*, which
 was designed to be extended to *all mankind*.
 Again, the *immediate* disciples and followers of
 Christ, or some of them at least, thought that
 circumcision and the observation of the cere-
 monial

monial law of *Moses* ought to have been imposed upon, and to have been submitted to, by the *Gentile converts* to Christianity: but then, in this they *erred in excess*; namely, in making, or rather in thinking Judaism to be a part of Christianity, when it is not so; at least it was not judged to be so by *St. Paul*, and a great party of Christians with him. Now if the *apostles*, if the immediate *disciples* and *followers* of Christ were liable to such mistakes as those before-mention'd, even after they had received the *promise of the Father*, as it is evident they were, if the *history* of their *acts* is to be relied upon; then, surely, this ought to be a reason to us to *weigh* and *consider well* what we receive from them; especially if it appears to be *contrary* to what we have received from their *Master*, which is the present case. Besides, such caution, care and inspection is what the apostles themselves have recommended to us. Thus, *1 Thess. v. 21. Prove all things*, all questions, all doctrines, let them come from what quarter soever; and then, upon such trial, hold fast that which appears to be true and good. *1 John iv. 1. Believe not every spirit*, every prophet, every teacher; but try them all whether they be of God, or not; because many false prophets or teachers are gone out, or shew forth in the world. By this advice we not only learn, that *all teachers* and their *doctrines* are to be *tried*, but also, that there is a *certain rule* by which we may judge whether such doctrines are true,

or false; and consequently whether they are, or may be of God, or not; because, without such a rule, all trial comes to nought. So that, according to the above advice, we are not *blindly* to submit to *any thing*, much less to *every thing* that may be imposed upon us. And, as Christ has made a renovation of mind and life, and that only, the ground of God's mercy to vicious men, and has not made his own sufferings and death a party in the case, (if I may so speak) nor indeed does the nature of the thing admit that he should; so, surely, the *authority* of the *apostles* cannot be a *sufficient warrant* to us, to set aside a doctrine which is most apparently *true* in itself, and which has been delivered to us by their *Master*.

The pardoning penitent offenders is a matter of *great importance*, in which the penitent is *greatly interested*; and therefore it cannot be a matter of *indifference* whether God pardons penitent offenders, or not. Now, if it cannot be a matter of indifference, then the case will be brought to this short issue, *viz.* it is in the nature of the thing either *right* and *fit* that God should pardon penitent offenders, or else it is *wrong* and *unfit* that he should do it; I say, it must be one or the other of these, seeing *indifference* (which is the mean) is excluded out of the case. If it be the *former*, that is, if it be in the nature of the thing *right* and *fit* that God should pardon penitent offenders, then he will most certainly do it; and he will do it for this reason, *viz.* because it is *right*

and *fit* that he should ; *this motive* being sufficient to determine the divine will and power to do what is right, exclusive of all other motives or considerations whatever. If it be the *latter*, that is, if it be in the nature of the thing *wrong* and *unfit* that God should pardon penitent offenders, then it is most certain that God will not pardon them, and he will not do it for this reason, *viz.* because it is *wrong* and *unfit* that he should ; nor will any consideration prevail upon him to act thus, it being morally impossible that the *merits of ten thousand redeemers*, or that any intercession or application to him should prevail upon him to do what is in itself wrong. So that the forementioned doctrine, *viz.* That God is made placable or merciful to penitent sinners through the merits that have arisen from the life, the sufferings, and death of Jesus Christ, is most notoriously false. And

Here, I think, it may not be amiss to enquire into the doctrine of *merit*, as applied to *Jesus Christ*, which is generally made the main ground of Christians *faith* and *hope* ; tho' by the way Christ has not made *faith* in his blood, nor reliance on his merits, but only *bearing his sayings and doing them*, the great, and the only ground of safety to his followers. As Christ was appointed and sent of God to teach and instruct mankind in the *true way* to eternal life ; so he entered upon his ministry when about *thirty* years of age, before which time it does not appear, that he did any thing material

rial in which mankind are interested. And when Christ entered upon his ministry, it is said that he *fasted forty days*, after which he was led by the spirit into the wilderness, and was *tempted* of the *devil*; but then, as Christ was not *hungry* all that time till the *forty days* were at an end, and therefore did not exercise any great *self-denial* in the time of his fasting; so his *virtue* could not rise very high on that account. And, as Christ's standing out, and not being *overcome* by the devil's temptations, rises no higher than *simple innocence*; so virtue or merit seems at least to be *excluded* out of the case. And when Christ entered upon that work he was appointed to, he went up and down *Judea*, or at least he travelled over those parts of that country where the poor and ignorant people lived, *teaching them*, and *doing good to them* by the many miracles he wrought; by which means probably he went thro' much *painfulness* and *weariness*, and sometimes drew on himself the *reproaches*, and at other times the *acclamations* of the people: but then, in all this, (according to his own account) he was with respect to God an *unprofitable servant*, he did no more than was his duty, in the office he was appointed to. Indeed, by what Christ did, mankind became *greatly obliged* to him, as he prosecuted *their good* thereby. And, as Christ went up and down the country of *Judea*, doing good as beforementioned; so when about *three years and an half* were expired, he, at *Jerusalem*, fell into the

hands of *wicked* and *blood-thirsty* men, who treated him with scorn and contempt, buffeted him, put a crown of thorns upon his head, and at last put him to death in a way the most *shameful* and *painful*. And, as Christ went through all this duty and suffering readily, willingly and cheerfully, and with a view to promote both the present and future well being of mankind; so of necessity he must thereby render himself *highly approveable*, and *greatly rewardable* to the common Father of us all; from whom, no doubt, *Christ has, and will, in due time, receive a full and ample reward*. But then, as to mankind it is out of their power, (at present at least) to *return the kindness*. I say, there can be no room for doubting, but that God has, and will amply reward the virtue or merits of Jesus Christ; but then, there cannot be the like reason for concluding that God will *heap favours upon, or shew mercy to others* on account of *Christ's merits*; because that would be acting contrary to the eternal rules of right and wrong, which require, that *where virtue takes place, there, in the same person, reward should take place also, and not in the person of another*. God may, if he please, shew kindness to his creatures *independent of all merit*; but then, it would be the *goodness of God*, and not the *merits of another*, which would be the *sole ground* of that kindness: whereas were God to shew kindness to one, by way of *return* for the virtue or merits of another; such return would be very *improper*, as

the reward would be placed on a *wrong object*; in which case, (the truth is) the *absence* of virtue would be favoured, (if I may so speak) whilst *virtue itself* would go unrewarded. This being the true state of the case, the grand question arising from hence will be, whether the *cruelty* exercised on Jesus Christ in his sufferings and death be a just ground for *mercy*, or for *resentment* in the Deity. In all other cases, I dare say, it will be allowed, that such a scene of action would be a just foundation for resentment; and if so, then the question will be, how comes *nature* to be reversed in this? how comes that to be a just foundation for mercy here, which would be a just foundation for resentment in all other cases? To add the circumstance of Christ's being the *son of God*, is so far from *helping*, that on the contrary it makes the case still *worse*, as that circumstance makes the *grounds* of resentment so much the *stronger*. However, if the *opinion* of Jesus Christ be of any *weight*, he has declared himself plainly and fully upon this question, *Mark xii. 1—9, And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard,—and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.—Again, he sent another, and him they killed, and many others, beating some, and killing some. Having yet there-*

therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, they will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, this is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen; and will give the vineyard unto others. This parable, I think, is only applicable to Jesus Christ, and to those men who had been before sent to the Jews to remind them of their duty, and to call them to repentance for the breach of God's laws, and who had met with ill usage from those Jews on that account; and likewise to the Jewish nation. In the application of this parable, Christ is so far from representing his sufferings to be the ground of mercy to the Deity in any respect, that he does not give the least hint of it; but on the contrary, he represents his sufferings and death as a just ground of divine revenge. What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. I am sensible this is only applicable to those who were some way or other concerned in, or accessory to Christ's sufferings and death; but then, these are all that can possibly be interested in the case. As to the rest of mankind, the sufferings and death of Christ cannot possibly be a ground of divine mercy, nor revenge to them; because they are not rendered the proper objects of either thereby.

by. To suppose therefore, that the *vileness* and *wickedness* which the *Jews* and *Romans* were guilty of, in laying so heavy a burden of affliction on Jesus Christ, as he underwent by his sufferings and death; or that the *virtue* exercised by Jesus Christ, in submitting to, and patiently bearing that burden; I say, to suppose that either of these were a ground or reason to the Deity to shew mercy to *mankind*, is most wild and extravagant, and repugnant to the common sense and reason of mankind. As to the *wickedness* exercised in that scene of action, that, most certainly, was a just foundation for *divine revenge*. And, as to the *virtue* exercised by Jesus Christ, tho' this might render him highly worthy of recompence or reward; yet it could not possibly be a proper ground for God to shew *favour* or *mercy* to *mankind*, because they were not rendered more or less the *proper objects* of either thereby. The doctrine of *transferring* virtue or merit from one to another, or of God's shewing kindness to one on account of the virtue or sufferings of another, as it has been of long standing in the Christian church, (who probably took it from the *Jews*;) so, I presume, it laid the foundation for this doctrine, *viz.* That works of *supererogation* take place in some Christians; which doctrine has prevailed in the *church of Rome*, and has greatly promoted the *trade* thereof. This doctrine of works of supererogation taking place in some Christians, has indeed been *justly exploded* by *Protestants*; tho' at the same time they have maintained that there was an *infinite*

finite redundancy of good works in Jesus Christ; whereas, if we suppose an infinite redundancy of virtue or merit in *Christ* which was *transferable*, then where lies the absurdity or impropriety of a redundancy of merit in *some* of his followers, that is equally transferable, tho' *much less* in quantity, in proportion to the measure of virtue they have attained to? If it be said, that Christ's followers have done no more than was their duty, and therefore they have not had a *redundancy* of good works; then the same may be said of Jesus Christ; it *behoved him*, or it was his *duty* to do, and suffer as he did, in order to answer the purposes of his ministry, and the end of his coming, or of his being sent into the world.

If it should be said, supposing the doctrine of *transferring merit* were *excluded* out of the case; yet, nevertheless, it was absolutely necessary Christ should *suffer* and *die*, that thereby God might vindicate and support the *honour* of his laws, and likewise shew his great *dislike* of *sin*; because otherwise the pardoning penitent offenders would expose God's laws to *contempt*, by countenancing men in the breach of them: Answer, That it was necessary Christ should *suffer* and *die*, in order to answer the purposes of his *ministry*, may perhaps be true; but that it was necessary he should suffer and die, to answer the *purposes aforesaid*, that could not be the case; because those purposes could not possibly be *answered* thereby. The *honour* of God's laws could not be supported and vindicated by

the *open* and most *notorious breach* of them; which was the case in the crucifixion of Christ. Nor could God's dislike of sin possibly be shewn, by his *permitting* men to be *guilty* of the greatest wickedness, in imbruing their hands in the blood of a person the most innocent and virtuous: I say, God's dislike of sin could not possibly be shewn, by his permitting or suffering such *cruelty* and *barbarity* to take place, which was *all the part* the Deity bore in that scene of action; namely, he *permitted* or *suffered* it. Nor indeed does the pardoning penitent offenders in the least *countenance* the breach of God's laws. For, tho' God pardons *penitent* offenders; yet he pardons *none but penitents*, and that shews God's *dislike* of sin, and the breach of his laws, to be *such*; that no merit, no application or intercession made to him by another, is sufficient to *atone* for the breach of them; that nothing but a thorough renovation of mind and life in the *sinner himself*, will discharge him from that *punishment* which his *sin*, through the just judgment of God, has bound him over to.

But then, it may be urged, that the *apostles* of Christ taught this doctrine, *viz.* That God was made placable or merciful to penitent sinners by the *sufferings* and *death* of *Jesus Christ*; as their writings do plainly shew. Thus *Romans* v. 9, 10. *Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For, if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son,*

&c. Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* Eph. iv. 32. *Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Heb. ix. 12. *By his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* 1 Pet. ii. 24. *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, &c.* Chap. iii. 18. *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.* 1 John i. 7. *But if we walk in the light, even as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin.* Rev. i. 5. *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, &c.* Chap. v. 9. *For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, &c.* To which I answer, that these and all other texts of like import, must of necessity be taken in a figurative sense, in order to render them consistent with truth, and with Christianity.

If it should be farther insisted on, that the apostles *did teach* the aforesaid doctrine, in the *texts* referred to; for tho' their writings do abound with figures; yet the sentences before-mentioned, or some of them at least, do not admit of any such figurative sense as is here supposed. As thus, *forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* Here the doctrine taught by the apostle is plainly and evidently this, *viz.* That it is upon *Christ's account*, and for *his sake*, that God forgives penitent

nitent offenders; of which *no figure* can be found which will *destroy this sense*, and at the same time leave the apostle's words consistent with *common sense*. To this I answer, That if the apostles did teach this doctrine, of which I do not take upon me, nor indeed am I able to shew the contrary; then in this, as they greatly departed from the truth, so they went greatly beyond the design and intention of their Master, by making that the ground of God's mercy to penitent offenders, which Christ hath not made so; and therefore this doctrine is no part of Christianity.

If it should be farther urged, that the apostles have not only taught the forementioned doctrine, (*viz.* That God was made placable or merciful to penitent sinners by or through the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ;) but they have also given it the sanction of miracles, as they wrought miracles in confirmation of their *ministry at large*, of which *this doctrine* is a part; so that were this doctrine *erroneous*, such error would be rendered *invincible*, by the miraculous power which attended it: To this I answer, Whether the apostles taught the aforesaid doctrine, or not; or whether this doctrine has had the sanction of miracles, or not; is not very material in the present case; because the *authority* of the *apostles*, and the *sanction* of *miracles* united, cannot possibly *alter* the nature of things, cannot make a false proposition *true*, cannot make the doctrine under consideration to be either *true* in itself, or a

part of Christianity, when in reality it is neither. And, as to miracles, that matter may perhaps be thought to be *cleared up*, and all difficulties *removed* by a late learned and ingenious writer on the subject of miracles, who has observed, that when miracles are unconnected with doctrine, then they only prove themselves; that is, they only prove that such miracles were wrought; and this, I think, must be true, except it be that they may also be marks of kindness or resentment, according to the good or evil which may be produced by them. Neither veracity nor infallibility have any necessary connection with, nor dependence upon power, nor power upon them; and therefore the power of working miracles cannot, of itself, be a proper test of truth in any case whatever. And, as it would be very inconclusive to argue, that because a man speaks truth, therefore he has the power of working miracles: so it will be equally inconclusive to argue, that because a man has the power of working miracles, therefore he speaks truth; the *latter* conclusion being equally as *unnatural* as the *former*. Whether a man speaks truth in any instance, or whether he has the power of working miracles, must be proved by such principles from which these conclusions do naturally and unavoidably follow, and not from one another, seeing they have no connection with, nor dependence upon each other. The author I refer to has also farther observed, that when miracles are connected with doctrines,

then

then they are either miracles of truth, or miracles of a lie, according to the truth or falseness of the doctrines or propositions they stand connected with. So that if the doctrine under consideration, together with the other parts of the apostles ministry, were connected with the miracles that the apostles wrought; then, as those miracles stand connected with some propositions or doctrines that are true, so in these instances they are miracles of *truth*; and as these very same miracles stand connected with the doctrine under consideration, which is erroneous; so in this instance they are miracles of *error*, (or, according to our author, they are miracles of a lie;) which distinction and difference does not arise from the miraculous power exercised, but from the *different doctrines* which such power stands connected with. And indeed our author seems to be much in the right, in the present case, because the nature of the thing seems to require that all doctrines which are to be tried ought to be brought to their *proper test*, (at least all doctrines of moral consideration, in which mankind are interested, these ought to be tried by the *standard of moral truth*) and not be tried by any *power* they may arbitrarily be *connected* with; I say arbitrarily connected, because nature does not constitute any such connection.

Besides, as, (according to the author I refer to) miracles, when unconnected with doctrines, prove nothing but themselves; so the miracles wrought by the apostles, which stand upon record

cord in their Acts, do not appear to be connected with any doctrines, and consequently those miracles only *prove themselves*; and in this view of the case they are out of the question. That the miracles wrought by the apostles were not connected with any doctrine, by this I mean, that they were not particularly *declared to be so* by those who wrought them, they not having declared what particular doctrines they intended to connect those miracles with, or whether they intended any such connection at all; and therefore, the question will be, What is it which constitutes a *connection* betwixt miracles and doctrines? seeing nature has not made any such connection. This indeed is a matter of great importance in the present case; because, till this point be fairly settled, we may perhaps only *ramble*, and not *reason conclusively* upon the subject. But then, this is what the author I refer to has not done, nor attempted to do; tho' in his view of the case it seems to have been *greatly wanted*, and the subject seemed to *require it* at his hand. And as to me, it is a task which I find myself unequal to; for when I look round the subject, difficulties crowd in on every side. However, I here observe, that the connection betwixt miracles and doctrines may be made or constituted, or at least may be supposed to be constituted several ways. As *first*, by a *particular and special declaration* of him who works the miracle, in which declaration is specified the *particular* doctrines or propositions each mira-

cle is, or is to be connected with. Or *secondly*, by some *general declaration* made by him who works the miracle, expressed in these, or the like words, [The works that I do, bear witness of me.] Or *lastly*, such connection may be supposed to be constituted by the working of a miracle, and the promulgation of a doctrine by *one and the same person*, without any general or particular declaration made concerning it; in which case, the *miracle wrought* becomes, *of itself*, connected with *every doctrine promulged by the operator*, at least, with all that are promulged *after* the operation. If the *first* of these ways be the case, that is, if miracles and doctrines become connected by a *particular declaration* of him who works the miracle, then the miracles wrought by the *apostles* are out of the present question, they only prove themselves, seeing they are *destitute* of any such connection with doctrines as is here referred to, and at most were only miracles of kindness or of resentment. And then, as the miracles wrought by *Moses* in *Egypt* were only connected with this proposition, *viz.* that *Moses was sent of God to Pharaoh to demand the people of Israel's freedom*, and were not connected with that body of judicial and ceremonial *laws*, commonly called the *dispensation of Moses*; so that dispensation does not appear to have been any more connected with, and supported by *miracles*, than was the *dispensation of Mahomet*. And the miracles wrought in the *wilderness* do not appear to be any more, or any other

other than instances of *God's extraordinary presence* with the children of *Israel*, until he had brought them to the promised land; and at most were miracles only of kindness or of resentment. Again, if miracles become connected with doctrines by some *general declaration* made by him who works the miracle, expressed in these, or the like words, [The works that I do, bear witness of me;] then the miracles wrought by the *apostles* are likewise, in this view of the case, out of the present question, as being *destitute* of any such connection. The apostles wrought miracles upon *different* occasions, as the objects of *pity* were presented to their view, and the like; but then, it does not appear, that they connected those miracles with the doctrines they taught, by any *general* or *particular* declaration concerning it. Or *lastly*, if miracles and doctrines, *of themselves*, become connected by their being wrought and promulgated by *one* and *the same person*, without any general or particular declaration concerning such connection; then, indeed, the miracles wrought by the *apostles* must have been connected with their doctrines. But then, as the doctrine under consideration, *viz.* that God was made placable or merciful to penitent sinners through the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, is supposed to have been taught by the apostles, which doctrine I have before shewn to be erroneous and contrary to Christianity; so all the miracles wrought by the apostles, which became connected

nected with this doctrine, were, in *this instance*, miracles of *error*. And this must have been the case whenever the apostles taught any thing that was *erroneous*, of which the doctrine before-mentioned, I think, was not the only instance. I say, in all *such instances*, the miracles the apostles wrought must have been miracles of *error*; tho' in many *other instances* those very miracles were miracles of *truth*.

If it should be said, admitting the supposition, that the *same miracle* may be both a miracle of *truth* and a miracle of a *lie*, (which indeed, I think, it may be, if miracles and doctrines become *connected* as aforesaid, except the investing a man with the power of working miracles makes that man both *infallible* and *impeccable*, and thereby secures him for ever after from thinking, speaking, and acting *wrong*, which surely is not the case, nor, I think, is it pretended to be;) I say, if it should be said, that the admitting the above supposition greatly *embarrasses the subject*, and involves it in *such confusion* from which nothing can certainly be concluded: I answer, we must of necessity take things as they are, whether they *prove more*, or *less*; and not pretend to extract *that*, or *more* from them than is contained in them; seeing, according to the proverb, We can have no more of a *fox* than his *skin*. Miracles are instances or evidences of *superior power*, and have a natural tendency to draw people about the *operator*, and to engage their *attention* to what he says; they may
 O likewise

likewise be marks of *kindness* or of *resentment*, according to the purposes they are made to serve; all this, I think, is plain and indisputable. But when the matter is carried farther, and miracles are considered as *connected* with *doctrines*, and thereby are made *vouchers* for those doctrines, then *difficulty* and *distress* appears. For when once a man has wrought a miracle, *after that* it will be in his *power*, and at his *choice* to make it a miracle of *truth*, or a miracle of a *lie*, or a miracle of *both*; as it will be in his *power*, and at his *choice* to promulge *truth*, or *error*, or *both* after the working of such miracle. And in this view of the case, miraculous power may perhaps be thought scarce fit to be trusted in *human hands*, as being of dangerous consequence; seeing error, even *hurtful error*, when vouched for by *miracles*, would become almost *invincible* to those people whose attention and discernment seldom goes farther than their *senses*, of which people there are not a few. For, as he who works a miracle is not only liable to *err himself*, after the operation, but is also liable to make the miraculous power he has exercised, subservient to *good* or *bad purposes* as he pleases; so were God to design and constitute such miraculous power to be a *sanction* to every *doctrine* which the operator should promulge *after* the exercise of it, the divine conduct, in such a case, would be most *hazardous*; and it would be running such a *risk* with regard to the safety and well-being of mankind, as a man of common prudence

dence would not chuse to do in an affair of much less concern, except the necessity of the case required it. And if we form a judgment of men in *former times*, when miraculous power was exercised, from what appears to *take place now*, it renders the case still more difficult; because now, it plainly appears, that many of the greatest pretenders to, and most zealous advocates for religion, faith, and orthodoxy, are scarce *trust worthy*, where the *abuse* of trust will turn to their *worldly* advantage, as experience and fact every day shew. To say that God will effectually secure all those with whom he entrusts miraculous power, for ever after from thinking, speaking, and acting wrong, would be to assert against plain fact, if the historical account of things in the New Testament is to be relied upon; but this, I think, is not pretended, as I have already observed. That the *apostles* and *first converts* to Christianity *erred in judgment*, even in matters of importance, after they were endowed with power from on high, and after they had wrought miracles by virtue of such power, is left upon record; and that the apostles were liable to such error, is, I think, farther evident from their writings, or at least this appears to me to have been the case of *St. Paul*, who is represented to have wrought miracles in abundance: and, that the apostles were liable to *err in practice* or *act wrong* is as evident, if *St. Paul's* authority is of weight, who declared, that he withstood *Peter* to the face,

because he (*viz. Peter*) was to be *blamed*, as having acted wrong, *Gal. ii. 11*. And *St. Paul* supposed of himself that he was liable to act wrong, even to his own destruction, *1 Cor. ix. 27*. If therefore the investing a man, even an apostle, with the power of working miracles, did not *secure that man* from erring in his judgment, nor from promulging such error; and if it did not *secure him* from erring in his practice, from imposing upon others, as is evident it did not; and if miracles and doctrines become, *of themselves*, connected as aforesaid, so that one becomes a *voucher* to the other; then the subject appears to me to be in a *perplexed state*; which perplexity seems to render *scepticism*, with respect to *miracles*, more *eligible* than otherwise it would be; as it naturally leads to this question, *viz.* Whether the *difficulties* which attend *doubting* that any miracles were ever wrought, are less, or equal, or greater than those *difficulties* which attend the *belief* of them. With regard to the former, the sceptick has *one main difficulty* to encounter with, *viz.* the *historical evidence* upon which the truth of those miraculous facts depends, that the believer gives his assent to, and by which, those facts are supposed to be *well attested*; but then the *weight* of this kind of evidence, in some cases, seems to depend upon the *favourable disposition* of the believer, who is convicted upon such evidence: so that *equal evidence* does not, in all cases, produce the *same degree* of assent where the favourable disposition is wanting,

ing, as where it obtains. This seems to be the case with respect to *witches* and *apparitions*; the facts that relate to these, having been looked upon for many ages past to be *well attested*, like that of miracles, the historical evidence for the proof of the former not coming greatly behind, for number, clearness, and credit, the historical evidence for the proof of the latter; and yet now, *scepticism* with regard to *witches* and *apparitions*, is become *much less disreputable*, and is *more easily admitted* than heretofore; and this has led our wise legislators to *cancel a severe edict* with regard to one of these, *viz.* that of *witches*. Whether the *weight* of that *historical evidence* which attends miracles is liable to such *fluctuation* as in the cases above-mentioned, I do not take upon me to determine; all that I have to observe is this, *viz.* that the believer, upon the foregoing supposition, (*viz.* that miracles are connected with, and are made vouchers for every doctrine the operator shall promulge after the operation by a divine appointment,) has also difficulties to encounter with; which difficulties, as they are *stubborn*, and seemingly *inflexible*, so one follows upon another, as the clouds follow after the rain. Thus, in the *first* ages of Christianity, when the gift of miracles was vouchsafed to the church; then *parties* and *disputes* about religion abundantly prevailed; and that not only in the *second* and *third centuries*, but also in the *first*, as the *writings* of the apostles do plainly shew. Upon which I observe, that in those

those times the power of working miracles must have been present with, and have been exercised by *all parties*, and thereby miracles must have been *connected with*, and have been promiscuously *vouchers for truth and error* alike; or else that power must have been exercised only in *favour of truth*, and consequently only by *those parties* that maintained it. If the *former* of these was the case, then *great confusion* must have followed; for as the power exercised, such as giving sight to the blind, health to the sick, life to the dead, and the like, could not, *of itself*, shew whether it was *connected with truth or error*; so the *party* exercising such power must have left the subject under the same *distress*; seeing it was exercised by *all parties*, and on *each side* of every controverted question alike. If the *latter* was the case, that is, if miraculous power was exercised only in *favour of truth*, and consequently only by *those parties* that maintained it, then, the consequence is clear, *viz.* that parties and controversies must have *ceased*, and could not long have subsisted among them; for as miracles would have been *connected with truth only*, so consequently they would have determined every question in favour of *orthodoxy*, by which means all parties and controversies must have come to an end; this surely would have been the case. There are many parties and controversies subsisting among Christians at *this time*, of which, I think, the pedobaptists and antipedobaptists are not to be considered

sidered the least; seeing much learning and reasoning have been shewn, and many volumes have been written by *each party* in that controversy. Now, supposing the gift of miracles was at this time restored to the church, and that the power of exercising it was present with *one* of these parties and not with the other, and consequently that miracles were connected with, and thereby became vouchers for *one side* of this controversy only, the question would be, what will follow from hence? And the answer to this question is most obvious, *viz.* that the *controversy itself*, and likewise the *parties* founded upon it would *cease* and come to an end; because on which side soever miraculous power appeared, it would *determine* the question in its *favour*; and the other party would be forced to *give out*, as not having wherewith to *oppose*. And if this would be the case *now*, which I think must be allowed; then, surely, it would have been the same in the *first ages* of the church, when miraculous power was present with it. And therefore, seeing parties and controversies prevailed among Christians, whilst the power of working miracles is supposed to have been exercised by them, from hence it may seem to follow either, *first*, that the power of working miracles must have been exercised by *all parties*, and thereby miracles must have been connected with, and have been promiscuously vouchers for *truth* and *error* alike, which introduces great confusion, as I have already observed;

or else it may seem to follow; *secondly*, that no such miraculous power was exercised *at all*; seeing otherwise parties and controversies would have *ceased*, which yet it is plain they did not; the *latter* of which may perhaps, in this view of the case, seem at least, to have the appearance of *probability*.

Nevertheless, I think, it must be allowed, at least it is readily allowed by me, that tho' there is no such connection betwixt *power* and *truth*, as that one is a *necessary attendant* on the other; and tho' miracles cannot alter the nature of things, cannot make a false proposition true: yet, I think, when it plainly appears that miraculous power is, or has been exerted, the exertion of such power calls for our most serious attention and regard; and if any doctrine has been promulged by the operator that mankind are *interested in*, which doctrine is in itself *probable*, as being perfectly agreeable to our natural notions of things; then such miraculous power at least greatly *strenghtens* or *heightens* that probability, as it ministers just ground for presuming that the *spring* of such *superior power* is the *spring* of *superior knowledge* also, when both, to appearance at least, are kindly held forth to answer the purposes of benevolence. But then, I think, we are not *blindly* to follow every thing that may be *recommended* by miraculous power; but on the contrary, I think, it is our *duty*, because our *interest* is embarked in the case, to try *every spirit*, *every doctrine*, *every prophet*, *every teacher*;

teacher; to *prove all things*, and to *hold fast that*, which upon *such trial* appears to be *worthy* of the *common parent* of mankind. This is the sum of the matter, as the case appears to me; tho' it may perhaps have a very different appearance to others.

Thus I have gone through what I proposed, and have, I think, treated this subject, *viz.* redemption, with *plainness, fairness* and *freedom*. And tho' I have gone out of the *common road*; yet if I should here have dealt forth *more truth* to my readers than they are usually entertained with, on subjects of this nature, I presume it will easily be excused.

F I N I S.

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T H E

GROUND and FOUNDATION

O F

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IT may perhaps seem *strange*, that an enquiry of this nature should take place at *this time*, after so many ages are past, and so much reasoning and argumentation has been exercised, and so many *thousands*, perhaps *millions*, of treatises have been written by men of *superior* abilities on moral *subjects*; I say, it may seem strange, that *now* it should become a *question* what morality is *founded upon*, or, perhaps, whether it has *any foundation* in nature at all. This may, possibly, be thought to favour of *universal scepticism*, or that there is no such thing as certainty in nature. However, so it is, that the *ground* of morality is become *disputable*. By morality I apprehend is meant that *rectitude*, *fitness*, or *propriety of action*, which is supposed to take place, or ought to take place among intelligent beings, as such propriety of action *approves*, or *recommends* itself to their intelligent nature, and

is the *law* of it; and its contrary, viz. *impropriety of action*, is supposed *unworthy* to be chosen by them, as it is in its own nature *disapproveable*. The ground of this disparity is supposed to be previous in nature, as resulting from the *natural* and *essential difference* in things; which difference is supposed to exhibit a *law*, or *rule* of action to intelligent beings, or a *reason* why such beings should chuse to act, or not to act, and why they ought to act one way *rather* than another; a *conformity*, or *nonconformity* of action to which rule being that which denominates *actions*, and *persons*, as relative to those actions, to be good, or bad, virtuous, or vicious. This rule, or reason of action, is sometimes called the law of *nature*, the *moral* law, and the law of *reason*, as it is supposed to be the *offspring* of nature, and, as such, to be written on the *tables* of every man's heart, and as it is supposed to be a *reasonable*, or *proper* rule of action to *all* intelligent beings, who are capable of *discerning* such propriety and impropriety of action, as aforesaid.

That there is such a rule, or reason of action, as above mentioned, and what it is grounded upon, is the *subject* of our present enquiry. But before I proceed, I think, it will be proper to premise, that the term *action* is not here used to express the bare, simple idea of *motion*, but motion under a *certain direction*, or as a *means* to some end;

this is the complex idea of the term action, when considered as good, or bad. Again, the terms, *viz.* good, (when used to express *natural good*,) pleasure, happiness, &c. are used synonymously; by which is meant, what is *pleasing* and *agreeable*: and the terms, *viz.* evil, (when used to express *natural evil*,) pain, misery, &c. are also used synonymously; by which is meant, what is *afflictive* and *disagreeable*. Again, I here admit, or take for granted, *two* points, without attempting to *prove* either; *viz.* *first*, that there is not an universal *sameness*; and, *secondly*, that there is not an universal *indifference* in nature. By there not being an universal *sameness* in nature, I mean, that pleasure is not the *same thing* as pain, that a cube is not the *same thing*, or *kind* of thing, as a sphere, &c. the ideas annexed to these terms being as really *distinct* and *different* in nature, as the terms or sounds are, which they are expressed by. And that this is the *truth* of the case is evident to me, because I *perceive* it to be so; that is, the *bare, simple perception* of a sphere and a cube *prove* to me, that a *sphere* is not the *same thing*, or *kind* of thing, as a cube; and it is evident to me from such simple perception *only*, nor does it admit of *any other kind* of proof; and therefore, it cannot *otherwise* be proved to another. If I should be called upon to *prove*, that a cube is not the *same thing* as a sphere, I must decline it; for as I can only prove it

to myself, by my *sight* and *feeling*; so I can only recommend to others the use of their *senses*, as the only *means* to obtain conviction by. By there not being an universal indifference in nature, I mean, that pleasure and pain are not *equally* eligible, *equally* desirable; but, on the contrary, pleasure is in nature better, and *more* desirable than pain. Pleasure is a *natural good*, which is the *proper object* of desire, and *worthy* of enjoyment; whereas pain is a *natural evil*, which is the *proper object* of aversion, and *fit* to be avoided. But then, this is not proved by argumentation, but by simple perception *only*, as in the other case. If any person should *doubt* of the truth of these points, (supposing that can be,) then such persons are not *concerned with*, and therefore, are not *applied* to, in the present enquiry. These things being premised, I observe, That *happiness* is the *end* of *being* to intelligent beings. Barely *to be* is no *benefit*; and therefore, is not *better* than non-existence. To be *miserable* is a real *disadvantage*; and therefore, is *worse* than not to be. To be *happy* is a real *benefit*; and therefore, is *better* than not to be; and *much better* than to be miserable. From these premises, I think, this conclusion follows, *viz.* that to be happy is the *only desirable state*, or that *happiness* is the *only end* of *being* to intelligent beings. And if happiness be the *end* of *being* to intelligent beings; then happiness, or the view and prospect of it, must be a
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proper ground of action to them, such action being considered as a *means* to that end. Thus far, I presume, *all*, who may be considered as *concerned* in the present question, are *agreed*; and *beyond* this, perhaps, they may in *part* greatly differ; and therefore, after this, what is the *truth* of the case, must not be *presumed*, but *enquired* into. And for the better settling of this point, I will *first* shew, what I apprehend the *truth* of the *case* to be, and the *grounds* upon which my judgment is formed with regard to it; and then I will consider it, when put in the *opposite* light.

Happiness is a *natural good*, the enjoyment of which is a *real benefit*; and that affords a *proper ground* of action to an intelligent being, to *obtain* and *secure* it. Misery is a *natural evil*, the suffering of which affords a *proper ground* of action to an intelligent being, to *remove* or *prevent* it. And as happiness and misery admit of *degrees*, so a *greater* degree of happiness is *rather* to be chosen and pursued, than a *less*; and a *less* degree of misery is *rather* to be borne or submitted to, than a *greater*. And as happiness is in nature *better* than no happiness, and *much better* than misery; so it is for *that reason* rather to be chosen and pursued for one's self, than not; and *much rather* than misery. I say, this *must* be the case, because happiness is *better* for *one's self* than no happiness, and *much better* than misery. A-
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gain, as happiness is in nature better than non-happiness, and much better than misery, so it is for *that reason* rather to be communicated to another or others than not, and much rather than misery; and for the *same reason* a greater degree of happiness is rather to be communicated than a less: I say, this *must* be the case; because thereby there is *so much more good*, more happiness, introduced into the creation, (which is *in itself* greatly desirable, and therefore, *worthy* to be introduced) than *otherwise* there would be. And as happiness is better, and preferable, as aforesaid, so the pleasure or happiness of each *individual self* is better to *itself* in an *equal* degree, than the happiness of *any other* individual; and therefore, it is *rather* to be chosen, and pursued by, and for itself, than for *any other*, when such equal pleasure to *both* is incompatible. And this is the case, when such happiness of an *individual* comes in *competition* with the happiness of a *multitude*; because a multitude is no other than a collection of *many* individuals, whose happiness is only the happiness of each individual *self*, of which that *multitude* is composed. The case is the same, as to the *prevention*, or *removal* of *misery*, the absence of which may be called negative happiness. Pain or misery is a *natural evil*, which is *afflictive* and *grievous* to be borne, according to its measure and degree; and that renders it *proper* or *reasonable*, that it should

should be prevented or removed, as well for *others* as for *ourselves*, tho' our care and concern for ourselves is, in order of nature, *prior* to our concern for others, as we are *nearer* and *dearer* to ourselves, than we can possibly be to others; and therefore, our *first* care ought to be for ourselves. And as happiness is *better*, and *preferable*, as aforesaid, so that *exhibits* a proper ground or reason to an intelligent being, to *forego* some *low* degree of pleasure to *himself*, when he can *greatly* heighten the pleasure of *another*, and more especially of a *multitude* thereby; and likewise to *bear* some *small* degree of *pain himself*, when thereby he can *relieve* another, or others, from an *affliction* or *burthen* most heavy and grievous to be borne, and which, were he in *his*, or *their* case, he would *greatly* and very *reasonably* desire to be delivered from. I say, it would be a *proper* reason to an intelligent being to act thus, as hereby he would introduce *so much the more happiness* into the creation, (which is greatly desirable,) than *otherwise* there would be. And tho', in such cases, the kind, the benevolent agent would be, in some *low* degree, a *sufferer*; yet the *much greater good*, which would be done to *others* thereby, would be a reason *more* than sufficient to a rightly well-disposed mind, a mind that is sensible what pleasure and pain are, to *deny itself* willingly and chearfully for their sakes. Besides, a good, a kind, a

benevolent mind, a mind that is disposed to do good for *goodness's sake*, from a sense of the *usefulness* and *worthiness* of such a conduct, a mind, which is not *sunk* into, which is not *degenerated* into, *absolute selfishness*, such a mind will naturally *taste* so much pleasure, and *feel* so much satisfaction from a sense of his having *done good*, as aforesaid, as will *more than compensate* for *all* that he has suffered, *all* that he has denied himself of, in so doing. Indeed, an absolutely selfish mind can taste no *such pleasure*, nor feel any *such satisfaction*: for were every intelligent nature in the universe to be made completely happy by *his* means, it could be no *otherwise*, nor no *farther*, a ground of pleasure and satisfaction to him, than as his own *self-good* was promoted thereby. If it be *equally indifferent* to each, and every individual intelligent being, whether *any*, or *all* intelligent beings be either *happy* or *miserable*, but himself, (which is supposed to be the case,) then the *happiness* or *misery* of *any*, or *all* other intelligent beings cannot make him *more*, or *less* happy, or miserable, than otherwise he would be; because there is nothing in the case, which can possibly be, in any degree, a *ground* of pleasure to him, or the contrary. I here consider the case, as it is in *nature*, abstractedly from *merit* and *demerit*, and *independent* of self-good; and therefore, it *must*, and *will* be the same, whether *self* has any concern in the case,

or not. To communicate happiness is *in itself* good, commendable, and praise-worthy, whomever that happiness is communicated to, or by; and it is so, when considered *abstractedly* from self; and therefore, it *must* be so, whether this, or that particular self be interested in it, or not. To be made happy is *better* than not, and *much better* than to be made miserable; and therefore, to make happy is *better* than not, and *much better* than to make miserable, *whomever* that happiness be relative to. And from what I have observed, I hope it appears, that *disinterested* benevolence is a *proper* principle of action to an intelligent being.

And if the case be, as I have represented it, namely, that pleasure is a *natural good*, and pain is a *natural evil*, and therefore, *pleasure* is preferable, and ought *rather* to be chosen for *one's self*, and to be communicated to *others*, than not, and *much rather* than pain, (so that there is an *obvious reason*, arising from the nature of things, for the *partaking*, and for the *communicating* of pleasure; and an *obvious reason* against the *partaking*, and against the *communicating* of pain;) then *morality*, or that propriety and rectitude of action, mentioned above, commonly called the *moral law*, and the *law of nature* (as distinguished from all laws, that are grounded on *mere will*;) this rule or law is founded upon a *rock*, which is immoveable, *viz.* upon *invariable and eternal truth*: then morality

is what it is, *independent* of revelation, of the doctrine of *futurity*, and of the consideration of a *Deity*; because it *must*, and *will* be the same, whether these, or either of these, be taken into the account, or not: then there is a *proper ground* for, and an obvious distinction betwixt *virtue* and *vice*. When virtue is considered in a *larger* and more general sense, then *all* actions, that are *consonant* to the aforesaid propriety of action or moral law, come under the denomination of *virtuous* actions; and all actions, that are *repugnant* to that law of nature, are *vicious*. And if virtue be considered in a *more particular* and restrained sense, then whoever benevolently *, that is, voluntarily communicates happiness to another, (when no circumstance intervenes to *bar* the propriety of that communication,) without any view, hope, or expectation of *-serving himself* thereby, any otherwise than that he may *reasonably* hope and expect, that others will shew him the *like* kindness, when there is the *same* ground for it; such *communication* is properly called *virtue*, and the communicator is so *far*, and in *that* instance, a *virtuous* man; he is a *friend* and a *benefactor* to the intelligent world, and
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* If the *spring* of action in doing good to another, be the good the *other* is to reap by that action, and not the good of the *actor*; then this is properly a *benevolent* action, or benevolence is the *spring* of that action. But if *one* intelligent being does good to *another*, for the sake of *-serving himself* thereby; then it is not *benevolence* properly speaking, but *selfishness*, which is the *ground* of that action.

is highly *worthy* of recompence or reward upon account thereof. And he who voluntarily and causelessly, that is, without any proper, or *reasonable ground*, communicates misery to another ; such *communication* is properly called *vice*, and the communicator is *so far*, and in *that* instance, a *vicious* man ; he is an *enemy* and *injurious* to the intelligent world, and thereby renders himself the *proper object* of a just resentment, that is, of correction and punishment. In this view of the case, that kindness, that friendliness, that disinterested bounty, which we see take place in the world, can *easily* and *fairly* be *accounted for*, viz. because *benevolence*, from whence they all flow, is a *proper principle* of action to man, as he is an intelligent being. Upon the present supposition there is a *proper ground* for gratitude, for justice in discharging all obligations, and for every other *social virtue* among men. In this view of the case, that *sympathy*, that *mourning* with them that mourn, and *rejoycing* with them that rejoice, which we see take place among men, this can *fairly* be *accounted for*, viz. because *benevolence*, which is a *proper principle* of action to intelligent beings, *naturally* leads men to have a *mutual concern* for each other's well doing, and to be *mutually affected* with each other's case. And, in this view of the case, the constitution of nature can *fairly* be *accounted for* ; all that *wisdom* and *goodness*, that has been so amply displayed in the *formation*, and
production

production of the various species of animals, which inhabit this earth, and all the *provision*, that is made for their subsistence, and to *defend* them from the evils and dangers, they are exposed to; I say, *all this* can fairly be accounted for, upon a supposition that *benevolence* is a *proper* principle of action to intelligent beings: because then it must have been benevolence, *disinterested* benevolence, which *disposed* the *Deity* to become that *bountiful* and *kind parent* to his creatures, which the constitution of the natural world plainly shews him to be. And, upon the present supposition, the *wisdom* and *goodness*, which is particularly exemplified in the *human* constitution, the *affections* that dispose men to society, to be compassionate to, and tender of each others welfare, and the like, this is all *easily accounted* for, as all these powers and affections *naturally* lead men to that *benevolence*, which is a *proper* principle of action to intelligent beings. And, upon the present supposition, there is a proper ground for *calling* men to an *account* for their behaviour, and for *rewarding* or *punishing* them both in *this* world, and in the world to *come*, according as they have *virtuously* pursued the *great end* of being to each one's self, and to all other intelligent beings, and have acted *agreeably* to the *law* of their natures; or as they have *viciously* acted *contrary* to both. Thus I have shewn, what I apprehend the *truth* of the *case* to be; and if it should be

otherwise, than what I have represented it, yet it is greatly to be *wished* that it were so; because the *good*, the *much greater good* of the intelligent world does most apparently *depend* upon it; and that may be considered as a *presumptive* argument of its *truth*.

Having thus considered, what appears to me to be the truth of the case, I now proceed to consider it, when put in the *opposite light*; and which, I think, will be fully expressed in a few words; *viz.* that *selfishness* is the *only*, or the *sole* and *universal principle* of *action* to intelligent beings, and, as such, it is the *law* of their natures. And, in *consequence* of this principle, it is right, proper, or reasonable, that *each* individual should pursue his *own interest*, or greater self-good, in *all ways* and by *all means*, by which it can *most effectually* be obtained; and he is to do this at *all hazard*, even tho' it be at the *expense* of the happiness of *all other* intelligent beings; and that no intelligent being is any way *obliged*, nor indeed will be *concerned* to pursue the good, the happiness of *any other* individual, any *otherwise* or any *farther*, than as his *own self-good* is, or may be *promoted* thereby, or, at least, as it appears to him to be so. And as I apprehend this to be a *fair* and a *true* representation of the state of the case, which now comes under consideration; so it seems to me to be founded on mere *dogmatism*, as having *no solid* principle in nature or reason for its support,

or for it to be *grounded* upon: For tho' it is highly proper or reasonable, that every intelligent being should pursue his *own greater self-good*, and endeavour to obtain the *highest happiness*, that his own nature and the constitution of things will admit; yet it does by no means follow, that he *ought not*, or *will not* disinterestedly use his endeavour to promote the good of *others*, and even *deny himself* some *low* degree of pleasure for *their* sakes; I say, this will not follow from the above premises; nor, surely, can any *good reason* be given, why a man *ought not* or *will not* be a *good man*, by disinterestedly endeavouring to make his fellow creatures *happy*. However, the above doctrine of absolute selfishness is *abetted*; and therefore, for the present, let it be *admitted*, that we may see how the case will stand upon that supposition.

And here I observe, that if nature exhibits but only *one common* principle of action to intelligent beings, *viz. self-good*; then there is *scarce* any place for the above-mentioned distinctions of *moral, immoral, &c.* For supposing the *way* and *means* to self-good be *considered*, and *called* morality, or propriety of action, (which in the *other view* of the case is *proper* and *true*, so far as selfishness is kept within due bounds, and is not indulged to excess;) then as *all* actions *spring* from that principle of *self-good* only, and are *all* directed only to *that end*, they must

must *all* be morally good in the *intention*, whatever they may be in the event; and, surely, actions *ought* to take their denomination from the *intention*, rather than from an *event*, which was not intended. And as, in this view of the case, *all actions* will be *morally good*, (that is, selfish;) so there will be *no place* for its opposite, *viz. benevolence*, which in the present case is *immorality*, or *moral evil*; because nature does not afford a *motive* or *temptation* to it. The case is the *same* with respect to the distinction of virtue and vice. For if *selfishness* be considered to be virtue, as being *proper*, and what *nature* leads to, and *benevolence*, (which is its contrary) be deemed vice, as being *unnatural*, or *contrary* to the law of nature; then, tho' *virtue* may take place among men, yet *vice* will not, because there is nothing in nature to *lead to it*. And then, tho' virtue may admit of *degrees*, (as he, who takes the *shorter* and *quicker* way to self-good by *robbery* and *theft*, provided he does it with safety to himself, may be considered to be *much more* virtuous, than he, who gets his bread in the *sweat* of his *face*;) yet this is what benevolence, or vice does not *admit*; because there is not, nor will be any such thing, as there is nothing in nature to lead men to it. And as there is no place for benevolence, so the case is the same, as to *gratitude* and *justice*; because a man cannot possibly come under any *obligation* to any other,

other, but himself, seeing others do not serve him upon *his* account, or for *his* sake, but only for their *own*. Nor can any such justice take place, as consists in *rewarding* virtue, and *punishing* vice, as to this world. For tho' virtue or selfishness does take place; yet, surely, it has *no claim* to reward. He that *robs*, or *cheats* his neighbour of ever so *great* a sum, and makes himself ever so *happy* thereby, tho' this may entitle him to the character of a very *virtuous* man, yet it can give him *no claim* to a reward; because, as all his virtue centers in *himself only*, so he can have *no demand* upon others, on account thereof. And if there were of this kind of vice, viz. *benevolence*, which upon the present supposition there will not; yet if *no one* is a sufferer by it, but the *benevolent* person, supposing him to be a sufferer, it cannot be a *proper ground* of vengeance and punishment. And, upon the present supposition, the doctrine of the *corruption of nature* must needs be groundless. For tho' that *selfish disposition*, which naturally takes place in all men, and is the only ground and reason of action to them, may possibly be *weakened* in some individuals, through the *weakness* and *alteration*, that may take place in their respective constitutions, by which their interest may be pursued with *less vigor*, than before; yet that disposition can be neither *corrupted*, nor *supplanted*, because there is *no opposite*, no *other principle* in nature, to
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corrupt it with, or supplant it by; and therefore, to *talk* of the corruption of nature, must needs be *absurd*. And, upon the present supposition, there can be no *ground* of gratitude, and thankfulness to the *Deity*, for what *we are*, and *have*; because, as the *Deity* is an intelligent being, so what he has done *for us*, could not be on *our account*, and for *our sakes*, but only for *his own*. Nor will gratitude and thankfulness to the *Deity* turn to any account *to us*; and therefore, there can be no *ground*, or *reason* for them. And,

This leads me to observe further, *viz.* that if selfishness be the *only*, the *sole* principle of action to intelligent beings; then the whole *vegetable* and *animal creation*, yea the *whole* constitution of nature *cannot* be accounted for. An *absolutely independent* and *self-sufficient* being could not *call into being* such a constitution of things, to answer any purpose to *himself*; because he cannot possibly reap any *advantage* from it: and an *absolutely selfish* *Deity* would not do it, to answer any purpose to others; because there is *no principle* in nature to *excite* him to it; and therefore, it would not have taken place at all. But the constitution of nature *does take place*; and therefore, the principle under consideration must needs be a *false* principle. I have here spoken of the constitution of the natural world in *general*; for were I to descend to particulars, it would be *endless*. If the *Deity* has no principle to act from, but selfishness,

fishness, (which must be the case, upon the present supposition :) then he could not possibly be the *parent* of the natural world, because there is no principle in nature, which could possibly *excite*, or *dispose* him to produce such a constitution of things. And if God be not the *founder* of the natural world; then the question will be, Who is? so that I fear, if the principle under consideration should be pursued *much farther*, it would not fall greatly short of *atheism*. For, if the constitution of the natural world was not the produce of an *intelligent* being, as, I think, upon the present supposition *it was not*, because the *marks* of a *disinterested* benevolence most obviously appear in it; then the argument *for* a *Deity*, arising from the *works* of creation and providence, is *sunk* and *lost*. And then it will be proper for those *overselfish* gentlemen to consider, what *foundation* theism has to *rest* upon. As to the argument *a priori* for the *existence* of a *Deity*, that, I imagine, is *too abstruse* for the generality of mankind to receive conviction from.

And as the *divine* conduct cannot be accounted for upon the present supposition, *viz.* that *selfishness* is the *only principle* of action to intelligent beings; so neither can the conduct of mankind. From whence comes all that kindness, that friendship, that disinterested bounty, that obviously takes place in the world, (bad as it is,) if there be no such thing as *disinterested benevolence* in nature? To say,

say, that men do good to each other *upon account*, and for the *sake* of that *pleasure*, that will accrue to *themselves* thereby, is most *absurd*; because, as it must be *perfectly indifferent* to an absolutely selfish being, whether *any*, or *all* other beings be happy, or miserable, but *himself*: so the happiness of *any*, or *all* other beings, tho' procured by *his means*, cannot possibly *minister* the least degree of pleasure; because there *will not*, nor *cannot* be any thing in the case, which can be a *ground* of pleasure to him. If it be *equally indifferent* to me whether *any*, or *all* other beings be *happy* or *miserable*, then the happiness or misery of *any*, or *all* other beings in the universe cannot possibly be to me a *ground* of *pleasure*, or the *contrary*. And, if the doing good to another, be, in any instance, an *occasion* of pleasure to an absolutely selfish being; then such pleasure does not arise from a *sense* of the good done to, and of the happiness of *another*, but only from the benefit, the happiness, that accrues to the *actor* thereby. Or, if it should be said, that publick and private good are so *connected*, and have such a *dependence* upon each other, that a man cannot do good to *another*, without being *interested in*, and doing good to *himself* thereby; and that a sense of this is the *ground* of action to men, when they do good *to each other*, as aforesaid: to this it may be answered, tho' publick and private good and evil are in some
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measure connected, and become subservient to each other, yet they are not *so connected*, as that the *good* or *evil*, which *one* member of society partakes of, becomes a good or evil to *every other* member thereof. So far from it, that the *reverse* to this is sometimes the case; as when *one* man is *enriched* by the *impoverishing* of *many*. Private good and evil, in abundance of instances, are *purely personal*, and extend no farther than the *receiver*; much less do they *recoil back* good or evil to the doer. If a man feeds his hungry neighbour, his *own good* is no farther connected with it, than the *pleasure* and *satisfaction*, which arises from his having performed so *kind* an action. Indeed, when private evil becomes so general, as to *dissolve* the *bonds* of society, and men in *general* become beasts of prey to each other, as being under no *publick check* or restraint, which is *seldom* the case; then, as *private* good suffers, so publick good *suffers with it*, and then it will be the *interest* of the most selfish, to join with *others* in restoring a *publick interest*, for their mutual security. But whilst the *bonds* of society are *maintained*, as it will be the *interest*; so, (upon the present supposition,) it must be the *duty* of every man to *rob*, and *steal*, and *cozen*, and *cheat* his neighbours, if he can serve *himself* thereby. I say, it will be his *duty*, or acting *consonant* to the law of his nature, to *act thus*, provided he can do it with *safety* to *himself*; and

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even to *cut* his neighbour's throat, if he can promote his *own self-good* thereby. So that all that kindness, friendship, and disinterested bounty, which every day take place in the world, *remain* to be *accounted* for. Were I to enumerate all the *absurd* and *bad* consequences, which naturally and obviously follow this doctrine of *absolute selfishness*, by the shewing of which it would be exposed to *contempt*, it would be endless.

And that this selfish doctrine should be advanced by *christians*, by men who value themselves upon being the *disciples* and *followers* of Jesus Christ, yea, and who assume to themselves the character of being *teachers*, and *guides* to their brethren in *Christ's name*, and by virtue of *his authority*, is something extraordinary; because the *worthiness* and *valuableness* of Christ's *doctrine*, of his *character*, and *conduct*, is grounded on the *contrary* supposition, *viz.* that benevolence is a *becoming*, a *noble*, and a *proper* principle of action to intelligent beings. Jesus Christ is represented as coming into the world to *seek*, and to *save* mankind, and that what he *did*, and *suffered*, was *ultimately* directed to this end: whereas, upon the present supposition, he was a most *mercenary* being, who came into the world *only*, and *wholly* to serve *himself*, and to promote his *own* greater self-good thereby. And if so, then wherein lies *his merit*? or what is there in his case to be *boasted of*? However, Jesus Christ assumed

the character of a *benevolent person*, and also made *benevolence* the characteristick of *discipleship* to him. *Hereby shall all men know, that ye are my disciples, if ye have love, [not to yourselves, but] one to another* : so that to say the least, Jesus Christ must needs have been, according to these men, an *arch-heretick*, as to this doctrine of absolute selfishness. St. *John* stands likewise justly chargeable in this respect, 1 *John* iv. 7. *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God* : which must needs be *heretical* ; for if St. *John* had been truly *orthodox*, he would have expressed himself thus, — *Beloved, let us love ourselves, for self-love is of God*. St. *Peter*, St. *Paul*, and the rest of the apostles, whose writings are with us, must *all* of them likewise have *greatly erred*, as those writings do plainly shew. And indeed, all the *books* of the New Testament must be *heretical*, because therein *benevolence* is highly recommended, which tends greatly to *corrupt* and *mislead* mankind, were that practicable ; which, indeed, is not, because men act from *selfishness only*, there being no opposite, no other principle in nature, to divert them from it.

And that this *selfish doctrine* should be trumped up in aid of *divine revelation*, is likewise very *strange*. For as all men are by *nature* led to be selfish, and there is no *opposite*, no *other principle* in nature to divert them from it, or dispose them to be otherwise ; so experience shews, they are by
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this means selfish enough of *all* conscience; and therefore, do not need a divine revelation to make them *more so*; and consequently, such a revelation must needs be *useless*. Besides, there will be *different* degrees of virtue or selfishness, as well *without* a revelation, as *with it*. Some men will pursue their interest *more vigorously* and *successfully*, than others, by which they will get the *start*, and have the *advantage* of the more indolent and slothful. I say, this will be the case both *with*, and *without* a revelation: and therefore, what *need* is there of a revelation? or what *purpose* can it serve? And supposing there will be a future retribution in another world, it *alters* not the case; because then there will be *different* degrees of selfishness for the Deity to *reward* in it, (if such an absurd supposition may be admitted,) whether a divine revelation be given, or not. There will be *Jonathan Wilds* * and other *heroes* in virtue, who will *vigorously* and *undauntedly* pursue their respective interests, or what appears to them to be their greater self-good, in spite of the gaol, the whipping-post, the pillory, the gallows, and all the laws and means, that may be used to *restrain* them from it. And if there are *different* mansions in heaven, then there will

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* *Jonathan Wild*, commonly called the thief-catcher, who had his residence in *London*; and was the head or principal of a large gang of robbers, thieves, and pickpockets, who were under his direction, was executed at *Tyburn*, *May 24*, 1725.

be those *heroes* in selfishness, to take the *upper* places in them; and therefore, a revelation must needs be *useless*, because the purposes of virtue or selfishness, both as to this world, and that to come, can as *well*, and perhaps be *better* answered without it.

If it should be said, that selfishness works so *strongly* in man, as there is no principle in nature to *check* it, or *counter-balance* it; that it will unavoidably lead men to be *beasts* of *prey* to each other, they will be *continually* robbing, spoiling, and destroying one another; by which means a publick or general good will be *frustrated* and *disappointed*, except mankind are lay'd under some *proper* and *sufficient* restraint: to prevent which bad state of things, the Deity has provided a *future* state of existence to men, in which *state* mens interest will be *infinitely* greater, than it is in this present world; and, in order to make that future state *subservient* to a publick good, in *this world*, the Deity has put upon men a kind of *forced* benevolence, or benevolence *improperly* so called, by requiring men, and making it their *duty*, to *deny* themselves, and to put a *bar* to their present interest, by doing good to *others*, and *abounding* in good works in *this world*, in order to *secure* to themselves, and to *heighten*, their greater self-good in another; and that all this is discovered, and rendered *certain* to men by *revelation*, and this is the *purpose* divine revelation is intended to serve. Upon this I observe,

observe, that if, when men are left to *follow nature*, they will become beasts of prey to each other, &c. then, as this is their *natural state*, so it may well be supposed to be the *best state* they were *intended* for; and to suppose, that the *purposes* of the Founder of this world can *better* be answered, by putting upon men something that is *forced* and *unnatural*, than can be done by the produce of *nature itself*, seems next to a paradox. Again, if a forced benevolence, or benevolence improperly so called, be *necessary* to answer the *purpose* of a *publick good*, (as is here supposed, else the Deity would not *force it* upon men, to *answer* that purpose,) from hence it will follow, that, if *true* benevolence be not the *offspring* of nature, then it would be much *better*, and therefore, it is greatly to be *wished for*, that it was; because the putting a force upon nature is a kind of *desperate* attempt, according to the proverb, *Patience by force is a medicine for a mad dog*. Again, I observe, that supposing mens following nature will effectually *frustrate* a general good, (which, indeed, upon the present supposition, is very *naturally* supposed, because absolute selfishness is in a manner *opposite* to publick good, as the *prevailing* of one, is the *depression* of the other;) I say, if this be the case, then the question is, how comes the *Deity* to be *concerned* to prevent it? For if nature exhibits *only one* common motive to action to intelli-

gent beings, *viz.* self-good; then the Deity cannot have any other motive to act from; and from hence the question arises, *viz.* how can an *absolutely selfish* Deity be concerned for a publick good, or, indeed, for any good at all, excepting self-good, when all *foreign good* is in nature quite distinct from, and altogether *irrelative* to his case; and therefore, he can have no *excitement* to it? So that it is almost as *hard* to conceive, how an absolutely selfish Deity can be concerned for a publick good; as it is to conceive, how two *parallel* lines can meet in a point.

201 If it should be said, that selfishness is the *spring* of action to the Deity, in his promoting *publick good*; because he does not promote it for the sake of his *creatures*, but only on account of that *pleasure* that arises to *himself*, from their happiness: to this it may be answered, *first*, that if the happiness of the creature is a *ground* of pleasure to the Deity; then pleasure to the Deity is the *effect*, and not the *cause* of the creature's happiness. Again, if the happiness of *one* intelligent being be not the *natural* and *proper* object of desire to *another* intelligent being, and therefore, is not *worthy* and *proper* to be *communicated* by him; then the question is, how can the happiness of *one* be a *natural* and *proper ground* of pleasure to the other? Surely it cannot. If it be *equally eligible* and *indifferent* to one intelligent being, whether any, or *all* other intelligent beings be either *happy*

or *miserable*, (which is the present case;) then the happiness of *one* cannot possibly *minister* pleasure to *another*, because there is nothing in the case to *excite* it. On the other side, if the happiness of *one* intelligent being is the *natural* and *proper object* of desire to *others*, and therefore, such happiness is *worthy* and *proper* to be *communicated* by them, and even to *deny* themselves a *less* degree of pleasure for its sake; then the happiness of *another* will become a *natural excitement*, and a *proper ground* of pleasure to them. And this must be the case with respect to the *Deity*, so far as it is applicable to him. The *Deity*, upon the present supposition, is influenced by no other principle but *selfishness*, and it is *equally indifferent* to him, whether *any*, or *all* other beings be *happy*, or *miserable*; and therefore, as there is nothing in nature to *excite* him to communicate happiness to others, so, were he to do it without any motive to excite him to it, then their being made happy by *his means*, could not be a *ground* of pleasure to him, because there would be *nothing* in the case for him to be *pleas'd with*, (as his own self-good would be out of the question,) nor to be an *excitement* of pleasure to him. And this I take to be a *sufficient answer* to what is usually urged, *viz.* that men *do good* to others, not for the sake of those they *do good to*, but for the sake of *themselves*, and on *account* of that pleasure, which will accrue to *themselves* by so doing; whereas, if there were not an

antecedent propriety and *worthiness* in doing good, then the doing it could not possibly *recoil back* pleasure to the doer, because there would be no *ground* for, nor any *excitement* to pleasure in the case; and therefore, the making doing good to others a *ground* of pleasure to the doer, is, in my opinion, *giving up* the point, and *proves* what it is brought to *confute*.

Among those, who have been the abettors of the doctrine of *absolute selfishness*, none, I think, has been more open, and thereby more fair, nor has carried the matter farther, than the author of the tract, entitled, *Self-love and virtue only reconciled by religion*, &c. In which tract the author has averred, (if I remember rightly,) that, supposing this world were *our all*; then it would be *reasonable* for every man to pursue his own pleasure at *all hazard*, even tho' it were at the expence of the *happiness* and *lives* of the rest of our species; so that the abettors of the aforesaid doctrine stand *disposed*, upon their own principles, (supposing futurity out of the case,) to make *an hundred thousand millions of millions of men* extremely *miserable*, through the whole period of their existence, provided they can *add* to their *own short-lived pleasure* in so doing; and such a conduct as this would be *reasonable*, upon these mens principles. It would be *reasonable* for a man to *rip up* women with child, to take their little ones and *dash them in pieces* against the stones, and to commit *all kinds* of violence, barba-

barbarity and cruelty, provided his *own interest* could be served thereby. But can it be reasonable for a man to imbrue his hands in the blood of his *aged and tender parents*, of his *loving wife*, and innocent children, without any *provocation* given, without any thing to *excite* his resentment? The answer is, that *this*, and what is a *thousand-fold* more savage and cruel, if such a thing could be, would be *reasonable* upon *these mens* principles; that is, supposing *futurity* out of the case, and supposing a man's *interest* in this world could be served by it. Surely, the *vilest* of men have not been so corrupted, so *degenerated* in judgment and affection, as this; and therefore, the author, I have before referred to, one would think, must have been something out of the *ordinary course of nature*, or else that he had discharged himself of *reason* and all *humane* affection, before he undertook to *vindicate* such principles as these, by publishing his *pamphlet*, (which may be considered as a *libel* upon reason, upon human nature, and upon the author of it) to the world.

And as the author, I have referred to, has undertaken to *reconcile*, (as he calls it,) self-love and virtue, I therefore observe farther, that there is, in my view of the case, both a *virtuous* and a *vicious* selfishness. Self-love, when exercised *properly*, and kept within *due bounds*, as it is right *in itself*, so it is *morally good*, or *virtue*; and, when this is
the

the case, then it is not *reconciled* to virtue, because it is *virtue itself*. And when self-love is exercised *improperly*, and is carried to an *extreme*; then it is *wrong*, and then it degenerates into *moral evil*, or *vice*: and as such selfishness stands in direct *opposition* to virtue; so it can neither be *changed into it*, nor made to *pass for it*; and therefore, it cannot in any sense be *reconciled to it*. And as there is both a virtuous and a vicious selfishness; so there is also both a *virtuous* and a *vicious benevolence*. When benevolence is exercised *properly*, and is kept within *due bounds*; then it is according to rectitude, and then it is *morally good*, or *virtue*: but when it is exercised *improperly*, and is carried to an *extreme*, (which may be the case;) then it is *wrong*, and then it degenerates into *moral evil*, or *vice*.

Before I leave the subject, I beg leave to observe further, *viz.* if self-good be the *sole*, the *universal* principle of action in nature, and if nature *prompts* every intelligent being to pursue its greater self-good, tho' some will be *better* qualified than others to *discern* wherein their greater interest lies, and some will pursue their interest more *vigorously* and *successfully* than others, as experience plainly shews, and which, I think, is what is contended for, when the principle is *fairly stated* and *fully explained*; then, as the Deity will not be concerned to promote the *good* of any of his creatures in *any* constitution of things,

things, whether *now* or *hereafter*, as he cannot possibly serve *himself* thereby; so he will not make use of any *means* to this end, seeing there is nothing in nature to *lead* him to it. To pretend therefore, that God *kindly* and *providentially* watches over his creatures for their good; that he has given to mankind a *revelation*, a *Saviour* and *Redeemer*, in order to *procure*, and *secure* a greater self-good to them; that he has set up a *priesthood*, whether christian or otherwise, to *instruct* and *minister* to men for their good; that he has appointed *sacraments*, and *prayers*, and other instituted *means* of grace for their good; and the like: all such pretences must needs be *groundless*, because there is nothing in nature, which could possibly *excite* the *Deity* to interest himself in, or be any way concerned for the good of *his creatures*; and therefore, there is no principle in nature to *ground* these pretences upon. And were the *Deity* to act as above, without any thing to excite him thereto, it would answer *no purpose* to his creature; because *nature* prompts each individual to pursue its greater self-good, according to its *judgment* and *capacity*, and as the *frame* of its constitution directs and excites; and therefore, there can be no need of any *farther* means to this end. There can be no need of *parsons* and

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prayers * to make men *selfish*, because they will be *sufficiently so*, whether parsons and prayers have any concern *in the case*, or not. There can be no need to *invoke* the Deity, to make men *more selfish*, because selfishness is the very *constitution* of nature; and there is no *opposite*, no *other principle* in nature to *check*, or *counter-balance* it. To say, that the abovementioned means are necessary to engage, and enable men to pursue their greater self-good in *another world*, is begging the question; because there is nothing to *ground* the presumption upon, that there will be to men a greater self-good in another world; and if there will, yet the *Deity* will not be *concerned* to promote or secure it; and therefore, will not make use of any *means*, to answer that purpose. Or to say, that God may appoint those means, to engage men to do good to each other in *this world*, in order for each one to promote and secure his *own present* self-good thereby, this must needs be weakly urged; because the Deity can be no more concerned to promote mens *present*, than their *future* well doing; and therefore, has not appointed *means* to this end; and because men will be *politically* good to others, where their interests appear to be *inseparable*, and where they are sure to serve *themselves* thereby,

* Parsons and prayers are here used to express all instituted means of grace.

thereby, whether any positive institutions take place, or not.

But farther, upon the present supposition, no *good argument* can be drawn from the *goodness* of God in favour of any cause; because there is no *pretence* for such *kind* of reasoning, nor any *foundation* to ground such argument upon. And as to the *hopes* and *expectations* men may indulge themselves in, with regard to *futurity*, these must needs be *childish* and *vain*; because an *absolutely selfish Deity*, and an *absolutely selfish constitution of things*, can neither be a proper ground of *safety* in our present state, nor of *hope* and *expectation* in any constitution of things to come. The principle, I have been considering, subjects the Deity to that *low* principle of *selfishness*, which were it the *truth* of the case, then all *created* beings would *perpetually* have remained in a state of *non-existence*, because there *would* not, there *could* not have been any thing, any principle in nature, to have *excited* or *disposed* the Deity to have given being to them. The bare exercise of *power*, and of *knowledge*, or *judgment* to direct that power, could not have been a *ground* of action to the Deity in the production of the *universe*, except *profit* to the Deity followed upon it. And what *profit* God could make to *himself*, by giving being to his *creatures*, is hard to conceive.

The case is the same with respect to any *pleasure*, the Deity may be supposed to have from the exercise of his *power*, and his *judgment* to use it; because it is *profit*, which is the *only ground* of pleasure to an absolutely selfish being; and therefore, were there no *profit*, there could be no *pleasure* to the Deity, in any of his productions. So that if *disinterested benevolence*, or doing good to others without any view, hope, or expectation of *profit* to the doer, be not a natural, a proper, a reasonable, a worthy, and commendable *principle* of action to an intelligent being; then, I imagine, the *patrons* of the doctrines of *absolute selfishness* have a *difficult* task upon their hands, as it seems to lie upon them to *shew plainly*, how we all came into *being*, or how the Deity could possibly be *disposed* to give being to us. Thus I have gone thro', what I proposed, with regard to the *ground* and *foundation* of *morality*, and have shewn, what I apprehend the *truth* of the case to be; which if it be not, then I readily acknowledge, that all my *reasoning* and *argumentation* upon *moral subjects* stand for *nought*; and which if it should be made appear, I am ready publicly to *retract*. But if what I have before laid down is the *truth*; then, I think, what I have offered, *must*, and *will* stand its ground, whatever opposition has been, or may be made to it. However,

this

this is a point of *high concern* to mankind, and is *next*, if not of *equal importance*, to the consideration of a Deity. I have also considered the case, when put in the *opposite light*; but then, which of these is the *truth*, must be submitted to the judgment of my readers.

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S E C T I O N I.

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Wherein those points, *viz.* Of divine impressions on mens minds ; of special grace ; of the virtue and merit of faith ; and of St. THOMAS'S unbelief, are particularly considered.

S I R S,

AFTER having had a correspondence with you by writing, for many years past, which, I trust, has not been altogether useless, nor unacceptable to you ; I now propose, at the conclusion of this tract, to take my leave of
you.

you. What I have principally aimed at, in all my writings, has been both to *evince*, and to *impress deeply* upon your minds, a *just sense* of *those truths*, which are of the *highest concern* to you. For, tho' I do not think that *error*, considered simply as such, that is, considered as a *wrong* apprehension of things, especially when *all proper measures* have been taken to have the understanding *rightly informed*, is either *blameable* in itself, or *displeasing* to God, seeing it is what *all men* are *liable*, and greatly in *danger* of falling into, be they ever so *careful* in guarding against it: yet, forasmuch as our *opinions* have, in some instances, a *great influence* upon our *wills*, and consequently, upon our *behaviour*; when that is the case, then, error, in the *event*, may be *greatly injurious* both to ourselves and others; and therefore, it must be a matter of *moment* to have our understandings *rightly directed* in all such cases, in order to the *rightly directing* our *affections* and *actions*. Some of the points, that I have laboured to impress upon the minds of my readers, are these that follow. *First*, That there is a natural and an essential *difference* in things, and a *law* or rule of affection and action *resulting* from that difference, which every moral agent ought to direct his *affections* and *behaviour* by; and, that nothing but a *conformity* of *mind* and *life* to this rule, or, at least, an *honest intention* of acting rightly, and a *suitable practice*, will render men *pleasing* and *acceptable*

ble to the Deity. *Secondly*, If men have *greatly departed* from the rule abovementioned, and have, by their *vicious* affections and actions, rendered themselves the *proper objects* of divine resentment; then, as nothing but their *repentance* and *reformation* can render them the *proper objects* of mercy and forgiveness, so that, and nothing but that, will be the *ground* and *reason* of God's mercy to them. *Thirdly*, That God will *judge* the *world*, and that he will do it, not by *capricious humour*, and according to *arbitrary will*; but by, or according to, the *eternal rules* of *right* and *wrong*, that is, by the aforesaid law; and, in consequence thereof, will *reward* or *punish* men in another world, according as they have, by their *good* or *bad behaviour*, rendered themselves the *proper objects* of either in this. And, *fourthly*, That the *three* foregoing propositions are the *sum* and *substance* of the gospel of Christ, or of what Christ was, in a *special manner*, sent of God to acquaint the world with. These, surely, are points in which mankind at large are greatly interested; and therefore, their being *set right* in these matters must be of the highest concern to them.

The *three first* of these come under the denomination of *natural religion*; that is, the *belief* of these, and a *practice conformable* to such belief constitute the pure and uncorrupted religion of *reason* and *nature*; as they are grounded upon the unalterable nature, and the
eternal

eternal reason of things, and, as such, they are, and must, and will be the same, whether there be any *divine revelation*, or any *promulged law*, or not. Mens *relation* to, and *dependence* upon God, and their *relation* to, and *dependence* upon each other, and all *obligations* that flow from such relations and dependencies, are what they are, *antecedent* to, and *independent* of any revelation or promulged law; and therefore, are, and must be the same, both *before*, and *after* such promulgation; and all just and reasonable *expectations*, grounded upon these, and upon mens behaviour with respect to them, must be the *same* also. So that the *grounds* of mens acceptance with God, and of their obtaining the divine mercy, and the *justness* and *propriety* of a future retribution, must of necessity be the *same*, whether God has made a *revelation* of his will to mankind, or not. And, as to the *fourth* and *last* point mentioned above, (*viz.*) that the *three* foregoing propositions are the *sum* and *substance* of the gospel of Christ, this, I am sensible, is so far from having been *generally admitted*, that, on the contrary, *great opposition* has been made to it; and men seem disposed to have *no gospel* at all, rather than *such* a gospel as this. This is a gospel *too plain* and *intelligible* for artful men to make their *advantages* of, and to build a *profitable trade* upon; they must have a gospel which is *sublime* and *mysterious*, which is out of the reach of the human understanding, and therefore, cannot be judged of by it,

otherwise it will not answer their purposes. This is a gospel too closely attached to *virtue* and *goodness*, for vicious and evil-minded men to be pleased with; they must have a gospel which will *permit* them to be *easy* under, and which gives them a *little indulgence* in their vices; and therefore, it is no wonder that the *representation I have given* of Christ's gospel should be opposed by *many*; tho', by the way, if that representation be not the *truth* of the case, then, it would have been *better for us* that no gospel had been given at all; because *any other* gospel *but this* would have been a great *imposition* upon mankind. And this leads me to observe, that the point under consideration is *supported* by the *absurdity* of the contrary supposition, supposing Christ's gospel to be divine. For, had Christ taught that *any thing* besides a right disposition of mind, and a right behaviour, would render men *acceptable* to the Deity; or that *any thing* besides repentance and reformation would be the *ground* of God's mercy to sinners; or that *any thing* *opposite* to the eternal rule of right and wrong, would be the *rule* by which God would judge the world; such doctrines would be plainly *repugnant* to the *nature*, and to the *truth* of things, and consequently, must of necessity be *false*. So that it is grossly absurd to suppose that any such doctrines were taught by *Christ*, whilst we admit his mission to be *divine*; because, if the

former

former were the case, then, the latter could not be so; that is, if Christ did teach doctrines that are *opposite* to what I call his gospel, then, his *mission*, at least, as far as it relates to these, could not be *divine*, nor could any *external evidence*, how great soever, possibly *prove* it to be such. This, I think, is the true state of the case; and my opponents are at liberty to take *which side* of the question they please. It is not sufficient to say, that God is at *liberty* to make *what he will* the ground of his favours to men, and of his mercy to sinners, and that he may judge the world by *what rule he pleases*; because, tho' *such a conduct* may comport with the character of an *arbitrary* and *absolute governor* amongst men; yet, it will not comport with the *just* and *proper character* of him who is the most perfect intelligence, and the wise and good governor of the universe. There is a *rule of affection* and *action* for all those cases, that arises from the natural and the essential *differences* in things; which *rule*, we may be certain, God will *always* abide by, and make it the *measure* of his conduct; and therefore, it is equally as absurd to suppose that God will *add to*, as that he will *take from* this rule. These are *some* of the points that I have endeavoured to *evince*, and to *impress* upon the *minds* of my readers; not barely as matters of speculation, but ultimately that they may be a foundation for the *rightly* directing

and governing our affections and actions. Alas! what will it avail us to *believe* that nothing but a right disposition of mind, and a right behaviour, will render us *acceptable* to the Deity; except we are prevailed upon *by it* to render ourselves the *proper objects* of God's favour? Or what will it avail a wicked man to *believe*, that nothing but repentance and reformation will be the *ground* of God's mercy to sinners; except he is *led by it* to put away from him the evil of his doings, to cease to do evil and learn to do well, and thereby to render himself the *proper object* of God's mercy? Or to what purpose will it be to *believe* a judgment to come; except we are *prevailed upon* by it to *live as those* who must give an account of themselves to God? This, I say, is what I have *principally* aimed at in all my writings, notwithstanding it has been said that I have *written for bread*; which I have not been under a necessity of doing. And tho' I have, for some time past, been rendered capable of living *independent* of labour, by being enabled without it to procure those *necessaries* of life, which are suitable to that *rank* in the world that God in the course of his general providence has placed me in; yet, this is owing principally to the *bounty* of my friends, whose *kindness to me* I take this opportunity publicly and thankfully to acknowledge. And, indeed, (according to the proverb,) Let every one praise the bridge he goes

goes over; the world, *bad as it is*, or as it may be *represented to be*, has been a *kind world* to me; for could an exact estimate be made of all the *good* and *evil* I have received from others, I dare say, it would appear, that the *former* has *exceeded* the *latter* ten-fold. I mention this to do justice to the world before I leave it; and to *take off*, or, at least, to *lessen* the *popular prejudice* that has been taken up against it in this respect.

And, as I have offered my thoughts *freely* to the world on the *points* before mentioned, as well as on *many other* subjects; so this has introduced an *idle* and an *impertinent* enquiry concerning me, namely, what I am; whether a *believer*, or an *unbeliever*. This enquiry I call idle and impertinent, because it can answer *no good end*, and because my arguments and reasonings are *just the same*, that is, they are *equally* strong and conclusive, or the contrary, whether I am one, or the other of these. However, I think, it will be proper to state the *notion* of *believer* and *unbeliever*, or *infidel*, that so this matter may appear in the clearer light. Whoever *assents* to a proposition as *true*, such an one is said, (according to the common way of speaking,) to be a *believer* with respect to that proposition, whatever be the *ground* of that assent; whoever *doubts* of the *truth* of a proposition, so as to *withhold his assent*, and yet does not believe the *contrary*, such an one is said to be a *sceptick* with respect to it; and

and whoever, not only *witholds his assent* to a proposition, but also *believes the contrary*, such an one is said to be an *unbeliever*, or *infidel*. As thus, *Mahomet was a special messenger sent from God*; with respect to this proposition, whoever *assents* to it as *true*, such an one is a *believer*; whoever *doubts* of the *truth* of it, so as to withhold his assent, and yet, does not believe the contrary, that is, does not believe it to be a *false* proposition, such an one is a *sceptick*; and whoever not only doubts of the truth of that proposition, but also *believes the contrary*, that is, believes that *Mahomet was not* a special messenger sent from God, such an one is an *unbeliever*, or *infidel*. So that a man may be a *believer* with respect to *one* proposition; a *sceptick* with regard to another; and an *unbeliever*, or *infidel*, with respect to another: and thus all men, of *thought and reflection*, are believers and scepticks, and unbelievers or infidels, in *some respect or other*. And therefore, when those terms, *viz.* believer and unbeliever, or infidel, are applied *to me*, I suppose the enquiry is, whether *I do believe* that *Jesus Christ* was a messenger sent from God, to make known his will, touching the true way to God's favour and eternal life? or whether I do not only *withold* my assent to this proposition, but also *believe the contrary*? I say, I apprehend, this must be meant, because otherwise those appellations, with regard to *me*, are most *loose and indeterminate*,

nate, and may be applied to *any* subject. So that until the subject is *fixed* to which those terms, *viz.* believer and unbeliever, are applied, I am not a judge for myself, whether I am *one*, or *another* of these. And tho' it would probably be a *vain* attempt to try to *satisfy* such inquisitors, seeing, instead of satisfying, I should, perhaps, rather *offend* them; yet, I will shew my readers, because possibly it may be of use to ~~them~~, *what my sentiments are* with respect to the points before mentioned, as also on many other subjects; together with the *reasons*, upon which those sentiments are grounded. And, in the doing of this, I shall (as I think I ought,) strictly pursue *truth*, without *respect* to *persons* or *things*, and without paying a *partial regard* to any system of religion, whether it be considered as *christian*, or *otherwise*; and accordingly, shall treat every question with *plainness* and *freedom*, it being, in my opinion, a *piece of justice* which is due to *all subjects*, that if we make an inquiry about them, we should do it with *plainness*, *fairness*, and *impartiality*; and introduce every thing that makes *against*, as well as *for* the question in debate, whether that question has been *generally* admitted, or not; this being the most *likely way* to come at *truth*, and therefore, it is *not likely* that truth will be a *sufferer* by it. And, indeed, there is the more reason for a *strict* and *impartial* examination of *such*

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points as have met with a *general* acceptance; because that very thing, *viz.* their having been *generally admitted*, is too too apt to prejudice us in their favour. Nor shall I, (I trust,) pay a partial regard to *any opinion I myself may have been of*, at any time past, with regard to any question I may have given my judgment upon; but shall consider it with the same *freedom* and *impartiality*, as if I had not given any such judgment. For, as I then gave my opinion according to the *evidence* that appeared, and as it was *then* present to my mind; so I shall do the same now, how *widely* soever I may *differ* from myself thereby.

But then, I do not pretend to any *extraordinary illuminations*, or *divine impressions*, as having been made upon my mind, because I do not apprehend I have ever *experienced* any such thing; and therefore, I have no other way in which I can *pursue truth* but that of *reasoning* and *argumentation* only. And tho' there have been, as well in this, as in former ages, many who have *pretended* to have been favoured with divine impressions, and thereby with extraordinary illuminations; yet, I think, they are very *unsafe guides*; not only because I cannot discover any *principle*, any *premises*, from which we may conclude, with *certainty*, that their pretences are *well grounded*; but also because these pretenders have, with regard to their doctrines, *greatly differed* among

mong themselves, infomuch that what some have held forth and taught as *divine truth*, others have exploded as *pernicious error*. Besides, as there is in man a *discerning power*, which renders him capable of distinguishing betwixt good and evil, truth and error, (tho', through *inattention*, and a *partial* knowledge of the case, he is *liable to err* in the use of it;) so this power is *of God*; and that it is so, is as *evident*, and as *certain*, as that *we are*, because it plainly appears to be a *part* of our frame and constitution. And that this faculty was, by the Author of our beings, *designed* and *intended* to answer the purpose aforesaid, is as obvious, as that our eyes were given us to *see* withal; whereas, I think, we cannot have *equal certainty*, that any impressions, made upon our minds, are divine; and therefore, the former must, from the nature of the thing, be a *much safer* guide than the latter. And, as our discerning faculty is *of God*, and is planted in us, by him, to *answer* the aforesaid purpose; so, I doubt not, but that in an *honest* and *careful* use of it we shall render ourselves *approveable* to our Maker; whereas, with regard to the impressions * that may be made upon our minds, it seems to me altogether *uncertain*,

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* Some of those, who pretend to experience the special operations of the Deity upon their minds, do not call those operations *divine impressions*, but *divine influence*, which term is rather more unintelligible, as its sense is undeterminate in the present case; but then, whether the term *influence* is made use of for that reason, I am not a judge.

tain, not only whether any of them are *divine*, and consequently, whether we *ought* to be directed by them, but also whether we shall render ourselves *approveable* to God by following so *uncertain* a guide. However, that I may set this matter in as *clear* a light as I can, I will suppose, that *some ideas* have been impressed upon *my mind*, of which I have indulged the *pleasing thought*, that the impression was *divine*; this being supposed, the question is, what is there in the case for me *fairly* and *rationally* to ground the *presumption* upon, that the impression was *divine*? And, in order to give a satisfactory answer to this question, *two* things seem necessary to be enquired into, *viz.* *First*, What *different circumstances* may be supposed to attend *impressions*, by which difference of circumstances one impression may be *distinguished* from another? *Secondly*, What are those circumstances, that are *peculiar* to *divine impressions*, by which they may be distinguished and certainly known, from all other impressions, that may be made upon the mind? And, *first*, the enquiry is, what different circumstances may attend impressions, by which they may be distinguished one from another. And here, I shall not take notice of all the trifling circumstances, that may be supposed to attend the case; because, I think, that is needless, and would look more like banter than argument; but only of such as are *most material*, or *some* of them, at least, in order to *explain* the

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the thing; and accordingly, I observe, that impressions may be *stronger*, or *weaker*, or they may minister *more*, or *less* immediate pleasure to the mind; the subject matter impressed, when considered abstractedly from the impression, may also be considered as *certain*, or *probable*, or *neither*; and it may be of *greater* or *less* importance, or of *no importance* at all; it may be of concern to *some one*, or *more*, of our species, or of *general* concern to the whole; it may relate to things *spiritual*, or *temporal*; to things *past*, *present*, or to *come*; these are some of the most material circumstances, which may be supposed to attend the case, and in which *one* impression may be *distinguished* from *another*. But then, as to the *second* enquiry, *viz.* what circumstances are *peculiar* to *divine impressions*, by which they may be distinguished and certainly known from all other impressions, which may be made upon the mind, this I am utterly at a loss to discover. Whether *divine* impressions are *stronger*, or *weaker*, than *other* impressions; or whether they give *more*, or *less*, immediate pleasure to the mind; and so on: this I cannot possibly come at the knowledge of, as I have *no rule* to judge by, nor can I have any light or information from the case itself; so that after all my care I may be under a *delusion*, if I admit the *supposition*, that the impression was *divine*; because I have *no way* by which I can *distinguish*, with *certainty*, *divine* impressions from all other

impressions, which may be made upon my mind. And, if this is of necessity the case with *me*, then, I think, it must be the same with *all other men*. And, if I am *disqualified* for distinguishing divine impressions from any other impressions, which may be made upon my *own mind*; then, surely, I must be rather *more so* with respect to the impressions that are made upon the minds of other men. And this, I hope, will be admitted as a *sufficient excuse* for my not blindly submitting to what may be dictated to me as a *divine oracle*, by those who may consider themselves to have been favoured with divine impressions, and extraordinary divine illuminations. To say, that divine impressions can no other ways be distinguished, and certainly known, than by an *experimental feeling* of the thing itself, which feeling cannot be *described*, or *expressed*, and therefore, cannot be *explained to others*; this, I think, is taking sanctuary in *darkness*, and seems to favour strongly of *delusion*, or *imposition*. If, when ideas are impressed upon the mind, there is something *felt*, which cannot be *expressed*; then, the question is, How do we certainly know that what is thus felt is *of God*? And, if we have *no rule* to judge by, in the present case, but are guided by mere *imagination*; we *think* it is *divine*, therefore it is so; then, this *inexpressible feeling* leaves the case in the same *perplexity* and *uncertainty* as before; there is something *felt*, which cannot be *described*,

scribed, and what is thus felt is *presumed* to be by, or from the immediate operation of God, without any thing to *ground* the presumption upon; this, I think, is the *sum* of the *evidence*, which arises from those *inexpressible* feelings abovementioned. Whether God does immediately interpose, and impress ideas upon the minds of men, or not, is what I cannot *certainly determine* with respect to *either side* of the question, because I have not wherewith to *ground* such a determination upon; and therefore, I shall only observe, that if God does *interpose*, as aforesaid, then, whether this be considered as a *part* of the *original* scheme of God's *general* providence, by which he proposed to govern the world, by constantly impressing on mens minds *such images* as each one's respective case might render *useful* to him; or whether it be considered as an act of God's *special* providence, for the *removing* such errors and evils, as thro' the *weakness* or *vileness* of men, may have been introduced, and become greatly injurious to mankind; I say, whether a divine interposition, as aforesaid, be considered as *one*, or the *other*, of these, it seems to be *suitable to*, and altogether *worthy* of the divine wisdom and goodness for the Deity to interpose, in *such a way*, as that every man may *distinguish*, with *certainly*, divine impressions from all other impressions, that may be made upon his mind; because, without this, mankind are

in a most *unguarded* and *unsafe* state, as without it they lie greatly exposed to *delusion* and *imposition*, and consequently, to those very *errors* and *evils*, which divine impressions are supposed to relieve them from ; but then, as this does not appear to have been done; therefore, it becomes the more *doubtful*, whether there be any such thing as divine impressions on mens minds. If it should be said, that the nature of the thing *does not admit of any rule or way*, by which divine impressions may be *distinguished*, with *certainty*, from all other impressions that may be made upon the mind ; and as this is *out of the reach* of divine wisdom and power to effect, so it is what we are not to *seek after* nor *expect* ; if this be the case, it will follow, not only that it must always be a matter of uncertainty, whether there be any such thing as *divine impressions* on mens minds, but also there will be a strong presumption of the *contrary* ; because divine impressions, without a certain rule, whereby to distinguish them from all other impressions, cannot *instruct* and *guide*, but only *perplex* and *distress* mankind ; which, surely, the supreme Deity is not *disposed* to do. Suppose it should be strongly impressed upon a man's mind, that it is his *duty*, and what God *requires* and *expects* from him, at the close of every day, to plunge his *whole body under water*, as a token of his *penitence* for the sins he had been guilty of the day past, and of *God's mercy*
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in the forgiveness of them; or suppose it should be impressed upon his mind, that it is his duty to *cut and wound his body*, in some particular part, at some certain times, as a token of his *abhorrence of himself* for his transgressions, and of what he might justly expect, were God severe in punishing him equal to his crimes; or suppose any other *images* to be strongly impressed upon a man's mind, in which his *duty and behaviour* is concerned; in this case, if he has *no rule*, by which he can distinguish, with certainty, *divine impressions* from *all other impressions*, that may be made upon his mind, then, the ideas that had been impressed upon his mind, as aforesaid, whether of a *divine* original, or *otherwise*, could not possibly *instruct* and *guide* him, with regard to his duty and behaviour, but on the contrary, (if he acted with that *care and caution* as the importance of the case requires that he should, and which, surely, it is every man's *duty* to do,) they would *greatly perplex and distress* him; because he would be altogether *uncertain*, whether those impressions are divine, or not, and consequently, whether it was his *duty* to attend to them, and be guided by them, or not. I am sensible, that the doctrine of divine impressions has been adhered to, and maintained by *most*, if not *all*, *religious parties* in the world; but then, they all seem inclined to *confine* the favour to their *own party*, or, at least, to think it is *chiefly*, and

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more certainly with them; and therefore, they are apt to *draw back*, and are unwilling to submit to what is dictated to them as a *divine oracle*, when it comes from any *other quarter*; and thus, a christian would scarce think himself *concerned*, much less *obliged* to attend to what may be delivered to him as the *produce of divine impression* by a *Mahometan*; and the like of a *Mahometan*, by a christian. Nevertheless, if it should be thought, that I have not done *justice* to the *subject*, then, I hope, some *friend* to truth and to mankind will kindly interpose and set this matter in a *clearer* and a *truer light*; and this may well be expected from those, who not only maintain the doctrine of divine impressions, but who also consider themselves to have *experienced* the power of such impressions on *their minds*; because such *experienced men* may well be supposed to be *capable* of shewing plainly, what it is, which distinguishes divine impressions from all other impressions, that may be made upon the mind, supposing it *can be done*; which if it cannot be done, then, of necessity, the case must be most *perplexed* and *hazardous*, as I have before shewn. To say, that *God does* immediately impress ideas upon the minds of men, tho' we *cannot certainly know*, at the time, that we are under the influence of such impressions, nor can we *distinguish* such divine impressions from any other impressions, that may be made upon the mind;

this, I think, in any other case would be deemed *mere presumption*, and would be far from being satisfactory. And,

As I have been lately led to consider, or rather to reconsider the doctrine of *grace*, or *special grace*, as it is sometimes called; so, I presume, my readers will take it in good part, if I lay before them the produce of those reflections. By grace is here meant *that power*, which God is supposed *secretly*, *imperceptibly*, and *supernaturally* to communicate to men; which power is called special grace, in distinction from, and in opposition to, *that power*, and those favours vouchsafed to men, by the Deity, in and through the *common* and *ordinary* course of nature, thereby to *enable men* to perform their respective duties, and render themselves acceptable to their Maker, which *otherwise*, or *without* such special aid, they are *not able*, by their natural powers or inherent ability, to do and perform. This doctrine of grace seems to be founded on the following supposition, *viz.* that it *may be*, and *is a man's duty* to perform that which *he has not power sufficient* for the performance of; but then, this supposition seems to be most absurd, groundless, and false. All due or duty is *connected* with, *relative* to, and *dependent* upon *that power*, which any agent has for its performance; so that the *line of a man's duty* cannot possibly be extended *a point farther* than the *line of his ability* for the performance of it; because,

where, and so far as power for performance *fails*, or *falls short*; there, and so far duty *fails*, or *falls short* in proportion. It, surely, cannot be a man's duty to *see*, who has *no eyes*; nor to *relieve* the *needy*, who *has nothing* within the compass of his power or procurement to relieve them with. The case must be the same in all other instances and cases, where duty may be supposed to be concerned; whatever a man has not *sufficient power* for the performance of, the performance of that thing cannot possibly be *his duty*; and therefore, as a man's duty may be *increased*, by the increase of his *ability*; so his duty will be *decreased*, by the decrease of his *ability* also; and were a man changed into a brute, which is said to have been the case of *Nebuchadnezzar*, then, *all the duty* that lay upon him, as *a man*, would cease or be annihilated, if I may so speak. Whether a man's ability be decreased, or destroyed by *accident*, or *design*; whether by *himself*, or by any *other agent*, it alters not the case; because the decreasing, or destroying a man's power for performance, *naturally* and *necessarily* decreases, or destroys *all the duty* that was connected with it, and dependent upon it. Suppose a man should *designedly* have put out his *own eyes*, then, tho' he may by so doing have been *greatly criminal* and *blame-worthy*; yet, when his *visive power* was *destroyed*, and his capacity of seeing *ceased*, then, all the duty that was

connected with, and dependent * upon that *capacity*, of course ceased with it; and it would be altogether as absurd to suppose it a man's *duty*, who has put out his *eyes*, to do that, when he is *blind*, the performance of which depends wholly upon *sight*; as it would be to suppose it a man's *duty*, who has *killed himself*, to perform that, *after* he is *dead*, which is only performable *when, or if alive*. And, if duty is thus *naturally and necessarily* connected with, and dependent upon, suitable and sufficient power for the performance of it, so that the former cannot be without the latter, which evidently appears to be the case; then, to suppose that it *may be, and is a man's duty* to do what he has not sufficient power for the performance of, this must needs be an absurd, groundless, and false supposition. And, if the *supposition*, upon which the forementioned doctrine of *grace* seems, at least, to be *founded*, is groundless and false; then, the doctrine itself seems to want a *proper foundation*; because it seems quite *superfluous*, and thereby it becomes very unlikely, that

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* Here a question or two does very naturally arise, *viz.* Suppose a man should contract a *just debt*, and afterwards should fall into such circumstances as to be *unable* to make satisfaction, does his *inability* cancel his obligation? or does he not continue as *much obliged* as before? and is it not his *duty* to make *satisfaction*, notwithstanding his inability? Answer; tho' a man's *inability* does not *satisfy* any debt he has contracted, but he still continues to be a *debtor*, and is still *obliged* to make satisfaction when he is *able*; yet his *inability* so far *suspends* that obligation, as to make it of *no force*, until he is invested with *power sufficient* to make satisfaction.

God should *interpose* and communicate *power* to men, for the performance of their duty, when they have *sufficient power* to do their duty, *antecedent* to such his interposition. Does it not seem quite preposterous for a rich man to *desire* and *pray* to God to give him *ability* to do his duty, as a *rich man*; when the *riches* he is *already* in the possession of is that *very ability* by which he is to do his duty, *as a rich man*? The case is the same in all other instances of duty. And if special grace is *superfluous*, as it must needs be; then, this seems to be a *weighty objection* against the truth of that doctrine.

The truth of the case seems plainly to be this; men are a species of creatures, who are constituted of *various parts* and *powers*, by which they are rendered capable of answering *worthy purposes* upon this globe; and as the parts and powers of which men are constituted are not *all equal*, but are different in different persons, so their respective *duties*, and the *purposes* they are to serve, *vary* and are *different* also. And tho' men are subject to *many wants*; yet, they cannot possibly want *ability to do their duty*; because in whatsoever state they are, *their duty* will be proportionate to the *ability* they have for the performance of it. And tho' men are surrounded with manifold *temptations*, that is, there will many things take place, which will become *excitements* to men to break thro' the line of their duty; yet, as these
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are excitements only, and do not *put a force upon nature*, so every man must have sufficient power, either to *comply with*, or to *reject* these excitements; and consequently, is at liberty, whether he will break thro' the line of his duty, or not; because in every instance, *where*, and *so far* as nature is forced, in such instances men are not *tempted*, but *over-ruled*, they do not *act*, but are *acted upon*; and therefore, in those cases, *duty* is quite out of the question. And, as to the term *self*, if by it is meant *all the parts and powers* of which each individual is constituted, exclusive of that principle of *freedom*, or *agency*, by which those parts and powers are to be directed; then, and in this view of the case, *self* is the *work of God*, and cannot be considered abstractedly from it; so that whatever a man does, he does it by the *ability that God giveth*, and *God is all in all*. If a man lifts up his hand, or his foot, or performeth any other action, whatever purpose the action is made to serve, he does it from a *power derived from his Maker*; and the power, by which such action is performed, is *as much*, and *as truly* derived from God, as if it were *supernatural*. And, as all the parts and powers, which constitute each individual, is *each individual self*; so each individual is *self-sufficient* for the performance of every thing, which is within the compass of that *self-power*, without any other help. Thus, a man who *abounds in riches*,

riches, is *self-sufficient* for the *relief* of the poor, as far as his riches enable him so to do. And thus, a man who has *health of body*, and the *use* of his *limbs*, is *self-sufficient* for walking; that is, he is able of himself to remove himself from one place to another, without any *other help*; and, indeed, without any other, or farther power or help *from God*, than what results from his frame and constitution. How *idle* and *ridiculous* must it therefore be, for the advocates of special grace, by mere dint of *assurance*, to *run down* the doctrine of *self-sufficiency*, as they are pleased to call that sufficient ability a man has, and of necessity must have to do his duty; as if the very *supposition* of such sufficiency was a *most monstrous* thing! If by *self* is meant the *exercise* of *human agency*, by which each individual self does, of itself, voluntarily chuse either *rightly to use*, or *slothfully to neglect*, or *wickedly to abuse* the various parts and powers of which his constitution is compounded; then, and in that view of the case, *self* may, without any great impropriety, be considered *abstractedly* from the work of God, as aforesaid; and then, *as self*, when it wickedly abuses the human powers, by applying them to base purposes, does thereby *of*, and *from itself*, independent of any immediate act of the Deity, render itself a *base* and *evil creature*, and does thereby, *of itself*, become justly *despiseable* and *condemnable*; so, in like manner,

manner, when *self* rightly directs the human powers, to answer the worthy purposes they were intended to serve, then, it does *of*, and *from itself*, independent of any immediate act of the Deity, render itself a *worthy* and *good creature*, and does thereby, *of itself*, become justly *approveable* and *commendable*. And, in this view of the case, each individual *self* is to be considered *good*, or *bad*, as *of itself*, abstractedly from, and independent of the work of God; because God *leaves* each individual *self* perfectly at *liberty* to direct *his work*, viz. the parts and powers of the human constitution, to answer *good*, or *bad purposes*, as it pleases; of which the case would be equally the same, supposing any *supernatural power* were added, whilst *self* is *at liberty* to use that power *well*, or *ill*. Thus, the member of the body called the *tongue*, is wholly the *work* and *gift of God*, together with the self-moving power, or *ability*, to use it; but then, each individual is *perfectly at liberty*, in the application of its self-moving power upon the tongue, to direct it to the publication of *truth*, or a *lie*, or the answering any *good*, or *bad purpose*, as it pleases. And, suppose God should, by an immediate act of his power, *add* to the human constitution any *new endowment* of mind, or any *new members* to the body, such as a *pair of wings*, by which a man would be enabled to fly; if he is *at liberty* to use this new power *well*, or *ill*,

ill, then, all the good or evil that is produced by it, ought to be placed, *not to God's*, but to the *agent's account*, who directed that power to answer the purpose it was made to serve; this new power, when added to the constitution, being *as much*, and *as truly* a man's *self*, as those powers are, of which his constitution was *antecedently* compounded. How extravagant must it therefore be for men, out of an *affetation* of *humility* and *lowliness of mind*, to place all the *evil* they do to their *own account*, and all the *good* they do to the *account of God*; whereas, God is *equally* concerned in the production of *evil*, as in the production of *good*; and man is *equally* concerned in the production of *good*, as in the production of *evil*; and therefore, *both* ought to be equally ascribed to *one*, or the *other*. That is, if all the *good* a man does ought to be ascribed to *God*, then all the *evil* a man does ought to be ascribed to *God also*; because God is *equally* concerned in the production of *both*; and if all the *evil* a man does ought to be ascribed to *himself*, then all the *good* he does ought to be ascribed to *himself also*; because he is *equally* concerned in the production of *both*. This appears to me to be a *fair*, a *just*, and *true* representation of the case. And,

Here, perhaps, it may not be amiss to take notice of what is sometimes urged in *favour* of the doctrine of *special grace*, or rather of what is urged *against* the doctrine of

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of *self-sufficiency*, which seems to stand in *competition* with it; namely, *first*, That it must be *great pride* and *arrogance* in man to consider himself as an *independent, self-sufficient* creature, as one who can, *of himself*, do *many good* actions; whereas man, especially *since the fall*, is most *corrupt, impotent*, and *weak*, who cannot, *of himself*, so much as *think a good thought*, much less bring forth any thing that is good, without the *special aid* of his Maker. This *objection*, if it may be called an objection, is *fully obviated* in what I have observed above; tho', indeed, what is urged is a *mere invective*, as if it was *pride* and *arrogance* in a man to think *justly* and *truly* of the *work of God*, of his *own frame* and *constitution*, &c. which is the present case. God has *so far* made man an *independent, self-sufficient* creature, as to furnish him with parts and abilities for action, and has left him *quite free* to use the parts and powers, of which his constitution is compounded, *well*, or *ill*; and to call a *just* and *proper sense* of this, *pride* and *arrogance*, is most intolerable; not but it is a case too common for men to supply the *want* of argument with *invectives*. *Secondly*, It has been urged, that the *scriptures*, and more particularly the *New Testament*, represent *mankind* to be *weak* and *impotent*, as aforesaid; and those scriptures require men to *think thus* of *themselves*, and to pray to God to *give them* strength and power to *do their*

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duty, which, without some *special divine aid*, men, *of themselves*, are not able to perform. Answer; All doctrines and counsels that *militate against truth*, cannot themselves be founded *in truth*; and therefore, are not to be admitted, whether they come from *Paul*, *Moses*, or any other person who may have assumed a *prophetick* or *divine character*. And, as every man must of necessity have power sufficient to perform *every duty*, and answer *every obligation* that lies upon him, because otherwise he could not possibly have been *under* such obligation; so consequently, if there are any doctrines or counsels held forth to us in the scriptures, that are *incompatible* with this truth, then, they cannot possibly be founded *in truth*, and therefore, ought to be rejected. *Thirdly*, It has been urged, that the doctrines of *man's impotency*, as aforesaid, and of *special grace*, have been *universally* maintained by men of *all religions*, and in *all parts* of the world, excepting, perhaps, a few *philosophers* and *deists*, whose *pride* and *vanity* led them to think all our species to be either *fools*, or *knaves*, but themselves; and, as universal opinion is on the *side* of the *doctrines* referred to, so this is a *presumptive* argument of their *truth*; because, were men *universally to err* in points of *importance*, it would be of very *bad consequence*; but this is not the case; in points of *importance* men *universally* agree. Answer; If there have been any such men who have
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thought all others to be either *fools*, or *knaves*, that have professed to *differ* in their sentiments *from them*; then, they must, at least, have been *egregious fools* that *thought so*. And, if the above charge of *pride* and *vanity*, upon philosophers and deists, be only grounded upon their *dissenting* from *universal opinion*; then, the above charge is a *mere invective*. What the *bad* consequences are which follow *universal error*, I am not apprized of; nor am I *fully satisfied*, that in *all points* of importance men are *universally agreed*. As to the doctrines of man's impotency and special grace, that these have had *universal opinion* to *back them*, is much to be questioned; because in other points there are *many* that do not *publicly oppose* popular opinions, and yet, are *far* from going into the *belief* of them; and that may, perhaps, have been the case of the doctrines under consideration. But, supposing the doctrines referred to have had *universal opinion* on *their side*; yet, surely, that cannot be a *proper ground* to determine any man's judgment in their *favour*. Universal opinion must have some *reason*, that has been *universally admitted* as its *proper basis*, else it is a mere phantom; to take up an opinion, without some *reason* to ground it upon, is like *building without a foundation*. Wherever, therefore, universal opinion obtains, the question will be, *What* is that opinion *grounded upon*? which ground I am carefully to examine, in order to see whether it is a *pro-*

per foundation for such opinion; if I find it to be so, I assent to it, not because it is *universally* assented to, but because it appears to me to be *well grounded*, independent of such universal assent. If I find it to be otherwise, the question will be, What must I do? Must I judge of the case according to the *strength* of the evidence, as it appears to my mind, or must I *give up* my understanding in *complaisance* to universal opinion? Not the *latter*, surely, because the ground of assent does not become a *whit* the stronger, by its having obtained *universal assent*; nor is it *more so*, than if it had obtained assent from *one mind only*; or even than if it had gained *no assent at all*. Suppose the *reasons*, upon which the *Ptolemaick* system of astronomy was grounded, had obtained *universal assent*; would that system have been *well grounded*, because the *reasons* upon which it was grounded had been *universally admitted*? and ought universal opinion to have determined the judgment of *Copernicus*, *against* the strongest and most obvious reasons to the contrary? Surely, not.

If the advocates for special grace should tack about, and say, that by grace is not meant any *new power* that is given to men; but only that the Deity does particularly, and specially, interpose and *dispose men* to make a *proper use* of the abilities they already have, which *otherwise*, or *without* such a divine interposition, they would not be disposed to do: Answer; This is in reality *giving up* the doctrine

trine of *special grace* we have had under consideration, and introducing *another sort* of special grace in its place and stead. And, as to this *new sort* of special grace, if the Deity does by it any otherways dispose men to do their duty, (if it may be called duty, which is greatly improper,) than by disposing them by *motives of persuasion*, to make a *proper use* of the powers they have, this would be *destructive* of *human agency*; because, so far as *force* takes place, agency is *displaced*, and in all such cases man is a *mere passive subject*; he does not act, but is acted upon. And, if this sort of grace consists only in furnishing men with *proper motives of persuasion*, to *dispose* them to do their duty; then, in this, it enters upon the *province* of *another sort* of *special grace*, which by way of distinction I call the *second sort*; viz. *external divine revelation*, commonly called the christian revelation; whose proper province it is, or, at least, it is said to be, (by general, if not universal opinion among christians,) to lay before men those *motives of persuasion* as are *proper* to *dispose* them to do their duty, which motives of persuasion, without external divine revelation, men *could not* have attained to, and therefore, *without* such *external divine revelation*, they must have been destitute of them. So that in this case, it is *pulling down* one sort of special grace, to *set up* another; it is *taking from* the special grace of external divine revelation, by setting up a *third sort* of special
 grace

grace to *supply* its place, and to *answer* its purposes. Thus, when men have taken from the human constitution, *those powers* and *capacities*, which the author of nature has furnished it with, and compounded it of; then, they introduce what they call special grace, to *repair* the *injury*.

But farther, I beg leave to repeat an observation that I have already made, (perhaps more than once in the course of my writings,) because, I think, it is what my readers should *always* remember, and govern their judgments by; *viz.* that in the determinations they come to concerning the *truth* of any proposition, or fact, such determinations ought to *correspond with*, and be *proportionate* to the *strength* and *clearness* of the evidence upon which they are grounded; and, that where *certainty* cannot be attained, our judgments ought to be directed and governed by *probability*; and, as probability may be greater, or less, so where the *greater degree* of probability appears, it ought to determine our judgments to *that side* of the question, to which the *greater degree* of probability stands related; and, that our assent ought to be *stronger*, or *weaker*, in proportion to the *greater*, or *less* degree of probability, which is the ground of that assent. This, I think, *ought* to be the case; and herein, I apprehend, lies the *propriety*, *rectitude*, or *morality* of *faith*, if it may be expressed thus. But then, by the term *faith*

is here meant the *bare act of assent* to the truth of a proposition, or fact, abstracted from any rectitude of action that may be *previous* to it, or *consequent* upon it; whether that assent be grounded on *sensible evidence*, or on *demonstration*, (which may, perhaps, come under the denomination of *science* or *knowledge*;) or whether it be grounded on *any other kind of evidence*.

I am sensible, that in opposition to what I have thus frequently observed, it is pretended, that the *excellency* and *merit* of *faith* arises from, and bears a proportion, rather to the *weakness*, than to the *strength* of the *evidence* upon which it is grounded. And, this opinion is founded upon the words of Christ to St. Thomas,—*John xx. 29. Jesus said unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed [or more blessed] are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.* Now, if the faith that is founded on the testimony of *others*, is *more worthy*, *more blessed*, than the faith that is founded on the testimony of a man's *own senses*, as in the instance referred to; then, the consequence is clear, *viz.* that the virtue and merit of faith arises from, and bears a proportion, rather to the *weakness*, than to the *strength* of the *evidence* upon which it is grounded. Wherefore, I observe, that if this were the case, *viz.* that to believe upon *weak* evidence is *more valuable*, than to believe the same thing upon evidence that is *stronger*;

stronger; then, by parity of reason, to believe *without* evidence must be *more meritorious*, than to believe upon *weak* evidence; and then, to believe *against* evidence must be still *more valuable*, than to believe *without* evidence; the very *stating* of which case sufficiently exposes it. Upon this principle, the faith that is founded upon the single testimony of *one man* is more valuable, than the faith that is founded upon the united testimonies of *twelve men*, supposing them to be all persons of equal credit; and it is more valuable for this reason, *viz.* because, in the *former case*, the evidence upon which faith is founded is *eleven times weaker* than in the *latter*, as one is *eleven times less* than twelve. The value of faith may likewise be *greatly heightened*, by the circumstances that attend the case. If the testimony of twelve men is *directly contrary* to the testimony of one man, and if it appears that the twelve were *better qualified* to know the truth of the case referred to, than that single evidence, and likewise were known to be persons of *greater veracity*, and so were more likely to testify the truth of what they knew concerning it; these circumstances *greatly weaken* the credit of that *single* evidence, and consequently, they *greatly heighten* the *value* of that *faith* that is grounded on his testimony. But, surely, nothing can be more preposterous than to suppose, that the faith founded on the testimony of *one man* is *in nature* more

meritorious, than the faith that is founded on the testimonies of *twelve men*, in *opposition* to that single evidence, which twelve witnesses are *better qualified* to know the truth of the case, and are *more likely* to relate the truth of what they know; or to suppose the *faith* that is founded upon the testimony of *another man*, who is capable of *deceiving*, as well as being *deceived*, is *more valuable*, than to assent upon the evidence that arises from what *we ourselves* have seen and heard. And yet, this must be the case, if the *valuableness* of faith arises from the *weakness* of the evidence upon which it is grounded. St. *Thomas* believed the resurrection of Christ, upon the evidence that arose from *his own senses*; another man believed the same fact, upon St. *Thomas's* testimony; now, as the ground of assent to St. *Thomas* was most certainly *stronger*, than the ground of assent to the other, as a man comes *nearer to certainty* by what he *sees and hears himself*, than by what is *told him by another man*; so assent in St. *Thomas*, surely, was *rather* more proper, and therefore, *rather* more valuable, than assent in the other person, if there be any *disparity* in the case, whatever may have been said to the contrary; at least, it appears so to me. If St. *Thomas* withheld his assent to the fact beforementioned, when *proper evidence* had been presented to him, and if his dissent sprang from any *unreasonable prejudice*, any *great impropriety* in his conduct

and resolutions, in this he may have been *greatly blameable*; but then, I think, his *faith* did not become *less valuable* when he did believe, by the evidence being *stronger*, than *that evidence was* which had been offered to him before, and which had been, perhaps, through his inattention, or otherwise, *insufficient* for his conviction. Surely, according to the principle before laid down, the *excellency* of christianity must consist in the *reversing* of nature; tho', I think, Christ did not intend to set forth, that faith founded upon weak evidence is *more worthy, more valuable*, than faith that is founded upon evidence that is stronger; but only that *other believers* would share in the advantages, that are supposed to follow believing, *as well as St. Thomas*, notwithstanding their faith was not founded on *sensible* evidence, as his was. *Thomas*, because thou hast *seen me*, thou hast believed; but then, tho' the favour of seeing my person, since I arose from the dead, as thou hast done, has been vouchsafed but to a few; yet, nevertheless, others who *answer the purpose* of believing *will not fail* of sharing in the blessedness that attends it, *as well as thee*, notwithstanding they have not been convinced, upon such *sensible* evidence, as thou hast been. *Thomas*, because thou hast *seen me*, thou hast believed; *blessed* [also] *are they who have not seen, and yet have believed*. As the above paraphrase is consonant to *truth*; so, I think, it *justly* expresses the sense of the text.

Since my putting together the foregoing reflections, the reverend and ingenious Mr. *Foster* has published * his sentiments, touching the *morality of faith*; and has attempted to shew, that *faith*, founded on *sensible* evidence, is *less valuable* or *moral*, than faith founded on *other* evidence; but then, he does not ground this disparity upon the *strength* and *weakness* of the evidence, but upon *other circumstances*, which he supposes *peculiar to each case*; viz. that faith in the former, or when grounded on sensible evidence, is in a manner *forced*, and *involuntary*, and thereby is *more easy* and *cheap* to the believer; whereas, faith in the latter case requires *more pains* to be taken, *more ingenuity*, *more care and application* to procure it. Upon which, I observe, that in *some* instances the case may be as it is represented, and in other instances it may be the reverse. Suppose a friend of mine, upon whose testimony I have just ground to rely, was lately come from *London*, and he *voluntarily* informed me, (without any application of mine to procure the information,) that the *pillar* lately standing near *London-Bridge*, commonly called the *Monument*, was *fallen down*; in this instance faith founded on the *testimony* of my friend would be in a manner *forced*, and *involuntary*, and would be *much more easy* and *cheap* to me, than faith founded on *sensible* evidence, because that would require my taking the

* See Mr. *Foster's* Sermons, Vol. III. Sermon ix.

care and pains of a journey to London, to inspect the place, in order to procure it. But, admitting the case were always, as is represented above, then, in this view of it the worth and morality that attends it is not so much relative to faith, as to that rectitude of action, by which a man discharges his mind of all partiality and prejudice, and examines carefully, and candidly, all the evidence that falls within his notice, both for, and against the question in debate; this rectitude of action being plainly distinct from, and previous to faith, and is equally valuable, whether it be productive of faith, or of its contrary, viz. infidelity. Suppose a man to have divested himself of partiality and prejudice, and to have honestly enquired into the truth and divinity both of the Christian and the Mahometan revelations, and suppose the produce of such enquiry to be faith in the Christian, and infidelity with respect to the Mahometan revelation; then, the question would be, whether infidelity, with regard to the Mahometan revelation, be not equally valuable and moral, as faith in the Christian? And, the answer, I presume, will be, that one of these is as valuable as the other; or, rather, that the morality, in each case, was not so much relative to faith, nor infidelity, as to that rectitude of action which was distinct from, and previous to both. And, let it be admitted, for argument sake, that the reverse of this was the case; namely, that the produce of such

such enquiry was *faith* in the *Mahometan*, and *infidelity* with respect to the *Christian revelation*; and then, the question will be, whether *faith* and *infidelity* in this *latter case*, be not *equally valuable* and *moral*, as *faith* and *infidelity* in the *former*? And, the answer, I think, will be, that the *latter* would be *equally valuable*, *equally moral* with the *former*: I say, I think, the answer will be this, (except the judgment be *strongly biassed*, by some unreasonable prejudice, which is supposed to have been *St. Thomas's case*;) because *infidelity* is equally as *valuable*, or *moral*, as *faith*, when they are *equally well grounded*. And, as *faith* is plainly distinct from that rectitude of action which is previous to it; so, surely, what is *proper* and *peculiar* to one of these, ought not to be applied to the *other*; and yet, I think, the *blending together*, or *incorporating* of these, and then, making what is *proper* and *peculiar* to a *part*, relative to the *whole*, is that upon which the *strength* of *Mr. Foster's reasoning*, and the *weight* of his argument depends. And, as in the disquisition of all questions of this nature, great care ought to be taken in guarding against all *hurtful errors*; so, in order thereto, I think, we must not only distinguish betwixt *faith*, and what is *previous* to it, but also betwixt *faith*, and what may be *consequent* upon it. Suppose a man to divest himself of partiality and prejudice, and carefully and candidly to enquire, whether there will be a *future*

ture state of existence to men, and a future retribution; and suppose the produce of such enquiry to be *faith* in both these, and that such faith was *proper*, as being proportionate to the evidence upon which it was grounded; and suppose likewise, that the believer, in consequence of his faith, was led to *repent* of the *evil* of his ways, to *cease* to do *evil*, and *learn* to do *well*; then, tho' there would be a *propriety*, or *worthiness* in his faith, and in his behaviour precedent to it; yet, the *principal worthiness*, or *merit* of the case, would not be relative to these, but to that *rectitude of mind and life* which was consequent to them; and, it would be this *chiefly* that would render the believer *pleasing* and *acceptable* to his Maker. For, if the faith before mentioned should have no such *good effect* upon the mind and behaviour of the believer, but he *still goes on* in a *vicious course*, and *lives* as if there would be *no future state*, *no future retribution*, which may be, and, perhaps, sometimes is the case; then, such a believer, notwithstanding the *propriety* of his faith, and of his *conduct* previous to it, would be *unacceptable* to God; and his conduct, upon the *whole*, would be so far from *entitling* him to a *blessing*, that, on the contrary, it would *bring* upon him a *most grievous curse*. But further, the *propriety* and *worthiness* that may take place in *faith*, and in that *rectitude of action* which may be *previous* to it, these rise no higher than a *virtuous*

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or *proper selfishness*; he that *enquireth*, enquireth *for himself*, and he that *believeth*, believeth *for himself*, and not for *another*; and the worthiness of these *fall infinitely short*, if I may so speak, of that worthiness which is *relative to a virtuous, godlike benevolence*, or what one agent *generously* does for another. What an agent does *for himself*, it carries with it its *own reward*; what an agent *generously* does for others, renders him *worthy of recompence or reward from all*.

As the case of St. Thomas has been under consideration, I think, it may not be amiss to observe, that the *branch of history*, wherein that case is contained, seems to be of *doubtful authority*; because it seems, at least, to *contradict*, in two points, the *other histories*, wherein the resurrection of Christ is recorded; and thereby it seems to *weaken the cause* it is brought to *support*, viz. the doctrine of *Christ's resurrection*. The purpose Christ's resurrection was *immediately directed to*, was his *qualifying* his disciples, by giving them *proper instructions* for preaching his gospel to the world; and his *commissioning*, or *authorizing* them to execute that trust. And the doing of this *properly*, seems to have required that he should fully have instructed them *first*, and then commissioned them *afterward*; this *last act* being the *finishing part*, or that which *concluded* and put a *period* to his *ministry* among them. And it seemed also to require, that, when the commis-
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sion * was given, *all should be present* which were designed to act under it; because otherwise the *absent persons* would have *no commission* at all; and it seems very strange, that Christ should have *chose a time* for giving this commission, when *any one* person was *absent*, who was intended to act by virtue of its *authority*; these points are what the *nature and propriety* of the thing seem to call for. And as the account of the *resurrection* of Christ is contained in *five* histories; so *four* of them make Christ's giving the aforesaid commission the *last ministerial act*, he performed to his disciples, except his *blessing them* when he was parted from them. And as to the other point, *viz.* that *all* the disciples were *present* when the commission was given, *two* of the historians are express as to that, and say, that the *eleven* were there, and consequently *Thomas* must have been present, as he was *one* of the *eleven*; and this the other *two* do not *contradict*, but rather suppose it. But then, with respect to *both* these points, *St. John's* gospel sets forth the *contrary*, where it is said expressly, that *Thomas* was not present when the commission was given; and that Christ appeared *twice afterward*, at *one*

* That Christ should give a commission to his disciples, and that *five* historians should take upon them to transmit this commission to posterity in the very *words of Christ*; and yet should *all differ* from each other with respect to it, is exceeding strange, and shews a defect of memory, or something else. This commission was of *such concern*, that one would have thought it should have been so strongly impressed upon the minds of those that heard it, as never to have been forgot, in whole, or in part.

one of which times *Thomas* was cured of his *unbelief*. This being the case, the question is, how must our judgments be *determined*, when *two opposite* points are maintained? And the answer is obvious; if we follow nature, the *less* number ought to *give place* to the *greater*, where the evidences are of *equal credit*, and are *equally qualified* to know the truth; and consequently, that the *one historian*, viz. *St. John*, ought to *give place* to the *four*, who contradict him. And then, as *part* of *St. John's* history will be *set aside*; so the doctrine of *Christ's resurrection* will be thereby *cleared* of such *incumbrance* as that part of his gospel has brought upon it. However, in order to bring those historians to *some agreement*, and save *St. John* harmless, it will be proper to consider *John's* history as *ending* with the 23d verse of the xxth chapter of his gospel; and then, that history will *tally* with all the other histories, *so far* as not to *contradict* them in either of the points before mentioned. But then, the question will be, what must be done with the *remainder* of *John's* gospel? And the answer likewise is obvious, viz. it must be *rejected* as *spurious*. What saith the scriptures? *Cast out the bond woman and her son; for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman*. The part of *John's* gospel referred to, may have been *added* to that *history* by some other hand; principally, perhaps, for the sake of that *ridiculous story* of *Thomas's unbelief* related in it,

that being the principal point it is concerned with. I call that *branch* of history a ridiculous story; because it seems designed to represent *Thomas* as acting a *most ridiculous part* in it. The historian, in giving an account of *Thomas's* unbelief, has certainly *dropped* those *circumstances* which attended the case, and yet are necessary to be known in order to form a *proper judgment* upon it. The history sets forth, that some of the disciples came to *Thomas*, and told him, they had *seen the Lord*; upon which he is represented to have replied, *instantly*, [*Except I shall see, in his hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe;*] this to me seems *incredible*. The disciples must, surely, have told *Thomas* the *circumstances* of the case, and in what *manner* their Master had *appeared*, and shewed himself to them, and *what* was the *ground* of their assent, else there was nothing to *lead him* to make *such* a declaration; if *Thomas* had not *disliked* what was the *ground* of assent to the other disciples, then, he could have had *no occasion* given him to declare what should be the *ground* of assent to *himself*. This being the case, I shall therefore *supply* the history with *such circumstances* as plainly appear to be both *natural* and *necessary*, taking in *such help*, from the general history of *Christ's resurrection*, as it affords; and with this help the case will appear in a *two-fold* light; as thus. The disciples, who had seen *Christ*
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after his resurrection, came to *Thomas*, who had not seen him, and told him, they had seen the Lord; upon this *Thomas* asked them how, and in what manner their Master had appeared, and shewed himself to them? They answered, that when they were gathered together (the door being shut for fear of the *Jews*,) their Master *instantly appeared* and stood in the midst of them, and after he had conversed with them some time, he then *as instantly disappeared* and vanished out of their sight; and that, as he had appeared to them at *different times*, so he had made that appearance under *different forms*. This account was so far from being *satisfactory* to *Thomas*, that, on the contrary, he was *naturally* led to *suspect* it; for as this account afforded *no sort* of proof of the *identity* or *sameness* of *Christ's person*, that is, it did not make it appear, that the *person* whom they had seen, was *the very same person* who had been crucified, but rather rendered it *greatly uncertain*; seeing that appearance was under *different forms*, and was so *instantaneous* as made it look more like an *apparition*, than a *real resurrection*; so from hence there seemed *just ground* for *Thomas* to fear, that those disciples might have been misled. And, as the *aforsaid* account was not *satisfactory* to *Thomas*; so he gave his fellow disciples to understand *what would be satisfactory* to him; namely, that as the crucifixion of *Christ* had rendered his body *particularly remarkable*, by the *scars* and *marks* that the spear and

nails must have made upon it; so the *seeing* and *feeling* those parts of the body should be the *test* to him, and the *ground* of his *assent*, or *dissent*; and, if the person, who had appeared, was his *real* and *very Master*, he did not doubt but he would give him *such satisfaction*; nor would he be *displeas'd* with him for *desiring* it; seeing it was acting with such *care* and *caution*, in an affair of great importance, as every *honest, prudent man*, who is not disposed to *follow every dreamer*, ought, and would be disposed to do. But then, the case may be put in another light, which may, perhaps, not appear quite so favourable to *Thomas*. The disciples, who had seen Christ *after* his resurrection, came to *Thomas*, and told him, they had *seen the Lord*. Upon which *Thomas* asked them, in *what manner* Christ had appeared, and shewed himself to them? To which they answered, that they had not only *seen his person*, but also had *conversed* with him; and that *he* had *eat* and *drank* in their presence, and had exposed to their view *those parts* of his body, which the spear and nails had *peirced*; that he had required them, and they had *seen* and *handled* those very parts; by which they were *satisfied* it was their Master. This, however, was not *satisfactory* to *Thomas*, but he required *stronger* and *clearer* evidence; upon which the disciples asked him, *what evidence* would satisfy him? To which he replied, [*Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust*

thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.] Good God! is such ridiculousness as this possible? Could *Thomas* be such a *simpleton* to disallow the weight of the evidence, upon which his fellow disciples had been convinced, and then *instantly* insist upon the *very same kind* of evidence for himself? Surely, it could not be. I here presume, that the disciples did shew to *Thomas* what were the grounds of assent to them, besides *barely telling him* they had *seen* the Lord; because *otherwise* it is past all belief, that *Thomas* should make the declaration he did. The supplements I have added, are not forced, but quite natural, and are in part taken from the general history of Christ's resurrection; and therefore I further observe, that the disciples who talked with *Thomas*, shewed him that they grounded their belief of the resurrection of their Master, either on the circumstances mentioned in the first, or else on the circumstances mentioned in the second view I have taken of the case. If on the first, then *Thomas's* declaration was most just and proper; if on the second, then, it is not to be conceived that *Thomas* could make that declaration; the ridiculousness of the supposition over-sets it; not but the authority of the relation itself seems to be doubtful, upon the grounds before mentioned.

Thus much I thought proper to observe, by way of introduction.

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F O U R

DISSERTATIONS,

V I Z.

- I. On the HISTORY of MELCHIZEDEK. From which it appears, that *Abraham* did not give Tithes to *Melchizedek*, but *Melchizedek* to *Abraham*.
- II. On the Temper and Behaviour of ESAU and JACOB, the two Sons of the Patriarch *Isaac*. Whereby it appears, that *Esau* was much the better Man.
- III. On the Conduct of BALAAM. In which that Prophet's Character is cleared of those Reproaches and Imputations wherewith it has been stained.
- IV. On Dr. SHERLOCK, Lord Bishop of *Salisbury's* Assertion, viz. *Thus far all is well*; as grounded upon, or as an Inference or Conclusion drawn from the following Premises, namely, *And the people (of Israel) served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the Elders that out-lived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel*; which Premises are the Text to his Lordship's Sermon, lately published.

Inscribed to

Mr. SAMUEL DICKER,
Of WALTON in SURREY.

By T H O. C H U B B.

L O N D O N :

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DISSEMINATION

OF THE

RESULTS

OF THE

RESEARCH

CONDUCTED

BY THE

COMMISSION

ON THE

MATTERS

OF THE

INDIAN

AFFAIRS

AND

THE

WELFARE

OF THE

INDIAN

POPULATION

IN

INDIA

DURING

THE

PERIOD

FROM

1901

TO 1911

DEFINITION

Mr. SAMUEL DICKER,

OF

Walton in Surrey.

WORTHY SIR,

YOUR leaving your place of abode in Jamaica (where, through a proper application to business, accompanied with strict honesty and integrity, you acquired a plentiful fortune with great reputation) to pass the remainder of your days in this your native country, in the contemplation of truth, and in the communication of good to your fellow creatures, has given me the occasion, and opportunity of waiting on you by this address; for as I am happily fallen under the kind influence of the latter, so I beg leave to present you with the following Dissertations, that thereby I may contribute my mite towards your participation of the former. And though what I here offer may not, perhaps,

DEDICATION.

exactly accord with the sentiments of Patriarchs, Apostles, and many other men of note, as well in former, as later and present times; yet as truth does not always lie in the path that is most trodden, so, I flatter myself, that will plainly appear to be the case with regard to those subjects I have animadverted upon. However, truth is the point I aimed at; and whether I have hit the mark, or not, is humbly submitted to your impartial and unbiassed judgment, by,

Kind SIR,

Your greatly obliged,

Sarum, Feb. 1,
1745-6.

Humble Servant,

Tho. Chubb.

A
DISSERTATION,
OR
ENQUIRY,

Concerning the history of *Melchizedek*.
From which it appears, that *Abraham* did not give tithes to *Melchizedek*, but *Melchizedek* to *Abraham*.

IN the book of *Genesis* we have an account, that *Chedorlaomer* king of *Elam* was not content with being king in his own kingdom, or over his own family, household or tribe; but, like ambitious princes of later times, he assumed a dominion over other kings, and their kingdoms or people that were in his neighbourhood. And in consequence of this assumption, those kings and their people served *Chedorlaomer* twelve years, and in the thirteenth year some of them rebelled; that is, they attempted to shake his yolk from off their necks. This revolt raised the wrath and resentment of
Chedor-

Chedorlaomer; and in order to gratify his revengeful passion, and withal to strike terror in all the people in those countries, he, the following year, gathered together his own people, and also the kings and their people, who continued in their subjection to him, viz. *Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellaser, and Tidal king of nations*; these went out and ravaged the country all around them, committing great waste where-ever they came. Upon which, and in order to give a check to the ambition and tyranny of *Chedorlaomer*, and to put a stop to those ravages, *Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinah king of Admah, Shemebar king of Zebojim, and Bela king of Zoar*; these joined their forces, and went out and engaged in battle with the kings and people before mentioned, five kings against four. This battle was fought in the vale of *Siddim*, in which the five kings, and their people, were totally routed; and the conquerors fell upon the spoil, and took the goods, and victuals, and carried away some of the people captive, amongst whom was *Lot, Abraham's brother's son*. But when tidings thereof came to *Abraham*, he armed his trained servants, that had been born in his house, three hundred and eighteen men, and arose, and made haste after *Chedorlaomer* and his company, and pursued them unto *Dan*, and overtook them, and fought against them; and smote them, and pursued them farther, even unto *Hoba*. And *Abraham* brought back all the goods, and also *Lot* his nephew, and his goods,

goods, and the women, and all the people. This victory was of the *utmost* consequence, not only to the *five* kings, and their people, who were *immediately* and *directly* interested in it; but also to the *other* kings and people of *Canaan*, who were likewise interested in it, though *more* *remotely*, as it checked the *pride*, and broke the *power* of *Chedorlaomer*, which, otherwise, the more *distant* parts of *Canaan* were likely to have *felt* the *terrible* effects of. A *just* sense of this deliverance led *Bera*, king of *Sodom*, to go out to *meet* *Abraham*, at his *return* from the slaughter of *Chedorlaomer*, and the kings and people that were with him, to *compliment* *Abraham* upon the *victory* he had obtained, and to make his *thank-offering* to him, for the signal service he had done to their country; and he *met* *Abraham* at the valley of *Shaveh*. And *Melchizedek*, king of *Salem*, he also went out to *meet* *Abraham*, at his *return* from the slaughter of the kings; for though *Melchizedek* was not *immediately* interested in the victory obtained, yet he was *highly* obliged to *Abraham*, as thereby a *stop* was put to the *ambitious* views, and *tyrannical* practices of *Chedorlaomer*; the *bad* effects of which, otherwise, the *king* and *people* of *Salem* might soon have *felt* to their *cost*. This *Melchizedek* was a *priest*, as then the *head* or *principal* of every family was both *king* and *priest* in his *own* house; and he was the (or a) *priest* of the *most* *high* *God*, that is, *Melchizedek* was a *priest* who paid his *acknowledgments* or *thank-offerings*, not

to the *titular* and *fictitious* deities of the *Canaanites*, but to the *supream* Deity, the *God of Gods*, or the most high *God* *possessor* of heaven and earth. And as *Melchizedek* went out to *meet Abraham*, so he did not go *empty-handed*, but took with him *bread* and *wine*, and, no doubt, such other *good things* as *Salem* afforded, in order to *refresh Abraham* and the people that were with him, who must have been *greatly fatigued* by their *pursuing* after, and *fighting* with *Chedorlaomer*, and his company, as *afore said*. And when *Melchizedek* drew near, and met *Abraham*, he *blessed* him, that is, he put up his *petition* to the *supream Deity*, for a *blessing* upon *Abraham*, and said, *Blessed be Abraham* * of the most high *God*, *possessor* of heaven and earth; and *blessed be the most high God* which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand. *Melchizedek* having thus prayed to God for a *blessing* upon *Abraham*, and having also gave thanks to God for giving him the victory, he

* That *Melchizedek* was greater than *Abraham*, may, perhaps, be true; he may have been *possessed* of lands and territories, whereas *Abraham* sojourned in the territories of another; he may have been the *head* of a more numerous family, or people, than *Abraham* was, and so may have been *greater* than he, as the *king of Great Britain* may be said to be *greater* than the *king of Sardinia*. But then, it does not follow, that *Melchizedek* was *greater*, or *better*, than *Abraham*, because he had *blessed*, or *prayed* for a *blessing* upon *Abraham*; according to the argument of the *author* of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* upon the case; *Heb. vii. 7. Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better* (or greater.) A beggar may *blefs*, that is, he may put up his *petition* to God, for a *blessing* upon a king; but then, it does not follow, that the beggar is *better*, or *greater*, in any respect, than the king he *blessed*, or *prayed* for; and, therefore, the *afore said* *author's reasoning* must needs be *inconclusive*.

he then proceeded to *blefs*, or pay his *thank-offering* to *Abraham himself*, by presenting him with a *tenth part* of the *good things* he had brought from *Salem* (for he gave him *tithes* of all) and then, the other *nine parts*, no doubt, he *distributed* among the rest of the people, to *refresh* and *comfort* them; or, at least, as far as that would go towards it. *Melchizedek* having thus shewed his *gratitude* and *thankfulness* to *Abraham* (who might well be considered as the *saviour* of their country) by making him a *present* as aforesaid; then *Bera* king of *Sodom*, being thus *instructed* by *Melchizedek's* example, he also made a *generous offer* to *Abraham* of *all the spoil*, of *all the goods* that had been *retaken* from *Chedorlaomer*, reserving only the *persons* that had been *brought back* for himself. This *generous offer* of *Bera* was by *Abraham* as *generously refused*; who would not accept of any the *least part* of it for *himself* (much less did he take a *tenth part*, therewith to make presents of to *others*) save only what the *young men* had *eaten*, and a *portion* for his *three friends*, *viz. Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre*, in whose *territories* he *sojourned*, and by whose *help* he had *gained* this victory. This, I think, is the *natural thread*, and, therefore, a *just account* of the *branch* of history I have been considering; and would, I doubt not, be *admitted* as such, were it not *contradicted*, in one of its articles, by the *author* of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*; which author considers *Abraham* as having given *tithes* to *Melchizedek*, as in

chap. vii. 2. *To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; verse 4. Now consider how great this man was, to whom the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.* Whereas in the precedent view of the case, *Melchizedek* is considered as having given tithes to *Abraham*, and not *Abraham* to *Melchizedek*. For the clearing and settling of this point, it is to be observed,

First, That the forementioned author had nothing but the *Jewish history*, or *Pentateuch*, that could be of any weight, to ground his opinion upon, touching *who* gave tithes in *Abraham* and *Melchizedek's* case; there being no other history, memoir, or record that appears, at least, that I have ever heard of, but the original *Hebrew Pentateuch*, in which an account has been given of this matter; and though our *English Pentateuch* is but a translation from some *Hebrew* copy, yet that must have been likewise the case of all other copies, except those in the *Hebrew* tongue; for as the *Pentateuch* was originally written in *Hebrew*, so whatever language it has since appeared in, whether *Greek*, or otherwise, such copies must of necessity have been either immediately, or mediately, translations from the *Hebrew*; nor do I apprehend, that the several copies of the *Pentateuch* do at all differ in their relation of this piece of history, with respect to the point under consideration. For as it has been looked upon, in former times, by some learned men, to be, at least, a little doubtful who gave tithes, whether

whether *Abraham*, or *Melchizedek*; so, surely, if there be *any copy* of the *Pentateuch* in which this point is more *particularly* and *fully* expressed, it would have been *discovered* and *appealed* to long before now. As to *any opinion* that may have been given upon the *case* of *Melchizedek*, by *Josephus*, or any other learned man, whether *Jew*, or *Christian*, whether *antient*, or *modern*, if it does not appear to be *fairly grounded* on the history, it cannot be of *weight*; because, at most, it is but barely *conjectural*, or *presumptive*. When men are disposed to *extend* their knowledge or belief *beyond* the means of information, then they have recourse to *conjecture*; and as their judgments have no *proper* guide, so, consequently, they determine according to the *arbitrary* and *wandering* imaginations of their own minds. And this I take to be the *ground* of the *multiplicity*, and *contrariety* of opinions, learned men, of many ages, have gone into concerning *Melchizedek*; as well as in a multitude of *other* cases. *Melchizedek* is indeed taken notice of in a (I suppose *Hebrew*) *fragment*, or, perhaps, a short poetical *composition*, in which the Poet, or Psalmist, speaking of the *person* whom he made the *subject* of his muse, saith, as in *Psalms* cx. 4. *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of * Melchizedek.* But then, the Poet is *silent*

* To be a priest after the *order* of *Melchizedek*, surely, can be no *more*, or *otherwise*, than to be a priest after, or according to
that

as to tithes; and, therefore, the aforesaid author could not have *any thing* from that composition whereon to ground his opinion, that *Abraham* gave tithes to *Melchizedek*, and not *Melchizedek* to *Abraham*. And as the *author* of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* could have no *proper foundation* for his opinion, but the *history* referred to, touching *who* gave tithes, in the *case* under consideration; so this leads me to observe,

Secondly, That *that* history does not yield a *proper ground* for such opinion to be built upon, *viz.* that *Abraham* gave tithes to *Melchizedek*, but the *contrary*; as, I think, will plainly appear, if the natural thread of the story be *duly attended to*. For when the historian had observed, that *Melchizedek* brought forth* bread and wine, and also that he was the (or a) priest of the most high God, he added, *and he* (*viz.* *Melchizedek*) *blessed him* (*viz.* *Abraham*) *and said*, *Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth*;

that order of priesthood which took place in *Melchizedek's* time; and which *order* of priesthood, I apprehend, is agreed upon by *all* to be, that the *head*, or *principal person* of every family or tribe, was *king* and *priest* in his own house. I say, this is *all* that can *fairly* be supposed; because all that the historian has informed us of, touching *Melchizedek's* priesthood, is only that he was the (or a) *priest* of the most high God.

* If the city of *Salem* was in the valley of *Shaveh*, and if *Melchizedek* met *Abraham* at the entrance of that city; then the reading in our *English Bible* may be *very proper*, *viz.* that *Melchizedek* brought forth bread and wine, that is, he brought forth of *his city* bread and wine, when he met *Abraham*; but otherwise, I think, by *brought forth*, must be meant, that *Melchizedek* brought these with him from *Salem*, when he went to meet *Abraham*.

earth; and blessed be the most high God which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand. Here we see, that the *active* person, or the person *speaking*, was *Melchizedek*; and the *passive* person, or the person spoken to and of, was *Abraham*. The historian goes on, without the least *hint* or *intimation* of a *change* of persons, and observes, that he, the *active* person, or the person *speaking*, *viz.* *Melchizedek*, gave *him*, the *passive* person, or the person spoken to and of, *viz.* *Abraham*, *tithes of all*. Thus we see, that the historian is very *particular* and *express*, that it was *Melchizedek* which gave tithes to *Abraham*, and not *Abraham* to *Melchizedek*; and this leads me to observe,

Thirdly, That the *circumstances* which attended the case *do not* admit it to be otherwise: For, *first*, *Melchizedek* had *done nothing* to, or for *Abraham* which called for such a *grateful return*; whereas, *Abraham* had *laid Melchizedek*, and *all the people* in that neighbourhood under an *obligation of gratitude* to him, in that he had (for the present, at least) *rid* the country of their *great oppressor*. *Melchizedek* had not *risked* his *life* to procure *safety* to *Abraham*; but *Abraham* had done this to work *deliverance* for some, and to procure *safety* to the country around, of which *Melchizedek* and the *people of Salem* were a part: so that there was not the *shadow* of a *reason* for *Abraham* to have given *tithes* to *Melchizedek*; whereas, there was the *strongest reason* for *Melchizedek* thus to shew his *gratitude* to *Abraham*. To say, that *Abraham*

gave

gave tithes to *Melchizedek* on account of his being a *priest*, must needs be weakly urged; because, though he was a *priest*, yet he was not a *priest in*, and to the *house* or *family* of *Abraham*, and therefore, did not stand in the relation of a *priest* to him; and because *Abraham* was also a *priest himself*, as the *head* of every family or tribe was both *king* and *priest* in his *own house*; which was *Abraham's* case, except we suppose him to have been *less pious* than his neighbours, which supposition, surely, is not to be admitted. Besides, *Abraham* built *altars*, offered *sacrifices*, and *did* what was done by *other priests*; and, therefore, was *as much*, and *as truly* a *priest* as *Melchizedek* and other *priests* were; so that there is not the *least pretence* for *Abraham* to have given tithes to *Melchizedek* on account of *priesthood*. Nor, *secondly*, had he *any thing* in the *valley* of *Shaveh*, of *his own*, to make a present with, or to give tithes of. When *Abraham* heard of the *evil* that had befallen his *cousin Lot*, he went out in *haste*, and the men that were with him, in order to *pursue* after, and *overtake Chedorlao-mer* and his company; and therefore, the thing speaks itself, that they took *nothing* with them but their *weapons* of *war*, and what was necessary to *annoy* the enemy; and did not *needlessly* incumber themselves with *goods* and *riches* to make *presents* withal. Whereas, when *Melchizedek* went out to *meet Abraham*, upon his *return* from the slaughter of the kings, he was provided with *bread* and *wine*, and such *good things*

things as Salem afforded; and thereby he was furnished with materials wherewith to make a thank-offering to Abraham. To suppose, as the author to the epistle to the Hebrews does, that Abraham gave to Melchizedek a tenth part of the goods or spoil that had been retaken from Chedorlaomer, this supposition appears to be altogether groundless; because the historian has observed, that when Bera king of Sodom made an offer to Abraham of all the goods or spoil that had been brought back, Abraham would not accept the least part for himself, not from a thread even to a shoe-latchet; much less did he take a tenth part thereof, to make a present to Melchizedek. Besides, the goods or spoil referred to, was, antecedent to the aforesaid quarrel, the * property of those unfortunate people whom Chedorlaomer and his adherents had vanquished; and for Abraham, upon his return from the slaughter of the kings, to have withheld from the distressed owners a tenth part of their goods, and given them to a neighbouring king, who had not been a sufferer, is a supposition that is most unnatural and preposterous.

What

* When Chedorlaomer and the kings and people that followed him, went forth to engage in battle the five kings and people that came against them, they took with them, no doubt, their weapons of war, and what was necessary for a present subsistence; but then, it is not to be supposed that they needlessly incumbered themselves with goods and riches, thereby to lay a foundation of spoil for their enemies; nor does the history give any countenance to such a supposition. The spoil, therefore, referred to, must needs have been the goods and wealth which had been plundered and taken from the people of Sodom, &c. and which the historian informs us Abraham had brought back.

What I would farther observe upon the case is, that if the *author* of the epistle to the *Hebrews* erred, in the *instance* above-mentioned, as it plainly appears, to me at least, that he did; then that *may* have been the case in other instances; and then *his* judgment or opinion *alone*, upon *any* point, is not a *proper foundation* for our *faith* to be *grounded* upon, because he may possibly have erred; and consequently, *whatever* he has offered ought to be *tried*, before it be admitted, and not *implicitly* submitted to. Thus, this Author considers *Jesus Christ* to have been a *priest* after the order of *Melchizedek*, chap. v. verse 6. The author gives a quotation, which he applies to Christ, *viz.* *Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.* Verse 10, speaking likewise of Christ, he saith, *Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek.* Here, indeed, the author seems to have taken his opinion of Christ's *priesthood* being after the order of *Melchizedek*, from the *Hebrew* poet or psalmist before-mentioned, who left his readers in the *dark*, as to the *person* whom he made the *subject* of his psalm or song, and which this author applies to *Jesus Christ*. But then, it does not appear that *Jesus Christ* was a *priest* after the order of *Melchizedek*. The order of *priesthood* in *Melchizedek's* time, was, that the *head* or *principal* in every *family* or *tribe* was both *king* and *priest* in his *own house*, as hath been already observed; whereas, it does not appear, that

that Jesus Christ was the *principal* of the *family*, or *tribe*, to which he belonged, but rather the *contrary*; and, therefore, supposing him to have been a *priest*, yet it does not appear that he was a priest after the *order* of *Melchizedek*. Nor does it appear, that Jesus Christ performed any *priestly* acts, or exercised any *priestly* office in, and among his *own* family, or tribe, nor indeed whilst he was upon *earth*; and, therefore, when the term priest was applied to him, it must have been used in an *improper* and *figurative* sense. To say, that Christ executed the office of a priest, by offering up himself a *sacrifice* upon the cross, for the sins of the world, this seems to be *weakly* urged; because Christ did not *offer up*, or sacrifice *himself* (if the term may be admitted) but was *sacrificed* by the wicked *Jews* and *Romans*; and, therefore, Christ was not a *priest*, but a *victim* in that bloody scene of action. Or to say, that Christ's priesthood was *spiritual*, is *beside* the point; because that is the same as to say, that Christ was only a priest in an *improper* and *figurative* sense; and because the *present* question is not concerning the *spirituality*, or *temporality* of Christ's priesthood, but only concerning the *way*, *method*, or *order* by which he was introduced into it. Or to say, that whatever Christ was in the days of his *flesh*, yet he is *now* a priest, as he executes a priestly office in *heaven*; this is *towering* in our imaginations *above* the clouds, and *aver-*
ing that which we have *no way* (that appears)
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clearly to understand, or make out; and, consequently, it is extending our *faith* beyond the means of information, heaven being quite out of distance with respect to us, so as for us to understand what is transacting there. Indeed, the author of the history of the Acts of the Apostles has informed us, chap. vii. that in the *enthusiastick rapture* St. Stephen was in, just before his death, the heavens opened, and St. Stephen looking *steadfastly in*, or looking in with a *steady fixed eye and mind*, he saw the glory of God, or God seated on a *glorious throne*, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; but then *nothing* concerning Christ's *priesthood* can be *inferred* from hence.

And here, I beg leave to digress a little, by observing to my readers, that according to the *Jewish theology*, that is, according to the *sentiments*, and the *accounts* which some of the *Jews* have given of Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, or the national God of *Israel*, they seem, at least, to have considered him as a *great and glorious Being*, whose *place of residence* is *above the starry region*, or in the *highest heaven*, where he is seated on a throne of Majesty, being attended by a multitude of *less glorious beings*, or *ministerial deities*, some of which, at least, are called *angels*; and that the *place of residence* to Jehovah is parted from these *lower regions* by a *veil or curtain*, commonly called the *firmament of heaven*; and that this veil is sometimes *parted in sunder*, in order to give a *farther view* into what is above it.

it. Those angels that attend Jehovah's presence are sometimes sent to do *business* upon this globe, and then they appear greatly to resemble the species of *mankind*; but otherwise, by reason of the aforesaid curtain, and, perhaps, by their *great distance*, they are *invisible* to the inhabitants of this earth, excepting upon some extraordinary occasions they have been rendered visible to some particular persons, to whom they have been sent to transact business with, as aforesaid. Thus, when Abab king of Israel adjured the prophet Micajah to tell him nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord; (1 Kings xxii. 16.) the prophet, in obedience to that solemn charge, said to the king, *I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have no shepherd; and the Lord said, these have no master, let them return every man to his house in peace.* The prophet said also to Abab, *Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord, I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right-hand, and on his left.* And as Jehovah had then a purpose to answer, viz. to entice and persuade Abab, that he might go up, and fall at Ramoth-Gilead; so an enquiry was made, who of those attendants would undertake this work. And there came forth (from among this host, or multitude) a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, *I will persuade him.* And the Lord said unto him, *Wherewith?* And he said, *I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.* And he said, *thou shalt persuade*

persuade him, and shalt prevail also; go forth, and do so. Now, therefore, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets; and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee. Here we see, that the Lord, and his host of attendants, and the throne of Majesty on which he was seated, were the objects of vision to Micajah; and, therefore, so far must have been material. This branch of history has put thinking people upon the enquiry, from whence the lying spirit might come? who was the principal in this deceit? and to whose account this dissimulation and falsehood is to be placed? And in consequence of such inquisition, some say, it is not to be considered as diabolical, as coming from the prince of darkness; because they apprehend the Hebrew historians have never characterized the Devil, or Satan, with the title of *Jehovah*, but have generally given that appellation to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or the national God of Israel; which Jehovah is, by the historian, made to be the principal in the case under consideration; now therefore the Lord, or Jehovah, hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, said Micajah to Ahab. And as some men think the Devil is not to be considered as the principal in the case referred to; so they think much less can it, with any propriety or truth, be applied to the supream Deity. The one God over all, say they, is possessed with the most boundless power, and the most perfect intelligence; and, therefore, is able, of himself,

to

to answer any purpose he may have in view, without having recourse to the contemptible means of *lying* and *falsehood* to obtain it. If *Abab* had rendered himself *unworthy* to live in this world, and the supream Deity had been disposed to *remove him* out of it, he could *many ways* have put a *period* to *Abab's* life, without *commissioning* one of his creatures to go forth and *deceive him* with a *lie*, with a *fallacious* promise of success, thereby to *entice him* to go up, and *fall* by the sword at *Ramoth-Gilead*. Nor, say they, *will* the one God over all, who is the grand source and fountain of *light* and *truth*, make use of the *low means* of *artifice* and *collusion* to answer any of his purposes; because thereby he would *act* quite out of *character*, he would perform the *part*, act *like unto*, and, as it were, *fill up* the character of the *prince of darkness*, and the *father of lies*; and, therefore, most assuredly, the *lying spirit* in *Abab's* prophets was not *of*, or *from* the *supream Deity*, nor was he any way a *party* in the case. Consonant to the *account* given of *Jehovah* by the prophet *Micajah*, is that given by *St. Stephen*, who when he *saw* the heavens *opened*, or when the firmament of heaven was *divided* or *parted in sunder* in his view, he then (as he informed the people) *saw also* the *glory of God*; by which he must mean, he saw *God seated* on his *glorious throne*, as is evident from what he saw *besides*, viz. *Jesus*, or the *Son of man standing* on the *right hand* of *God*. These instances shew what *con-*
ceptions

ceptions the Jews had of Jehovah, or the God of Israel, viz. that he is *in part material*, and thereby *visible*; though generally *invisible* to us, as he is *concealed* by a *veil*, and as his principal residence is in the *highest heaven*, which is *far above*, and out of our *sight*. The term *saw*, that is here made use of, does not admit of being taken *figuratively* in the present case; because, as St. Stephen *saw* with his *bodily eyes* the heavens open, or the firmament of heaven part in sunder; so the *view* he had from such an *opening* must have been with his *bodily eyes* also. But then, though what was thus *seen* may be applicable to some *secondary, subordinate deity*, who is clothed with *matter*, and thereby is rendered *visible*, or, at least, the *object* of vision; yet, surely, it is hard to conceive it can be *applicable* to the *one God over all*, to that *Immensity* who has neither *throne* nor *footstool*, neither *right hand* nor *left*, but is *equally present* in every part of infinite space, in the same manner, kind, and degree. Besides, if the raising any *low, carnal, unsuitable, or false image* of the *Deity* upon the *human mind*, or the *likening God* to any thing *sensible and material*, by any *moulten* or *carved work*, or by *paintings* on a *wall*, be deemed *idolatrous*, as I apprehend it is, at least, by protestant Christians; then, surely, the raising *such image* by any *arrangement* of *words*, or *sentences*, must, with *equal propriety*, come under the same denomination. *I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him,*

him, on his right hand, and on his left, said Micajah: and St. Stephen, likewise, looking up steadfastly into heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. These accounts are delivered to us as *historical facts*, the one being grounded on the authority of a *Jewish*, and the other on the authority of a *Christian historian*; which historians have set forth, that the prophet *Micajah* and *St. Stephen* were *eye witnesses* of the facts referred to. But to return.

If the *author* of the epistle to the *Hebrews* was *liable* to err, and *did err*, as in the instances above; then that *may* have been the case of *other scripture writers*; I say, that *may* have been the case, for any thing *we know*, or for *any grounds* we have from which we may *fairly* and *justly* conclude the contrary. And this holds forth a *wholesome lesson* of instruction to us; namely, that when *books* are put into our hands * as *guides* to our *judgments* and *actions*, then it nearly concerns us all *carefully* and *attentively* to consider *what it is* which is thus held forth to us. And this ought more especially to be done with respect to *writings* that have a *divine character* stamped upon them; because *long* and *general experience* shews, that men are too too apt to *give up* their *understandings* in *complaisance* to what comes forth under *such* a character. And though it is of no consequence to us, whether *Melchizedek* gave tithes

* This point will be more largely and fully considered in the vith section of the *Author's Farewel to his Readers*.

tithes to *Abraham*, or *Abraham* to *Melchizedek*; yet as these *indifferent* things do not stand alone, but are *mixed* and *blended* with matters of the *greatest moment*, with which our *conduct* and *behaviour*, our *comfort*, *peace*, and *safety* are concerned, and may be greatly *affected* by; so our discovering an *error* in the *former*, may lead us to be more *watchful* and *careful* with regard to the *latter*. And though whatever *God* saith is *truth*, and need not be *farther* enquired into; because, were it not *truth*, it *would not* be said by him; yet *when*, and *what* *God* saith by the *mouths* and *pens* of *men*, may be most *uncertain* and *precarious*; and, therefore, as he is a *fool* who *saith* in his *heart* there is *no God*; so he is also a *fool*, though not in an equal degree; who *believeth* in his *heart* whatever may be put upon him as a *divine oracle*, without *diligently* enquiring, according to the *best* of his ability, and *carefully* and *attentively* considering, whether it be *really so*, or *not*.

A N

E N Q U I R Y

Into the conduct of *Esau* and *Jacob*,
the two sons of the patriarch *Isaac*.
Whereby it appears, that *Esau* was
much the better man.

AS the *Jews* have always *boasted of*, and
valued themselves upon their being the
special favourites of heaven, and that
they have been *singled out*, not only from the
body of mankind in *general*, but also from the
rest of the offspring of the patriarch *Abraham*,
(to whom the promise was made) to be the
peculiar people of God; so, perhaps, it may
not be deemed *impertinent* to enquire, what
there may have been in *reason* and *nature* to be
the *ground* of that preference. And as there
does not appear to be *any other* memoir or re-
cord but the *Pentateuch* only, *from*, and *by*
which, the characters and conduct of the *He-*
brew patriarchs are *discovered* and *made known*
to us; so it must be *that record* only which
can furnish us with *materials* for the present
D enquiry.

enquiry. The *Hebrew* historian informs us, that *Abraham* had *eight* sons, viz, *Ishmael*, *Isaac*, *Zimram*, *Jokshan*, *Medan*, *Midian*, *Ishbak*, and *Shuah*; but then, though *Abraham* had *many* sons, yet they were not *all* counted for the *seed*, it being *Isaac* only who was the son of the *promise*. As to *Ishmael*, he was *base-born*, being the son of *Hagar*, who was *handmaid* to *Sarah*, *Abraham's* wife; and as to *Zimram*, *Jokshan*, *Medan*, *Midian*, *Ishbak*, and *Shuah*, these were the sons of *Keturah*, *Abraham's* second wife, *Gen. xxv*; though, at verse 6, *Keturah* seems to be considered as *Abraham's* concubine. None of these were counted *Abraham's* seed in that *particular* and *special* sense in which *Isaac* was, he only being the son of the *promise*, and of whom God said to *Abraham*, In *Isaac* shall thy *seed* be called. And as *Isaac* was the son of the *promise*, or him in *whose* posterity the *promises* that had been made to *Abraham* are supposed to *center*; so he had *two* sons, viz. *Esau* and *Jacob*; the younger of which was *preferred* in his posterity to the posterity of *Esau*, who was the *elder* brother, the offspring of *Jacob* only being counted for the seed, as the seed of *Esau* were excluded: but then, whether there was any thing in *reason* and *nature* to be the ground of that *preference*, is the subject of our present enquiry. And in order to make a *proper* inquisition, I think, we must take a *short* view of the *conduct* and *behaviour* of these *two* men, under the several exigences that attended them, so far as they have been

been exhibited to us in and by the *Pentateuch*; this being the *only way*, that appears, for us to obtain *proper* satisfaction in the present case.

First, We are to enquire into the *conduct* and *behaviour* of *Esau*, he being the *elder brother*. And as the history of *Esau* is very *short*, so the *first* thing remarked of him, with regard to his *conduct*, is, he was a *cunning hunter*, a man of the *field*, *Genesis xxv. 27.* by which, I suppose, must be meant, that he shewed *more art* and *cunning* in pursuing after, and catching game, than some others did; and, therefore, he was stiled a *cunning hunter*. And though, perhaps, the *skill* which *Esau* shewed in *catching* game, may not be considered as *greatly* to his *praise*; yet neither can it, I think, be considered as a *proper ground* of dispraise to him. The historian has further observed: *And Jacob sod pottage, and Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage, for I am faint; therefore his name was called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him, and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread, and pottage of lentils, and he did eat, and drink, and rose up and went his way; thus Esau despised his birthright.* In this branch of history, *Esau's conduct* is, perhaps, justly *condemnable*, *viz.* his bartering away his birthright (or his right to a

greater share of the inheritance of his father) in the manner, and upon the terms above-mentioned. The historian saith, that *Esau despised* his birthright: by which, I think, nothing more can be meant, than that he had not set *so high a value* upon it as he ought, or as the case required that he should. But then *Esau's* offence seems to admit of *some alleviations*, as it was committed in his youth, a time of life in which mens value for riches and worldly wealth does not usually rise *so high*, as when they are farther advanced in years; as he was under great restlessness and uneasiness from the great drought or fever that was then upon him, and which put him off his guard; and as he was drawn, or betrayed into it, by the unreasonable proposal and demand of his brother. Besides, *Esau* conceived himself to be at the point of death, and that the partaking of *Jacob's* pottage was the only means he had to prevent it; and that led him to reason and act as he did. Behold, (said he) *I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do me?* If the premise *Esau* reasoned from had been just, and well grounded, then the conclusion he drew from it, and his subsequent conduct would have been just and proper also. If *Esau* had been really at the point of death, (as he thought himself to be) and if the partaking of *Jacob's* pottage was the only means he had to prevent it; and if he could come at that pottage no other way than by parting with his birthright for it; I say, had this been the case, (which, it is plain from

from the history, *Eſau* conceived it to be) then, ſurely, *Eſau* acted *properly* in preferring a greater good to a leſs, when, without it, he muſt have been *deprived* of both; he acted *right* in giving up his birthright to *ſave* his life. So that, at the worſt, *Eſau's* *miſconduct* was the effect of *weakneſs*, but not of *wickedneſs*; it was the produce of a *miſtaken* judgment, but not of a *vicious* mind. The *author* of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* ſeems therefore to be *too ſevere* in his *cenſure* upon *Eſau*. Chap xii. 16, 17. *Leſt there be any fornicator, or profane perſon as Eſau, who for one morſel of meat ſold his birthright; for ye know, that when afterwards he would have inherited the bleſſing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears.* This *Chriſtian* writer, like ſome writers of *later times*, gives a very *partial* account of *Eſau's* caſe, and calls him a *profane* perſon for *ſelling* his birthright for *one morſel of meat*, without taking notice of the *principal circumſtances* which attended the caſe. *Eſau* did not ſell his birthright for one morſel of meat, conſidered *ſimply* as a *morſel of meat*; but under the conſideration of its being a *means* of *preſerving* his life; he did not ſell his birthright to *gratify* his appetite, but to *ſave* himſelf from death: Behold, ſaid he, I am at the *point* to die, (or I ſhall *very ſoon* be dead) and what *profit* ſhall this birthright do me? Nor was *Eſau* *rejected* from the *bleſſing* on account of his having *ſold* his birthright; as the aforeſaid author hath ſuggeſted; but, on the

the contrary, he was tricked out of it, by the *wicked* contrivance, by the *lying* and *falsehood* of his mother and brother. The author referred to has farther observed concerning *Esau*, that he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears; by which I suppose he must mean, that *Esau's* repentance came too late, and was unavailable; or else what he said is scarce sense: but then, this is said without any authority from the history, which represents *Esau*, not as blaming himself for the loss of the birthright, but as laying all the fault upon *Jacob* his brother. *Genesis xxvii. 36.* And he (viz. *Esau*) said, *Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times, he took away my birthright, and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing.* And though the historian has observed, that when *Esau* found himself disappointed of the blessing, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and that he lift up his voice and wept; this does not appear to have arisen from a sense of his misconduct in selling his birthright, but only on account of his brother's disappointing him of the blessing which his father intended him; and from an earnest desire that his father would bless him also, as well as his brother. Verse 34. *And when Esau heard the words of his father, (that he had given the blessing to Jacob which was intended for him) he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. Verse 38. And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing,*

blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father; and he lift up his voice and wept. From what I have observed, I think, it appears, that the *author* of the epistle to the *Hebrews* has not done justice to the character of *Esau*. And *Esau* was forty years old when he took to wife *Judith* the daughter of *Beri* the *Hittite*, and *Bashemeth* the daughter of *Elon* the *Hittite*; which were a grief of mind to *Isaac* and to *Rebecca*, *Genesis* xxvi. 34, 35. Whether *Esau* was any way blameable in the choice of these women, the historian has not informed us, but only that they were a grief to his parents; and therefore, nothing can be concluded from it either to his praise or dispraise.

What comes next to be considered, is *Esau's* disappointment of the blessing, and his behaviour thereupon. When *Isaac* was old, he proposed to give his blessing to his elder son *Esau*, he not having done any thing (that appears) to have forfeited his father's favour. And in order thereto, *Isaac* sent *Esau* into the field to catch venison, and to dress it, and make savoury meat, such as his soul loved, that he might eat thereof, and bless *Esau* before his death, *Genesis* xxvii. But *Rebecca* hearing what *Isaac* said, proposed a stratagem to *Jacob*, whereby to deceive *Isaac*, and disappoint *Esau* of the blessing; which stratagem was put in execution, and succeeded; *Isaac* was deceived, and *Jacob* stole away the blessing from his brother. And it came to pass, as soon as *Isaac* had made an End of blessing *Jacob*, and *Jacob* was scarce gone out
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from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-born. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who, where is he that hath taken venison and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times, he took away my birthright, and behold now he hath taken away my blessing: and he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him; and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father: and Esau lift up his voice and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above, and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and

it shall come to pass, when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yolk from off thy neck. And Esau hated Jacob, because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him; and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob.

In this branch of history, there are three things remarkable as to the conduct of *Esau*. First, he was deeply affected with the loss of that blessing his brother had deprived him of; and he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry; — and he lift up his voice and wept. Secondly, he made strong applications to his father, that he might be blessed as well as his brother. When *Esau* heard the words of his father, that he had given the blessing to *Jacob*, he said unto his father, *Bless me, even me also, O my father.* — And he (*viz. Esau*) said, *Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?* — And *Esau* said unto his father, *Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father; and he lift up his voice and wept.* These words of *Esau*, surely, were most melting, and were enough to have pierced the heart of any man, and, therefore, must needs have wounded the very soul of *Isaac*, his aged, tender, and loving father. Lastly, the resentment *Esau* went into, upon the ill usage he met with from his brother. And *Esau* hated *Jacob*, because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him; and *Esau* said in his heart, *The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will*

I slay my brother Jacob. Here the proper question is, what ground was there for such concern, such application, and such resentment in *Esau*? For the solution of which question, I shall not enquire, whether in those times parents had it in their power, and it was left to their option to determine the state and condition of their posterity, either for prosperity, or adversity, for many generations to come; it being sufficient for the present purpose to observe, that this was then thought, or judged to be the case. *And Isaac answered, and said unto Esau, Behold I have made him (viz. Jacob) thy lord, and all his brethren have I given unto him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him, &c.* Now this being the state of the case, *Isaac's blessing* must of necessity appear to *Esau* to be a matter of the utmost consequence to him, and to his posterity; and, therefore, it must have been a proper ground for the great concern he was under in losing the blessing his father had intended him, and for the pressing application he made to his father, that he might be blessed as well as his brother; and it was also a proper ground of resentment to him against his brother, who had been so greatly injurious to him; it being as just and proper, and as much founded in nature, to hate or dislike the proper objects of hatred, as it is to love or approve the proper objects of love. Perhaps, it may be said, with too much justice, that *Esau* carried his resentment too far, in that he meditated his brother's death; *Esau said*
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in his heart, *The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob.* However; though this part of *Esau's* conduct may be *justly blameable*, yet it had every *alleviating circumstance* attending it. For as *Jacob* had *extorted* from *Esau*, in the day of his *distress*, his *birthright*, and now had robbed him of his father's *blessing*; these high provocations so *awakened* and *raised* the passion of *resentment* in *Esau*, as makes it *no wonder* that it exceeded its *proper limitation*, seeing under *such* circumstances a man must be *greatly* upon the *watch*, and have a *great command* of himself, to keep the passion from *exceeding* its proper bounds, and which is not *ordinarily* the case. And though *Esau* said in his heart, he would *slay* his brother; yet he did not *hastily* put this his resolution in *practice*; he did not in the *height* of his passion *fall foul* of his brother, and put a *period* to his life; but only *intended* to do it, at some *distance* of time to come; and as his *resentment* had been, in some measure, *justly raised*, by the *repeated injuries* that had been done him, so it was *removed*, when the *heat* of his passion was over; and upon his brother's *humble submission*, it was turned into *love*.

Rebecca being *conscious* of the *ill usage* that had been done to her son *Esau*, to *prevent* any bad consequences that might follow upon it, she *prevailed* upon *Isaac* to send *Jacob* to *Padan-aram*, to take a *wife* of their own *kindred*; and *Jacob* went to his uncle *Laban*, and

took two of his daughters to wife, and under him gathered together great substance, and then returned back to Canaan. And as Jacob could not but be sensible how basely he had acted towards his brother; so he proposed to appease his brother's anger by a present. *Genesis xxxii.* And Jacob took of that which came to his hand, a present for Esau his brother, two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she-asses and ten foals. *Chap. xxxiii.* And Jacob lift up his eyes, and looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men; and he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two hand-maids. And he put the hand-maids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. And he lift up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, *Who are those with thee?* And he said, *The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.* Then the hand-maids came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves; and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. And he said, *What meanest thou by all this drove, which I meet?* and he said, *These are to find grace in*
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the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself. Here we see, notwithstanding Jacob had supplanted Esau twice, by depriving him both of the birthright and blessing; yet Esau went out to meet him at his return, and when he saw him, he received him with all the affection and tenderness of a brother. Esau, as it were, cast the remembrance of his brother's ill usage of him behind his back, and when he saw him, he ran to meet him, he embraced him, fell upon his neck and kissed him, and wept over him; such joy did Esau shew at the return of his brother. This, surely, is almost a singular instance of good nature, and overlooking of injuries upon the first submission; in which Esau has few equals, and, perhaps, none have excelled him. But this is not all; for as Jacob had prepared a large present for his brother, in order to appease that anger which he knew had been justly provoked; so Esau most generously refused it, and said, I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself. To say I have enough, when an offer of much more presents, is an instance of self-denial that does not ordinarily take place; and yet this was Esau's case. Where is the man! where is the Christian! who says I have enough, when an offer presents of greatly increasing his store? and yet this was the case of Esau. For though, perhaps, it may not be unusual for a Christian bishop, when in the possession of two or three thousand pounds per year, to say I have enough, whilst there

there is *no prospect* of his rising *higher*, or getting *more*; yet *no sooner* is a *view opened* to a *more profitable see*, then, *where is*, or *where was* that Christian bishop, that *self-denying* father of the church, who *has not*, who *does not* use *all* his interest, put forth *his utmost* endeavour, and, as it were, *row against* wind and tide to get himself *safely* landed there? The instance of *contentment* and *self-denial* shewn forth in *Esau*, is, surely, of *inestimable value*, and worthy even of *Christian* imitation; *I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself*. *Esau* also kindly offered *Jacob* some of his people, to help *Jacob's* household on in their way. Verse 15. *And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me; and he said, What needeth it? let me find grace in the sight of my lord. So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir.* These are the *principal occurrences* of *Esau's* life, as they are held forth to us in the *Pentateuch*; by which, I think, it *appears*, that though *Esau* was of *like passions* with other men, and was *subject* to all the *infirmities* and *frailties* of nature; yet his character, upon the whole, is *worthy* and *amiable*.

What comes next to be considered, is the *conduct* of *Jacob*; and the *first* thing remarkable of him, is that of his *getting* the birthright from his brother; which shews what was the *grand spring* or principle of action in him, *viz.* *covetousness*, or a *vicious self-love*. *St. Paul* has observed, 1 *Tim.* vi. 10. That the *love of money*

ney is the root of all evil; by which, surely, the apostle must mean, not a *proper*, but an *excessive* or *vicious* love of money, or worldly goods, which is usually termed *covetousness*: this he considers to be the *root of all, or most evil*, as it leads men into many *bad practices* to procure it, and which was *verified* in Jacob's case. *Genesis xxv. And Jacob sold pottage, and Esau came from the field, and he was faint; and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage, for I am faint. If Jacob had attended to the calls, and the obligations of nature, then, when he saw his brother Esau in distress, and beheld the anguish of his soul, he would readily and speedily have administered relief to him; and this he would have done independent of all application, and of the brotherly relation that subsisted betwixt them, because it was what Esau's pitiable case required; and, therefore, for Jacob to see his brother in distress, and to shut up the bowels of his compassion from him, when called upon for help, is such an instance of hard-heartedness, as is not ordinarily to be met with. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. As Jacob had discharged himself of all the previous obligations of nature, so his heart ran after gain, and that even in his youth, which does not alleviate, but rather aggravate the offence, it being a time of life in which that passion is not usually so greatly corrupted. Jacob no sooner saw the distress of his brother, and heard his complaint, but he cast about him what*

what *advantage* to make to *himself* thereby. *And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright;* this, surely, was a most *monstrous demand*, and shewed *Jacob's covetousness* to be *immeasurable* even as the sand of the sea. If *Jacob*, in *bartering* with his brother, had required *pennyworth* for pennyworth, it would have had the face of *justice*, though void of *pity*; or if he had required a *pound's-worth* for his pennyworth, that would have been a most *unreasonable* and *extravagant demand*; but for him to require his brother's *birthright* for his *bowl of lentil broth*, is such an *exchange* as admits of no *comparison*; and is such an instance of *boundless avarice*, as hath none to parallel. And as was *Jacob's covetousness*, so was his *confidence*; he must have had the most *consummate* assurance to have been *capable* of making so *monstrous* a demand. And that *Jacob* might make *sure work*, he required his brother to *bind the bargain* with an oath. *And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him, and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.* Thus was *Esau* supplanted of the *birthright*, under a *colour* of *justice*; and God must be made a *party* in the cause; *Esau* must *appeal* to the Deity to be a *witness* to this most *accursed contract*.

Genesis xxvii. *And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son; and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said unto him, Be-*
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hold, now I am old, I know not the day of my death ; now therefore, take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison, and make savoury meat, such as I love ; and bring it to me, that I may eat, that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebecca heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son ; and Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebecca spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord, before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, according to that which I command thee ; go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two kids of the goats, and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth ; and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebecca his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man ; peradventure, my father will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver, and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said, Upon me be thy curse, my son ; only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother ; and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. Here we see, that Rebecca was the projector of the intended fraud ; she put her son Jacob upon playing the trickster with his father and brother :

ther: we also see, that *Jacob* at first declined the work; but then his *refusal* was not grounded on the *baseness* of the design, but on the *danger* of not succeeding in it: Behold (said *Jacob*) *Esau* my brother is a *hairy* man, and I am a *smooth* man; my father, peradventure, will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a *deceiver*, and I shall bring a *curse* upon me, and not a *blessing*. And *Rebecca* took goodly raiment of her elder son *Esau*, which were with her in the house, and put them upon *Jacob* her younger son; and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck, and she gave the savoury meat, and the bread which she had prepared, into the hand of her son *Jacob*; and he came unto his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I, who art thou, my son? And *Jacob* said unto his father, I am *Esau* thy first-born, I have done according as thou baddest; arise, I pray thee, and sit, and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.—And *Isaac* said unto *Jacob*, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son *Esau*, or not. And *Jacob* went near unto *Isaac* his father, and he felt him, and said, The voice is *Jacob's* voice, but the hands are the hands of *Esau*; and he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy as his brother *Esau's* hands; so he blessed him, and said, Art thou my very son *Esau*? and he said, I am. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee: and he brought it near to him, and he did eat; and
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he brought him wine, and he drank: and his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now and kiss me, my son; and he came near, and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him; and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed; therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, &c.

When some men engage in an evil design, they stick at nothing in the prosecution of it; and that seems to have been Jacob's case. Jacob, through the instigation of his mother, engaged in a design of robbing his brother of the blessing his father had intended him; and he commenced the most thorough-paced liar, both in word and deed, to obtain it. Jacob put on his brother's apparel, he counterfeited the skin of his hands and his neck, he covered himself with dissimulation as with a cloak, and then went to his father with that boldness, which is only suitable to honesty and truth. And Jacob said, My father; and Isaac said, Who art thou, my son? and he said unto his father, I am Esau thy first-born, I have done according as thou baddest me. And as Isaac's jealousy was raised, by the voice that he heard (the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau, and he discerned him not; that is, he discerned him, and yet he discerned him not) so this led Isaac to put the question more strongly and closely to Jacob, viz. Art thou my very son Esau? and he said, I am. Never, surely, was dissimulation and falshood carried to a greater height, than in the present case. Jacob not only put

himself in the *place* of his brother, and called himself by his brother's *name*; but when he was strictly examined, he *stood to it to the last*, that he was the *very Esau*; and, no doubt, would have *swore* it, had that been required. *And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? and he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me.* Good God! for *Jacob* to make the Deity a *party* in his *unrighteous* cause, and represent God as bearing a *part* in, and *forwarding* the fraud, must needs be the *height* of *impiety*, as well as the *grossest* *falsehood*.

As *Jacob* had *justly* raised the *resentment* of his brother, by *robbing* him of the *birthright* and *blessing*; so to prevent *Esau* from *returning* the injury, *Rebecca* prevailed upon *Isaac* to send *Jacob* to *Padan-aram*, to his uncle *Laban*. Genesis xxviii. *And as Jacob went on his way, the sun being set, he laid him down to sleep; and he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it.* What this *hieroglyphick* dream was designed to point out, the historian has not informed us; though this seems to be hinted by it, *viz.* that the *place* of *residence* to the angels is *heaven*, and that sometimes they *descend*, and do *business* upon earth, and then *ascend* up to heaven again; but then the *swift* motion by which they are supposed to pass through the air, seems to be *very unaptly* represented by the *slow* progression of *ascending* and *descending* upon

a ladder. And the Lord stood above it (*viz.* this ladder) and there made several *promises* to *Jacob*, and to his seed, if such a thing could be, considering the *evil* practices *Jacob* had been so lately engaged in. And when *Jacob* awoke, he vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and plenty; (the last of these, surely, was supposed and intended, though not expressed; else, whereof would *Jacob* have had to have given a tenth to God, according to his vow) then shall the Lord be my God; and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will, surely, give the tenth part to thee. As *Jacob* was sometimes concerned in making of contracts; so he took care to stipulate good terms for himself, whether he trafficked with God, or with man; witness the birthright contract, as well as that just mentioned. Not but the last article in this contract may possibly have been descended from priestly parents, as priests of all sorts have endeavoured to persuade the world, that what is given to them is offered to God, and acceptable to him; of which they seem to look upon tithes to be a very convenient portion. And if the article referred to was part of the contract, then it does not appear, that this part of the bargain was made good; though *Jacob* had acquired so large a substance in *Padan-aram*, as at his return it constituted two bands: so that

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Jacob's vow seems to have been like that of the sailor in the storm. And *Jacob* went on his journey till he came to the country of the east, and there he met with *Rachel*, his uncle *Laban's* daughter, who had him to her father's house, where he was kindly entertained. And *Jacob* served his uncle *Laban* fourteen years for his two daughters, *Leah* and *Rachel*, by whom he had seven sons, and one daughter; and likewise four other sons, viz. two apiece by each of their hand-maids, *Bilhah* and *Zilpah*, whilst they remained in the house of their father. Whether the multiplying of wives and concubines, as in *Jacob's* case, is consonant to that rule of action which the species-of mankind ought to be governed by, is a question I shall not enter into; but only observe, if it was so in *Jacob's* case, then it must be so in all other cases under the same circumstances. And when *Jacob* had thus increased his family, he desired *Laban* to let him return with them to the country from whence he came. *Genesis xxx.* But *Laban* desired *Jacob* to continue with him, and he would reward him to his satisfaction. And he said, *What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing; if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed, and keep thy flock. I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the speckled and spotted among the goats; and of such shall be my hire. So shall my righteousness answer*
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for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face; every one that is not speckled among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be accounted as stolen with me. This, to appearance, was a most fair and equitable proposal, and seemed to bespeak the proposer to be a man of strict honour, honesty, and integrity; whereas, in truth, it was an artful contrivance in Jacob, to gather the best of Laban's cattle to himself, and make them his own property, under the appearance of justice and honesty, as the event shewed. Laban not being acquainted with the craft and subtilty of Jacob, and expecting his cattle would have been left to follow nature, without being practised upon, to turn them out of that otherwise natural course they were in, he readily complied with the proposal, considering himself, no doubt, to have been in very safe hands; though afterwards he found the case to be otherwise, to his cost. Jacob having struck a bargain with Laban, he soon fell to practising upon his cattle, in order to answer his own purpose. And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazle, and chesnut-tree, and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods; and he set the rods, which he had pilled before the flocks, in the watering troughs, when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink; and the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled and spotted. And Jacob did separate the lambs, and

and set the faces of the flocks towards the ring-straked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flock by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle. And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods; but when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in; so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger were Jacob's. As was Jacob's covetousness, so was his craft, viz. inexhaustible; and thereby his conduct was all of a piece. Whilst Jacob was in Canaan, in the house of his father Isaac, his wits were employed in making his market upon the fortune of his brother; and when he came to Padan-aram, the same kind of craft was exercised in draining the blood out of the veins of his uncle Laban. Jacob's skill in natural philosophy, or his knowing what natural effects the striking the imaginations of the cattle at the time of conception would produce, together with the ignorance and simplicity of Laban; these put it into his power to enrich himself, at his uncle's cost: he put the pilled sticks into the watering-troughs, and the cattle conceived, and brought forth accordingly. And as Jacob did this to the strong cattle, but not to the weak; so by this means the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger were his own. Thus Jacob, taking the advantage of his uncle's ignorance and simplicity, increased in wealth exceedingly, and had maid servants and men servants,

servants, and camels and asses. This being the case with *Jacob* at *Padan-aram*, as he grew rich, his uncle grew poor: so *Laban* and his sons grew very uneasy thereby; which *Jacob* perceiving, he thought it adviseable to march off. *Genesis xxxi.* And the better to grace the retreat, the historian observes, that the Lord said unto *Jacob*, *Return unto the land of thy fathers, and I will be with thee;* but then, who the lord was that gave *Jacob* this seasonable advice, the Lord only knows. However, *Jacob* sent and called *Rachel* and *Leah* to the field unto his flock, and said unto them, *I see your father's countenance that it is not towards me as before; but the God of my fathers hath been with me. And ye know, that with all my power I have served your father, and your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ring-straked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ring-straked: Thus hath God taken away the cattle of your father, and hath given them unto me. And that Jacob might clear up his own innocence, and throw all the blame upon his uncle, he farther informed his wives what he had seen in a dream, and what the Lord had told him. As Jacob was a perfect master of the arts of dissimulation and misrepresentation, so in the use of these he took upon him to justify himself, at the expence of his uncle's reputation. It was Laban (if Jacob is*

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to be credited) who was the *deceiver*, and who had *changed* his wages *ten times*; whereas the *truth* of the case seems to be this: *Laban* finding himself to be in *bad hands*, and that his circumstances grew *worse* and *worse*, he made those *changes* in *Jacob's* wages, in order to *check* a growing evil, which otherwise he knew not how to *guard* against; and, indeed, *Jacob* shewed himself to be so *very sharp*, that *Laban*, with all his *care* and *circumspection*, could not be a *match* for him; and, therefore, must needs have been a *great sufferer* by him. And though it seemed *right* to *Laban*, that *Jacob* should be *well rewarded* for his *service*, and therefore he generously offered him to make his *own terms*; yet it could not seem right to him, and therefore he *did not* intend, by that offer, to put it in *Jacob's* power to bring him to *poverty* thereby, which he plainly saw *Jacob* was driving at; to *prevent* which, he *changed* his wages, as aforesaid. However, *Jacob* had *another way* of maintaining his *innocence*, by charging all that had happened upon *Providence*: *If he* (viz. *Laban*) *said thus*, *The speckled shall be thy wages*; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he *said thus*, *The ring-straked shall be thy hire*; then all the cattle bare ring-straked: Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and hath given them unto me. Never, surely, was there a more *partial* or *false* representation of a case than this! *Jacob* knew full well, that as to the *bearing* of the cattle it was the product of *second causes*; and that he

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was the *only agent* concerned in *setting* those causes on *work*; it was *he* who *piled* the *sticks*, and laid them in the *watering-troughs*; it was *he* that brought the *strong* cattle to the troughs, in order for them to *conceive*, as aforesaid: and therefore, for him to make it the *act* of *God*, to say, that the *Lord* had *taken away* *Laban's* cattle, and *given* them to him, was both *impious* and *false*. It is a case but too common for mens *evil* deeds to be *covered* with the *cloak* of *divine Providence*. Every thing is considered as under the *direction* and *appointment* of *God*, whether *good* or *evil*; all things come to pass according to his will; it is *he* that maketh *war* and maketh *peace*; it is *God* that maketh *rich* and maketh *poor*, though one man becomes *rich* by *robbing* and *plundering*, and another becomes *poor* by being *robbed* and *plundered*: and thus men *prostitute* the *character* and *profane* the sacred name of *God*, by making him a *party* in every *unrighteous* cause. *Jacob* having *complained* to his wives, and they *joining* in the complaint, they agreed to *go off* with all that they had; to which *Rachel* added her father's *images*, which she had secretly *stolen* from him. And as *Jacob* took the opportunity of going away whilst *Laban* was *sheering* his *sheep*; so it was told *Laban* on the *third* day, that *Jacob* was *fled*. Upon which, *Laban* took his brethren with him, and *pursued* after him *seven* days journey, and they overtook him in the *Mount-Gilead*. And *God* came to *Laban* the *Syrian* in a *dream* by *night*, and said unto him,

Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. Who, or what *this* god was that interposed in favour of Jacob, when his character and conduct are taken into the account, is hard to find; for though, perhaps, it may be much too severe to say of Jacob, he had a heart to conceive, a head to contrive, and a hand to execute any villany; yet, surely, it may be very justly and truly said of him, that his avaritious desires, and the craft he used in gratifying them were greatly extensive. When Laban overtook Jacob, he complained of ill usage, in that Jacob stole away secretly, and did not give him the opportunity of seeing and kissing his children, and sending them away in cheerfulness; and moreover he had stolen his Gods. And Jacob answered, and said unto Laban, Behold, I was afraid, for I said, Paradvventure thou wilt take by force thy daughters from me: with whomsoever thou findest thy Gods, let him not live; before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee; for Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them. Then Laban searched all their tents and stuff; but as Rachel had put the images in a hamper, and sat upon it, and pretended, when her father came to search the hamper, that she could not rise up, because the custom of women was upon her; so she, (having learned the art of lying and dissimulation as well as her husband) by this means, prevented her father from searching the hamper; and thereby Laban not only lost his images, but also brought upon himself the imputation

imputation of a *false accuser*. And *Jacob* was wroth, and chode with *Laban*, &c. However, at last, they made up the matter, they entered into a covenant, and parted friendly.

Jacob having parted from *Laban*, he went forward, and sent and acquainted *Esau* of his coming. *Genesis xxxii.* And the messengers returned to *Jacob*, saying, *We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. And Jacob was greatly afraid, and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, in two bands.* Fear and shame are proper attendants on guilt, tho' unnatural to innocence. *Jacob* could not but be conscious of the injuries he had done his brother; and, therefore, when he heard he was coming to meet him, with *four hundred men*, it put him in fear. However, having prayed to God for protection, and measuring his brother's temper and affections by his own, who was greedy of gain, he thought nothing was so likely to appease his brother's anger as a valuable present; and which he set apart accordingly. And *Jacob* was left alone, and there wrestled a man (or one who appeared like a man) with him until the breaking of the day; and when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of *Jacob's* thigh was out of joint; and he wrestled with him. And he said, *Let me go, for the day breaketh; and he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name?* And

And he said, *Jacob*. And he said, *Thy name shall be no more called Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou had power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name? And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? and he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God (or the angel of God) face to face, and my life is preserved.* From this, and several other accounts in the *Pentateuch*, it is plain, that the *angels* who appeared to, and conversed with the *Hebrew patriarchs* were a species of beings, which, as to their *outward appearance*, very much *resembled* the species of *mankind*; they eat, and drank, and walked, and talked like men: but then, whether they were *distinguishable* into *sexes*, viz. *males* and *females*, and so did, or do *increase* and *multiply* like *human kind*, is a point the history, perhaps, may be thought not to be quite clear in; though, I think, there are *some passages* in *holy writ* which seem, at least, to *favour* the *affirmative* side of this question. Thus, *Job* i. 6. *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.* That these *sons of God* were *angels*, is highly probable; not only from *Satan's associating* himself with them, who was one of that species, though an angel of *darkness*; but also angels are represented in the bible as *attending* the *divine presence*, which these *sons of God* were said to do. These angels be-
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ing called *sons* of God, plainly bespeaks them to be of the *male* kind, and supposes that there *were*, or *might be* others of the *same species*, who come under the denomination of *daughters* of God; though, perhaps, those *daughters* of God, or *female* angels, if any such there be, may not have been *sent* to do business upon *earth*, as the *sons* of God were, and, therefore, we may have heard *nothing* of them. In a *large* family, where there are *parents* and *children*, *masters* and *servants*, *sojourners* and *guests*, and persons of *different* ages and sexes, these are distinguished by *different* names; and as the *offspring* of the *heads* of the family are distinguished by the general term *children*, in distinction to those in the same family, who are either their parents, or else sojourners, guests, or servants; so these *children*, with regard to the *sexes*, are distinguished by the terms *sons* and *daughters*; sons and daughters, as to the sexes, being put in *opposition*, and by way of *distinction* in the same family, with regard to the *offspring*, as *males* and *females* are with respect to the *species* at large; and, therefore, the term son does as much contain in it the *idea* of a *male*, as it does that of a *child*. So that if there is a species of *intelligent* beings that are not distinguishable into *males* and *females*, that is, if there is *nothing* in the constitution of each individual which denominates it either a male or female; then, it is plain, that the term *son*, as well as *daughter*, is *altogether* *irrelative* to that species; because there

is *nothing* to ground the *distinction*, and, therefore, not the *appellations*, upon. From what I have observed, I think, it appears, that if God has a son, then there must be, at least, a *capacity* in nature for his having a *daughter*; if the Deity has a *male child*, who, on that account, is called a *son* of God, then he may have a *female child*, who, on that account, may be called a *daughter* of God; and, consequently, if there are *male* angels who are called *sons* of God, then there may be *females* of the same species who may with *equal propriety* be called *daughters* of God also. To this I may add, *Genesis vi. And it came to pass, when men began to multiply (or were greatly multiplied) on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose.—There were giants in the earth in those days, (viz. when, or after the coalition of species, or the sons of God going in unto the daughters of men, as aforesaid) and also after that, (viz.) when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them; the same [children] became mighty men, which were of old (or in those antient times) men of renown. That is, the males who sprang from such a coalition of species, from sons or angels of God and daughters of men, were not only of larger stature than others, but they had also rendered themselves remarkable by their actions; they became famous on account of their mighty deeds,*

deeds, they were mighty men, men of renown. That these sons of God were not of the human species is plain, because they are put in *contradistinction* to them; when men began to be, or were greatly multiplied, then the sons of God did as aforesaid. And that these sons of God were *angels* is highly *probable*; because we know of *no other* species of intelligent beings but the *angels* who have so near a *resemblance* to men, or who have had any *intercourse* with them. And that these sons or angels of God were of the *male* kind is plain, not only from the appellation of *sons*, which bespeaks them to be *males*, but also from their going in unto, or *lying* with the *daughters* of men, and those women bearing *children* consequent upon it. Whether angels are of a *gigantick size*, and so produced *giants*, or whether this *extraordinary* production was owing to the *mixture* of the species, as aforesaid, is not to be *discovered* by the history. *Jacob* having *wrestled* and *conversed* with the *angel*, as before-mentioned, he went forward until he met his brother, who received him *graciously*. *Genesis xxxiii.* And when the two brothers were again parted, *Jacob* came to *Shechem*, a city of *Shechem*, and he bought a parcel of land of *Hamor*, the father of *Shechem*, who was lord of the country. And *Dinah*, the daughter of *Leah*, which she bare unto *Jacob*, went out to see the daughters of the land. *Genesis xxxiv.* And when *Shechem*, the son of *Hamor*, the *Hivite*, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and defiled her; and his soul

*clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob. And Hamor, the father of Shechem, proposed to the sons of Jacob a treaty of marriage betwixt his son and their sister; and offered to give what dowry they should require. And the sons of Jacob (concealing their resentment) answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said,—We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us. But in this will we consent unto you, if you will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters unto us, and we will become one people; but if ye will not harken unto us to be circumcised, then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone. And the words pleased Hamor and Shechem his son; and the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter. And Hamor and Shechem conferred with the rest of the people, and prevailed upon them to come into the agreement; in consequence of which they were all circumcised. As the sons of Jacob inherited the corrupt affections, the dissimulation and falshood of their father; so, like him, they made every thing to yield to their inclinations, and even things sacred must be made subservient thereto. And accordingly conformity in the externals of religion must be required from the Shechemites, every male among them must be circumcised, a divine institution must be prostituted, the more fully to gratify a revengeful passion, and to satisfy
their*

their avaritious desires. The *Shechemites* having submitted to the painful rite of circumcision, which disabled them from making that defence of their lives and fortunes as otherwise they would have been capable of, they thereby put it into the power of the sons of Jacob to cut them off. And it came to pass on the third day, whilst they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, (who, no doubt, were appointed for that purpose by the rest) Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and (like thirsty bloodhounds) came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor, and Shechem his son, with the edge of the sword; and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out. The sons of Jacob (probably the other sons, having the signal given them) came upon the slain, and spoiled the city.—They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field, and all their wealth; and all their little ones and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house. Here we see was a general, and a most terrible destruction and devastation, in which the innocent and the guilty were equally involved; and, therefore, if ever resentment was carried much too far, it seems to have been so in the present case; and this very naturally leads to the question, (*viz.*) What could have been the ground of so severe a revenge? And the answer is, It was Shechem's lying with their sister Dinah, which thing ought not to have been done. That

such a thing ought not to have been done, is *true*; but then, it is as *true*, that the offence bore *no proportion* to the retaliation; especially if it be considered, that *he* who had deflowered *Dinab*, not only *proposed*, but *greatly desired* to make her his wife, which was, in some measure, *repairing* the injury; and which *offer* the sons of *Jacob* *publickly professed* to accept, upon certain *conditions* that were *complied* with. And, therefore, for these *sons* of *Jacob*, these *favourites* of heaven, to break through the *covenant* they had entred into, and not only *kill* the *offending* party, but also his *father*, and all the *males* that were in the city, and then *possess themselves* of all their cattle, goods, and substance, both within doors and without, and take their *wives* and *children* captive, is such an *unheard-of* barbarity and villany as is rarely to be met with; and which makes the *actors* look more like *beasts* of prey than men. Nor, perhaps, were *all* these sons of *Jacob* *always* clear of those *kind* of *offences* they showed so *great* a resentment against; witness *Reuben's* going in to his *father's* concubine, and *Judah* lying with *Tamar*, his *daughter-in-law*; and who would have gratified his *wrath*, as well as his *lust*, upon her, had not *shame* covered his face. Not but it hath been often observed, that those men who take the liberty to *debauch* the *wives* and *daughters* of *others*, shew a *great* *resentment* when the like is practised upon their *own*; and this shews the *excellency* and *usefulness* of that golden rule of action, *viz.* of *doing to others* as

we would they should *do unto us*. However, *Jacob* was greatly offended at the vile behaviour of his sons, and told them, They troubled him and made his name to *sink* among the inhabitants of the land; which seems to be the *justest* and most *amiable part* of his conduct. And as *Simeon* and *Levi* were a kind of *principals* in the aforesaid cruelty; so *Jacob* reproached them with it when he came to die. *Genesis xxxv.* *Simeon and Levi* (said he) *are brethren, instruments of cruelty are in their habitations; O my soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall; cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel. Genesis xlix.* This cruel disposition seems to have prevailed in the sons of *Jacob*, and to have become a kind of *second nature* to them; else, surely, they could not have meditated their brother *Joseph's* death upon so slight grounds, *viz.* his father's loving him better, and treating him with more *tenderness* than he did them. *Genesis xxxvii.* And *Jacob* travelled from *Shalem* to *Bethel*, and from thence he went towards *Ephrath*. *Genesis xxxv.* And *Rachel* conceived, and bare *Jacob* another son, (which put a period to her life) and she called his name *Benoni*; but his father called his name *Benjamin*. And *Jacob* shewed a *partial regard* to his two sons *Joseph* and *Benjamin*; though this is not to be wondered at, because they were

his *youngest* children, whose mother was *dead*; and because they were the sons of his most beloved *Rachel*. After this, I think, there is nothing *memorable* in the history of *Jacob*, with which his *moral character* is concerned; so that what I have taken notice of, are the *principal* occurrences of his life, from which his *character* is to be collected; except we take into the account his acts of *piety* and his *enthusiasm*, all which were *compatible* with very *bad actions*. *Jacob's* character, upon the whole, seems to be this, *viz.* he was a *covetous, crafty, designing man*; who sacrificed *truth, honour, and honesty* to his *avaritious* views: and though he made a profession of *great piety*, and he is said to have had frequent *personal conferences* with God, with angels, &c. yet his *conduct*, upon the whole, seems *justly condemnable*, and what even a *wise and good man* would greatly *disapprove*.

Thus I have taken a view of the *behaviour* of *Esau* and *Jacob*, the *two sons* of the patriarch *Isaac*, as their *conduct* has been exhibited to us by the *Pentateuch*; from which it appears, upon a comparison, that *Esau* was *much the better man*. As to the *posterity* of *Esau*, we have nothing to *ground* an enquiry upon, their actions having been buried in *oblivion*; at least, the case has that *appearance* with respect to me. And as to the *seed* of *Jacob*, his *sons* are represented by the historian to have been *wrathful, cruel, and treacherous*, whose hands were *stained with blood*; and their *posterity* are repre-

represented by their *own* historians and prophets to have been, from their *first* commencement as a nation to their *last* dispersion by the *Romans*, a *stubborn*, a *rebellious*, and a *gainsaying* people. For though the *ox* knoweth his *owner*, and the *ass* his master's *crib*; yet *Israel* did *not know*, nor would the sons of *Jacob* *consider*. The sum of the argument seems to be this, *viz.* *Esau* appears to have been a *plain*, *honest*, *undesigning*, *good-natur'd* man, whose posterity, as to their *moral conduct*, (for want of materials) we can form no judgment of: *Jacob* appears to have been an *avaritious*, *crafty*, *designing* man, who stuck at *nothing* to gain his ends; and his posterity were an *untractable*, *obstinate*, *wicked* people, who would be neither *led* nor *drove*, would be wrought upon neither by *smiles* nor *frowns*. And this carries us back to our *first* enquiry, *viz.* if the *Jews* were *singled out* from the *rest* of mankind in general, and from *all others* of the seed of *Abraham* in particular, to be the *peculiar* and *favourite* people of God; then, whether there was any thing in *nature* or *reason* to have been the *ground* of that preference? And this question is answered (by, or from the precedent enquiry) in the *negative*, *viz.* there *was not*. But then it is to be observed, when the question is put, Whether there was *any* ground? it is meant, any *proper* ground of *preference*. If a man should chuse a *shrew* to be his wife, for or because she is a *shrew*, this would be a *ground* of choice, though a very *improper* one,
and

and he would commence a *fool* by so doing. In like manner, *stubbornness*, or *perversefulness*, may be considered as a *ground*, though it cannot be a *suitable* and *proper* ground of *preference* to a being of the most *perfect* intelligence, and *boundless* power, which the one God over all is allowed to be. That the *supream* Deity, the *one common* Parent of the intelligent world, should single out a *particular* branch of the human species to be his *peculiar* and *favourite* people, is hard to conceive, is what the human understanding cannot well digest; and that he should give the preference to the *less* worthy, the *less* deserving, is still more so. And this very naturally leads to another enquiry, *viz.* Whether the *Jews* pretence of being the *peculiar* people of God could possibly have been *well grounded*? The solution of which is left to *more capable* judges.

Perhaps it may be said, that the election of the *Jews*, to be God's *peculiar* people, was not upon their *own* account, or for their *own* sakes, that any *great advantage* might accrue to *them* thereby; but their election was intended to answer *other* purposes, namely, to preserve the *knowledge* of, and keep up a *sense* of the *true* God in the world; to *abolish* the doctrine of *ministerial* and *deputed* gods; to restore and preserve the *purity* of God's *worship*, by *excluding* from it all *images* and *external representations* of the Deity; and that from *Jacob's* family might spring a *person* that should be the *Saviour* of the world. To this it may be answered,

swered, that the *seed* of *Jacob* were not elected to be God's *peculiar* people for their *own* sakes, nor to answer any great and valuable purpose to *them*, is *expresly* contrary to that covenant, or those *promises* which were made to their *ancestors*, and which are the *evidences* of that *election*. Thus, *Genesis* xii. 1, 2, 3. Now the Lord had said unto *Abraham*, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. Chap. xiii. 14, 15. And the Lord said unto *Abraham*, ——— Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, and eastward and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. Chap. xvii. 6, 7, 8. And I (*viz.* God) will make thee (*viz.* *Abraham*) exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee; and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, all the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of *Canaan*, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. Upon the making of these promises, the rite of circum-

cision was appointed, to be a *sign* or *token* to the *Jews* of God's *faithfulness* and *truth* in making good this perpetual and everlasting covenant to them. From these *promises* made to *Abraham*, and which were afterwards *confined* to the *posterity* of *Jacob*, it abundantly appears, that the house of *Israel* were *chosen* and *separated* from the *rest* of the world to be God's *peculiar* people, with a *principal* view, and *especial* regard to those people themselves, that they might be a great and prosperous nation through all generations; and, therefore, what is *offered* above with *relation* thereto, must needs be *perfectly* *groundless*. As to those *conjectural* grounds (for, surely, they are no other) of the *Jews* election to be God's peculiar people, which are mentioned above, I observe, that if by preserving the *knowledge* of, and keeping up a *sense* of the *true* God, be meant to preserve the knowledge of, and keep up a sense of a *supream* Deity; then, according to the *learned*, the knowledge of, and a sense of a *supream* Deity, was *part* of the *Pagan* *theology*; and, therefore, was not in *danger* of being *sunk* and *lost* in the world. For though the *Pagans* worshipped, or paid their respect to *many* mediatorial and subordinate gods; yet they acknowledged and worshipped *one*, and *but one* *supream* Deity. Nor could the election of the *Jews* to be God's peculiar people, *abolish* and *extinguish* the doctrine of *ministerial* and *substituted* deities; because *Judaism* itself was *grounded* upon it. Galatians iii. 19. *Wherefore*
then

then serveth the law? it was added, because of transgression, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made; and it (viz. the law) was ordained by angels [or deputed gods] in the hand of a mediator. Hebrews ii. 2, 3. For if the word (or law) spoken (or ordained) by angels (or ministerial deities) was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience (against that law, delivered by substituted gods, as aforesaid) received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape? &c. Again, verse 5. For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world (or dispensation) to come, whereof we speak. This plainly implies, that the world, or dispensation that then was, or which had passed, or was passing away, had been put in subjection to angels, or deputed gods. And as the law was ordained, or dispensed to the Jews, through the ministry of angels, or deputed deities; so, surely, the aforesaid doctrine could not, nor was it intended to be extinguished by the Jews election, as aforesaid. And this makes it probable, that Jehovah, who is said to have conversed with Abraham, Moses, and other Jewish patriarchs, and is called the God of Israel, was no more than a ministerial and deputed god. And, indeed, Christianity may, perhaps, seem to rest upon a like foundation, as grounded upon the ministry of Jesus Christ. For though some Christians maintain (perhaps, on very slight grounds) that Jesus Christ is the one necessarily existing Being, the one supream Deity; yet there have been other Christians, who have

maintained (perhaps, on as good grounds as the former) that Jesus Christ is no more than a *deputed* and *subordinate* God. And if the *Jews* were *elected* to be God's *peculiar* people, in order to keep God's *worship* clear of *idols*, or *idolatry*; then the *means* was greatly *disproportionate* to the *end* proposed to be obtained by it; because there was never a people *more addicted* to idolatry than they, till after their *dispersion* (by the *Babylonish* captivity) into *Persia*, and other countries, by which the *knowledge* of the *common* people, and the *Jews* *theology*, seem to have been greatly improved; the *common* people, *before* that time, being most *grossly ignorant* in *theological* matters, having *scarcely* any knowledge of *their own law*. And as to the Saviour of the world *descending* from any *particular* family, or person, it could not possibly be of any *consequence* to mankind; because, provided they have a *Saviour*, it must be a matter of *indifference* to them, *who* their Saviour descended from, whether *Shem*, *Ham*, or *Japhet*. And if it may be considered as a *reputation* to Jesus Christ, that he descended from the patriarch *Abraham*; then it must be a *disreputation* to him to have descended from the patriarchs *Jacob*, *Judah*, and others; though in truth there is no *real* reputation, or *disreputation*; no *worthiness*, or *unworthiness*, derived from either.

Before I quit this subject, I beg leave to observe farther, *viz.* that in the *history* of *Jacob*, he is not only represented as being *engaged* in several

several *bad designs*, and that he prosecuted them by very *unjustifiable means*, without any the least *mark of dislike* shewn by the *Deity* thereto, or any *token of contempt* being stamp'd upon *them*; but also, on the contrary, the history seems at least to *set forth*, that the *Lord* was *with Jacob* in all his *unrighteous undertakings*, and that God made what *he did* to *prosper* in his hands. This being the case, or at least it is supposed to be so, from hence a question seems naturally to arise, *viz.* Whether the *two* following *propositions* are *natural conclusions* from the above *premises*? namely, first, that *God sees not sin in some people*, which was fully exemplified in the case of *Jacob*. Secondly, As *Jacob* was *highly favoured of God*, and what *he did* the *Lord* made it to *prosper*; so if a man takes *him* for an example, and goes into the like practices of *dissimulation, falsehood, &c.* to answer his evil purposes, as *Jacob* did; then he can have no *just ground* to conclude, but that the *Lord may be with him*, and that *he may be highly favoured and prospered of God also*. The *former* of these is a *doctrinal*, and the *latter* a *practical conclusion*; both which seem to *follow* from the above *premises*, and seem to be the *uses* that every man is to make of the *branch of history* referred to, by a *practical application* of it to *himself*. If *God sees not sin in some people*; then he *may not see sin in me*. If *God is with, and prospers* some men in their *unrighteous undertakings*; then he *may be with, and act the same*

same part by me, should I engage in any *bad design*; at least, I can have no *proper ground* to conclude he *will not*; so that I have an *equal chance* of having God on my side. This, I say, seems to be the *practical improvement*, that an attentive mind is *naturally* led to *make* upon reading the *piece* of *history* I have been *examining*.

The use I would make of this, is to lead my readers to consider, what *extraordinary care* and *caution* every one ought to use, who *attentively* reads, and *practically* applies, what he reads [in the Bible] *to himself*. For though attentively to read, and practically to apply, are the most *natural* and *proper uses* that any *books* held forth to us, as *proper guides* to our judgments, our affections and actions, can be *applied to*; yet such is the *subject matter* contained in the Bible, in many of its parts, that without the *utmost care* and *caution* be used in *reading*, and *applying it* as aforesaid, it may become the *parent* of manifold evils, of which the branch of history I have examined is an *obvious* instance. The *justness* and *propriety* of this reflection, I readily submit to the judgment of every *serious* and *considerate* man. I will only add, that if God be *immutable*, which most undoubtedly he is; then he *equally* approves, and disapproves the *proper objects* of approbation and dislike in *all ages* and *places*, without respect to *persons*, or *things*; seeing he is every where, and always the same, both in *this dispensation*, and in *all dispensations*; in *this world*, and in *all worlds*, both yesterday, and to day, and for ever. A

A S H O R T

D I S S E R T A T I O N

On the conduct of *Balaam*. In which that Prophet's character is cleared of those reproaches and imputations wherewith it has been stained.

IN the book of *Numbers*, we have an account, that when *Balak* king of *Moab* heard of all that had been done to *Sihon* king of the *Amorites*, to *Og* king of *Bashan*, and to their cities and people, he was sore afraid. And he called together some of the elders of *Moab* and *Midian*, and sent them, with a present in their hands, to *Balaam* the son of *Beor*, to *Pethor*, to intreat *Balaam* to come to him to curse *Israel*; upon a presumption, that he whom *Balaam* blessed with his mouth, would be blessed indeed; and that he upon whom *Balaam* pronounced a curse, would be cursed accordingly. These messengers went to *Balaam*, and delivered their message; but *Balaam* gave them to understand, that he would give no answer, until he had received
instruc-

instruction from God, and then he would answer agreeable thereto. This *cautious conduct* in *Balaam* seems to merit *praise*, in that he would not *hastily* take upon him to *blefs*, or to *curse*, until he had *consulted* his principal, and was invested with *proper authority* for either. However, he *hospitably* invited the messengers to *lodge* with him, and he would give them their *answer*; and they abode with *him* accordingly. The historian has also informed us, that *God* came to *Balaam*, and said, *What men are these with thee?* And *Balaam* said unto *God*, *Balak* the son of *Zippor*, king of *Moab*, hath sent unto me, saying, *Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt which covereth the face of the earth, Come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.* And *God* said unto *Balaam*, *Thou shalt not go with them, thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.* Upon this *Balaam* informed the messengers, that the *Lord* had *refused* to let him go with them; and they returned with *this* message to the king, their master. The messengers having returned with the forementioned answer to *Balak*, and he not being *satisfied* therewith, sent a *second* time to *Balaam*, by messengers more *honourable* than the former, not only with a *present* in their hands, but also with a *promise* from *Balak*, of promoting *Balaam* to great honour, and of doing for him what he should desire, and with an *earnest request*, that *Balaam* would come to him, and *curse Israel*. To

which message *Balaam* answered, and said unto the servants of *Balak*, If *Balak* would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot (that is, I will not) go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less, or more. An answer, surely, the most honest, which contains in it a steady resolution to maintain his integrity, and that no worldly consideration should turn him from his duty; if *Balak* would give me his house full of silver and gold, I will not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less, or more. However, he kindly invited the men to tarry with him that night, and then they should hear in the morning what the Lord had farther to say concerning them. *Balaam* acted with the same caution now as before, he would not give an answer to the message, till he had been instructed of God what answer to make. And God came unto *Balaam* at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word, which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. And *Balaam* rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of *Moab*. Here we see, that *Balaam* had God's order to go with the men, only it was given him in charge, that what God should say, that should he do, which he had before made a resolution to do; nor does it appear he had any inclination to do otherwise. And when *Balak* heard that *Balaam* was come, he went out to meet him. And *Balak* said unto *Balaam*, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? Wherefore camest thou not unto me?

Am I not able, indeed, to promote thee to honour? And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo I am come unto thee, have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall (or will) I speak. Never, surely, was there an answer more proper, or that shewed a stricter adherence to duty, than this. Lo I am come unto thee, have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that will I speak. And Balaam went with Balak unto Kirjath-buzoth, that he might see the utmost part of the people, and pronounce a curse upon them all. But Balaam regarded not the request and importunity of Balak, nor his silver, nor his gold, nor his titles of honour, nor any prospect of greatness to himself; but like a good and faithful servant, he kept close to his duty, by speaking the words, and them only, that God put in his mouth, and thereby pronounced upon Israel a blessing instead of a curse. And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether. And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth? Surely, it may be truly said of Balaam, he held fast his integrity, and would not let it go. Then Balak took Balaam unto the top of Pisgab, from whence he might see but part of the people of Israel, that he might curse them, as he had not leave to curse the whole. But Balaam, as before, kept to his duty, he would say neither

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less, nor more, than the word God put in his mouth; the issue of which was not a curse, but a blessing upon Israel. And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all. But Balaam answered, and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the Lord speaketh unto me, that I must (or will) do? And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee to another place, peradventure it will please the Lord, that thou mayest curse me them from thence; and Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh towards Jeshemon. And when Balaam saw, that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not forth to receive instructions, as at other times, or as he had done before, but the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he prophesied of, and pronounced a blessing upon Israel. And Balak's anger was greatly kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together. And Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place; I thought to promote thee unto honour, but lo the Lord hath kept thee back from honour. And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also unto thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot (I will not) go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good, or evil, of my own mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak. And now behold I go unto my people; come, therefore, and I will

advertise thee what this people will do unto thy people in the latter days. And he took up his parable, &c. At the conclusion of which conversation, the historian observes, And Balaam rose up, and went and returned unto his place: and Balak also went his way.

This is the representation the historian has given of the *behaviour and conduct* of Balaam; by which it appears, that he maintained an *unshaken resolution* to adhere strictly to his duty, notwithstanding the *strong temptations* of worldly wealth and greatness that had been presented to him. He *resolved*, and *made good* his resolution, not to *deviate* from his duty, either by *excess*, or *defect*; that he would do neither *more*, nor *less*, than as God should direct; that the *word* which God should put in his *mouth*, *that*, and *that only*, he would speak. And, therefore, whatever *opprobrious names* he may have been *stigmatized* by, whether that of conjuror, enchanter, or otherwise; yet his *behaviour and conduct* appear to be *amiable*, and which has not been *excelled* by many of those whose names have been entered upon record, either in *sacred*, or *profane* history. And if we add to this what the prophet *Micah* has related concerning him (by what authority we know not) it will *greatly heighten* his character. *Micah* vi. 5, 6, 7, 8. *O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. Wherewith shall I come before*

before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers * of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Never had any man more just and proper notions of the supream Deity, and of the true grounds of mens acceptance with him, than Balaam had. When Balaam had gone through all that parade of external piety, which was consonant to the customs and manners of those times, by building altars, offering burnt-offerings, &c. he then seriously expostulated with Balak, and represented to him as well what is not, as what it is, which constitutes true religion, and renders men truly acceptable, and well-pleasing to their Maker. And this he did in a very short, and yet in a most plain and instructive way, by expressing it in the following words. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born*

* By rivers, probably, was originally meant gallons, or some other measure, or vessel; because oil does not run in rivers.

born * for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee (by that principle of discernment which he hath made a part of the human constitution) O man (whomsoever thou art) what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but (or only) to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? This representation shews Balaam, the Midianite, to have been a man of great penetration, and of a sound judgment; who had not contented himself with a bare superficial knowledge of things, nor been carried away with the bigotry, superstition, or enthusiasm of the times; but had carefully and candidly considered as well what is not, as what it is, which constitutes true religion. And that his conduct was agreeable to his superior understanding, is evident from the history, and is backed by that most pathetick wish of his, which stands upon record, Numbers xxiii. 10. *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* This was the earnest desire, and, no doubt, the constant endeavour of this great and good man. I say, if what the prophet Micah has set forth concerning Balaam, be admitted, then it greatly heightens his character; but that, perhaps, may be

* If the more valuableness of the thing sacrificed, renders the sacrificer so much the more acceptable; then by parity of reason it seems to follow, that he who offers up his own offspring in sacrifice to God, does thereby render himself so much the more acceptable; because a man's own offspring is to him the most valuable of all valuable things, excepting what may more strictly and properly be called himself.

be looked upon as of *doubtful* authority, because it is not contained in the *Pentateuch*, nor do we know what *Micah* had to ground it upon.

And as I have taken a view of the *beautiful character and conduct* of *Balaam*, as it is set forth in the history; so, to do *justice* to the subject, I will next consider what may be *objected* to it. And *first*, the historian has informed us, that God's *anger* was greatly kindled against *Balaam*, because he *went* with the men; that God *reproved* his *rashness* by the mouth of the *ass*, 2 *Pet.* ii. 16. *The dumb ass speaking with man's voice, forbid the madness of the prophet*; and that he also *reproved* him by the mouth of an *angel*. Upon which I observe, that *Balaam* acted with all the *caution* and *prudence* imaginable throughout the *whole* affair. For when the men came with the *reward* of *divination* in their hands, and with an *offer* of great honour; though the temptation was *strong*, yet *Balaam* was not *wrought upon* by it, but kept close to his duty; he would neither *go* with the men, nor send them *away* without him, until he had *received* instruction from God *which* of these he should do; and, therefore, for God to order *Balaam* to *go* with the men, and then be *angry* with him for going, is a supposition most *absurd* and *unnatural*. To say, that *Balaam* had received a *full answer* at *first*, and, therefore, he should not have *applied* to God a *second* time, is, perhaps, *presuming too far*; for though *Balaam*

knew

knew what was God's pleasure with regard to the *first* messengers, yet he could not be certain, without enquiring, with respect to the *second*; and, therefore, for him not to *run hand over head*, but to enquire, was certainly *more prudent and safe*. Balaam could not certainly know, but God might determine *different*, with regard to the *second* message, from what he had done by the *first*; which was the case *in fact*, as the *event* shewed; and, therefore, to enquire, surely, could not be *blameable*; nor is it likely to have been a *ground of displeasure* to God. That Balaam's *ass spake*, is recorded in the history; but that the prophet's madness was *properly reprov'd thereby*, does not appear. *And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine, unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee?* The voice is *man's voice*, but the *reasoning* is that of an *ass*. What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? *was impertinent*. The ass knew (if she knew *any thing* of the matter) that she had crushed her master's *foot* against the *wall*, and that she was *fallen down under him*; and, therefore, to ask *what she had done*, was great impertinence. *Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine, unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee?* might be justly said; but then, as she had *always* carried her master with *safety* before,

fore, so that gave her master reasonable ground to *expect* (he not perceiving any *impediment* in the way) that she would have carried him with *safety then*, and her doing *otherwise* was the ground of his *displeasure* against her; so that what the ass offered as an *excuse*, must have appeared to her master as an *aggravation* of her fault. If the ass had observed to her master, that the way was *barred* by the presence of a *shining man*, or angel, which kept her from *going on*, and that was the ground of their present *miscarriages*, and had appealed to his *eye-sight* for a *proof* thereof, she would have answered the *manly* character she assumed, by speaking with *man's* voice; but for the ass to use the *voice* of a *man*, and yet to *reason* no better than an *ass*, seems to render the miracle of none effect. That the *presence* of the *angel* in the way should have formed a *picture* upon the *eyes* of the *ass*, and yet not upon the *eyes* of *Balaam*, is a *little strange*; but that God should give to the ass the *voice* of a *man*, and yet should not put *manly reasoning* into her *mouth*, is *greatly more so*. The historian informs us, that the angel stood in the way, and he told *Balaam* he came there to *withstand him*, because his way was *perverse*; but then we are not informed *wherein* that perverseness consisted. However, *Balaam* confessed his fault in *beating* the ass, as now it appeared he had no *proper ground* for it; he *excused* his misconduct, if it may be so called, and *offered* to return back. *And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I*
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have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me; now, therefore, if it displeaseth thee, I will get me back again. And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that shalt thou speak, which Balaam was before fully determined to do; and if so, then what need of all this pother? The sum of the matter seems to be this, God gave Balaam an order to go with the men, and then was angry with him for obeying that order. God reprov'd Balaam by an angel and an ass; and then bid him do what he was reprov'd for doing, viz. go with the men. This branch of history, so far as the angel and the ass are concerned in it, has the marks of incredibility upon it; which makes it seem more like a fable than a fact. Again, it may be objected,

Secondly, That Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness, 2 Pet. ii. 15. and that he ran greedily after reward, Jude 11. Upon which I observe, that this censure is not justified, but contradicted by the history. That Balaam was a man, and, as such, was liable to the infirmities and frailties of nature, I presume will be granted on all hands; and that he was attacked by temptations of worldly wealth and grandeur, is set forth in the history; and that those temptations might, in some degree, affect his passions, may have been the case, seeing he was but a man; but then these temptations, strong as they were, were effectually baffled and overcome by him. If Balak would give me his
house

house full of silver and gold, I will not go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less, or more; was, surely, a most glorious triumph over temptation. And though to be strongly tempted, as aforesaid, may be considered as a misfortune to Balaam, by rendring his case more hazardous; yet as those temptations were mastered, and overcome by him, so certainly they terminated in his glory. If when the bait was held forth, Balaam had greedily caught at it: if when the men came to him, with the reward of divination in their hands, saying, Come, curse Israel, his heart had been so set upon the proposed reward, as to have went instantly after the men, without consulting his God, or his duty, and had cursed Israel, according to their desire, then his affections and conduct would have been justly condemnable; but whereas the reverse of this was the case, therefore, most assuredly, it bespeaks his praise. Again, it may be objected,

Thirdly, That Balaam wickedly endeavoured to pervert the Deity, by attempting to prevail upon God to curse Israel; and that this is recorded by the same historian, who has given us the larger and more general account of him, as aforesaid. Deuteronomy xxiii. 5. Nevertheless, the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam, but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee. God's not hearkening unto Balaam plainly implies, that Balaam had besought him to curse Israel. This is also recorded by another Hebrew historian, Joshua xxiv. 10. But I (viz. God) would not hearken unto Balaam,

laam, &c. Upon which I observe, that as this is not *supported*, but is rather *contradicted* by the more general history of *Balaam*; so it carries with it its *own answer*. That a man of *Balaam's superior* understanding, who had a most *clear* and *just* conception of the *nature* and the *moral* perfections of God, and of the *true grounds* of acceptance with him, and who was the *master* of his own passions, as the history sets forth; that he should be so *weak*, as to *think*, that God would be *wrought upon*, by his *request*, to curse *Israel*, which otherwise he was *determined* to bless, is, surely, *past belief*; the *extravagancy* of the supposition *oversets* it. Again, it may be objected,

Lastly, That though *Balaam* could not prevail upon God to *curse Israel*; yet he taught *Balak* the way how to *debauch* and *corrupt* them, and thereby to bring down God's curse upon them. *Numbers xxxi. 16. Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord, in the matter of Peor, &c. Revelations ii. 14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.* Upon which I observe, that this is not *supported*, but rather *contradicted* by the more general history of *Balaam*; wherein the *true cause* of *Israel's* miscarriage, of their committing fornication, and falling into idolatry, is set forth.

*Numbers xxv. 1, 2. And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, and they called the people to the sacrifice of their gods; and the people did eat, and bow down to their gods. Verses 16, 17, 18. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Vex the Midianites, and smite them, for they have vexed you with their wiles, wherewith they have beguiled you, in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozby, the daughter of a prince of Midian, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake. Here we have an account how the people of Israel came to be corrupted, and drawn to idolatry. The people of Israel went among the * Moabites and Midianites, and that introduced a familiarity betwixt them; and this gave the men of Israel an opportunity of debauching their young women, by gratifying their carnal desires upon them; and then those girls, in return, inticed them to idolatry. The history saith, The people (that is, the men among the Israelites) began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, and they (viz. the young women of Moab, who had been thus debauched) called the people (that is, those fornicators) to the sacrifice of their gods; and the people did eat, and bow down to their gods. Thus the people of Israel became corrupted and defiled, became fornicators and idolaters, without either Balak,*

OR
* That the men of Israel went among the Moabites and Midianites, is plain; because otherwise they could not have been present at their idol feasts, nor bowed down to their gods, these not being performed in the camp of Israel.

or *Balaam's* being concerned in the matter; nor is the thing at all *credible* in itself. That *Balaam*, who was *well instructed* in the principles of religion, and had so strict a *watch* upon his own actions, as not to *deviate* from his duty, though under a *powerful* temptation; and, according to the prophet *Micah*, was so much *concerned* for the *well being* of *Balak*, as to point out to him, in the plainest manner, the *true* and *only grounds* of divine acceptance; and was himself so *deeply* affected with this very *conversation* he had with *Balak*, as to breathe forth his soul in that holy wish, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his*; which he knew full well could not be, except he *lived* the life of the righteous; I say, for *this man*, under *these* circumstances, at the *same* time, in the *same* conversation, and, as it were, in the *same* breath, to *abandon* his good principles, and *basely* and *wickedly* advise and instruct *Balak* how to *corrupt* and *defile* *Israel*, is a supposition so *monstrously absurd* and *unnatural*, as would have *shocked* the faith even of pope *Pius* himself; and which, surely, the most *credulous* cannot go into the belief of; though, indeed, it must be acknowledged, credulity has a throat *so wide*, that almost any thing can be *swallowed* by it.

Upon the whole, perhaps, the question will be, *How* shall we make up this *account*, that has those *different* appearances in, and from the books and writings referred to? And if I may be permitted to *conjecture*, possibly, the case

case may be this. When the *Israelites* made war upon the *Midianites*, they made *no distinction*, but cut off both *good men*, and *bad men*, as they came in their way. *Numbers xxxi. 8.* They slew the kings of *Midian*, beside the rest of them that were slain, namely, *Evi*, and *Rekem*, and *Zur*, and *Hur*, and *Reba*, five kings of *Midian*; and *Balaam* also the son of *Beor* they slew with the sword. *Balaam* being thus involved in the common destruction, by falling a sacrifice to the wrath of the *Israelites*, that the cruel and unnatural death of this great and good man, might not remain as a blot upon them through all posterity, the *Israelites* then, or in after times invented, and fixed the above-mentioned calumnies upon him, thereby to excuse and justify their imbruing their hands in his righteous blood. These calumnies, surely, could not possibly have gained credit with the *Prophet Micah*; though it is plain they did with *St. Jude*, and other *Christian writers*, in later times. What I have last offered is only a conjecture. However, if any person can make up the above account better, when that is done, this will readily be given up. The use I would make of these reflections, is to observe to my readers, that we ought not hastily to follow the multitude in judging of, or giving characters of men, nor indeed of writers of note, whether they have been *Jews*, *Christians*, or others; but, on the contrary, we ought carefully to examine the facts from which their characters are to be collected, and to take in

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the *whole* of their respective cases, and *candidly* to form a judgment from these, because otherwise we are in danger of *not doing* justice to them. *Balaam* has been *usually*, and, perhaps, *generally* considered to have been a *very bad man*; whereas from the view I have taken of his case, I think, it appears he was the *very reverse*. Besides, that the Deity should frequently converse with a *bad man*, as *Balaam* is judged to have been, and should *disclose* the secret purposes of his providence *to him*, is a supposition that is *scarce* *admitable*.

A N

E N Q U I R Y

Into the justness and propriety of Dr. *Sherlock* Lord Bishop of *Salisbury*'s assertion, *viz.* *Thus far all is well*; as grounded upon, or as an inference or conclusion drawn from the following premises; namely, *And the people (of Israel) served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel*: which premises are the text to his Lordship's sermon lately published.

JUDGES ii. 7. *And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel*: Thus far (says the bishop * of *Salisbury*) all is well. In order to form a judgment of the bishop's conclusion, as drawn from the above premises, it seems proper to have a right understanding of those premises;

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* See a sermon preached by the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of *Salisbury* at the cathedral church of *Sarum*, *October* the 6th, 1745, on occasion (as it may seem) of the rebellion in *Scotland* in favour of a popish pretender.

ses; that is, to know what the historian meant by serving the Lord, or what was that duty and service the Israelites paid to God all the days of Joshua, and of the elders that outlived him. Serving the Lord, sometimes signifies (in holy writ) *worshipping* the Lord, or shewing outward marks of *respect* to him, suitable to the *external piety* of the times, and which in Joshua's time consisted in building altars, offering sacrifices, &c. But then this kind of service could not be intended by the historian, because in these services, according to the history, the people of Israel had been almost *totally deficient*. After the Israelites had passed over Jordan they were *circumcised* and kept the *passover*, and after the taking the city of Ai, upon a *second* attack, as having been repulsed at the *first*, they then built an altar, and offered *burnt-offerings* and *peace-offerings*; but after that time there is not the *least hint* in the history of their performing *any act* of public worship to the Lord, until the *end* of Joshua's campaign, and then they were in a manner *drawn* into it by the *rebuke* of an angel; upon which, they then offered sacrifice to the Lord, as a thing they had not been used to do. Serving the Lord, sometimes implies the *worshipping* the Lord, and *him only*, in distinction from, and in opposition to the worshipping of *idols* and the *gods* of other nations; but this, the historian has informed us, *was not* their case; and, therefore, could not be *intended* by him. Joshua, a little before his death, called the

the people together, and having reminded them of the *victories* they had obtained, which he considered as the *works* of the Lord, and which the historian called the *mighty works* of the Lord that he did for *Israel*, he exhorted them as followeth: *Joshua xxiv. 14.* Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity, and in truth, and put away the strange gods (or idols) which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. From this advice of *Joshua*, it is plain, that the *Israelites*, in his time, even whilst they were making war upon the *Canaanites*, retained and venerated the gods or idols their fathers had worshipped on the other side of the flood, and in *Egypt*; and consequently had not worshipped the Lord only. *Joshua* adds, verse 15, And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the *Amorites* in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. *Joshua* bringing the case to such an issue, plainly shews, that serving the Lord only, before that time, was a point far from having been settled among them, or practised by them. *Joshua* having declared for himself and family, that they would serve the Lord, that is, they would serve him only, and the people also having declared the same, *Joshua* said unto them, verses 22, 23, Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord, to serve him; and they said, We are witnesses. Now, therefore,

(said he) *put away the strange gods which are among you; and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.* From all which it is plain, that the *Israelites retained and venerated the idols* their fathers had *served* on the other side of the flood, and in *Egypt*, and also the *idols* they had met with in *Canaan*; for though they *killed the idolaters*, yet they *preserved and cherished the idolatry*; and for which an *angel* was sent to *rebuke* them, *Judges ii. 2.* Sometimes, by serving the Lord may be meant, the paying obedience to God's commands *in general*; but this the historian *could not* intend, because he has nothing in his history to *ground* such a declaration upon, or to *support* it by; seeing the *duty and service* he has recorded as paid to God by the *Israelites*, throughout the time referred to, may be *summed up and expressed* in their having *killed and taken possession.* And this leads me to observe, that sometimes serving the Lord implies, the *executing vengeance* on those whom God had appointed to *destruction*, or, at least, on those who were *declared* to be thus *destined*, by the men who assumed the character of being God's *voice* to the people. And in *this way* of serving the Lord, it may, perhaps, be *truly* said of the people of *Israel*, that they *served or intended to serve the Lord all the days of Joshua, &c.* And, indeed, *this kind* of service paid to God is represented in *holy writ* as *highly valuable*, and *disobedience* to commands of *this sort* is represented to be *most detestable.* Thus when *Saul* was sent by *Samuel* utterly to *destroy Amalek*,

lek, both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and afs, and *Saul* had not executed that bloody commission to the full; *Samuel* told him, that to obey in such cases was better than sacrifice, and to hearken to commands of that kind, so as to put them in execution to the full, was better than to offer the fat of rams; and on the other side, that rebellion or disobedience in such cases was as the detestable sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness or non-compliance with such commands was as iniquity and idolatry, *Samuel* i. 15. And as the *Israelites* thus served the Lord all the days of *Joshua*, and of the elders who outlived him, by executing vengeance on those who had been thus doomed to destruction; so to set this matter in a full and proper light, it seems necessary to inquire how great and extensive that destruction was, which constituted the *Israelites* service and obedience, as aforesaid.

And, first, it will be proper to see the extent of the *Israelites* commission to kill and destroy, and then we shall the better judge how fully that commission was executed by them; and consequently, what ground the historian had for averring that *Israel* served the Lord all the days of *Joshua*, and of the elders that outlived him. *Joshua* i. Now after the death of *Moses*, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto *Joshua* the son of *Nun*, *Moses* minister, saying, *Moses* my servant is dead, now therefore arise, go over this *Jordan*, thou, and all this People, unto the land which I do give to them,

even

even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates; all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea towards the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. This was the grant, or the extent of country given, or rather promised to be given to the people of Israel; viz. from the wilderness southward, to the river Euphrates northward, and from the country of the Hittites inclusive (I apprehend towards the sun rising, eastward,) to the great sea towards the going down of the sun, westward; a great extent of land indeed, which if full of inhabitants, as the history seemeth to set forth, it must have been an home for some hundreds of thousands, perhaps, millions of people. And here the question is, how were the Israelites to be put into the possession of all this country? And the answer is, they were to dispossess the inhabitants by putting men, women, and children to death, and thereby possess themselves of their country, and all that they had. Deuteronomy xxxi. 3, 4. *The Lord thy God, he will go over (viz. Jordan) before thee, and he will destroy those nations before thee, and thou shalt possess them; and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord hath said. And the Lord shall do unto them as he did to Sicon, and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them whom he destroyed.* Numbers xxi. 34, 35. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Fear him not,* (viz.

(viz. Og king of *Bashan*) for I have delivered him into thine hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didest unto *Sihon* king of the *Amorites*, which dwelt at *Heshbon*. So they smote him and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive; and they possessed his land. This was the extent of the *Israelites* commission, they were utterly to destroy both men, women, and children, and leave none alive, of all the people who inhabited those countries; from the wilderness southward, to the great river *Euphrates* northward; and from the land of the *Hittites* eastward, to the great sea westward, (a most bloody commission indeed;) and to possess themselves of those countries, and whatever they found therein, was the grant or promise that had been made to them.

Having thus seen the extent of the *Israelites* commission to kill and destroy, we are next to enquire how *duly* it was executed. After the *Israelites* had passed over *Jordan*, their first attack was made upon *Jericho*; and tho' God had engaged by promise for their success, yet they foolishly sent men to spy out the land; as if any human art, or policy, or strength could stand out against God. These spies went to *Jericho*, and took up their quarters with an *harlot*, who sheltered and concealed them; and so added treachery to her lewdness. After the return of the spies, *Joshua* and the people went up against *Jericho*; and the ark was carried round the city once every day, for six days successively, and
seven

seven times the seventh day, one of which must have been their sabbath, or day of holy rest according to their law; and seven priests went before the ark, trumpeting (or making an hideous noise,) upon trumpets made of rams horns. What purpose this perambulation, and making this frightful noise for the space of seven days could answer, is hard to conceive; except it was to strike terror in the people of Jericho, while the Israelites were employed in undermining, and digging down the wall of their city, which probably was time sufficient for that purpose. When the priests had gone round Jericho seven times on the seventh day, the people made a great shout, and the wall fell down; not, surely, by any miraculous power, seeing there were hands and time sufficient to have forced it down without; miracles not being used where there are natural means sufficient to produce the same effects without them. The people of Jericho were so greatly intimidated by seeing the armies of Israel, and hearing the bloody massacre that had been committed upon the people of Heshbon and Bashan, on the other side Jordan, that they made no resistance, no defence; but tamely submitted like sheep to the slaughter, and were all put to the sword, except the lewd woman and her family, who had sheltered the spies as aforesaid. For when the wall of Jericho fell down, the people went up into the city, every man straight before him; and they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, ox and ass, with the edge of the sword.

sword. O *Jericho!* *Jericho!* *hard* was thy *lot*; the sons of *rapine* and *violence* entered thy *streets*, and *washed* their *footsteps* in thy *blood*; thy *virgins* were *cut off* as the *flowers* of the *field*, and thy *young men* were *slain* with the *sword*; in thee were heard the *dying groans* of *multitudes*, who were *weltering* in their *gore*, whilst there were *none* to *pity*, nor *none* left to make *lamentation*; in thee the *weeping*, *bleeding*, *fainting*, *dying mothers*, beheld with *pierced hearts*, their *tender innocent sucklings* torn from their *breasts*, and *trampled* under *foot*; in thee the *grey hairs* of the *aged* pleaded for *mercy*, with those *savages* whose *tender mercies* were *cruelty*; and yet, most assuredly, *blessed* are the *merciful*, for they shall obtain *mercy*, Math. v. 7. O *Jericho!* *great* were thy *sorrows*, in the *day* of thy *calamity*; and yet *Jericho's* sorrows were, as it were, but the *beginning* of *sorrows*. O *Jericho!* *Jericho!* what hadst thou *done*, that thou shouldst be pursued with so *severe* a *revenge*?

The *Israelites* having *murdered* all the *people* of *Jericho*, as it were in *cold blood*, for the *people* made no *resistance*; and having *burnt* their *city*, and *all* that was *therein*, excepting the *silver*, and the *gold*, and the *vessels* of *brass* and *iron*, which were *put aside* for *God's use*, they went next towards *Ai*. And tho' *God* had engaged by *promise* to *give* them the *country*, and had assured them that those they went against *should not* be able to stand before them; yet *Joshua* seemed to think a *little human prudence*

dence might be *useful*; and therefore, sent some men to view *Ai*; who upon their *return* informed him, that the people were but *few*, and therefore, they advised him not to send *all* *Israel*, against *Ai*, but only *two* or *three thousand*, which they thought would be *sufficient*. This *advice* *Joshua* followed; and accordingly sent against *Ai* about *three thousand* men. Whether *Joshua* had any *reliance* on those *promises*, that the *people* of *Canaan* should not be able to *stand* before them, *Joshua* ii. 9. That *one* should chase an *hundred*, and an *hundred* should put *ten thousand* to flight, *Leviticus* xxvi. 8. Or whether he thought the people of *Ai*, like those of *Jericho*, would have made no resistance, but would *tamely* have yielded to the point of their swords; or whether his *misconduct* was owing to the *wrong* information given him by the *spies*; so it was, that he did not send strength *sufficient* to *vanquish* the people of *Ai*. When the *Israelites* went up against *Ai*, the men of *Ai* armed themselves with *courage*, as well as with *weapons* of *war*, and being resolved to *repel* force with force, they engaged in battle with the people of *Israel*, killed *thirty-six* of them, and put the *rest* to flight. This *defeat* put *Joshua* into the utmost confusion at *first*, till he had *recovered* himself, and through his great *penetration* and *sagacity* he had found out an *expedient* to *revive* the *courage* of the *Israelites*, and to *save* his own *reputation*, as *God's* voice to the people. *Achan* had taken of the *accursed* thing, and that was to be considered as the
ground.

ground of God's displeasure against Israel; and consequently, of their being put to flight by the men of Ai. Achan had taken at Jericho a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold; which silver and gold, instead of being put into God's storehouse, as it ought to have been, (tho' the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof,) Achan put it in his own; and that made it an accursed thing, and brought displeasure upon Israel; thirty-six men were slain by the people of Ai. This, surely, was a very improper and unnatural dispensation of Providence, that Achan's sin, the sin of an individual, should bring displeasure upon all Israel. The prophet Ezekiel has assured us, in the name of the Lord, (who was, for any thing that appears, as much, and as truly God's voice to the people, as Moses or Joshua) that God is not a partial being; that he has no respect to persons; that the soul that sinneth, (and therefore every soul that sinneth) shall die; that the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son, nor the son the iniquity of the father; but that the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and upon him only; and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him, and upon him only; that these are the ways of righteousness and equity, and that these equitable ways are the ways of God most high. And if God be truth, by the mouth of his servant Ezekiel; then let Moses and Joshua, and every other gainsayer be a liar: whereas in the case before us, Achan only sinned, and displea-

sure came upon *Israel*; through *Achan's* trespass *thirty-six* men were slain, whilst *Achan* the trespasser remained alive; these were *unequal, unrighteous* dispensations, and therefore, according to *Ezekiel*, were not the ways of God most high. However, to make an atonement, *Joshua* took *Achan* the son of *Zerah*, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had, and all *Israel* stoned him (and his family) with stones; and then burnt them with fire.—So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. This atonement seems to be as *unequal, as unrighteous*, as the *unequal resentment* that preceded it; for tho' *Achan* had trespassed, yet his children and his family were *guiltless*; and therefore, to involve them all in one common destruction, was to visit the iniquity of the father upon the children; it was to make the sons and daughters to bear the iniquity of their father; which *unequal, unrighteous dispensation* God hath most solemnly protested against, by the mouth of his servant *Ezekiel*, as in chap. xviii. Nevertheless, by virtue of this atonement the breach was made up, God and *Israel* were made friends again; and by the aforefaid disaster *Joshua* learned two lessons of instruction, viz. first, not to lead men into temptation, and therefore he ordered, for the time to come, that every capture should be the property of the captor, without reserving any part for God; and, secondly, to send more than sufficient strength against

against the enemy, and not to rely *too much* on the *promise* of God, who had so *sadly failed* them in their *last* encounter. *Joshua*, in consequence of this *prudent* precaution, tho' he *had*, or *pretended* to have God on his side; yet, when he went up a *second* time against *Ai*, he *acted* as if God had *nothing to do* in the matter. *Joshua* sent *thirty thousand* away by *night*, to lie in *ambush* against *Ai*; *five thousand* of which were placed on the *west* side of the city, whilst *Joshua* and all the rest of the men of war were to go up against the *north* side, as if they would *engage* in battle; and then to make a *feint*, as if they *fled* from before the people of *Ai*; until they had drawn them *out of the city*, and the liers in wait had *entered* it, and set it on *fire*; which when *Joshua* and the people *saw*, they were to *return* to the charge; all which was *done*, and they *succeeded* accordingly. But then, this victory seems to favour strongly of *human policy*; and had not the historian *assured us* that all this was done by the *order of God*, one might be tempted to think that *Joshua*, in this instance, did not *trust* in the *Lord* with *all his heart*, but *leaned a little* to his *own understanding*. Thus by *craft* as well as strength were the people of *Ai* *overcome*; and *Joshua* drew not *back* his hand, until he had destroyed *all* the people of *Ai*; which tho' they were reckoned but *few*, yet those that fell were *twelve thousand*.

The people of *Jericho* and *Ai* being thus *all cut off*, it greatly *alarm'd*, (as well it might,) the

the people in all that country; and this led the men of *Gibeon* craftily to make a league with *Joshua*, thereby to save themselves; but then this drew upon the *Gibeonites* the resentment of their neighbours, for thus combining with the common enemy; the consequence of which was, that five kings and their people came and encamped before *Gibeon*. However, the *Israelites* came to the aid of their new ally; and totally routed these kings and their people, and slew them with a great slaughter. In this battle God is represented by the historian as appearing for the *Israelites* in an extraordinary and miraculous manner: first, in throwing down great stones out of heaven upon those they pursued, by which more were killed than were slain by the sword; secondly, in causing the sun, (or rather the earth) to stand still, for the space of a whole day, at the command of *Joshua*; but as the last mentioned miracle is past all belief, seeing God could have destroyed those men many ways, without throwing the system of nature into a convulsion, as the stopping the diurnal motion* of the earth, for the space of twelve hours, may be said to be;

* If God's stopping the diurnal motion of the earth, to give *Joshua* time for destroying the *Canaanites*, when that could as effectually have been done by the other miracle upon record, viz. by throwing down great stones out of heaven upon them all; if this be past belief, then what can be said of the earth's being not only stopped in its diurnal motion, but that motion being reversed, and the earth moving in an instant ten degrees the contrary way; and then in an instant to return again to its former motion, as in the case of the shadow going back ten degrees on the dial of *Abaz*? 2 Kings xx. 11. I say, if the former account be incredible; then the latter must needs be so. Besides, the laying a lump of figs upon

be; so that renders the *former* miracle more doubtful; and likewise shews than even an *Hebrew* historian is not *absolutely* to be relied upon. *And that day Joshua smote Makkedah and the king thereof, and all the souls that were therein, and left none remaining; and that must needs have been a bloody day indeed.* From *Makkedah* Joshua passed on to *Libnah*, and there he put all to the sword; and from *Libnah* to *Lachish*, and there he did the same. *And Horam king of Gezer went up to help Lachish, and Joshua smote him, and his people, until he left him none remaining.* Thus the *Israelites* having put off humanity, and having discharged themselves of the previous obligations of nature, under the pretext of a *divine* commission, went through the country of *Canaan*, cutting off its inhabitants like *withering hay*, without shewing *pity* or *mercy* to any of them; and tho' many of them fell in battle, yet the case would have been the same if they had made *no resistance*, they must all have been *destroyed*, which was the case of the people of *Jericho*. And Joshua took also *Eglon*, and *Hebron*, and *Debir*, and *Kadesh-bernea*, and *Gaza*, and *Goshen*, and put all to the sword, even all that *breathed*. After this, a great many kings and their people assembled together,

upon *Hezekiah's* boil, and his recovery upon it, was such a demonstration of a cure, as needed no miracle to prove it to be so; nor would *Hezekiah's* patience have been long tried, had he waited the event, seeing on the *third* day he was to appear in the house of the Lord, according to the word of the prophet *Isaiab*. Surely, by these *extravagant* relations the *Hebrew* historians tried to what length human credulity was capable of being extended;

gether, to *defend* themselves, and their country, and to *put a stop* to the *ravages* of these *Israelites*; and they went out a *great multitude*, even as the *sand* of the *sea*; but the *Israelites* overcame them, and put the *numerous people* of those countries *all* to the *sword*, until they left *none* remaining. At that time *Joshua* cut off the *Anakims* from *Hebron*, from *Debir*, from *Anab*, and from the mountains of *Israel* and *Judab*; and thus a *great part* of the country, which had been *promised* the people of *Israel*, was by *this means* put into their hands. The historian enumerates *thirty-one* kings and their people, which had been *slain* by *Joshua* and the people of *Israel*; beside the *multitudes* that were *slain* on the *other side Jordan*, with the *Anakims*, and *others*, which *were not* brought into that account. By this time *Joshua* was *grown old*, and *unfit* to bear the *fatigue* of war, (tho' there yet remained *multitudes* of people to be cut off, and much more land to be put into their possession, *Joshua* xiii. 1.) and therefore, he spent the small remainder of his time in *counselling* the people, and *dividing* the country among them, as well what they *had not* yet conquered, as what they had. And after *Joshua's* death, the *elders* (that were his cotemporaries) with the *people* of *Israel* went on with their conquests, in order to *subdue* the *rest* of the people that were not yet subdued; and they took *Bezek*, and slew in it *ten thousand* men. And tho' the *Israelites* pushed their conquests as far as they could; yet the people began to be *too strong* for them, so that
great

great numbers remained. And tho' they drove the people out of the *mountains*, which probably were not *so full* of inhabitants; yet they could not drive them out of the *valleys*, because they had *chariots of iron*; notwithstanding *Joshua* had assured them, that chariots of iron should be *no bar* to their conquests; Joshua xvii. 18. Nor, indeed, could it have been, if the power that attended them had been the power of *God most high*, against which no power, nor counsel can stand. But then, tho' the *Israelites* were far from being put into the possession of *all* that great extent of country which had been promised them, viz. from the *wilderness* southward, to the *river Euphrates* northward, and from the land of the *Hittites*, inclusive, eastward, to the *great sea* westward; and so were far from cutting off all that had been appointed to destruction; yet, it must be confessed, they made a very great slaughter; in which, I think, upon a moderate computation, they must have bereaved of life not less than *six hundred thousand people*, including women and children; tho', perhaps, it may have been *double*, or *treble* that number. And thus the people of *Israel* served, or are said to have served *the Lord* all the days of *Joshua*, and of the elders that outlived him, by killing and taking possession; but after the *death* of these men, they did not pursue their conquests, they ceased to kill and destroy as before, and so ceased to serve the Lord, as aforesaid.

And that *killing the Canaanites*, and taking possession of their country was the *service*, and

all the service the historian referred to, as being performed by the people of Israel, at the time referred to, is most evident from the remarks he has made of their serving or paying obedience to God's commands in this respect, and his recording the complaints that were made of their disobedience in other respects. Thus, *Joshua* x. 40. And *Joshua* (with the people) smote all the country of the hills, — all that breathed, as the Lord commanded. Chap. xi. 9. And *Joshua* (with the people) did as the Lord had bid him; he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire. Verse 23. And so *Joshua* (with the people) took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had said unto Moses. Chap. xiv. 15. As the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did; and they divided the land. This was the principal, and almost all the service the Israelites paid to God throughout *Joshua's* times; for as to building altars and offering sacrifices, these kind of services do not appear to have taken place any more than twice, viz. once at the beginning, and once at the end of *Joshua's* campaign. And though they were commanded, *Deuteronomy* vii. 5. But thus shall ye deal with them: ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire; yet in this they had been greatly deficient; they had indeed cut off the idolaters, but then they preserved the idols, and thereby cherished the idolatry; and this led *Joshua*, a little before his death, to give them a charge, saying, Put away
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the strange gods that are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel. And such their neglect of duty and disobedience, was not only reprov'd by Joshua, but also an angel was sent on purpose to upbraid them with it. Judges ii. And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land, and ye shall throw down their altars; but ye have not obeyed my voice; why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lift up their voice and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there unto the Lord. And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance, to possess the land. And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

In this branch of history we have an account of an angel complaining to the Israelites of their disobedience to the command of God, in that they

had not *extinguished* the idolatry they met with in Canaan, but on the contrary they had *cherished* it; and also here is a *threatening*, or a *foretelling*, that the *idols* of Canaan, which they *clave* to, should, or would be a *snare* to them: here is likewise a kind of *confession* which the *Israelites* made; of their being *guilty* of what was *charged* upon them, and a *return* to their *duty*; they *lift up* their voice and *wept*, and they *offered* sacrifice *then* and *there* unto the Lord. The historian having given us this account of the *Israelites* *disobedience*, in not *cleaving* to the Lord with all their hearts, but *venerating* the *idols* of Canaan; he almost immediately adds, *And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and of the elders that outlived him*: by which *service* he could mean *no more*, nor *otherwise*, than their being employed in *killing* the people of Canaan, and *possessing* themselves of their country, and all that they had, *according* as the Lord had *commanded*.

Having fully shewn what is *contained* in the above *premises*, or what was that *duty* and *service* which the *Israelites* paid to God all the *days* of *Joshua*, and of the *elders* that outlived him; I now come to enquire into the *justness* and *propriety* of the bishop of *Salisbury's* *assertion*, as grounded *upon*, or as a *conclusion drawn* from them, *viz.* Thus far *all* is, or was *well*. Were I to introduce a *text* of scripture that may be deemed *analogous* to that of the bishop's, as *serv'ing the Lord* by *killing mankind* is the *subject* of both, *viz.* *John* xvi. 2. *They shall put*
you

you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service; and were I to ground an *assertion* upon, or draw an *inference* or *conclusion* from these premises, *analogous* to the conclusion drawn by the bishop, *viz.* *Thus far all will be well*; this, perhaps, would only introduce a question, namely, which of those conclusions was most *natural* and *just*, the bishop's, or mine? Or were I only to ground an *assertion* upon, or to draw an *inference* or *conclusion* from the bishop's premises, which is *directly contrary* to what his lordship has *inferred* from these premises, *viz.* *Thus far all is, or was ill*; without offering any thing by way of *argument* or *evidence* to support such *assertion*; this may, perhaps, be looked upon as *balancing accounts* with the bishop, by bringing *one naked* *assertion* against *another*: but then, this would not *satisfy* the present enquiry. I therefore observe, that *life* is a *natural good*, and *death* is a *natural evil*; and therefore, to *save life* is *doing well*, and to *take away life* is *doing ill*, when considered *abstractedly* from all other considerations. And as the people of *Israel*, all the days of *Joshua*, and of the elders that outlived him, went from city to city, and from kingdom to kingdom, carrying *blood* and *slaughter*, *death* and *destruction*, *wasting* and *desolation* to all people and places wherever they came; so the most *natural*, and *obvious* conclusion, which *follows* from these premises, is, *Thus far all was ill*; and, with the bishop's leave, I add, it was *greatly so*. And if the *conclusion*

clusion I have drawn from the above premises be *natural* and *just*; then, as the bishop's *conclusion* from the *same* premises is *directly* the *reverse*, it must of necessity be *unnatural* and *improper*. But that the matter may appear *plain* and *obvious* to every reader, I will introduce a *similar case*, and thereby make it *our own*. Suppose the man who *pretends* a *right* to the crown of these realms, should likewise *pretend* that God has *given him* a special commission to *dispeople this island*, by putting men, women and children to *death*, and to place *another* set of inhabitants in their *stead*; and this man having forces attending him *sufficient* to attempt such an enterprize, *he*, and his *followers*, in consequence of such *commission*, at least, the pretence of it, goes from city to city, and from county to county, throughout this island, *killing* and *destroying all before them*, whether they made any resistance, or not; *cutting off* both men, women and children, without regarding *age*, or *sex*, the *grey hairs*, or the *sucklings*, but slaying *all that breathed*: I say, supposing this were the case; then, when this *bloody scene* of action was at an *end*, could any *by-stander*, any *man* conceive in his *heart*, or declare with his mouth, that *thus far all was well*? or would he not rather, and with much more *justice* and *truth*, think, and say, that *thus far all was ill*, and that it was *greatly so*?

The present *rebellion* in *Scotland*, together with the *Scotish* highlanders *descent* into *England*, headed by a *popish pretended* heir to the crown

crown of these realms, has given the people of this nation a *taste* of *such* troubles * and afflictions as they have not been used to bear: for tho' there are *few* who have *felt* the distresses occasioned thereby; yet those who have not felt them seem to have been *greatly affected* with the *fears* and *apprehensions* of them. And as the people of *England* have been *greatly alarmed* upon this occasion; so I dare presume there is *scarce a person* among us, except those who *wish well* to this vile, this cursed and desperate design, who would *admit* that the supream Deity, the kind and compassionate Parent of mankind, who alike pitieth every pitiable object, has

* The clergy, upon *this* occasion, or some of them at least, have been pleased to *consider*, and *represent* the present rebellion, and the troubles and afflictions which have befallen the people of this nation thereby, to be the *Lord's doings*, that it is the *hand* of the *Lord* which hath done all this, that the *Lord* hath *brought* all these evils upon us, as a *just* correction and punishment for our sins; which is the same as to say, that God, by a *secret divine influence*, hath *stirred up*, and *sent* a popish pretender, and a body of *Scotch* highlanders, to be as a *rod* in his hand to scourge, chastise and punish the *people* of this nation for their *great* and *manifold* sins and *provocations*. Now, if this be in reality the *truth* of the case, then, surely, it must be the *bounden duty* of the people of this nation *not* to resist these evils, *not* to *kick* against the *pricks*, *not* to *oppose* the will, and power, and handy-work of God, who hath *providentially* brought all these evils upon us for our good; but on the contrary, to *humble* ourselves under his mighty hand, to bear *patiently* and *passively* the chastisements of the *Lord*, by readily and willingly (after the example of our common master) yielding our *backs* to the *smiters* and our *cheeks* to those that *pluck of the hair*, without making any *resistance*: and then, entering into *associations*, making *contributions*, raising of *soldiers*, and the like, in order to *check* the progress of these rebels, and to *put a stop* to the present rebellion, must needs be wrong, and contrary to true piety; because these are no other than making *opposition* to, and *fighting* against *God*, and attempting to *baffle* and *disappoint* the gracious purposes of his kind providence towards us.

has given a *special commission* to this *banditti* of *Scotch* highlanders, headed by a *popish* pretender, to *rob* and *plunder*, to *waste* and *spoil*, as they have done: supposing a *divine commission* for it was *pretended*, and these spoilers *thought* it to be the case; and supposing there were men who assumed a *prophetick* character to *vouch* for it, and even a *pretence* of *miraculous power* to *back* it; I say, supposing the *disturbers* of the publick peace at this time put on *such pretences* as these; yet, surely, there is no man of *common sense* among us, who has so *low*, so *mean*, so *unworthy*, so *contemptible* an opinion of the common Father of mankind, as to *countenance*, or give *credit* to them. God is *not more* the God and Father of *one* nation or people than *another*, seeing we are *all equally* the work of his *hand*, and are *all upheld* and *preserved* by his power and goodness; and therefore, if God would not give a *special commission* to a *popish pretender* and his *adherents*, to commit the waste and spoil upon the people of *this nation* that hath been *committed* by them, which most certainly he *would not*; then *much less* would he, or did he grant to the *Israelites* a *commission* to bring upon the *Canaanites* much *greater evils*; as our *distresses* bear *no proportion* to the *wasting* and *desolation* that was brought upon the country and people of *Canaan*. For tho' what our countrymen have suffered be *great*, and greatly to be *lamented*; yet, alas! all their *sufferings* put together; whether at *Carlisle*, at *Penrith*, at *Preston*, at *Manchester*, at *Derby*, at *Nottingham*,

ham, and all other places in *England*, are by no means equal to the evils that beset the people of *Jericho* only.

If it should be said, in this *supposed case* there is *something* admitted that *ought not*, namely, that God *may grant* a commission to kill and destroy as well *now* as *heretofore*; whereas *since* the coming of *Jesus Christ* there neither *has*, nor *will there be* any such thing: Answer, what *has* been, *may be*; seeing *there is no new thing under the sun*, Eccles. i. 9. If it should be said, that the coming of *Jesus Christ* has made a very great alteration in the present case; because *since Christ's* coming the supream Deity is *the Lord merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and of great goodness, who willeth not the death of any, even the vilest of his creatures, but would much rather that they turned from their evil ways*; and this is what his patience and long-suffering is *designed and intended* to lead them to: and therefore, tho' such a bloody, killing commission was given to *Joshua heretofore*; yet no such commission will be *granted now*: Answer, if no such bloody commission will be granted *now*, because *now* God is *the Lord merciful, &c.* then this *fully proves*, that no such commission was granted *heretofore*; because heretofore God was *the Lord merciful and gracious, and equally and in all respects the same as now*; nor could the coming of *Jesus Christ* possibly make any alteration in him, seeing he is *the God that changeth not*. God is *love*, and he is *always*, and *every where* so. God is not *all wrath and vengeance* in one age, or to one part of the human

species, and *all patience and long-suffering in another age, or to another part of mankind; but he is always and every where the same.* So that if the dispensation of the *gospel by Jesus Christ, be a dispensation of grace and love; and if it be of, and from the supream Deity: then the dispensation of wrath and vengeance by Joshua must of necessity have come from some other quarter; seeing, as St. James hath justly observed, out of the same fountain proceedeth not sweet water and bitter, nor salt water and fresh.* If it should be said, the *Canaanites were idolaters, that they worshipped substituted, and, perhaps, fictitious deities; that they payed their respect to those thro' images, or external objects set up to represent them; and that this was the ground of God's displeasure against them, and of his commissioning Joshua and the people of Israel to destroy them: whereas the inhabitants of this island, whatever their misconduct may be in other respects, yet they keep themselves clear of idolatry; and tho' their modes of worship are various, yet that worship is directed to the one God over all; and therefore no such bloody commission will be given to destroy us, much less by a popish pretender: Answer, that the inhabitants of this island are better, act more suitably to their intelligent natures, and better answer the purposes of their creation, than the Canaanites did; and thereby render themselves much more the proper objects of God's patience and long-suffering, of his kindness and benevolence, than those Canaanites: this is much more easily taken for granted, than proved. The flagitious*

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gitious practices, and bad behaviour of the people of this island are *sufficiently known*, and therefore need not to be *enumerated*; and which, according to our publick and daily *confession*, our *case* cannot be *very good*; because we thereby seem to declare, that we have *offended* against *all* God's holy laws, that we have left undone *all* those things which we ought to have done, and have done *all* those things which we ought not, and consequently there is *no health in us*: whereas with regard to the behaviour and *moral* conduct of the *Canaanites*, we know *nothing* of them but from the *Hebrews*, that very *party* of men who were *their destroyers*; who, no doubt, have given a very *partial* account of them, and have greatly *aggravated* what may have been *justly* blameable in them, the better to *excuse* and *justify* their own *cruelty* and *barbarity* towards them. And if worshipping *substituted* gods be *idolatry*, then it becomes a question, whether the *inhabitants* of this island be *altogether clear* in that respect? because it may, perhaps, be a little *doubtful*, whether *Jesus Christ*, who is made the *object* of worship among us, be any other than a *ministerial* and *substituted* God; seeing, according to *St. Peter*, Acts x. 42. he was *ordained* of *God* to be the *judge* of *quick* and *dead*; which cannot possibly be the case of the *supream* Deity, who has *no superior*, no one *above him*, that he can *receive* any commission, or any kind of authority from. And supposing the *Canaanites* were *idolaters*, yet they were not *singularly so*; there having been *multitudes* of others both *then*, and *before*, and *since* that

time, who have been *equally culpable*, which yet have been treated with much *greater lenity*. And that God should single out the idolatrous *Canaanites*, and treat them with so *severe* a resentment; whilst he *winked* at idolatry in all other *places* and *times*, is a supposition that greatly *derogates* from his honour, and therefore is not to be admitted. Partial providences are *unequal*, *unrighteous* providences; and therefore, according to the prophet *Ezekiel*, are not the ways of God most high. Besides, the *Israelites*, to whom the commission was granted to kill and destroy, as aforesaid, were not only *strongly inclined* to idolatry themselves, but they *cherished* that very *idolatry*, which (according to the commission) they were appointed to *extinguish*: for tho' they killed the *idolaters*, yet they embraced and nourished the *idolatry*, as their own historians have set forth. And that God should *dispeople* a country, because they were *idolaters*, only to make way for *another set* of idolaters to succeed them, greatly exceeds the bounds of credit. And if God may be supposed to have *granted* such a bloody commission to *Joshua heretofore*, then why may he not *grant* such a commission to a *popish pretender now*? If it should be said, the giving such a commission to a popish pretender, would be to *encourage* and *abet popery*; and therefore, no such commission will be granted: Answer, then the giving such a commission to a *Jew*, was *encouraging* and *abetting Judaism*, which is *near of kin* to popery; and therefore, no such commission was granted to *Joshua*. Is popery a
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composition of *beggarly elements*? so was *Judaism*. Is popery a *bloody, persecuting constitution*? so was *Judaism*. Is popery a *law of carnal commandments*? so was *Judaism*. Is popery a most grievous *yoak of bondage*? so was *Judaism*. And admitting popery to be much more gross than *Judaism*; yet if God will not encourage nor abet the greater evil, popery, now, by, and thro' a *popish pretender*; then he will not, he did not encourage nor abet the less evil, *Judaism*, heretofore, by, and thro' *Joshua*, an adherer thereto. If it should be said, that *Joshua* and the *Israelites*, and take possession of their country, that thereby God might make good his covenant and promise to *Abraham*: Answer, that the supream Deity, who is the most *perfect intelligence*, and the most *boundless goodness*, should make such a promise to *Abraham*, as from the natural course of things would require *such* bloody work, *such* cruelty to be exercised to make it good, is past belief. If it should be said, that God made the aforesaid promise to *Abraham*, as a reward for his *faith* and *obedience*; and because God knew, or foreknew, that he would command his children and his household, or posterity, after him to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment: Answer, that God should reward *Abraham* according to his *worthiness*, is perfectly agreeable to the rules of right and wrong; but that he should reward the *worthiness* of *Abraham* in his *unworthy posterity*, is contrary to those rules; it is unequal, which *unequal* ways are not the ways of God most high.

And if God's *foreknowing* that *Abraham* would charge his posterity as aforesaid, may be considered as a *reason* to him for making the *promise*, and granting the *commission* referred to; then, surely, his *foreknowing* that *Abraham's* posterity would pay no regard to the charge and commandment of their *father*, but would act quite *contrary* thereto, must have been a much *stronger reason* against it: and, consequently, no such promise was made, nor commission given. If it should be said, notwithstanding all that *has been*, or *may be* offered against the aforesaid commission, as given to *Joshua*; yet we are *certain* God did give him such a commission; and as the people of *Israel* killed the *Canaanites*, and took *possession* of their country, in *obedience* to God's *commands*; so, Thus far all is, or was *well*: Answer, the granting such a commission was a most *partial* administration, which yields to us a *moral certainty*, that God *would not*, and therefore *did not* grant that commission. And as this commission was of an *extraordinary nature*, which required the Deity, as it were, to *undeify* himself to *grant* it, and men to *unman* themselves to put it in *execution*; so the nature of the thing most obviously requires that it should have *very extraordinary evidence* to prove or support its *credit*: and this leads to the enquiry, what the aforesaid certainty is *grounded upon*? And upon the strictest enquiry I am capable of making, I do not find the certainty referred to *has*, or *can have* any other *ground* or *foundation* than the *bare testimony* of the *Hebrew* historians; who, as they were *interested in*, and thereby *parties*

ties in the cause ; so their testimony *alone*, without any other *thing*, or *circumstance*, to *corroborate* it, would, in any other case of much less importance, be deemed no more than a *bare ground* of probability, if that : much less would it be admitted as a *proper ground* of certainty, in a case of so *extraordinary* a nature as that under consideration. If it should be said, that the *credit* of those histories, together with the *authority* of the historians, and the *divinity* of the aforesaid commission, are all *sufficiently supported* by that *miraculous* power which attended the *Israelites* ; and were such power exercised *now*, in favour of a *like* bloody commission, the *divinity* of that commission would be *sufficiently* proved, or supported by it : Answer, whatever miraculous power may be supposed to attend the *Israelites*, it can be no *pledge* or *security* to us, that their historians *always* wrote *truth* ; because these are points that are altogether *irrelative* to each other. And as we have a *moral* certainty, that God *would not*, nor *did not* grant any such commission, either *heretofore*, or *now* ; so that yields a *like certainty*, that God neither *has heretofore*, nor will he *now* exercise any such miraculous power *himself*, nor appoint such power to be exercised *by others*, to answer any *such purpose*. Besides, what *assurance* have we, that any *miraculous* power was exercised by, or among the *Israelites*, to *countenance* this commission ? If it should be said, that the *credit* of those miracles is *sufficiently* supported by the *histories* in which they are recorded : Answer, then I fear our argument must *end* in a *circular dance* ;

dance; the *credit* of the histories is supported by the *miracles*, and the *credit* of the miracles is supported by those *histories*.

To conclude: I observe, that this *present* state of things is confessedly a state of *probation* and *trial*, and not a state of *retribution*; that every man is to *chuse* the *end* he obtains, and the *means* he obtains it by; and that in a state or constitution of things *to come*, he will be called to give *account* to the supream Deity, (or to one substituted by him,) of what he *has done*, and how he has *behaved* in this *present* state: and then he will be *rewarded*, or *punished*, accordingly as he has acted a *wise* and *virtuous*, or a *foolish* and *vicious* part. But if the *constitution* of the natural world, if things *animate* and *inanimate* are *moved* and *directed* by a secret *divine* influence, or certain *springs* of *motion* and *action*, to answer the purposes of *God's providence*, 'as it is called; if the Deity by *such influence* so moves and directs the *understandings*, the *appetites*, the *passions* and *affections* of men, as thereby to *bring about* all those *events* that are called the *works* of his *providence*; if he maketh *rich*, and maketh *poor*, by secretly directing one man into a *path* that *leads* to riches, and thus leads another man into those *steps* that *bring him* to poverty; if God maketh *war*, and maketh *peace*, by exciting a *spirit* of *wrath* and *vengeance*, thro' which whole countries are involved in *blood* and *confusion*, and alike stirs up a *spirit* of *love* and *benevolence*, which leads to *unanimity* and *peace*; if he raises up a *spirit* of *pride*, *ambition*, and *lust* of *power* in *Kouli-Kan*,

Kan, thereby to introduce wasting and desolation in the *east*; and if he rouses up the like *turbulent* passions in the *French king*, whereby to introduce the like *calamities* in this *western* part of the world, by way of *correction* and *punishment* for sin; and if, (according to the bishop of *Salisbury*, in his sermon lately published,) by these *secret springs* of motion and action, or by this *hand* of *providence*, things are so directed, as that *prosperity* and *adversity* in this world are made to *tally with*, and bear some *proportion* to mens *virtues* and *vices*, (supposing in such a state virtue and vice do subsist:) I say, if this be the case; then, as *this world* cannot with any *propriety* be called a state of *probation* or *trial*; so a *future* retribution must of necessity be *superseded*. For as the *end* and *purpose* of *retribution*, or rather *retribution itself*, takes place in *this world*; so thereby the *ground* and *reason* of a retribution *to come* is effectually taken away. I will only add, that the *ground* of the precedent enquiry, and of what I have offered upon it, is in *honour* and *justice* to the supream Deity. For as I am *God's creature*; so, I think, I have a *right*, (without giving *reasonable* ground of offence to any,) to *take off* those *groundless imputations*, wherewith men have stained the *beautiful* and *spotless* character of God most high.

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X. An Enquiry concerning redemption. Wherein the Christian redemption is particularly considered. To which is prefixed, a Preface; wherein is shewn, That if Christianity be not founded on argument, but on those divine impressions that are made on mens minds concerning it, (as a late ingenious Author has attempted to prove;) then it is most uncertain and precarious, and cannot be reduced to any standard. And in which is also shewn, that Christ's kingdom has been so far from being supported, and established by the interposition of civil power, that on the contrary it has rather been annihilated thereby.

XI. The ground and foundation of morality considered. Wherein is shewn, that disinterested benevolence is a proper and a worthy principle of action to intelligent beings. And in which is also shewn, what some of those absurd and bad consequences are, which naturally and obviously follow the doctrine of absolute selfishness; or, that self-good is the sole and universal principle of action in nature: Occasioned by the Rev. Mr. *Rutherford's* essay on morality. To which is added, the first section of the author's farewell to his readers; namely, the introduction. Wherein those points, *viz.* of divine impressions on mens minds, of special grace, of the virtue and merit of faith, and of St. *Thomas's* unbelief, are particularly considered.

N. B. A Collection of Tracts in one Volume in Quarto formerly publish'd, and several Tracts printed since, which now make two Volumes in Octavo; contain the Whole of Mr. *Chubb's* Writings; of the latter may be had the Whole, or any particular Tract, if apply'd for in Time.







