

Alb. Foxcroft

THE
Reasonableness
OF
CHRISTIANITY,
IN
Four *SERMONS*.
WHEREIN

The Being and Attributes of GOD, the Apostasy of Man, and the Credibility of the Christian Religion, are demonstrated by rational Considerations.

And the Divine Mission of our blessed Saviour prov'd by Scripture-Arguments, both from the Old Testament and the New; and vindicated against the most important Objections, whether of ancient or modern Infidels.

By *Jonathan Dickinson*, M. A.

Minister of the Gospel at *Elizabeth-Town, N. Jersey.*

Cum dilectione fides Christiani : Sine dilectione fides demonum : Qui autem non credunt, peiores sunt quam demones. — Aug. de Charit.

With a *Preface* by *Mr. FOXCROFT.*

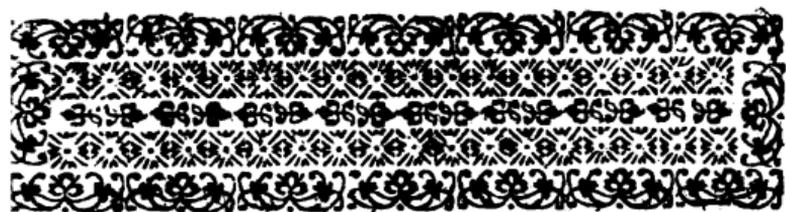
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TO
Martha *Epist.*
Christian READERS

THE reverend and learned Author of the ensuing Discourses needs not any Epistles of Commendation to such as are acquainted with his Person and Character: Whose Praise is in the Gospel thoroughout the Churches in those remote parts, where divine Providence has cast his Lot. Neither is unknown to the Publick: which has been favour'd with several lesser Writings of his, formerly publish'd on special Occasions; that must have left on the Minds of those who have read them, a grateful Relish, and such an Idea of Mr. Dickinson's peculiar Genius, Capacity and Judgment, as cannot but prepare them to come with rais'd Expectations and a particular Gust, to the Perusal of the following Tracts: Which it would therefore be as superfluous to recommend to each, as it would be thought vain in me to attempt profuse Encomium on them for the sake of others; or indeed would the known Modesty of the Author indulge me in taking this Liberty.

Only I must be permitted to say, that in reading these Sheets I have thought my self very agreeably entertain'd, with the Variety and Compass of Thought; Excellency of Matter, Strength of Argument, and Vivacity of Expression. And I must needs think, every serious discerning Reader will find the Beams of Divine Light, shining round the Gospel-Revelation, collected here in so close a Union, and borne in upon him with such a Force, as cannot fail (with a common Blessing) to give Heat and Energy to Faith and Love, establish him in the principles and duties of Christianity; and guard him against the Attacks of Infidelity on all Sides.

The general Design of these Papers is suggest- ed in the Title of them; yet it mayn't be improper to open the way to their reading them, by exhibiting a brief Scheme of the whole Work.

The first Sermon is on the Being and Attri- butes of GOD. Where we are led into deep and entertaining Contemplations upon the Divine Na- ture; by a particular View of the eminent Per- fections of GOD, as they are illustrated in the Works of Creation; and have laid before us very plentiful and irresistible Convictions of his eternal Power and Godhead, to the utter Confusion of all atheistical Pretences.

The second Sermon gives us the rational Evi- dences of our Apostacy from GOD; and then carries us into a delightful Meditation on our Recovery by a Mediator; producing a Variety of presumptive Arguments, many fair and lively Characters of Probability, that attend the Christian Institution: its unparalll'd intrinsic Excellencies

Excellencies are consider'd; its perfect Congruity to all the Divine Prerogatives, and Illustration of the Attributes of GOD; its Correspondence to the Nature and Necessities of Man, and Conduciveness to our present Welfare and future everlasting Happiness, are set in View; and a numerous Train of Arguments drawn together in a comprehensive and perspicuous manner, that deserve a very attentive Consideration, and which would have admitted of a copious Display, had not designed Brevity oblig'd our Author to restrain his Pen.

The other Discourses point out to us the one Mediator between GOD and Man, the Man **CHRIST JESUS**; and by many infallible Proofs demonstrate, that he is the true Messiah, to the manifest Confutation and Shame of all Deistical Exceptions.

The third Sermon considers the Evidence from Prophecy: explains the Nature of a Prophecy, as it is to be understood in the present Argument; sets forth the various Ways, in which Divine Predictions may be said to be fulfilled; instances in some of the more signal Prophecies of the Old Testament, relating to the Messiah, his Person and Character, the Time, Circumstances, and Consequents of his Appearing; then shews from the Evangelical Historians, that they have been literally and exactly verfy'd in **JESUS** of Nazareth: And finally, to complete the Demonstration, it is shewn, that as the Accomplishment of those ancient Prophecies is a certain Indication of their Divine Original, so the united Accomplishment of them all in the blessed **JESUS** is

a loud Testimony from Heaven, that he is the predicted Saviour, and justifies his Claim to the high Titles, Perfections and Relations, attributed to the Messiah in the prophetick Descriptions of his Person and Kingdom; all which, being of a Divine Extraction, consequently plead a Divine Veracity.

The fourth and last Sermon is upon the Argument from Miracles. Where we have the correct Notion of a Miracle briefly stated: In the next place Matter of Fact asserted, that there were true and proper Miracles wrought by our Lord **JESUS CHRIST**, in his own Person, and by his Apostles in his Name; Then it's shewn how those miraculous Operations illustrate the Verity of his Divine Mission, and the Certainty of his being the promised Messiah (in Attestation to which Character, assumed by him and ascrib'd to him, they were all perform'd) and so infer, by a just Consequence, the Truth and heavenly Original of the New Testament, that admirable Collection of Divine Revelations; which being written by inspir'd Penmen, has been preserv'd and transmitted in authentick Copies, without any material depravation, down to the present Age.

Finally, the Author having thus demonstrated the Divine Authority and Reasonableness of the Christian Institution, shuts up the whole with some wise and good Rules, to settle the Minds of wavering Professors, and direct Persons convinc'd of the Truth of Christianity in general (but at a Loss, among the various Divisions of Christendom, which Persuasion or Party to joyn with) how they may resolve their Doubts, fix their Choice,

Choice, and determine in what particular Way, Mode or Form, they may best serve CHRIST, to his Acceptance, and their own eternal Advantage.

Thus I have given the Reader a short and imperfect Table of Contents; a View of the principal Scope and Tenor of the Discourses here exhibited to the publick Light. — They are surely upon the noblest Subjects, sublime in their Nature, useful in their Tendency, and seasonable for this sceptical Day. And by a particular Application of them to the Ends of Practice and Devotion, which runs through and enlivens the Work, it is adapted to impress and engage the Heart, as well as employ the Mind; to warm the Christian, as well as please and improve the Scholar.

In perusing this little Volume, the Reader must summon his thinking Powers to a vigorous Attention, and call up his most devout Reflections; The seriousness of the Theme demands the latter; and the Variety, as well as Connexion of Argument, the former. And when you have deliberated over the following pages, I doubt not you'll be ready to break out in the Language of the Apostle; This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the World to save Sinners. — Without Controversy great is the Mystery of Godliness: GOD was manifest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory. — And GOD forbid, that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST,

You will see what abundant Honours Heaven did to Christianity, in the splendid Apparatus to its Introduction and Establishment, and in the extraordinary Successes that crown'd it, when it made its solemn Entrance into the World; which spread its Fame, and justly recommended it to the high Esteem and Admiration of succeeding Ages.

You will find, that the only wise GOD our Saviour has taken all possible Care for our Satisfaction in the Certainty of reveal'd Religion, and does not challenge our Belief of the Gospel, without giving us sufficient Grounds; whether in regard of the internal Signatures of Truth and Reason inseparable from it, or the external Motives of Credibility that accompany it: which consider'd together, do put it beyond all rational Doubt, and must needs produce a moral Assurance of its heavenly Original, in every one that will allow himself carefully and impartially to examine the Credentials it brings with it.

Sure I am, You will see all the Marks of Divinity most evident on the Christian Institution: and cannot doubt but you will be ready to say with the Apostle, I am not ashamed of the Gospel of CHRIST: Tho' I suffer Reproach as a Christian, nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed. You will see the Apostle had good Grounds for that Exhortation, Be not ashamed of the Testimony of our Lord, nor of me his Prisoner.

*You will rather turn your Repentments another way, and be ashamed of the profane abandon'd Mortals, who reject, insult and deride a Religion, so worthy of the blessed GOD; so consistent with
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the infinite Dignity of the SON of GOD; so calculated every way to the true Principles of Reason, and to the Exigencies of our apostate Condition; so fortify'd with Arguments of the noblest and strongest kind; so long triumphant over all oppositions from Earth and Hell, and in so many happy Instances from Age to Age the Power of GOD unto Salvation. All which Considerations serve to aggravate the Guilt and Folly of Unbelievers; to discover the just Reasons of their future Condemnation, and detect the Vanity of their present Pretensions to natural Religion, while they ridicule a Revelation, the Credit of which is so Divinely supported, and the believing Entertainment of which is indeed no other than a moral Duty, founded in the natural Fitness of Things: it being a most fit and reasonable Thing, that we should submit to credible Testimony; and if we receive the witness of Men, the Witness of GOD is greater. He therefore that believeth not GOD, in the Record that he gave of his Son, and so maketh him a Liar, does herein act contrary to the fundamental Law of Creation, and must needs stand condemned of himself, as well as of all about him, as the Shame and Disgrace of human nature. Surely all truly rational and serious Thinkers must inwardly blush for such a one, and be asham'd of his absurd and guilty Prejudices against the Gospel of CHRIST; when they see the Frenzy and Perverseness of conscious Infidelity so expos'd, in a glaring and convincing Light, as in the subsequent Discourses; which fully make it appear, that no Man rejects the Principles of Christianity, because his Reason

runs Counter to them, but because his Lusts controul his Reason and debauch his Judgment, fix a depraved Bias upon his Will, and commit a Rape on his Conscience, by their insatuating Charms. Hence it may be observed, these Latitudinarian Moralists are generally as libertine in their Practice, as in their Belief, and shew as little of the Man, as they pretend of the Christian.

Again, You will be asham'd of those thronging Herds in Christendom, of unprincipled implicit Believers, who are so supinely negligent and ignorant in Divine Things, that they take the Christian Profession upon blind Trust, and not out of Conviction and rational Choice; stupidly led by Education, popular Fashion, publick Establishment, Antiquity, or the like ignoble Attractives: without acquainting themselves with the illustrious Proofs of the Divine Authority of the Gospel, or indeed with its important Informations. So that they are unskilful in the Word of Righteousness; have need that one teach them which be the first Principles of the Oracles of GOD; and have nothing or little more to plead for Christianity, than a Turk for the Alcoran, or an Heathen for his national and antique Superstition: while yet the Religion of Christians admits of the most rational and ample Apology. But some have not the knowlege of GOD: I speak this to your Shame.

Again, You will be asham'd also of those assuming and imposing Christians (whether pharisaical and bigotted Papiests, or too symbolizing Protestants) that adulterate the Institutions of CHRIST, deform his Religion, and invade

wade his Prerogative, who is sole King and Legislator to his Church, and the only Lord of Conscience, by mixing their own presumptuous Devices, or the anomalous and spurious Inventions of others, in the sacred Affairs of the christian State ; † by setting up unscriptural Officers in the Church of CHRIST, by making new Decrees and Constitutions for the Substantials of Ecclesiastical Polity, by framing new Articles of Faith, new Parts or Modes of Worship ; and severely enforcing their apocryphal Innovations, Rites and Tenets, by secular Penalties, or rigorously obtruding the same as indispensable Terms of Communion, under the specious Colours of Apostolick Tradition, Uniformity, Decency, Edification, and the like : So shutting the doors of the Church against many, to whom a reasonable Charity can't but hope our Saviour will open the gates of Heaven ; and rudely reflecting too on the Wisdom and Fidelity of CHRIST, the great Trustee of Divine Power, and Dispenser of Truth and Good, who has given us a System of Principles and Body of Laws, in the inspired Records, that must needs be a perfect and decisive Standard ; to which nothing essential is necessary, nothing lawful, to be added, and by which every thing in the Service of GOD is to be try'd and regulated, and all our religious Inquiries and Observations bounded. Though, we confess, human Guides are appointed by him, for the clearer un-

† See an excellent Sermon of Mr. Dickinson's on this Subject ; where the true Boundaries of Church-Power are particularly consider'd and set in their proper Light.

derstanding the *Mysteries of his Doctrine, the Order of his House, and Laws of his Kingdom, and for promoting the Belief and Observation thereof.* Not for that we have Dominion over your Faith, or Conscience, but are Helpers of your Joy; and your Servants for JESUS sake.

To proceed,

You will be assam'd likewise of those unevangelical and (pretended) rational Christians, whether Preachers or Professors, whose favourite-topick is the Religion of Nature, and whose darling Rules and Motives are of the Philosophick kind; who leave a crucified JESUS very much out of their Schemes of Divinity, and make but little use of this blessed Mediator of Atonement and Intercession, in their Devotions and Dealings with GOD: who teach the Principles or practise the Duties of natural Religion, with little or no explicit Reference to a Redeemer, or Reduction of Things to the Gospel-Model; and pay a very cold Respect to the grand Peculiarities of the Christian Revelation (though so nearly connected with Salvation in the Gospel-Covenant, and in the Reason of things) whether Doctrines, relating to the Person, Character, and Offices of CHRIST, distinguishing Grace, supernatural Infusion, imputed Righteousness, final Perseverance, &c. or Precepts, concerning Covenanting with GOD, relying on CHRIST, living by the Faith of the Son of GOD, and doing whatever we do in his Name, praying with the SPIRIT and walking in the SPIRIT, directing our Aims to the Glory of GOD as our last end, and (in a word) consulting and applying the Gospel of CHRIST,

as our compleat and unerring Canon of Faith, Ritual of Worship, and Rule of Morals, as well as Charter of Privileges and Blessings. All which is so vital to Religion, so coincident with Apostolick Instruction and Example, so congruent to the Temper and Complexion of primitive and sound Believers: but scandalously neglected, or indifferently regarded in the present day, by many Professors and Preachers even in the reformatory World, to the great Grief and Regret of such as are jealous for the Honour of CHRIST, and tenderly concern'd for the Souls of Men.

Further, You will be sham'd of those heretical and wild Opinions, who professedly receive Gospel Revelations, and it may be in pretence preach CHRIST, but do miserably abuse, torture and pervert the Scriptures, to their own and others Destruction: As also of those enthusiastical Perfectionists (Spiritual Men, falsely so called) who act in Religion by no certain stated Rule, but by a variable fanatick Impulse or capricious Humour, and vainly boast of those superior Lights and Refinements, which they think supersede all Necessity of ministerial Teaching and outward Ordinances; and hence they explode the Sabbath, and Sacraments, and Discipline of the Gospel, those blessed Appointments of infinite Wisdom and Grace, as obsolete, and useless Superfluities.

You will be sham'd too of the many carnal and inconsistent Hypocrites, Fools in Israel, who while they name the Name of CHRIST, do not depart from Iniquity; and though perhaps orthodox Scripturists, punctual Devotionists, and precise Zealots for some disputed matters of Doctrine

or some affected Formalities in Religion, yet are shameful Delinquents in point of Morality, and live in open Defiance to some essential Precepts of the Gospel; are publick Blemishes to the Christian Name, by the most visible Indications of a worldly Spirit, by profane Speech, or a dissolute Behaviour: and thus give Scandal to weak Believers, and take the most probable Method to harden Infidels in their Aversion and Disgust to the Christian Faith, by practically renouncing it themselves. Such therefore the Apostle condemns as Enemies of the Cross of CHRIST, and requires the Churches to extrude with shame, as unworthy the holy Communion or even common Society.

In fine, I will say to every humble and pious Christian, You will upon a serious Review be ashamed even of yourselves also; from a Consciousness of your being so unstudy'd in the glorious Gospel, its rich Contents and numerous Proofs; so unfurnish'd for the Vindication of your holy Religion against the Assaults of its many Opposers; so unaffected with the amazing Grace of God in the Evangelical Dispensation, its transcendent Fulness of Light and Glory, its extensive Spread among the Gentiles, and yet the astonishing Distinction of Providence, in revealing it to some, while it's hid from others; — so unthankful for its great and precious Promises, and incomparable Benefits; so infirm in your belief of its peculiar Discoveries, and soon shaken in Mind by the impotent Cavils of various Seducers; so wavering and languid in your religious Resolutions; so remiss in your Endeavours of Obedience to its
 excellent

excellent Precepts ; so indolent and careless about the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, among such as sit in Darkness and are perishing for lack of Vision, while you sit under a meridian shine of the Sun of Righteousness.

In a word, You will be asham'd that you have so little of an experimental sense of the Power and Truth of the Gospel ; and that you are no better able to set a Seal hereto, from your own personal and lively Experience of that Communion with CHRIST (in his Word and Ordinances) which is so congenerous to the new Creature, so relishing to the spiritual Taste of a real Christian, so improving to Divine Knowledge and true Holiness ; and the Want or low Degree whereof in many Professors is so justly the matter of our mournful Observation.

I doubt not you will find such Reflections and Resentments awaken'd in you ; while with a due Application of Mind and with serious Pauses, labouring to enter into the Spirit of the Author and Importance of the Subject, you peruse the following argumentative and pathetick Defence of Christianity. You'll feel uneasy Sensations & Relentings in your thoughtful breasts, with respect to your selves : and must needs blush and be asham'd for the Multitudes of defective Christians, who fall under any of the preceding ignominious Characters, so opposite to the true Genius of the Gospel, and so derogatory to the Credit of its Divine Founder.

And now let me recall your Thoughts to the above-hint concerning Experience : upon recollecting which, that of the Apostle comes with a peculiar weight and force on my mind, He who believeth

fieth on the Son of GOD, hath the WITNESS IN HIMSELF, 1 Joh. 5. 10 ---- A Text that I would commend to every one for their frequent solemn Consideration: and gladly could I on this Occasion expatiate upon it in some pertinent and affecting Meditations; but that in so doing I should too long detain you, and much exceed the proper Limits of a presatory Epistle. I will hasten therefore to a Close, with this Hint, —

• It should be our main Solicitude, our first Desire, that the SPIRIT of CHRIST may cause the Light of the glorious Gospel to shine into our Hearts; and testify to its Verity and Divine Extract, by making it instrumental, through his concurrent Efficacy, to an indelible Impression of the Image of CHRIST on our Souls: And let it be our next and constant Care, that by visibly exhibiting this inward Experience, in an active Life of universal Conformity to the Example and Laws of CHRIST, we may give a solid Attestation to the Reality of our Faith, and adorn the Doctrine of GOD our Saviour, as it becomes us, in all Things: and thus evidencing our selves sincere Confessors, living Witnesses for CHRIST, we may hope for his Approbation in this World, and a glorious Reception in the next.

To promote this experimental Religion, and spread the genuine Spirit and Practice of Christianity, is the ultimate Design of the following Essay on the Reasonableness of it. And to what happy End may the special Blessing of CHRIST, whose Cause is here espous'd, accompany it to all, into whose hands it may come! So will the worthy Author (who, I wish, may long live, a burning and shining Light) have Occasion to rejoyce, in seeing this his Labour attended with the desir'd Prosperity: and we have Reason to be thankful, for the Benefit of this valuable Publication.

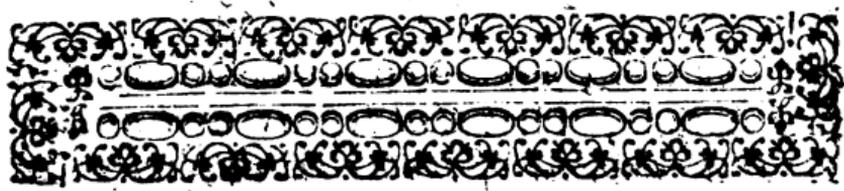
These are the unfeigned Sentiments, and the passionate Wishes of

Boston, Feb. 29.
1731, 2.

9 JU 64

Your christian Friend,

THOMAS FOXCROFT.



A
DEMONSTRATION
 OF THE
Being and Attributes
 OF
G O D.



ROMANS I. 20.

For the invisible things of Him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal Power and Godhead; so that they are without Excuse.



REASON is the dignifying and distinguishing property of humane nature; whereby Man, above the rest of the lower creation, is qualified to know, obey, and enjoy his Creator: By which alone he is capable of that Faith, without which it is impossible

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to please God ; and even of believing that first Article, That God is, as well as that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. Whence it follows, that He who has made us *rational Creatures*, expects from us a *reasonable Service* ; and cannot be pleased with that faith, practice, or hope, that is grounded on *education*, or common opinion ; and not the result of *rational reflection*, or enquiry.

It must therefore be agreeable both to our *duty* and *interest*, to enquire into the grounds of our *holy Religion* ; and *reasonably* to establish our selves in those precious Truths, on which we build our hopes ; and not to take them upon *trust*, as I'm afraid too many do. For which cause, I shall endeavour (*God willing*) to offer you some *rational evidences* of the truth of *Christianity* : and (*I hope*) full conviction, that we have not followed *cunningly devised fables*, in embracing the *Christian Religion* ; but a *light shining in a dark place*, whereunto we do well to take heed. And my first work is, to lay the *corner-stone* of this building ; and to take a brief prospect of some of those *Demonstrations of the Divine Being and Perfections*, which we are so plentifully furnished with, from the works of *Creation*
and

and *Providence*. For which end, I have pitch'd upon the words before us, as the ground of our present meditations: wherein we may *Note*;

1. THE Subject here treated of, which is the GLORIOUS GOD; denoted by the relative HIM, which relates to, & is connected with the foregoing verse, where the *Being and Nature of God* are expressly considered.

2. THE sublime immense *Nature*, and glorious Perfections of the *Divine Being*. [*The invisible things of Him*] The things of *God* are not only *invisible* to the bodily eye; but infinitely above the *search* of the most exalted understanding, inscrutable, and incomprehensible, to the most sagacious of created Beings. For *who can by searching find out God?*

3. THE clearest and most infallible certainty of these incomprehensible perfections of God. [*Are clearly seen*] Though we can't soar to the interminable *heights*, or dive to the boundless *depths*, of this *Infinite Nature*; we have demonstrative evidence of His *Eternal Power and Godhead*, with many of his essential perfections. We may be infallibly certain, that there is a *God*, *Infinite* in Holiness, Justice, Goodness and
 B 2 Truth,

Truth, &c. tho' we know not the manner of His *existence*, and operations.

4. THE foundation of this certainty, or the means of our obtaining this clear vision of the *Invisible things of God*. [*Being understood, by the things that are made.*] We see the *cause* by the *effect*; and have brightest evidence, that this vast and spacious *World*; with its amazing magnificence, lustre and harmony, was not its own *efficient*; did not proceed from *chance*, nor could be the product of an *Author* unequal to the *Work*: And must therefore be the *Workmanship* of an *Ininitely wise, & powerful Being*.

5. THE consequence of this evidence, [*So that they are without excuse.*] The *beastly* world, who know nothing of *God*, but what is visible from the works of *creation* and *providence*, may there observe such bright displays of *Infinite Wisdom* and *Power*, with other *Divine Perfections*, as will leave their *infidelity* inexcusable.

— But we may more concisely sum up the words, in this

OBSERVATION, *That the glorious Being, and infinite Perfections of God, are evidently manifest, from the works of Creation.*

THIS

THIS I shall endeavour to demonstrate, by these following Arguments.

I. I think it unquestionably *evident* to all men, that they *themselves* have a *Being*. This case admits of no debate; no man being capable to call in question his *own existence*, or doubt of his *Being*. Whence,

II. It is equally *certain* to every man, that he has not *always* been, what he now is. Within the compass of a few years, we were first begotten, conceiv'd, & born, and have passed the several stages of time, unto the age, to which we are now arriv'd. This no man can doubt of. Therefore,

III. It's most *sure*, that we must have our Original from some *cause*. An *effect* without an *efficient*, or a real *Being* produc'd by *nothing*, is the most palpable absurdity, and the boldest affront to common sense. ---- This then is *indisputable*, that we did not make our selves. For before we had a *Being*, we were nothing, & could do *nothing*. And it is equally certain, that we are not the product of blind unactive *chance*. For how could so noble a *Being* happen to spring out of *nothing*, without any creating power or energy? Whence then do we derive our Original? Not from our *Parents*; they were not *omnipotent*.

The Reasonableness

tant, to command us into *Being* by their powerful word. Nor could such noble, immaterial, *thinking* substances, as our *Souls*, proceed from them in a way of natural generation. For its the height of *absurdity* to suppose, that a *material* substance, could give *Being* to a *spiritual* one; as we shall hereafter consider. But were it suppos'd, that even our whole *man*, *soul* and *body*, was begotten by our immediate *parents*; whence had they this *power*? Or whence their own *existence*? If it be said, that they proceed in a continued chain of succession from their *predecessors*, the difficulty yet remains: For whence came the first link of this chain? It is equally *absurd*, to apply *self-existence*, or *self-origination*, to the first of our *species*, as to our *selves*. ---- Thus from the consideration of our *selves*, we are led to the clearest views of an *efficient cause*, by which we are what we find our selves to be. It is just arguing, *Psal. c. 3. It is He that hath made us, and not we our selves.*

IV. It's also clearly *evident*, that all those other *Beings*, which are in the world, were produc'd by some *cause*. We are not only certain of our own *Being*; but by the same intuitive certainty; we perceive *multitudes*

itudes of *Beings* beside our selves. --- If we look *upward*, we behold a vast magnificent *Arch*, replenish'd with innumerable multitudes of bright and glorious *Orbs*; all of them performing their *revolutions*, and discharging their appointed *functions*, with the greatest harmony, beauty, and order. If we look *downward*, we see this huge massy ball of *Earth*, upon which we tread, abounding with a surprizing variety of *animals* and *vegetables*, each carrying in 'em the marks of consummate *Art & Skill*.

AND can we imagine, that this immense canopy of the *Heavens* was stretched out, those mighty *globes* of *light* hung up in the *air*, and whirl'd round in their respective *circuits*; or this *Earth*, with all its furniture, created and founded on *nothing*, by their *own efficiency*? Can we, upon the view of a most stately & curious *building*, overlook the *workman* that made it, suppose it to spring out of nothing; or to make it self? No surely! the *work* shews the *workman*, and the *effect* the *cause*.

HENCE then, the consequence is inevitable, that there is some great & glorious *Cause* of our selves, and of every thing we see & know: And this Cause is what we call **GOD**. And hence, the very *heathen*
world

World may discover the God that created the Heavens, and stretched them out; that spread forth the Earth, & that which cometh out of it; that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein, *Isai. xlii. 5.* For the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy work, *Psal. xix. 1.*

I know of but one considerable *Objection*, against this reasoning and conclusion, that seems worthy of an intelligent mind; which is this;

THE World, in all its parts, may have Eternally existed; All the mutations and revolutions in nature, may have been effected by an Eternal law or propensity; and all the kinds of Beings in the World, continued by an Eternal succession.

THIS Objection, at first view, may fill the minds of some enquirers with confusion, while their thoughts are lost in the boundless Abyss of Eternity. I shall therefore take liberty to be something particular, in answering it.

THAT the World has not Eternally existed, is demonstratively evident from this consideration, -- Had the Universe been eternal, it must have had a necessary existence: and it would have been impossible,
that

that either the whole, or any part of it, should not have been, or have been any otherwise than it is. For, if not necessarily self-existent, it must derive its *Being* from some cause, and consequently have a *beginning*: and it must also have continued by an *Infinite and Eternal* series and succession of *necessary causes and effects*. For if all the *causes and effects* in an *eternally existing World*, are not *necessary*, but *contingent*; that is, if they from their own nature might be, or might not be what they are: Then the *World* in all its glory and magnificence, in all the *symmetry, order, and perfection* of its several parts, has *for ever* continued by *meer accident*, without any cause or reason: Which is the height of *absurdity*. This then is most certain, that if the *World* be *Eternal*, it derives both its *being and continuance* from absolute *necessity*. ---- But is it not most *absurd* and unreasonable to suppose the *necessary* self-existence of things that are evidently in their own nature *contingent*; and for whose *existence*, there is no more apparent reason or necessity from the nature of the things themselves, than for their *non-existence*? Is it not even ridiculous to imagine, that from the nature of things, the *World* must consist of just

is many, and just such kind of parts as it now does, without any possible addition, diminution, or alteration? That the *Earth*, for instance, could not have in its composition, one particle of sand more or less, than it has, nor produce one plant or animal, worm or fly, different from what it does? And yet this is the inevitable consequence of such necessity: For if the whole be necessary, every most minute particle is equally so.

BESIDES, If the *World* be from its own nature necessary, it is every where necessary, to every point of real or imaginary space. For what may from the nature of the thing be absent from one place, may notwithstanding any necessity to the contrary, be absent from any other, and consequently from every place. It being impossible that there should be any thing in one place more than another, to make it necessary. What therefore is necessary, must be every where so, and so be *Infinite*, as well as *eternal*. Nay and even every part and particle of the whole *World*, must by the same Argument be *infinite*: For there must be the same necessity for all the parts, as for the whole, as is before observ'd. Whence, there must be (upon this supposition) more

Infinite

Infinite Beings than there are atoms of sand, or rays of light: Which is the grossest absurdity.

AGAIN, If the *World* exist from necessity, and all the parts of it necessarily perform their various functions & operations: Then it is also necessary that they for ever do so, without any diversity, variation or change. Nature must always act by invariable and immutable laws, in the same order, with the same force, and to the same effect. For what is from the nature of the thing necessary to day, will be so to morrow and for ever. And thus that man that necessarily lives to day, must by the same necessity live always; he that is in health to day must be so for ever. And in a word, there can be no change in any part of the Creation: which is so contrary to our constant experience in this World of change, that it need not be insisted on.

I will just mention one Argument more against the eternity of the *World*, which possibly may be more intelligible, & more adapted to the capacity of my hearers, than what I've already offered.

THE supposition of the *World's* eternity does necessarily contradict the possibility of a *succession* in any thing whatsoever.

For a *succession* does in the nature of it imply a *first* and *last*, which are altogether incompatible with *Eternity*, and cannot without greatest absurdity be predicated of a *perpetual* and *unchangable* duration. To exemplify this, The *succession* of *day* and *night* could not have been *eternal*; such *succession* naturally supposing, that either the *day* was before the *night*, or the *night* before the *day*: If either preceded, there was a *first*, a beginning of the *succession*, on this side *Eternity*. Supposing the *day* was before the *night*, it must either have had a *temporal* beginning, or an *eternal* existence: If the latter be granted, there could yet have been no *eternal succession* of *day* and *night*; but an *everlasting day* must have preceded the *night*, had the *night* commenc'd never so many Millions of ages ago; there being an *infinite* distance between *eternity* and the remotest *time*: Nay more than so, had the *day* been *eternal*, there could never have been (upon the supposition before us) any *night* at all: For from whence could there be so great a *change* in the *eternal* and *immutable* course of *Nature*? How could there be such new *revolutions* in *nature*, when under the same *invariable laws*, that had continued from *eternity*? I

I might offer many other *Arguments* to obviate the *Objection*; but what has been said is sufficient, & possibly in the opinion of my *bearers* more than sufficient; I therefore reassume the former *conclusion*.

If the World has had a *beginning* (as is demonstrated) there must have been some *Author*, some *efficient cause*, by which it was created and made.

HAVING thus by a view of the *creature*, discover'd the *Creator*, and found evident demonstration of a *Divine Being* from the works of His Hands; Let us next consider some of those *invisible things of Him*, which may be clearly seen and understood, by the things that are made.

V. THEN the *Eternity* of GOD is ungain-
sayably evident from the works of *Creation*. We are not capable of a greater certainty of any thing whatsoever, than of this, that there has been something from *Eternity*; "since what has not eternally existed, had a *beginning*; and what had a *beginning* must be produced by something else." There cannot be a more unreasonable supposition, nor a more glaring contradiction, than that there was a *time* wherein there was perfectly *nothing*. For if so, there could have been nothing t all
Eternity.

Eternity. It being rather madness, than weakness, to attribute Creating power and energy to mere *nothing*. This consequence therefore forces it self upon us, that the Cause of all things, is an *eternal*, uncaused, independent *Being*. Whence we may justly declaim with the Psalmist, Psal. xc. 2. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the Earth and the World: even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.*

VI. It's likewise demonstrable from the works of Creation, that this Glorious *Author* of all things is a *Spiritual Being*. We certainly know, that we our selves are *thinking substances*: The very meditation before us makes it evident, that we are capable of *Thought, Reason, and Reflection*; that our Minds can suddenly soar to the *fixed Stars*, compass the vast circuit of the *Heavens*, and even launch into the boundless *Abyss of Eternity*, where they have just now been. --- And whence do we derive this power? Is it from dead unactive *matter*? Impossible! for *matter* is it self utterly incapable of *thought*, and therefore certainly unable to produce a *thinking Being*. This may be brought to strictest *demonstration*. --- If we allow
thought

thought to any matter whatsoever, we must allow it to every particle of matter; and thereby suppose as many thinking Beings as there are atoms in the Creation (the properties of all matter being the same.) The absurdity of which supposition lies open to every eye; and it would be no less absurd to imagine, that some certain composition or modification of matter can produce thought. For unthinking particles of matter, however put together, are matter still; and if there was no thought in any of the parts, there can be none in the whole, whatever be its composition; since the whole can have nothing, but what it receives from the parts*. The consequence is therefore inevitable, that since all matter is from its own nature necessarily destitute of thought, our thinking rational souls must derive their Being from some immaterial Author: It being utterly impossible for that to be produc'd in the effect, which was not in the power of the cause. And by the same Argument, this

* The curious Reader may see this more largely handled by Mr. LOCK of *Humane Understanding*, Lib. IV. Cap. X. And in Dr. CLARK's *Letters to Mr. Dodwell*.

glorious

glorious Spirit must have eminently in Himself, all the perfections of all the innumerable intelligent beings that now are, or ever have been in the World, were they all contracted into one Intelligence: Since they all depend upon Him for their Beings, capacities, and operations. And there cannot be more in the streams than in the Fountain: ---- It is rational arguing in Psal. xciv. 9, 10. He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?

If these speculations are too Philosophical for some of my hearers, the Argument may be proposed in a more easy and familiar manner. --- It is plain to every capacity, that we have souls as well as bodies, that our more noble part is a thinking intelligent spirit, that there are and have been multitudes of spiritual Beings beside our selves; and that these all proceed from some cause, at least equal to the effect, who must therefore Himself be a Spiritual Substance, possessed of all the excellencies of all other spiritual substances in the World: otherwise He must give what he has not; and the effect must exceed the vertue of the cause; which is manifestly absurd.

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4. THUS by a reflection upon our own *Souls*, we have discover'd the necessary truth of our *Lord's Doctrine*, Joh. iv. 24. That *GOD is a Spirit*. Let us now go on to consider some other of the *Divine Perfections*, legible in the *Book of Creation*.

And,

VII. It further appears from the *things which are made*, that the first *Cause* of all things must be an *Infinite Being*.

THE prodigious magnitude and amazing extent of the *Universe* do loudly proclaim the *Infinite* nature of its glorious *Author*. --- Tho' we can have but an imperfect view of this scene of *wonders*, we may yet gaze our selves into *admiration* and *surprize*, by what obscure and distant glances we are capable of. If we go no further from home than this globe of *Earth* upon which we dwell, we have here a *vast body*, computed at near Eight Thousand Miles Diameter, and above Two Hundred Thousand Millions of Miles in its *bulk* or solid content; which must appear to every eye a *Mass* worthy of an *Infinite Creator*. But as great as this seems to be, it is (as *Astronomers* inform us) exceeded in Magnitude by most of the *heavenly bodies*, and must be esteem'd but *small* in comparison of some of the

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Planets :

Planets; especially if compar'd to that stupendous Globe of Fire, the *Sun*. Now if we are fill'd with just admiration at the *massy bulk* of these huge bodies, how surprizingly great must be the *space* in which they perform their revolutions! The *Sun* being esteem'd above Eighty Millions of Miles distant from the *Earth*, and much further from some other of the *Planets*; which at those vast distances, are all observ'd to move round the *Sun*, and yet never to interfere, or clash with one another.

HERE we might make a stop, and adore the *infinite* perfections of the glorious *Author* of this spacious system of the *Sun* and *Planets*: But there are yet more distant, and greater *Objects of Astonishment*, that invite our attention, the *fixed Stars* I mean, which seem to fill the spangled *canopy*, and appear innumerable to the naked eye; and yet vastly more numerous when view'd through a *Telescope*, which discovers Myriads of 'em not otherwise visible. These being supposed at due distances from each other (as they certainly are) how *Immense* must be the *space* which they occupy! And if our modern *Astronomers* are not mistaken in a matter which they think themselves pretty certain

tain of, there is a new *scene* before us, which will captivate our *understanding*, and utterly lose our *thoughts*; they suppose the great multitude of *fixed Stars* to be so many *Suns*, all of 'em endued with native *light* and *heat*; of like *Dimensions* with our *Sun*; and each of 'em accompanied with a system of *Planets*, as our *Sun* is; and consequently each of 'em occupying as great a *space*, as was formerly supposed in the whole *Firmament*. . . . This account of the *Universe* makes it appear many thousand times greater than is ordinarily imagin'd; and should answerably excite our *admiration* and *praises* of the glorious *Creator* and *Contriver* of such a *magnificent World*.

But having thus long gazed at the prodigious *Masses* of these *heavenly Bodies*, and the immeasurable *space* possess'd by them; it's time to apply these considerations to the present purpose, and see if we can't discover the *Infinite* of the *Creator*, from this view of the *Heavenly regions*: Which, if we will but open our eyes, must appear in the *clearest light*. For it's manifest to every observation, that the *Maker*, *Guide*, and *Governour* of the *Universe*, must be always present in every part of this incomprehensible *space*; (He could not else have made,

made, nor could He otherwise superintend; order, and direct all the parts, operations, and influences of this stately *fabrick*) which is impossible to conceive, of any but an *infinite Being*.

BESIDES, He that *made* the *World*, must also of his free will and choice, have ordered and appointed the *place* of its residence; and nothing but His own *pleasure* could circumscribe it to these *limits*, or confine it to this particular *space*, in the *boundless void*, rather than any other. He must therefore Himself be equal to all *space*; whether real or imaginary; that is, He must be an *Infinite Being*, whom *the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens* cannot contain, as 1 King. viii. 27. Which was the thing to be prov'd. And thus we see the *Immensity* of that glorious *Being*, that *siteth upon the circle of the Earth, that stretcheth out the Heavens as a curtain; and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in*, Isa. xl. 22.

I might here have urg'd the *simplicity* and uncompounded Nature of GOD, as a further evidence of His *Infinity*: But this would be to go out of the way of my *Text*, which confines me to the consideration of the *Divine Perfections*, as visible in the
works

works of Creation ; and I think what is said is sufficient upon this Head. I therefore proceed.

VIII. THE *Unity* of the *Godhead* is also clearly seen from the works which are made.

FOR if there were more *Gods* than *One*, they could not be *Infinite* ; two *infinities* being a palpable contradiction : And if *finite*, they could not be the *first cause* of all things ; as is before demonstrated.

BESIDES, If there be more *Gods* than *One*, they must all be either *supreme*, *subordinate*, or *co-ordinate*. Two *supreme Beings* is a contradiction in terms : for either one must be *superior*, or both *equal* ; and therefore neither *supreme*. A *subordinate God* must be himself *dependent*, and could not have all things *depend* upon him ; or in other words, could not be the *creator* nor *upholder* of the World. It remains therefore, that if there be a *plurality* of *Gods*, they must be *co-ordinate*, which is equally *absurd* : For were there several *co-ordinate Gods*, they must either create the World *conjunctly* or *separately* ; not *conjunctly*, for if they join'd together in *Creating* the World, they would all make but one *first Cause*, and each severally but part of the *Cause* ; which being supposed, there could be no *perfect Being*.

Being; and consequently no *God*; Nor could a plurality of *Gods* make the *World* separately; there would then be no *first Cause* of all, if each caused but a part of the *World*.

I might further urge the *Unity* of *God*, from His *necessary* existence. ---- I have already demonstrated, that the *first Cause* of all things must be *Eternally necessary*: And nothing can be capable of plainer demonstration; for if there ever had been a *time* wherein He had not existed, He could have had no existence to *Eternity*, unless we suppose a *Cause* of the *first Cause*, which is *absurd*. ---- Besides, if all things were created by Him, He must necessarily be Himself *uncreated*, and being *uncreated* He must necessarily be *Eternal*: For what at *any time* did not exist, can never come into *Being* without being *created*, either by it self or by something else. Now if we suppose *God* to have *created Himself*, we attribute to him *action* before *existence*; which is the grossest *absurdity*. If we suppose Him *created* by any thing else, we suppose a *Cause* of the *first Cause*, as before. He must therefore be *Eternally necessary*; and consequently can be but *One*: For if it be possible that the *World* could be created

created by *one Efficient Cause* (which can't be doubted) there can be but *one necessary cause* of all things. Every thing else *may* be derivative and dependent, and therefore can't be *necessary*. Whence it's certain there can be but *one God*, who (as I've already prov'd) must be a *necessary Being*. ---- Thus we have clearest evidence of that truth, Deut. vi. 4. *The Lord our God is one Lord*. And of that 1 Cor. viii. 6. *But to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him*.

IX. It is moreover apparent from the *works of Creation*, that this glorious GOD is an *Omnipotent Being*. I've already prov'd, that the *Heavens* and the *Earth*, in all their amazing magnificence, curious frame, and regular order, sprung out of *nothing*, at the powerful command of the great *Creator*. Wherefore since there is an infinite distance between perfectly *nothing* and any real *Being*, there must be *Omnipotence* employ'd in this glorious work. The united powers of every *finite Being* would in vain endeavour to create from *Nothing* the most despicable *worm*, or even a *particle* of sand. For (as I observ'd) there is an *infinite* and eternal *opposition* between *meer nothing* and the

the most *inferior* creature ; and therefore the vilest *insect*, or smallest particle of *dust*, could not be brought from *non-entity* into Being, but by an *Omnipotent* arm. --- What a surprizing scene then do the *Heavens* and *Earth* afford us of the great *Creator's* power ? What less than an **ALMIGHTY GOD** could first find *matter* for an endless train of such *vast bodies*, and then compose the *stately fabric* !

AND I might further observe, that the *creation* of the World cannot be the extent of the *Creator's* power : For if once possess'd of *creating skill* and *ability*, He must always retain it ; and therefore could (had He pleased) have spent Millions of ages in *creating new Worlds*, until their number had exceeded the utmost stretch even of an *Angel's* thought. ---- And from this view of His *Omnipotence*, it also appears, that he could (had it been His pleasure) have *created* a like number of Worlds in a *moment* : For there can be no limits to *Almighty power*. Let us then dismiss this *Head*, with *Elibu's* admiration upon a like occasion, Job xxxvii. 22, 23. *With God is terrible Majesty. Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out ; He is excellent in power.*

X. THE *Infinite Wisdom* of the Creator, is also clearly manifest from the things that are made.

WE have already observ'd, that whatever perfection is found in the creature, must be first *eminently* in the Creator: For it's clearly evident, that what had its *Being* and *beginning* from another, must have all the *properties* of its *Being* from the same source. If we apply this to the present case, we shall find it necessary that He who has animated our dust and endued us with so much *wisdom*, must have more *Wisdom* in Himself than all the men in the World, "since all depend upon Him, and can have no other ways of *knowledge*, or *extent of power*, than what He gives them." The same may be said with respect to all created *Wisdom* in *Heaven* and *Earth*, which equally flows from the same fountain, who must therefore Himself be *Ininitely Wise*.

THE glorious *art* and *contrivance* in the admirable frame of Nature, do likewise loudly proclaim the *infinite Wisdom* of the Creator; while the whole, and every part, do so visibly conspire to answer the great ends of their *Being*. — Should we confine our speculations to the most *inferior* parts

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of the Creation only, how many marks of *Divine Skill*, that would nonplus the thoughts of the most sagacious enquirer, might be found in the least *pebble*! What a great variety of shapes, colours, smells, qualities, and uses, are there in the smallest *herbs* or *flowers*, not to be imitated nor even fully understood by *created wisdom*! And how are they propagated by an unsearchable *seminal virtue*! How curiously form'd, and admirably adapted to their several ends and uses, are the most contemptible *insects*! What industry, conduct, and seeming government, are there found with so inferior a creature as the *Bee*, that even *rivals* the policy of *Princes Courts*! With what wonderful *beauty* are the smallest *birds* and *beasts* adorn'd! And with what apparent *sagacity* do they subserve the ends of their *creation*; especially in their own *preservation*, and the *propagating* their kind! --- These and such like *contemplations*, do sufficiently discover the *Infinite Wisdom* that has thus order'd, and does thus *superintend* and *direct* all those *minute* and *disregarded* parts of the *creation*.

But if we continue our view, and lift up our eyes to the *superior* parts of the *World*, the scene will yet further open, and flash

flash brightest conviction into our minds, of the *unsearchable Wisdom of God*.

How came the parts of the *Earth* to cohere together, and not separately fly in the *boundless space*? Who has given the *Sea* his decree, bounded it by the shore, & said to its proud waves, *Hitherto shalt thou go and no further*? Who has hung the *Earth* upon nothing, and plac'd it in such due distance from the *Sun*, that it is neither by too near approaches to that orb of *Fire* scorch'd up and consumed, nor by a too remote station made a continent of ice? Who is the father of the rain, or bath begotten the drops of the dew, whereby the *Earth* is water'd & replenish'd? Whence are those amazing & innumerable Orbs that spangle the *Sky*, plac'd and kept at due distances, and whirl'd in their several courses, without interfering and dashing together, to the destruction of the *World*? Don't all these, and innumerable more wonders of *Nature* concur, to proclaim that man even mad as madness it self, that can suppose any lower cause of these things than *Infinite Wisdom*? especially if he considers the whole frame of this stately fabric, with the disposition of its several parts; together with that subordination, dependance, relation, and mutual

tual society, which is in the whole, and which each have to other.

BUT we need not go so far from *home* to find the *truth* we are seeking; we being *our selves* so bright a discovery of it. If we consider our *bodies*, how wonderfully are they made! what astonishing *art* and *skill* appears in the variety of the parts, in their beauty, symmetry, and proportion, their connection, dependance, and use! Who can search out the *wonders* of this *frame*, or fully account for so much as the *motion* of a *leg* or *finger*? But if we reflect upon the wonderful operations and faculties of the *Mind*, the *surprize* still grows upon us. The nature of the *Soul*, with its powers of *Understanding*, *Memory*, *Will*, &c. are beyond our search, and cover'd from our view with *thick darkness*, like their glorious *Author*. ---- Well may these and the like reflections strike us with *astonishment*.

AND there are doubtless vastly *superior* marks of *art* and *skill* in the *Creation*, which we know nothing of. How can we then but join with the *Psalmist* in his holy admiration of these things, in Psal. civ. 24. *O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in WISDOM hast thou made them all!*

XI. WHAT

XI. WHAT hath been said under the last *head*, doth likewise clearly discover the *Divine Omniscience*: And shew us plainly, that He that contriv'd and made, that does direct and govern this *magnificent World* with such *order* and *regularity*, must have all things present and future in His *view* at once.

FOR had not the whole *plan* of these amazing works, been before the *Architect*, He could not have contriv'd and dispos'd all the innumerable parts with such admirable *glory*, and surprizing *harmony*. And did not his *Omniscient eyes* inspect every *atom* of the Creation, and *clearly behold* the darkest recesses of nature, it would be impossible, that His *providence* could take care of the whole World, and all the *minute* parts thereof, as we see it does. How else could they all *subsist*? And what else could keep them from *destruction* and *confusion*? ---- Nay, had not all things *future* been *eternally* naked and open to His *all-searching eye*, it would have been impossible, that He could have so dispos'd 'em all, that they should have for ever conspir'd in their own mutual good and preservation, and their *Author's* glory. ---- It is therefore the natural result of these speculations,

culations, in Psal. cxlvii. 5. *Great is our Lord, and of great power, His UNDERSTANDING is infinite.*

I might still continue the thread of *discourse*, and by necessary deductions from the *works of Creation*, find brightest evidence of all other *Divine perfections*, which we have any notion of.

I might clearly prove, that the *Author of all created goodness*, whether *natural or moral*, is Himself *infinitely Good*; that the fountain of all *created justice*, is Himself *infinitely Just*; that He whose Nature is highest *perfection*, cannot be chargable with any *defect* (as all *sin* and *immorality* is) and must therefore be *infinitely Holy*; and that He who has made, does so carefully preserve and bountifully provide for all the parts of the World, is Himself *infinite Mercy and Love*. But the time would fail me to particularly insist upon these things; and these and the like consequences, are so natural and easy from what has been already observ'd, that they don't require to be largely insisted on.

I shall therefore now hasten to some *practical Inferences from the Doctrine.*

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I. If there be a *God* of such *infinite* *perfections*, it's a natural *Inference*, that He should be *worship'd* in a manner agreeable to His *glorious Nature*.

THIS is a *truth* so plainly legible in the *law of Nature*, that the most barbarous *Heathen* and salvage *Pagans* have always assented to it ; and it's even impossible for a *rational mind* to refuse an assent. Can we consider Him as the *Author* both of our *essence* and *subsistence*, as the *fountain* of all our *mercies* and *comforts*, upon *whom* we depend, in *whom* we live, and unto *whom* we are beholden for all things ; and yet suppose we owe Him no *reverence* or *homage* ? Don't even *Nature* it self teach us to look to the *Rock* whence we are born ? A *son* honoureth his *father*, and a *servant* his *master* ; if then He be a *Father*, where is His *honour* ? If He be a *Master*, where is His *fear* ? Mal. i. 6.

BUT to be more particular ;

WE are hereby instructed to manifest our *dependance* upon *God*, by *praying* to Him.

IF our *life* and *breath* are at His *dispose* ; if all the *good* we want or hope for, is *treasur'd* up in Him, and must flow from Him ; the very first principles of *reason* will teach us to repair to Him for a *supply*

of our *wants*; not only because we have no where else to go for any *supplies*, but because it's a rational *acknowledgment* of the *fountain* of our *mercies*, to look to *Him* for all our *good*; and to receive all as coming from *His bountiful Hand*. This is an *acknowledgment* that a *Parent* expects from his *Children*, a *Prince* from his *Subjects*: and much more may the *Eternal Majesty* expect it from such *vile worms*, and indigent creatures as we. ---- We should therefore come to *Him* with a deep impression of our own *nothingness*: For what are such clods of animated *dust*, if compar'd to the *Immense* fountain of all glorious perfections? We should come to *Him*, with a humble sense of our *natural unworthiness*. For besides our *moral pollution* (which I may hereafter have occasion to consider) we are but poor *potsherds of the Earth*; but *clay* in the hands of the sovereign *Potter*, and can therefore have no claim of *favour* from *Him*. We must come to *Him* with a humble *resignation & submission* to *His will*: For He is an *Eternal Sovereign*; and we at *His absolute and uncontrolable dispose*.

THE ends of this proposed *duty of prayer*, are not to give *God* a *new acquaintance* with our circumstances and necessities, or to
make

make any change in His *counsels*. No! there can be nothing hid from the *flaming eye* of His Omniscience. And touching His *counsel*, He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His Soul desireth, even that He doth. But we should pray to Him, that we may be our *selves* fit recipients of His Mercy: This being a direct means to keep us *humble*, and to awaken in us a sense of our *indigent*, helpless, depending state: It being likewise a means to keep us *religious*, to actuate our *love* to Him, from whom we implore, and obtain all our good; And to encline us to *live* to Him, as we *live* from Him.

THAT prayer has a direct tendency thus to excite, and enliven our *religious contemplations* and *affections*, is self-evident. And it's plainly obvious to every man's *reason*, that he is not qualified for the receipt of *Mercy*, that forgets both his *God* and his *own soul*; that regards neither the *bounty* nor the *Benefactor*; and that will no way testify his *dependance* upon *God*, nor his *subjection* to Him. The very *light of nature* does therefore preach that *doctrine*, Psal. xciv. 6, 7. O! come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people

people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hands.

If against this it be objected, that the glorious Nature of God is so highly exalted above such poor worms of the dust as we, that we are too inferior creatures to be the objects of His care and regard: --- This *Insinuation* discovers thoughts, altogether unworthy of such an Omniscient, Omnipresent, and infinitely Perfect BEING, who without any pains or difficulty, inspects and orders every atom in the Creation, takes care (as we may plainly see) of every worm and fly, arrays the lillies of the field, with their beautiful cloathing, and provides food even for the ravens of the valley. ---- Were any thing below His notice, whence could it subsist? What could uphold it in being, or prevent its return to its original causes?

FROM what has been said, it further appears, that we should not only manifest our dependance upon God by praying to Him, but our Gratitude by Thanksgiving & Praise.

THAT Gratitude is a natural debt to a Benefactor, and that our thankfulness should be proportion'd to the benefits received, are truths every where acknowledged. How then should our hearts and mouths be for
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ever fill'd with *praises* to the *infinite Fountain* of *goodness*; from whence so many streams of *mercy* are continually flowing to us, and from whom we are continually receiving such a *variety* and *affluence* of what is fit for our use, comfort, support, ornament, and delight!

BESIDES the wonders of *Redeeming love*, and the *mercies* which refer to another life (which I hope to have a further occasion to consider) the *good things* of this World only, which we all enjoy, give us cause to rouse up our *grateful* resentments, in that language, Psal. ciii. 1, 2. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.*

I might further observe under this *head*, that the consideration of the *Divine Perfections*, should make us most serious, hearty, sincere, and spiritual in all our *religious devotions*. It's most evident, that this *Omniscient eye* can't be flattered and deceived, with any *formal shews* and superficial pretences: For *He knows our thoughts afar off, searches our hearts and reins*; and has clearest views of our most inward motions and retirements of soul: Nor can He be pleased with our *mock-shews* of devotion,

while we flatter Him with our lips, and lye to Him with our tongues, and have our hearts far from Him: No! God is a Spirit, & they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and truth, Joh. iv. 24.

To Conclude,

II. THIS Doctrine teacheth us the last necessity that we are in, of an interest in the favour of this glorious God. Horror & surprize accompanies the very thought of being at odds with this dreadful Majesty; who has made us, does preserve us, and can crush us in pieces in a moment; or fill us with unutterable anguish, at His pleasure. Better would it be for us, that the whole Creation should conspire our misery and ruin, than that the God that made us, should refuse to have mercy upon us; and the Rock that formed us, should shew us no favour: For if God be for us, who can be against us? It is therefore a case worthy of our most solicitous enquiry, What are the means of obtaining the favour of God? But the answer of this enquiry must be deferr'd to a further opportunity.



A

DEMONSTRATION

OF

The Apostate state of Man by Nature,
And of the glorious Provision made for
his Recovery

BY

JESUS CHRIST.



ROMANS V. 6.

*For when we were yet without strength, in
due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

HAVING already demonstrated the
Being and infinite Perfections of
God, and from thence inferr'd
our extreme necessity of an in-
terest in His favour, I am now
(according to my promise) to enquire
into the way and means, of becoming fa-
vourites of this glorious Majesty: And in
order

order thereto, to consider, whether we are naturally in *god terms* with Him : And if not, whether He has made any provision for our *reconciliation*, and re-obtaining His *lost favour*. Both which considerations offer themselves, in a manner worthy of the *Divine Nature*, and agreeable to *humane reason*, in the words before us : Wherein we may Note,

1. THE fallen *apostate* state of mankind. *Christ died for the UNGODLY*, i. e. for such as were in an estate of distance from God, of enmity and opposition to Him.

THE *Text* indeed gives us no light into the cause of this *guilt* and *wo* ; but *reason* as well as *revelation* plainly dictates, that it is inconsistent with the *merciful nature* of our *glorious Creator*, and natural Lord, either to create us in an estate of *sin* and *miser*y ; or to reduce us to those wretched circumstances without just provocation : And therefore that *rebellion* and *apostacy* must necessarily be the source of this *corruption* and *pollution*, as we shall more particularly consider.

2. We may note the awful consequences of our *apostacy*. *We were without strength*. The original word here rendred *without strength*, is very emphatical, and represents

us in most *languishing*, helpless, & distressed circumstances. It alludes to and is taken from the *imbecillity* of those that are reduced to the last *extremity*, and brought to the brink of the *grave*, by sore sickness.

3. WE may note the *Remedy* provided for this *distress*; and the means of our recovery from this *languishing* helpless state: *Christ died for us*. When all humane help fail'd, and we might have utterly despair'd of recovery by any *created power*, then the glorious SON OF GOD stept in to our rescue, and purchas'd our deliverance with his *own blood*.

4. WE may note the *seasonableness* of this *remedy* provided for us. *In due TIME Christ died*, &c. which must either refer to the *time pre-ordained* of God for this glorious deliverance, as some understand the words; or rather to the *fitness* of the season, wherein our *blessed Redeemer* undertook and accomplish'd our *ransom*.

THE *misery* of the World at the time of *Christ's appearing*, by their universal depravation of manners; and by the deluge of *Idolatry*, that cover'd the face of the *Earth*; makes it appear to have been a *fit season*, for the glorifying the *Divine compassion*. And the *union* of the nations under

The Reasonableness

ider the imperial government, made it a fit season to publish the *salvation* procur'd for them.

But for a more distinct handling the words, I shall consider them as consisting of these two *Propositions*.

I. THAT *mankind* is brought into a *sinful*, miserable, helpless state.

II. THAT our *Lord Jesus Christ* did in due time die for their *deliverance* out of this state.

THE *method* I propose to my self, in discoursing upon these *Propositions*, is to distinctly shew, that they are not only *revealed truths*, but also most consonant and agreeable to the *light of reason*: And then as I pass along, make some brief *Reflections* by way of *Improvement*.

Prop. I. THAT *mankind* is brought into a *sinful* miserable and helpless state.

THIS may be illustrated, by first offering some *rational evidences* of this awful truth; and then by enquiring into the *cause* or *reason* of it.

FOR evincing the truth of the *Proposition*, I shall offer these following considerations.

I. It's plain to every *intelligent* mind, that a rational creature may *sin against God*.

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Every one must upon first thought acknowledge, that our *glorious Creator* sustains a near relation to us as our common *Parent*, and the *Author* of our *Being*, on which account He justly claims our *Love* and *reverence*: And that He has an absolute *sovereignty* and *dominion* over us, as our *Lord* and *King*; whereby He is entitled to our *subjection* and *obedience*. If then instead of that *love* and *reverence* which we owe to our *Heavenly Father*, we set light by or *disesteem* any of His *infinite Perfections*: Or if instead of that *obedience*, which is due to this *glorious King*, we do those things which we know to be contrary to His *will*; we violate the first *laws of nature*, and *sin* against *God*. This is a plain case, and admits of no dispute.

THE only difficulty before us is, how we shall *know* what is the *Will of God* concerning us. If there be no *law*, there can be no *transgression*; and if *God* has given us no *manifestation* of His *will*, He can't expect or require our *obedience*.

IN answer to this *Objection*, I must not take it for granted, that the *Scriptures* are a *Divine revelation*; that is yet to be prov'd. But must consider, whether we cannot by the *light of nature*, discover such *manifestations*

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tions of God's will and our duty, as will render our nonconformity thereto criminal and sinful.

AND if we do but contemplate the *perfections* of the *Divine nature*, this will appear in the clearest *light*. For whatever is contrary to any of *them*, must be displeasing to *God*, and repugnant to His *Will*; His own *Attributes* being what He cannot but *eternally* and *unchangeably* love and *delight* in. To exemplify this, The *light of nature* enjoins the belief of *one God* alone; and thereby teacheth us, that He is the only *Object* of properly *Divine* and *Religious Worship*: And consequently that it is a violation of the *law of nature* to *worship* other *gods*; Or that any *idol* of our imagination should be esteem'd, lov'd, trusted, obey'd, or honour'd as *God*.

MOREOVER, our own *reason* dictates to us, that *God* is Himself infinite *Rectitude* and *Justice*, and therefore, that every act of *injustice* whether it respects *God* or *man* as its immediate *object*, is contrary to His *Nature* and *Will*. --- Thus likewise does *God* appear to the eye of *reason*, to be a Being of infinite *Goodness* and *Mercy*, whence it's manifest that an imitation of this *Divine perfection* in *beneficence*, *clemency*, *love*,
and

and charity is acceptable in His sight; while bitterness, wrath, hatred, cruelty, or any acts of unkindness, are as contrary to His *Will*, as to His *merciful Nature*.

By a particular reflection on these mention'd *Attributes*, much of our *duty* towards God and *man* might be discover'd. And by a survey of His other *perfections*, we might find further acquaintance with His *will* concerning us; and thereby further evidence, that we are capable of *sinning* against Him. The same thing might be demonstrated by several other *Arguments*; but I think few men in their *right wits* can call this into question.

WHAT man will teach his *neighbour*, that treachery, fraud and violence are sinless and innocent? What *Parents* will instruct his *eldest son*, that he may *innocently*, if he can secretly, take away his life to possess his estate? What *Prince* will teach his *Subjects*, that they are under no religious bond to *obedience*; but may without sin against God, turn rebels, traitors and regicides? "If *man* be under no duty to God, and if nothing be *sin* against Him, what a creature would *man* be, and what a *hell* would *Earth* be!"

UPON the whole, it's most evident, that

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there

there are such things in *nature*, as *virtue* and *vice*, right and wrong; this is what our own *consciences* continually remonstrate, and what *all Nations* have always agreed in. Whence that appears agreeable to the very first *dictates* of *reason*, in Gen. iv. 7. *If thou doest well; shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.*

2. We have all a sad experience, that our *first* and *chief* inclinations, are to those ways that are most repugnant unto the *holiness* of the *Divine nature*; and to that *rectitude* that *God* reasonably expects from us.

As soon as ever we are capable of *action*, the leading *affections* and *passions* of the mind are manifestly *irregular* and *vicious*, the *appetite* *exorbitant*, and the whole bent of soul after what is most *opposite* to our *duty* and *happiness*: That if our *tender age* were without *restraint* and *government*, and a *loose* given to our *natural* inclinations; we should be worse than the *wild asses colt*, and be authors of destruction to our selves, and one another. With what *care* and *pains* must our *first* years be cultivated! With what perpetual *instructions* and *admonitions* must the seeds of *virtue* be sown in our minds! And with what
diligence

diligence and vigilance must the poyson sprouts of *vice* and immorality be weeded up; in order to prevent our headlong progress in *impiety* towards *God* and *man*!

Thus we begin our course: And in our more *advanced* age, what combat does every thinking person find, between his *reason* and *passions*, whereby he is even distracted with this perpetual struggle and contest for victory! With what difficulty do we form our minds to any *reverence* of our *glorious* Creator, or conformity to His justice, goodness, or holiness! How difficult a task is it to regulate our *appetites*, or to hold the *reins* of our *inordinate* inclinations and desires! ---- This is what the *beaten* World have from the eldest ages observ'd in themselves; whereby they have been fill'd with great *vexation* and *inquietude*; and put upon vain enquiries, after means of composing these *jarring* principles in their minds; which have issued in this *ancient* and common complaint, *Vides meliora, proboque, deteriora sequor.* Agreeable to that of the *Apostle*, *The good I know, I do not; and when I would do good, evil is present with me.* These things ly open to every observer, whereby they cannot but discern, that the *imaginations*

imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts are evil continually, as Gen. vi. 5.

3. WE cannot but observe, that the greatest part of the World do, against the light of their own reason, live in courses of sin against God, and of disobedience to Him:

How great a part of the World bow down to stocks and stones, worship the host of Heaven, or ly prostrate at the altars of some vile pagods; while they forget the God that made them, and the Rock that formed them! And tho' custom or education may so darken their understandings, as to satisfy their minds in this stupid idolatry; yet their own reason (were that consulted) would certainly teach them the sin & folly of this worshipping and serving the creature, more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.

AND besides this superstition and idolatry, whereby the Eternal Majesty is thus dishonour'd, by the much greatest part of mankind; How does lust and passion get the victory of reason and principle, even in the most enlightened parts of the World! Whence else are the ambition & tyranny, the ravages, massacres, convulsions and confusions, that render the Earth an *Acedama*? Or whence the enormous actions, and flagitious lives, the injustice and fraud,
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the malice and envy, the luxury, riot and excess; or other like *sinful* and *sensual* pursuits, that the *most* of the *World* are chargeable with? Can the perpetrators of such *impieties* plead *ignorance*? Don't they *sin* against *light*, and against the frequent remonstrances of their *reason* and *consciences*? Yes certainly! Tho' they know God, they glorify Him not as God, but become vain in their imaginations, until their foolish hearts are darkened, as Rom. i. 21.

- 4. It's evident that this promptitude to *sin*, flows from the *corruption* and *pollution* of our *natures*.

WHENCE can such *corrupt streams* proceed, but from a *polluted fountain*? And whence such a progress of *impiety*, but from a *wicked* and *depraved nature*? What reason can be assign'd, why men should chuse *irregular* and *sinful*, rather than *innocent* & *rational* pleasures & satisfactions; and gratify their *lusts* at the expence of their *comfort*, *health*, *reputation*, *estates*, and every thing else that is *pleasant* and *precious*, as we see they do? Why do bold *daring wretches*, without any apparent prospect of *pleasure* or *profit*, with an *effronted* bravery, defy *Heaven* it self, profane the *Divine Attributes*, and curse their *own souls*? And why do they rush
on

on in their *sinful* and *irrational* courses, against contrary convictions, and against all restraints, *Divine* and *humane*? What (I say) can be the cause of all this; but the *pravity* of our *natures*; and the cursed *enmity* of our *hearts* to *God*, and all that is good?

THOUGH there needs no other *Argument* to give us full assurance of this *sad truth*; yet a particular view of the *faculties*, habits and dispositions of our *Souls*, would give us further evidence, that *our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*, as Jer. xvii. 9.

5. THIS state of *sin* and *pollution*, which we find our selves in, must necessarily be a state of *guilt* and *woe*.

SIN in its formal nature is directly repugnant unto all the *properties* & *perfections* of *God*; and is the highest *affront* and *indignity* to Him. It is a *contempt* & *denial* of His *propriety* in us, and *dominion* over us; as it is a *refusing* subjection to His known *will*.

It is a *contempt* of His *goodness* & *mercy*, in chusing base and brutish *pleasures*, before His *favour*; and refusing to be allur'd to His service, by all the sweet attractives of His *gracious providence*. --- It is a horrid flight and disregard of His *Omniscience* and

and Omnipresence, that we dare *see* in His very presence, & act contrary to Him; tho' we know that our actions are *open* before Him. -- It's a daring defiance of His Omnipotence, for such worms as we to oppose, as tho' we could make our party good against the God, who made the World, and can make us *subject* to His flaming vengeance, at pleasure. -- It's a vile contempt of His Holiness and Purity, in preferring the pollutions of our own irregular appetites, before the attitude of His Nature. -- In a word, it is a contempt of all His Attributes, and direct *animosity* and *rebellion* against Him.

FROM this contemplation, it's most apparent, that we wretchedly *deviate* from the great end of our Creation, both by the habits and acts of *sin*. For it's the height of *stupidity* to imagine, that *infinite Wisdom* should make so noble a Being, for no higher purposes, than to condemn His Attributes, spurn His Authority, and maintain a course of *opposition* to Him. And the same consideration lays open before us the *guilt* of a *sinful* state. For if rebellion and treason against an *earthly Sovereign* be by all men voted so *black a crime*, as to involve the *rebel* in deepest *guilt*, and expose him

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to sharpest *revenges*; how much more *criminal* and *guilty* must he be, that maintains a *rebellion* against the *King of kings*, and lives in a course of open *enmity* & *defiance* both to His *Being* & *Government*! which we have seen to be our case.

WHAT kind or degrees of *punishment*, an offended *Sovereign* will inflict upon such *rebels*, is not so easily discover'd by the *light of nature*. But that we are justly exposed to *punishment*, is visible from the nature of our crimes. None calls in question the equity of *penal* rewards to *traitors* in the *State*: how much less can we reasonably expect to escape *unpunish'd* for our *treason* against *Heaven*! If it be *justice* in man to *punish* the delinquent, it must necessarily be so in *God*; who is the *fountain* of all created *justice*, and whose *holy Nature* is the only pattern of our *virtues* and regular conduct. It is therefore but reasonable to expect, that those who prefer the ways and fruits of *sin*, to the *favour* of *God*, should be left to their unhappy choice, and be shut out of His *favour* for ever. They may not, they cannot suppose, that such *guilty* and *polluted* creatures, such enemies to *God* and *holiness* should be the objects of the *Divine love* and *complacency*;

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or be admitted to the favourable presence, and delightful fruition of a *holy* God. No! *He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, or to look upon sin with approbation.* ---- Thus we see, that the loss of *God's* favour, and thereby the loss of all *happiness* (which can only consist in His favour) is the natural and necessary result of our state of *sin* and *enmity* to Him. And tho' we cannot discover by *natural light*, to what manner or measure of positive *penalties* our *sins* expose us: Yet we have greatest reason to expect and fear some terrible manifestation of *God's* righteous *displeasure*.

If it be objected against all this, that the *contrary* is evident, from the *dispensations of Providence*; it being a constant observation, that the most *impiously wicked* and *profane* are often in happy & flourishing circumstances, and seem to be the darling *favourites* of *Heaven*, while the more *holy* and *virtuous* are under greatest *afflictions*, and press'd with many *calamities*, as tho' they were the especial objects of *God's* *wrath*. -- I answer, this *Objection* does nothing militate against the *awful* considerations before us, but rather confirms them. For how *dark* and *inexplicable* soever the present *dispensations of providence* may be,

God is a God of justice; and the Judge of all the Earth will do right. Whence it's a natural conclusion; from the present seeming inequality in God's dealings with us, that this life is not the place of rewards and punishments; but that there will be a future retribution, wherein these crooked things will be made straight, and the flourishing prosperity of wicked men, will appear to be but a preparation for their ruin, and a setting for the slaughter. We may reasonably conclude, that God will first or last discover the justice and equality of all His dispensations. And since this does not appear from the present face of providence, we may look for a future season; for the manifestation of His just dispensation to sin and sinners, and for the execution of His deserved wrath upon them.

- THAT we are made for a future state, will appear from the contemplation of our own natures: Whereby we may certainly find, that we have spiritual and immaterial substances within us (as I have fully demonstrated in a former discourse) and that our Souls being immaterial, must be likewise incorruptible, & naturally immortal; made to survive their earthly tabernacles, and to live and act when our bodies return to their

their dust. --- Now can it be imagin'd that God has made so superior a creature as man, endow'd him with a *rational* and *immortal Soul*, and with such elevations of mind, only to act a short part in this World, and to just propagate his kind, and then return to an eternal state of *insensibility* and *inactivity*? No surely! these low and mean views are altogether unworthy of *infinite Wisdom*. It's therefore evident from the *immortal* nature of our *Souls*, and from the *shortness* of our continuance in this World, that we are here but in a state of *probation*; but candidates for another World, where we are like to meet with the *rewards* of our present behaviour, whatever it be. And what will be the reward of that *sin* and *impiety*, which we are all chargeable with, we have already seen. --- Thus we discover our *guilty* *miserable* state by *sin*, that God is *angry* with the *wicked* every day, *Psal. vii. 11.* And that *there is destruction to the wicked, and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity,* *Job xxxii. 9.* --- It's certain that we are naturally *helpless* and *without strength* or skill, to recover our selves out of this plunge. --- We see our selves in the *pit*, but can't find

find the way out, by our own power or wisdom. We have lamentable experience, that our nature is polluted, and all our faculties deprav'd, that our passions rebel against our reason; and that we are continually sinning against God, and provoking Him to anger. But which way shall we conquer our lusts, regulate our affections, and get reconciled to God? Here reason is non-plus'd, and our best rational enquiries fruitless, and in vain.

HERE let the Deist try his skill: Let him without the assistance of revelation, draw up a perfect system of the laws of nature: Let him consult the means of restoring our lost innocency; and of keeping our affections and passions, under the government of religion and reason: Let him call in the help of all the Philosophers of Greece and Rome, for his assistance in this arduous undertaking: And in the conclusion, he'll have but his labour for his pains, and continue in the same inextricable labyrinth.

THIS is apparent from the fruitless pains of all the wisest moral teachers in this case; who, tho' all sensible of our depravity and misery, could never find out the cause nor cure. They have indeed, some of them, given excellent moral rules, for the govern-
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ment and conduct of human life. But then, these were all very defective in many essential *articles*; and their best *systems* have countenanc'd and encourag'd, even the grossest and most unnatural *impieties*. But what light have any, or all of 'em given, in the present enquiry? What *remedy* have any of their schools propos'd for our *misery*? What means to restore unto *reason* the *empire* of the mind, and to reduce the *exorbitancy* of the *passions* and *appetites*? What way have they contriv'd to shake off our guilt, and to re-obtain the *Divine favour*? *Hic labor, hoc opus est*. Here they have run themselves out of breath to no purpose, while every *Seck* have propos'd a contrary, or different *scheme*; and all have left the *difficulty* as they found it. And had all *human-wisdom* been collected into one head, the case would have been the same. For *we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities like the wind, have taken us away*, *Isai. lxiv. 6*.

HAVING thus discover'd our *misery*, we may next consider the *cause* of it, under this enquiry, —

WHENCE

WHENCE is it so, that mankind is thus brought into a *sinful, miserable, and helpless* state?

To which I answer;

1. We could not at *first* come out of the hands of our *body* Creator, in such a corrupt, polluted, and *sinful* state.

HAD God at first created us in this state of *defilement*, He must have taken pleasure in our *sin* and *pollution*; and where then would have been His *holiness*? Had He at first made us with a *natural necessity* of being *guilty* and *criminal*, He must have been the *Author*, as well as *punisher* of our *guilt*; and where then would have been His *Justice*? Or had he been the *original* and *necessary cause* of our *misery*, where would have been His *goodness* and *mercy*? Therefore, to suppose God to be the *Author* of that *nest* of *sin* and *uncleanness*, in our wicked hearts; the cause of our vile affections, ungovernable passions, and exorbitant appetites; and the *fountain* of all these *poison streams*; is to attribute to Him worse than the worst of *human affections*. It is implicitly to say, that He made us on purpose that He might *delight* Himself in our *misery*: Which *shocking blasphemy* must be far from every imagination. Whence it appears,

appears, that *God made man upright, tho' we have sought out many inventions*, Eccl. vii. 29.

AND hence,

2. THE state that we find our selves in, makes the account of this matter in the *third of Genesis* very probable.

I shall not now concern my self with that *debate*, whether this *story* be *literally*, or *allegorically* to be understood: Be it which it will, it is a natural and rational supposition, that our *first Parents*, through the power of *temptation*, were guilty of *disobedience* against *God*; and thereby both for *themselves* and their *posterity*, lost the *innocence* and *happiness* of their first state.

It appears very likely, from the consideration of our present *degeneracy*, that we are the *branches* of a corrupt *stock*; and the offspring of *rebellious parents*. And let those that question this account of our *apostacy*, either assign some more probable *cause* of it; or for ever by under the just imputation of *obstinacy* and *unreasonableness*.

THOUGH we may meet with some difficulty, in reconciling the *imputation* of *Original Sin*, to the *rectoral holiness* and *justice* of *God*: Yet as much as may serve to our present purpose, and clear up the

consideration now before us, may be set in a plain and easy light. It is not difficult to suppose, that God should punish an *ungrateful rebel*, with the loss of all his *original excellencies* and *perfections*, both of *body* and *mind*. And it is a natural and familiar supposition, that a *degenerate stock* will have *degenerate branches*; that the *offspring* will be like the *parent*; and the *streams* partake of the nature and qualities of the *fountain*.

BESIDES, God may justly impute the *sin* of *Adam* unto his *progeny*, by way of *attainder*; as when a *rebel* among men forfeits his estate and honours from *himself*, and his *seed*, to his offended *Sovereign*. And this will be a more easy supposal, if we consider these two things, (1) That we were all *seminally* in our first *parents*, and in that sense partakers with 'em in their transgression. And (2) That they acted as our *publick representatives*, and therefore were to *stand* or *fall* for us, as well as themselves: Which being allow'd, the difficulty vanishes. And I see nothing in the nature of the thing, that can make it *incredible*, that God as an absolute *Sovereign* should constitute *Adam* the *moral*, as he was the *natural head* of all his *posterity*,
to

to represent and act for them all, in what he did. We don't esteem it a *bardship* in our temporal affairs, to be equally obliged by what our *representatives* act in our name and stead, as if they were our own *personal* actions. Nor should we in the present case have thought it unjust, to have partook of the blessed fruits of *Adam's obedience*, had he stood. What cause then can we have to complain of the *imputation* of his *disobedience* in this public character ?

- AFTER all, whether we can throughly *reconcile* this matter, to our own ways of thinking or not ; we can't find a more probable *reason* of our *lost* miserable circumstances, than that *by one man sin entered into the World, and death by sin*, as in Rom. v. 12.

BUT whatever be the *cause*, we cannot doubt the *malady*. We have too sad experience of our *misery*, to call that into question : And since we see the *house on fire*, it does not so much concern us to anxiously enquire by what means the *flame* was kindled, as to consult a method to *extinguish* it.

- THE *Improvement* therefore, that I would make of this *Proposition*, is, That it is of infinite importance for us, to consult

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some way of obtaining a pardon of our sins, a sanctification of our natures, and a reconciliation unto God. Our present state is not to be continued in. It's a dreadful condition to be God's enemies, a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And whither shall we flee for help? From what quarter shall we look for deliverance from the miseries we feel or fear? Will the pagan religion afford us relief? We have already heard, that the best schemes of their wisest Sages have been utterly insufficient to this purpose.

AND a thinking person will hardly be persuaded, that the worship of a herd of vile deities, with rites as vile and detestable as the gods themselves; should be well pleasing unto that Eternal Majesty, who will not give His Glory unto another; nor His Praise unto graven images.

SHALL we then repair for help unto the Mahometan religion, and consult the Alcoran in our present distress? Alas, in vain! For no wise man can trust in such a rhapsody of nonsense and confusion, and in such a medley of inconsistent, and absurd doctrines of religion and tyranny, twisted together, without some better evidence of its Divine authority, than the bare word of the voluptuous and ambitious author.

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- BESIDES, that *book* makes no pretences to shew a way how our *sins* can be *pardon'd*, our natures renew'd, and we re-inflated into *God's favour*. Nor does it propose any other *happiness*, than a *fool's paradise* of sensual pleasures; most disagreeable to a *vertuous* and *rational* mind.

WHITHER shall we next go? Shall we consult our *Oracles of wit*, and seek some rational *scheme of religion* and *happiness*, from our modern *pagans*, the *Deists*? These libertines can vainly boast of unprejudic'd *Reason* and *Science*, as tho' they were *the men*, and *wisdom must dy with them*. They can put out the *eyes of conscience*, & bravely *scoff* at *reveal'd religion*, as an idle dream, and the effect of a melancholly imagination, enthusiasm or *Priestcraft*. But which of 'em has ever pretended to propose a method of our obtaining *inward peace* and *purity*, *happiness* here, and *salvation* hereafter?

THUS far our search has been vain and fruitless. And must we now *yield* the cause, and sit down in *despair*? By no means! We are miserable indeed, if we can find no *end* of our enquiries; no *Religion* to trust in, no *foundation* to fix upon.

LET

LET us then *examin* the *Christian Religion*, and see if there be no more *reasonable* satisfactions to be found in that; whether that has made any adequate provisions for the *recovery* of *fallen man*, and for securing our present and future *happiness*. And our entrance into this *enquiry*, does immediately bring us to the consideration of the second *Proposition* :

Prop. II. OUR Lord *Jesus Christ* did in due time *die*, for the *deliverance* of sinful man, out of his miserable and helpless state.

THE glorious and eternal SON OF GOD beholding our apostate and perishing state, look'd down with *Divine compassion* upon a miserable World, delug'd in *sin* and *guilt*, and undertook their *ransom*. And that *God* might be *just*, in the pardon and justification of sinners, He is become their *surety*; that so by His bearing the punishment due to their *sins*, He might atone offended *Justice*, and by His *Sponsorial Righteousness*, He might purchase for them *glory* and *happiness*.

THAT this glorious *Mediator* might be qualified for this great undertaking; He was the *Eternal God*, that so the *dignity* of His person might give sufficient *merit* to
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His *obedience*. And He likewise became *man*, like our selves, that so He might be able to suffer the *penalty* due to our sins ; and that *satisfaction* might be given to *Justice*, by the same *nature* that offended. He was moreover both *God* and *man*, that representing both the *parties* at *odds*, He might *mediate* between them. --- And since *Death*, in the largest signification of the word, was the just and natural demerit of our *sins*, our almighty *Saviour* has for our *sakes*, and in our *stead*, encountred this *King of terrors*, in his most terrible appearance, in all his *pomp*, with all his *darts* and *payson*. Thus hath He *tasted Death* for every man ; and *redeem'd us* unto God with His own *Blood*.

THIS is summarily the meaning of the words of our *Text*, and of the *Proposition* before us. And if this *Doctrine* be true, it reflects a glorious *light* into our *dark* minds, plucks us out of the jaws of *despair*, and proposes a happy means of *life* and *peace*. It is therefore well worth our while to distinctly consider the *verity* of the *Christian Institution* ; and see whether its precious and comfortable *Doctrines* may be confided in.

THAT

THAT I may assist you in this enquiry, I shall at present, only offer you some strong probabilities on the side of Christianity; and then (if God permit) in some future discourses to that purpose, offer you full, plain, and ungainfayable evidence of these blessed truths.

THE strong probabilities, that I would now take notice of, may be propos'd under these two considerations;

I. THAT the *Christian Revelation*, if true, is every way worthy of God.

II. THAT it every way answers the miserable circumstances of fallen man.

I am first then to consider, That the *Christian Revelation* is every way worthy of God.

THIS consideration, if fully pursu'd, might discover to us, how all the *Divine Attributes* and *Perfections* most gloriously harmonize, and shine forth with brightest lustre, in this way of our *salvation* by *Jesus Christ*. But the time before us will allow only some very brief hints upon this Subject: However, I would willingly say enough to establish you in the present truth; and assist your contemplations upon this delightful theme.

THIS

THIS way of *salvation* appears worthy of *God*, in that herein was a glorious manifestation, and illustration of *infinite Goodness, Mercy and Love*. An *Eternity* is short enough to admire, adore, and praise the surprizing wonders of *redeeming Love*: For if we consider the *objects* of this *Mercy*, poor apostate rebels; there could be no motive but *Divine compassion*, for *mercy* to take place of *justice*, in the deliverance of such *criminals* from deserved *wrath*. If we consider the *freeness* of this *love*, not only without any obligation, or possibility of retaliation from us, but against highest provocations to the contrary; It will appear *infinite*, like the glorious *Fountain* of it. If we consider the *nature* of that *salvation* thus procur'd for us, that it contains not only a freedom from *sin* and *guilt*, but a title to *God's favour*, and to an eternal state of *glory* and *happiness*: We may with just admiration cry out, *What is man that thou art thus mindful of him?* But if we consider the *Author* and *price* of this *salvation*, that *God* has so loved the *World*, as to give his dear *Son* for us, and has redeem'd us with his own *blood*; the surprize still encreases, and *Mercy* appears in its highest exaltation. How then do all these con-

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siderations together, with the many others that might be propos'd, give us cause with ravish'd souls to acknowledge, that *the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God in Christ, passeth knowledge*, as Eph. iii. 18.

THE bright display of *infinite Justice* in our redemption by Christ, makes it also appear worthy of God. Were *justice* swallow'd up of *mercy* (as it must have been, had God sav'd sinners without a satisfaction) we might reject the *doctrine*, as unworthy of an infinitely *just* and *holy* God. But since He has shewn Himself *inexorable* in His demands of *satisfaction*; by requiring the utmost farthing of the *surety*, that was due from the principal *debtor*; and by punishing His own *dear Son* with a bitter *death*, as the sinners *representative*: His *work* appears *perfect*, and *all his ways judgment*, as Deut. xxxii. 4.

IF it be here *objected*, That it cannot be *just*, to transfer the punishment from the *guilty* to the *innocent*:

I answer, That God by right of His *supreme jurisdiction*; might relax the law, and transfer the penalty. And tho' *justice* requires full *satisfaction*, He might in absolute *sovereignty*; accept it from a *surety*.

True

True indeed, the Redeemer as He was the Lord from Heaven, was not liable to any constraint or compulsion, to this undertaking. But I see nothing either in the Nature or Law of God, that should make it unequal, to accept of full satisfaction from Him, when voluntarily offer'd.

I acknowledge, that it would be unjust among men, to accept of the life of an innocent for a guilty person, because we have not the disposal of our own lives. But this nothing affects the present case, since our Lord had in Himself, power to lay down His own life, and power to take it up again.

BUT I must hasten to observe, that

THE most glorious manifestation of God's holiness and purity in this work of our Redemption, makes it likely to be a Divine contrivance. Nothing could give a brighter discovery of God's implacable antipathy to sin, than the amazing sufferings of His own dear Son, when imputatively guilty. This discovers sin to be a weight that even infinite mercy could not bear, in that the blood of His well-beloved Son must be the only sacrifice to appease His displeasure against it; and that He could without relenting, behold the bitter agonies of Him, with whom He was well pleased, when He

was made sin for us. This shews us, that He is glorious in Holiness. Exod. xv. 15.

THE Omnipotence of God does likewise appear in its highest perfection, in this glorious work. God's creating the World out of nothing, and His upholding and governing all things by the word of His power, are not greater evidences of Omnipotence; than our Redemption By His incarnate Son. The incarnation of Christ, and the union of the Divine Nature with the human, is such a miracle of power, as exceeds all finite thoughts, in their highest elevation. And the same Almighty Agent is discover'd in our Lord's miraculous conception of a Virgin, without the help of man; in the triumphs of His cross; and the victory over all our spiritual enemies, obtain'd by His death; as well as by His resurrection from the grave, and His ascension into Heaven. In a word, the whole transaction of our salvation by Christ, is a manifestation of Omnipotent grace. But I may but hint at things, and shall only add;

THE glories of the Divine Wisdom do also shine forth with brightest splendor in the work of Redemption. The very projection of this scheme, was beyond the capacity

capacity of any *finite understanding*. The method (tho' most reasonable and agreeable) is so *deep and mysterious*, that it could not have been the product of *human invention* : Which consideration alone, is enough to convince us of the *Divine* original of the *Christian* institution. The end of this contrivance, *viz.* the exalting *God's* glory, and restoring *man's* happiness, was worthy of *infinite counsel* : And the means of accomplishing this vast design, could be adjusted only by *God Himself*. --- *Infinite the Wisdom ! Unsearchable the Counsel !* that took occasion from our *sin*, which was the highest opposition to the *Divine Perfections*, to make all His *Attributes* shine forth with brighter *glory* ; hereby not only to bring *infinite Mercy* and *inflexible Justice* into the sweetest *harmony* ; but to manifest both in greatest *lustre*, the one in *punishing* the *sin*, the other in *pardoning* and *saving* the *sinner* ! Who but *God* could have found the means for *Mercy and Truth* thus to meet together, and *Righteousness and Peace* to kiss each other ?

AND we may still with greater admiration, adore the miraculous contrivance for the *reconciling God and man*, by uniting the infinitely distant *Natures* into one *person* ;
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and thereby ordaining such a *Mediator*, who by partaking of both *Natures*, is interested in both *parties*; and so every way fit to reconcile *God* to *man*, and *man* to *God*! But I must not enlarge upon this copious subject, which would take a large *Volume*, to the distinct consideration of it; and a whole *Eternity*, in the just admiration of it. The short glance we have already had of this contemplation, makes it appear, that *God* hath herein abounded towards us, in all *Wisdom* and *Prudence*, Eph. i. 8.

THUS I have with all brevity consider'd how the *Christian* revelation is worthy of *God*. I am now to observe:

II. THAT it every way answers the miserable circumstances of *fallen man*.

WHAT could be more agreeable to the perishing circumstances of *guilty* condemned *sinners*, than the joyful tidings of *pardon* and *salvation*, of a deliverance from the depth of *wo*; and a title to *joy unspeakable and full of glory*; upon such easy and honourable terms? This justly recommends the *Christian Religion* above all others, that ever were or could be contriv'd,

AND if we take a view of the *tenor* and properties of this *institution*, we shall find it

it so adapted to the *nature* of *man*; to his various stations and relations in the World; to his *comfort* here and *happiness* hereafter; that as no other *Religion* could ever claim like regards, on these accounts, so this above all others, appears to be of *Divine original*.

THE *Doctrines* of the *Gospel* are all *holy* and *spiritual*, agreeable to the ennobled nature and faculties of our *Souls*. The *precepts* are most *just* and *reasonable*, directly tending to make us *holy* and *happy*, charitable and beneficent. The *motives* are most noble and sublime, fit to work upon our *affections* and *passions*, to deter us from *sin*, and enflame our desires after the *reward* of *holiness*. ---- Here the vices of pride, worldliness and sensuality; of injustice, fraud, persecution or oppression, fierceness or impatience, are justly condemn'd and prohibited; and a *flaming sword* brandish'd before us, to prevent our commission of these and such like *sins*. ---- Here we are taught self-denial, justice and mercy, brotherly love, unity, peace, and kindness one to another; with the most sweet and endearing *attractives* to such a *blest* life. ---- Here we have most excellent rules, for order and government. in
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the World ; for the peace and stability of *Kingdoms* and *Commonwealths*, for the restraining *ambition* and *tyranny* in the *Prince*, and *rebellion* or *sedition* in the *subject*. ---- Here we may find choicest *cordials* and supports, under all the *troubles* and *afflictions* we can conflict with ; and even against the *fears* and terrors of *death* it self. ---- Here we have all *rational pleasure* and satisfaction indulged us, tho' the *sinful* cravings of our corrupt and vitiated appetites, are prohibited, as most *hurtful* and *pernicious*. ---- Here may our minds be *spiritualized* and exalted to the highest elevation, they are capable of in *this life*, and yet raised with expectations of higher perfections in the *World to come*. ---- In a word, the *Gospel-scheme* is every way perfective of *human nature*, and calculated for our present and future *happiness* ; and is therefore worthy to be esteem'd the *Wisdom of God*, and the *Power of God*, as 1 Cor. i. 18.

HAVING thus seen some of the strong probabilities of the truth of *Christianity* ; which cannot but reflect a *convincing light*, into the mind of every serious and impartial enquirer ; I must defer the further demonstration of this truth, till another opportunity ;

opportunity; and conclude my present *Discourse*, with some brief practical *Inferences*.

And,

I. WE have cause with raised *affections* to adore and praise the *infinite mercy* of God, for revealing this glorious *salvation* to us in the Gospel.

LIFE and Immortality were purchas'd by the *obedience* of Christ; but they are brought to light by the Gospel. And it would have been as well for us, to have had no *salvation purchas'd*, as none reveal'd. In both cases a thick cloud of *despair* had cover'd our Souls, that we could never have seen through. But now from the distinguishing *Mercy* of God, the sun of *righteousness* hath arisen upon us; and the day spring from on high hath visited us. The light of life blazes into our Souls; and the way to Heaven like the path of the just, is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day: That we are under the most happy advantages possible, to secure an interest in this Saviour, and a title to the glories that will be revealed.

LET us but consider, how great a part of the World are yet groping in thick darkness, have utterly lost their way, in the

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the mists of ignorance and error ; and are without God, without Christ, and without hope in the World : While the grace of God that bringeth salvation, having appeared to us, we are even lifted up to Heaven by our privileges : And it will surely appear, that this special favour calls for special thankfulness ; and loudly summons all the faculties of our Souls, to be closely engaged in that inquiry, Psal. cxvi. 12. *What shall I render to the Lord, for all these benefits towards me ?*

AND if we yet further consider, how unworthy we are of such discriminating favour, it will give us cause to reflect upon these Divine obligations, with a rapture of Soul. Had there been any thing in us, that could have been any incentive to this distinguishing mercy, 'twould have lessened the obligation : But there was nothing in us, more than in the darkest regions of the earth, to move God's compassion to us ; or to excite Him to make known to us, the riches of the glory of this mystery, among the Gentiles. Free sovereign grace only deserves the praise. And our ingratitude will be of the blackest dye, if these reflections don't make the fire burn in our breasts ; and inspire us with most exalted sentiments,

sentiments, and thankful resentments of such *special* and *signal mercies*.

II. LET us hence be *exhorted*, to make it our sedulous concern, to obtain an interest in this *salvation*, in such a wonderful way provided for us, and so *freely* tendered to us.

LET us with flaming ardour of soul, and with most undeniable importunity, wrestle with God for an interest in Christ by *Faith*; that *He may become of God unto us, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption*. And that we through Him, may be heirs to an inheritance with the Saints in *light*.

WE should be awfully careful, that we don't perish from under the *Gospel*; lest this enhance our *guilt*, and aggravate our future condemnation, that *light is come into the World*, and we chuse darkness rather than *light*.



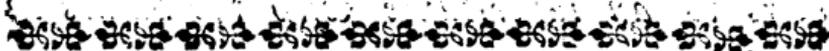
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Demonstration

OF THE

Christian Religion

From the PROPHECIES of the

Old Testament.

LUKE XXIV. 44.

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you; that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me.






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tions of this precious truth, that God has so loved the World, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For the proof of which, I shall first consider the clear evidence of this Doctrine, from the Prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament; and then shew you how it's ratified by God Himself, with the great Seal of Heaven; by the miracles, I mean, performed by Christ, and by others in His name. ---- The latter proposal must be deferr'd to a future opportunity: The former falls under present consideration from the words of our Text. In which we may Note;

I. SOMETHING supposed and taken for granted, viz. that the Scriptures of the Old Testament did prophesy of Christ; That the Messiah was written of in the law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms; which expressions, according to the Jewish mode of speaking, include all the sacred and canonical Books of the Old Testament.

THIS was a truth so universally receiv'd among the Jews, both before and at the time of our Lord's incarnation, that it wanted neither illustration, nor confirmation.

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2. WE may *note* the *Divine* authority, and undoubted veracity of these prophecies of *Christ*. *They must all be fulfilled.*

THESE sacred prophecies being the *Oracles of God*, are founded on His *truth* and *faithfulness*, are immutable as *God Himself*; and therefore cannot fail of accomplishment.

3. FOR the clearer understanding the words before us, we may *note* the end and design of our *glorious Lord*, in this Argument, which was to confirm and establish the Faith of His *Disciples* in Himself, as the *hope of Israel* and the *Saviour of the World*.

THIS appears from the connection of these words with the foregoing context. --- In the 37th verse, we find the *Disciples* terrified and affrighted with our *Lord's* miraculous appearance among 'em; *supposing they had seen a spirit*. And we are told in the 41st verse, that their surprize not only continued, but was accompanied with incredulity and unbelief. Our *Lord* therefore to obviate both their difficulties, first takes meat and eats before them, to convince 'em that He was not a *spirit*; and then urges the present *Argument*, as sufficient for ever to silence all their doubts
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and scruples, about the cause of His sufferings, and His Resurrection from the dead. This *Argument* He had before inculcated upon 'em, and now again leaves with 'em; as a standing confirmation of their Faith, in that *important Article*. The sum of which *Argument* is this, That all the *sacred writings* (which could not fail of accomplishment) did unanimously predict the manner of life, the death, and resurrection of the *Messiah*. And that therefore they could have no room left for surprize or diffidence, with relation to *Him*, in whom they had seen the accomplishment of all these *prophecies*: This being an attestation from God Himself, of His *Divine Mission*.

OR we may more summarily take up the words, in this

DOCTRINE, That the accomplishment of the *Old Testament Prophecies* concerning our Lord *Jesus Christ*, are a sure evidence, that He is the *Messiah*.

FOR the illustration of this *Observation*, I shall endeavour to shew;

- I. WHAT a *prophecy* is.
- II. How a *prophecy* may be said to be fulfilled.
- III. THAT

III. THAT there were *prophecies* of *Christ* in the *Old Testament*, which are fulfilled.

And,

IV. THAT the accomplishment of these *prophecies*, is a sure evidence, that *Christ* is the *Messiah*.

I. I am to consider, What a *prophecy* is.

I mean not in this enquiry, to consider the word in its full latitude, nor to take notice of the various acceptations it obtains in *Scripture* : But briefly to shew, in what sense it is to be understood in the present *Argument*. And as it affects the case before us, I understand a *Prophecy* to be a *Divine prediction of future contingent events*. I call it a *Divine prediction*, because it's the sole prerogative of *Omniscience*, to foresee future contingencies : And it cannot come within the compass of any *finite* understanding, to foretel those things, that have no foundation in nature, nor dependance on natural causes. ---- And I consider *contingent events*, as the only object of *prophecy* ; because it requires in ordinary, no *prophetic spirit*, to predict those events that are in themselves necessary, or that depend upon the nature of things.

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BUT I need not insist upon this *description*, the case being plain, familiar, and universally agreed in. I proceed therefore,

II. To consider, How a *prophecy* may be said to be *fulfilled*.

And,

I. A *prophecy* is sometimes said to be *fulfilled*, by way of *accommodation* only: when a prediction of one thing, may by reason of some eminent parity or similitude between them, be aptly *accommodated* to another.

IN this sense, the word *fulfilled* was in frequent use among the *Jews*: who affecting to speak in *Scripture-language*, would frequently mention the *fulfilling* of *Scripture*, when they meant no more by it, than a parity or agreement of circumstances, between the case consider'd, and the quoted Text; or an example parallel to something foretold, or spoken of in *Scripture*.

IN this *allegorical* sense, the sacred Penmen of the *New Testament*, do also sometimes speak of the *fulfilling* of *prophecy*, where there is no direct or literal *accomplishment*, nothing but an agreement, or accommodation of the event & prediction. Thus our Lord's return from *Egypt* is said

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to be *That it might be fulfilled, that was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son, Mat. ii. 15.* And thus the destruction of the young children by *Herod*, is said to be a *fulfilling of that which was spoken by Jeremy the Prophet, saying, In Rama was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, &c.* Whereas it is evident, that the first cited words of the *Prophet*, did immediately refer to the deliverance of the children of *Israel*, from their *Egyptian bondage*, and the latter to their distress and anguish from the *Babylonian carnage and captivity*.

FROM this use of the word *Fulfilled*, our modern *Infidels* have, unreasonably enough, taken occasion of insult & triumph; thence insinuating the weakness or unfaithfulness of the *Evangelical Historians*. But a due consideration of the case will discover more of *spleen*, than argument, in these irreligious sneers. Was there any thing more common among the most famous *Greek Oratours*, than to adorn their discourses with flowers taken from *Homer, Hesiod, Euripides*, or other of their *Poets*, when they never intended, nor could their Auditors understand any more, than a bare
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accommodation of the citation to the matter treated of? Or is there any thing more common among our selves, than to cite *Scriptures* in this *allusive* manner, which have no direct or immediate reference to the subject-matter of the Discourse? To exemplify this, It is consonant to the receiv'd modes of speaking, to call these unbelieving Gentlemen, *mocking Ishmaelites*, or *insulting Edomites*; although those *Scriptures*, *Gen. xxi. 9.* and *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* which are *fulfilled* in them, did not originally and primarily refer to *Hobbs*, *Blount*, *Collins*, or of any of their admirers. And I must tell them that continue in their *infidelity*, after such full and clear evidences of the truth of Christianity, as have been from time to time offer'd 'em; that there is *fulfilled* in them, what was spoken by the *Prophet Jeremy*, chap. v. ver. 21. that they are *a foolish people, and without understanding, which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not.* Though I don't think the *Prophet* had them in view when he spoke those words.

2. A *prophecy* is more strictly and properly *fulfilled*, when a prediction, according to its direct meaning, and primary de-

sign and intention, meets with an exact and full accomplishment. And,

3. A prophecy may be said to be fulfilled, when it has a double accomplishment; and is completed both in the Type and Anti-type, in the Sign, and the Thing thereby signified.

It has been indeed question'd by very learn'd and judicious men, whether any prophecies may in strictness of speech, be said to have such a double reference; They rather suppose, that those prophecies that have been so understood, do look unto Christ, and Him only: But then it must be acknowledged, that there is a sudden transition, from some other person or thing, unto the Messiah: And that two different events, are predicted, in the same continu'd Discourse. Thus, was that prophecy in the 2. Sam. vii. 12, 16, fulfilled, both in Solomon, and in one greater than Solomon. The promise to David in ver. 12, That when his days were fulfilled, and he should sleep with his fathers; God would set up his seed, after him, that should proceed out of his bowels; and establish his kingdom: this was literally verified in Solomon: But then the promise in the 16 ver. That his House and Kingdom should be establish'd for ever, and that his

his Throne should be established for ever; though it might first refer to, could not ultimately terminate in Salomon; but pointed to a more stable and durable Reign than his, even to an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away; and to a kingdom which shall not be destroy'd. In this sense the Psalmist understands this promise, in Psal. lxxxix. 36, 37. His Seed shall endure for ever, and his Throne as the Sun before me. It shall be establish'd for ever as the Moon, and as a faithful witness in Heaven. And agreeably, from this prophecy, the tradition universally obtain'd among the Jews, that the *Messiah* must be the Son of David. Which interpretation we see justified by the event.

BUT I don't design to insist upon this Head, my present purpose leading me to consider the accomplishment of prophecy, only in the second and strongest sense. In order to which, I proceed to observe;

III. THAT there were Prophecies of our Lord *Jesus Christ* in the *Old Testament*, which are strictly, literally, and exactly fulfilled.

THE time before us will not allow, that I should enter into a distinct consideration of the multiplied prophecies of the *Messiah*,

every where found in the *Old Testament*; and shew how they are verified in *Christ*. I shall therefore only consider four or five of those, that exactly point out the *time* of our *Lord's* coming, and then just take a cursory view of some of those predictions, that describe the *circumstances* of His appearing.

I begin with the blessing of dying *Jacob* to his son *Judab*, Gen. xlix. 10. *The Scepter shall not depart from Judab, nor a Law-giver from between his feet, until SHILOH come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.* It is generally allow'd, even by the *Jews* themselves, that by SHILOH here, is meant the *Messiah*: And thus their three *Targums* expound it *. But there is not such a joint agreement among Interpreters, in the meaning of the word SCHEBET or *Scepter*. The modern *Jews*, in despite to *Christ*, do perversly understand it a *Rod of correction*. But this is to do utmost violence to the whole scope of the *context*, which every way gives *Judab* the preference above the other *Tribes*;

* The *Jerusalem Targam*, that of *Jonathan*, and *Onkelos*.

and

and does not mark him out for special *correction*. And it equally militates against the *event*, which shews us, that *Judab* has not drunk so deep of God's fierce displeasure, as the other *Tribes*; whose name and remembrance are long since blotted out from under Heaven. --- Besides, it's evident, that an emblem of *Dominion* and *Government* is hereby design'd, from the following clause, *non a Lawgiver from between His feet*: For, how I pray, does a state of correction, debasement, and affliction, constitute them a *Legislature*?

BUT leaving these *Rabbinical* dreams and dotages; I must take leave to observe, that the generality of *Interpreters*, have (I think) mistaken the meaning of this word, supposing, from the use of a *Scepter* in our times, that it must imply an ensign of *Royal* or *Imperial* power; and thence understand the *prophecy*, that a *Kingly* dominion should remain in the hands of *Judab*, until the coming of *Christ*. But there are such *objections* in the way of this Interpretation, that I cannot come into it. Particularly, it seems very inaccurate, to speak of the *Scepter's* departing from him who never had it. *Judab* at this time had no *Kingly* power, and therefore could not
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lose it. And the Kingdom was so far from continuing in that *Tribe*, from the time of the *prophecy*, until the coming of *Christ*; that there was no *Royal* authority in any of the *Tribe*, for much the greatest part of the time: It commenc'd in *David*, and ended in *Zedekiah*. It not only ceas'd, but perish'd at the *Babylonish captivity*. For though there was a *regal* authority, after their return from *Babylon*, exercised by the *Maccabees* and *Herod*; yet the former were of the *Tribe* of *Levi*, and the latter was an *Idumean*, and none of 'em of *Judab's* posterity.

I therefore chuse with *Mr. Mede*, to understand the word *SCEPTER* to signify,
 " not *Kingly* dominion only; but any
 " power or Majesty of government, un-
 " der what form or name soever; whereof
 " a *Rod* or *Staff* was anciently the ensign.
 " Whence every *Tribe* is called *SCHEBET*
 " (the word here used) as being united
 " together under one *Staff*, or power of
 " Government. The meaning therefore,
 " is not, that *Judab* shall never cease from
 " having a *King*, or being a *Kingdom*; but
 " that it should not cease from being a
 " *State*, a *Body Politic*, or *Common-*
 " *wealth*, having a power of Government.
 " or

or Jurisdiction within it self, until *Messiah* come. Thus Mr. *Mede*. In favour of whose construction of this word SCHEBET or SCEPTER, it is remarkable, that the word is not only frequently used for *Tribe*, and particularly applied to every of the *Tribes* of *Israel*, *Numb. xiii*; thereby not obscurely intimating, that it was such an *Ensign* of Government as pertain'd to each of the *Tribes*: But it's also used in the sense I contend for, in this very *Context*. Thus *verse 16. Dan shall judge his people, as one of the Tribes (or SCEPTERS) of Israel.* From which use of the word in the *16th verse*, it appears plain to me, that not only *Dan*, but each of the other *Patriarchs*, then had the *Scepter* of judgment in their hands. And I can't see that there was any other *Scepter* promis'd to *Judab* in the *10th*, than to *Dan* in the *16th verse* of this *Chapter*. The difference between them consisted not in the formal nature of their Government or Dominion; but in the duration or continuance of it. They each had, according to this *prophecy*, their Princes, Rulers, Judges, or Heads of their *Tribes*, for a long time after, even until the captivity of the *Ten Tribes*, when *Dan* lost his *Scepter*.

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Now if this Interpretation be allow'd me (as I cannot see why it should not) it's obvious to every eye, that this famous *prophecy* has had a literal, full, and perspicuous *accomplishment*. The *Scepter* never departed from *Judah*, until the coming of *Christ*. Even in the time of the *Babylonish captivity*, they yet had their *Lawgivers* from between their feet ; they being indulged the use of their own *Laws*, when remov'd from their own *land*, as appears from *Esther* iii. 8. *And Haman said unto Abasuerus, there is a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people, in all the provinces of thy Kingdom ; and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the King's laws.*

BUT how soon after the *Incarnation* of our *blessed Saviour*, did *Judah* lose all authority ; both their *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical State* being utterly subverted ! And they instead of swaying a *Scepter*, are become an *astonishment*, a *hissing*, and *perpetual desolations*.

AND are not we our selves, as well as the other *Christian Nations*, a happy evidence of the gathering the people unto this predicted *Shiloh*, according to the *prophecy* before us ?

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THUS we have blazing evidence, that the *Patriarch Jacob* did foresee *Christ's* day, and foretel both the time, and consequence of His appearing in the World: And that this prediction is punctually and exactly verified in our glorious *Saviour*.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of another *prophecy*, which likewise precisely points out the time of the *Messiah's* manifestation: It is that in *Dan. ix. 24, 25, 26.* *Seventy weeks are determin'd upon thy people, and upon thy holy City; to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the MOST HOLY.* Know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build *Jerusalem*, unto *Messiah the Prince*, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks. The streets shall be built again and the walls, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks, shall *Messiah* be cut off; but not for Himself. And the people of the Prince that shall come, shall destroy the City and Sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood; and unto the end of the war, desolations are determin'd.

HERE is a plain *prediction*, that within the space of *Seventy* prophetic *Weeks*, or weeks of years (that is 490 years, as the *Jewish Rabbins* themselves expound it) the great things determin'd upon the *Jewish* people and the holy City, should be accomplish'd, transgression finish'd, reconciliation made for iniquity, everlasting Righteousness brought in, the vision and *prophecy* seal'd up, and the MOST HOLY anointed. And within *seven weeks* and *sixty two weeks* (that is 483 years) after the going forth of the Commandment to restore and to build *Jerusalem*, the *Messiah* should appear, and be cut off ; but not for Himself : And that after His death, the *City* and *Sanctuary* should be destroy'd, and the people given up to desolations. Now every one skill'd in Chronology, may see a most exact *accomplishment* of this *prophecy*.

THOUGH we have not so plain and express direction, when to begin the *seventy weeks*, or 490 years ; within which term, all those transactions relating to the MESSIAH were to be *accomplish'd* : We are plainly told, that the *sixty nine weeks*, or 483 years, were to commence with the going forth of the Commandment to restore or to build *Jerusalem* ; and to terminate at
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the excision, or death of the *Messiah*. Let us then begin this reckoning on the twentieth year of *Artaxerxes Longimanus* (the date of the Decree for building *Jerusalem*, as appears from *Neb. ii. 1.*) and it will end on the thirty third year after *Christ*, the year of His death. Thus exactly did the event answer the *prophecy*, as to the time of His manifestation, and crucifixion. And were not the *predicted* consequences of His coming, also most exactly fulfilled? Did not the *Romans*, the future people of *this Prince* (as the 26th verse might be translated) destroy the City and Sanctuary; and bring the determin'd flood of war and desolations on the *Jewish State*?

NEVER did face answer more exactly to face in a glass, than this *prophecy* and its *accomplishment* in our Lord *Jesus Christ* answer one another; that to refuse our assent to this glaring evidence, is not only stupidity, but obstinate blindness. Even a *Pagan Porphyry* was long since so confounded with this *prophecy*, that he could with all his learning and craft, find no other answer, but that it was *spurious*, and of a later date.

ANOTHER *prophecy*, which evidently foretells the time of our *Saviour's* appearing, may

may be found in Hag. ii. 7, 9. *And I will shake all Nations; and the desire of all Nations shall come; and I will fill this House with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The glory of this latter House shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.* These words consist of a three-fold prediction, (1) The convulsions and confusions that all Nations were to be exercised with. (2) The appearance of the *desire of all Nations* in the Temple then builting, whereby it should exceed the former Temple in glory. And (3) The *peace* that should be consequent upon the manifestation of the *Prince of Peace*. Now as to the first, none acquainted with History, is ignorant of the bright *accomplishment* of it, by the ravages and devastations made in the World, by *Alexander* and his followers; By the perpetual bloody wars and desolations, continued in the four Kingdoms, that succeeded to, and stood up in the place of the *great horn* of that *rough Goat*; And by the *Romans*, whose conquering sword at last brought 'em all into subjection. ---- And then, how soon after the end of this *concussion* of the Nations, did the *desire of all Nations* come into

into the *Temple*; and by His sacred presence, make that House more glorious than the former, though it was in every thing else inferior to it! And as to the last of these *predictions*, how exactly was it *fulfilled*, in the peaceable Reign of *Augustus*, wherein all Nations seem'd to have forgot their former fierceness and rage, as well as the use of their Military Armour!

Thus we are irresistibly constrain'd to acknowledge the *accomplishment* of this *prophecy*, in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, by His coming at the very time here foretold, immediately after the *shaking of all Nations*, during the continuance of the second *Temple*; and in that remarkable time of universal *peace*.

A fourth famous *prediction* of the time of our Lord's Incarnation, is that in Mal. iii. 1. *Behold, I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple; even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: Behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.* That this *prophecy* did relate to the *Messiah*, is clearly manifest by the Titles and Epithets here given Him, *The Lord whom ye seek, The Messenger* of

of the Covenant, whom ye delight in. And that it was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ, is equally manifest, by his appearing in the Temple, before the destruction of it, suddenly after the Messenger, viz. John Baptist, was sent to prepare his way, by Baptizing, preaching repentance, and warning the people to believe in Him that should come after him. But this is so plain that I need not insist upon it.

○ I might here have also urged *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*, in Dan. ii. 31, ——— 46. as a *prophetical* indication of the time of the *Messiah's* appearing. By which is foretold, that after the expiration of the *Third*, and during the subsisting of the *Fourth Monarchy*, a stone should be cut out of the *Mountain* without hands, that should break the *Fourth* or *Roman Monarchy* to pieces, and become a great *Mountain*, that shall fill the whole Earth; or as the *Prophet* expounds it, a *Kingdom that shall never be moved*. ---- The exact verification of which *prophecy* is too obvious, to escape the notice of any observer. None that has but dipped in the *Roman History* can be ignorant, that our Lord did appear in the height and glory of that Empire; that after His advent, the *Fourth Monarchy* did gradually moulder

moulder away, until 'twas utterly subverted, by the inundation of the *Goths* and *Vandals*; and that this *stone*, against all opposition from that *Kingdom of iron*, has grown to a great *Mountain*; and will (as we may surely conclude from this prophecy) in His own time, fill the whole Earth. But the time before us will not allow me to particularly insist upon these things.

BEFORE I proceed to the consideration of other prophecies of our *Blessed Saviour*, I would here take liberty to observe, that not only the *Jews*, but all the neighbouring *Nations*, did about the time of *Christ's coming*, entertain raised expectations of some glorious *Monarch*, that should bring great *Revolutions* upon the *World*. And from whence should they derive these notions; or whence form these expectations, but from these cited prophecies? ---- If it be alledged, that they might find these *predictions* in the books of the *Sybills*, the supposal adds force to our *Argument*: For if these were really distinct prophecies, their accomplishment in the Person of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, is additional evidence to His *Divine Mission*. But if these *Sybilline prophecies* were (as they are thought by very learned

learned men to be) “ a Jewish composition, design’d to propagate the belief of the *Messiah*, and to prepare the way for His reception by the *Gentiles*; and called *Sybilline*, only from a *Hebrew* or *Chaldee* word of the same sound, which signifies to prophesy *.” This convinces us that these *Divine Oracles* under consideration, were understood by the *Jews* before *Christ*, not only to refer to the *Messiah*, but to point out the very *Time* of His manifestation.

THAT there were such expectations among the *Nations*, about the time of our *Lord’s* incarnation, is set in a clear light, by many learned Writers, particularly by the Bishop of *Coventry* and *Litchfield*, †
 “ No sooner (says he) was the Kingdom
 “ of the *Seleucides* (one of the remaining
 “ branches of *Daniel’s* third Kingdom)
 “ extinguished by *Pompey*, in the person

* See Bp. of *Coventry* and *Litchfield* Defence of *Christ*.
 p. 10, 11.

† *Def. of Christ*. p. 124, 125. I have not that Book by me, and the short Notes I took out of it when I read it, will not enable me to acquaint the Reader from what Authors he took this piece of History: I must therefore refer him to the Book it self, for Satisfaction.

“ of *Antiochus Asiaticus* ; but the *Jews*
 “ every where lifted up their heads, as if
 “ they saw the sign of their Redemption,
 “ in the daynings of the *Fourth Monarchy*.
 “ Then rumors went about, no body knew
 “ how (tho’ indeed originally from the
 “ Jews) that nature was in pangs to
 “ bring forth a *King* for the *Roman people*.
 “ At which the frightened *Senate* decreed
 “ the strangling of every child that should
 “ be born within that year ; But their
 “ vain hopes of having that *King* in their
 “ own family, spoiled the execution of
 “ the Decree ; and so *Augustus* was suf-
 “ fered to live. Then *Lentulus*, thinking
 “ this to be the fatal year of the *Roman*
 “ Government, and that he might be the
 “ man intended for the new Empire,
 “ became principal in *Cataline’s* con-
 “ spiracy. Thus he.

To which I may add, that *Josephus* in
 a base servile flattery to the Emperour
Vespasian, applies these prophecies to him,
 and says, That which chiefly excited the
Jews to war, was an ambiguous prophecy
 found in the sacred Books ; that at that
 time, some one within their country should
 arise, that should obtain the Empire of the

whole World *. And Tacitus † and Suetonius ‡ two Roman Historians report, That it was contained in the ancient books of the Priests (according to one) or in the Fates (according to the other) that one from Judea should at that time (the time of Vespasian) obtain the Dominion. Much more might be added, to shew the common expectation of the *Messiah*, about the time of *Christ's* coming, both by the *Jews*, and also by the *Gentiles* now made acquainted with the *Scriptures*, by the *Greek* translation of them.

But it's time I should return to the consideration of some other prophecies, that predict the circumstances and consequents of our *Lord's* appearing.

It was foretold, that the *Messiah* should be born of a *Virgin*, *Isai. vii. 14.* In the *Town of Bethlehem*, *Mich. v. 2.* That he should reside in *Galilee*; and particularly in *Zebulon* and *Naphtali*, *Isai. ix. 1.* That He should enter *Jerusalem* upon an *Ass*, and a colt the foal of an *Ass*, *Zech. ix. 9.* That by His miraculous operations, the

* De bell. Judaic. Lib. vii. Cap. 13.

† Hist. Cap. 13.

‡ In Vespasian, Cap. 4.

eyes of the blind should be open'd, and the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame restor'd to the use of their limbs, and the dumb to their speech, as Isai. xxxv. 5, 6. That He should appear in low, mean, and afflicted circumstances; be despis'd and reject'd of the Jews, be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, Isai. liii. 2, 3. That He should finally be cut off but not for Himself, Dan. ix. 26. And the particular circumstances of His death, with the opprobry and ignominy that attended it, were likewise foretold by the Prophets. And I need not tell you from the *Evangelical Historians*, how all these circumstances of His life, and death, were exactly fulfilled in our Lord Christ.

AND as to the consequents of the *Messiah's* coming, it was prophesied, that after His death, the Jewish sacrifices and oblations should cease, their holy City and Sanctuary be destroy'd; and they made desolate, Dan. ix. 26, 27. That He should bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, who should come to His light, and see His Righteousness and Glory, Isai. xlii. 1. and lx. 3. and lxii. 2. Which were so visibly accomplish'd, in cutting off the natural branches of the Olive-tree, and grafting the Gentiles into the same stock; that it must be wilful blindness, not to see it.

I might largely insist upon this subject, and shew you, that there is scarce any passage of the birth, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, or glory of *our Saviour*; or scarce any circumstance of the state of His Kingdom here in the World; but what are particularly *prophecied* of in the *Old Testament*. But the time will not allow, nor does the case require, that I should enlarge upon this Head. I therefore proceed to consider,

IV. THAT the *accomplishment* of these *prophecies* is a sure evidence, that *Jesus Christ* is the *Messiah*.

I confess indeed, that the *accomplishment* of some single *prophecies* in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, is not convincing proof, that He was necessarily the Person *predicted*, and pointed out by them. There were (for example) many others, beside *Jesus of Nazareth* in *Judea*, before the *Scepter* departed from *Judab*, who descended from the *Tribe* of *Judab*, from the loins of *Abraham* and *David*, were born at *Bethlehem*, at the same time that the *Messiah* was to be expected, &c. But then, the united *accomplishment* of all these *Prophecies* in our *Blessed Lord*, renders the evidence clear and *incontestable*, that the characters of the
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the *Messiah*, in the *Prophets*, belong'd to Him, and him only. There was none but He, that with any colour could claim the characters of descending from *Abraham*, from *Judah*, and *David*; of appearing just 483 years after the Decree for building and restoring *Jerusalem*; of being born of a *Virgin*, in the Town of *Bethlehem*; of working so many *wiracles*; of dying and rising again; of setting up a *Spiritual Kingdom*, whereunto the *Gentiles* should be subjected; And all the many other *prophetic* descriptions of His Person and Government, too many to be here distinctly enumerated; which all agreed to our *Lord Jesus*, and therefore (as I observ'd) prove Him to be the *Messiah*. This will plainly appear, if we consider,

I. THAT the accomplishment of these *prophesies* is a clear and certain indication of their *Divine* original.

FINITE understandings can have no means of foreknowledge, but either *conjectural*, from the nature and reason of things; or by *inspiration* from Him, who has all things present and to come in His *Omniscient* eye. By one of these means therefore all the *events* we have been considering, must have been *foretold*; or else they

they were all a *juggle* and *imposture*. Mere *conjecture* they could not be; for what resemblance could be found, in all the face of Nature, of an *Incaruate God*; or what even obscurest hints of the time, manner, and consequences of His manifestation? Nor could they have been an *imposture*; for if so, they could not be justified by the event. We see 'em *fulfilled*; and thence are ascertain'd that they were *prophetically foretold*. We see that God Himself acknowledges the *prophecy*, by its completion; which He would not have done, in justification of most audacious and impudent *deceivers*. The consequence therefore irresistibly forces it self upon us, that these were the *Oracles of God*. It is a just challenge, and reasonable Argument, in *Isai. xli. 22, 23.* *Let them bring forth and shew us what shall happen. Let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them; and know the latter end of them: or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods.*

I know of but one *Objection* that can with any colour be offer'd against this arguing; which is, that *Diabolical predictions* have often been *fulfilled*, as appears by
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the ancient *Oracles* of the Heathen, so frequently consulted; and so frequently verified by the event. In answer to which, I need not insist upon the craft and collusion used in those *Oracles*; or the dark and doubtful meanings, in which they were usually deliver'd, seldom to be understood, but by the issue. But I allow it to be possible (as the *Scripture* also supposes it (*Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3.*) that *God* may, for the trial or punishment of a people, let the *Devil* into an acquaintance with some of His future purposes. But then, *GOD* is the *Author*, though the *Devil* be the *communicater* of these *prophecies*. *God* only reveals the event, though an accursed *Balaam* be the Prophet. *HE*, who adjusts all future things in His own breast, and whose sovereign pleasure and purpose make them possible, can *only* foresee what, how, or when they shall be. To ascribe a foreknowledge of future contingencies to the *Devil*, is to place him in *God's* Throne, and to give him the glory of the *Divine* *perfections*. But I proceed to consider,

2. THAT it's hence necessary, that all the characters of *Christ* in the *Divine* *prophecies*, are true, since *God* can neither deceive, nor be deceived.

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THE accomplishment of these prophecies discovers their glorious *Author*; the *Author*, their necessary truth and faithfulness. If they are of *Divine original*, they have a *Divine veracity*; and can no more be chargeable with falshood, or mistake in any instance, than *God* can deny or contradict Himself.

Thus have we strongest and most unquestionable assurance from the *holy Prophets*, that our Lord *Jesus Christ*, whom they have foreseen, and of whom they have so particularly foretold, is the *Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*; that He is *God's own Son*; and *the Man that is His Fellow*; that He is *Immanuel God with us, the Lord our Righteousness*; and *the Salvation of the ends of the Earth*: And in a word, that *all things are fulfilled that were written in the Law of Moses, in the Propbets, and in the Psalms concerning Him.*

I am aware that *Porphry's* ancient objection may be urged against all this, That these prophecies were all written since the event; and so are indeed rather histories of what is past, than predictions of things to come. But this is absolutely impossible, the sacred Books having been kept in the hands

hands of the bitterest enemies of *Christianity* (the *Jews* I mean) whose malice against *Christ* would not have allow'd 'em (had they been capable) to have conspir'd in such a forgery and interpolation.

CAN it be imagin'd, that they would have devis'd these *prophecies* on purpose to have brought a perpetual infamy upon themselves ? Could they thus frame weapons against their *Religion*, and study the confusion of their own faces ! ---- Besides, if they had been willing, they could not have been able thus to have impos'd upon the World. Had it been possible that all the *Jews* in the World, in their most distant dispersions, shou'd have to a man combin'd in this undertaking ; had they corrupted all their *Bibles* ; and not left one copy to detect the fraud (which is unreasonable enough to suppose) This blessed Book was in the hands of multitudes beside them ; and every where dispers'd among the *Gentiles*, especially in the *Greek* translation of it ; who must also have been in the conspiracy, if any such thing had been done. In a word, the World must have conspir'd in this cursed imposture ; and no copy of the *Bible* be left to bewray the villainy ; nor any man know how, why, or when it

was done. But it's time we proceed to some *Improvement* of the *Dobtrine*.

And,

I. We hence learn, that as the foregoing *prophecies* of the *Messiah* are by their *accomplishment* in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, a *Testimony* from Heaven that He is the *predicted Saviour* of the World; so likewise is the *completion* of His own *predictions*, an attestation unto and confirmation of His *Heavenly Mission*.

THE *Messiah* was foretold to be a *Prophet like unto Moses*, whom we should bear in all things, Deut. xviii. 15. And our blessed *Jesus* has justified His claim to that character, by His many *prophecies* of future things, which have been so punctually *verified*. He not only discover'd the most secret thoughts of men's hearts; and foretold the treason of *Judas*, while confin'd to his own breast, and perhaps before it was conceiv'd in his mind; But also particularly fore-shew'd His own death, with the manner and circumstances of it, the time of His continuance in the grave, His resurrection, and glorious ascension. He promised to the *Apostles* and others the *gifts of the Holy Ghost*; with His miraculous powers and operations. He *predicted* the destruction
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of *Jerusalem*, and the utter abolition of the *Temple*, with the preludes of that amazing desolation. And I need not be particular in shewing you the exact *accomplishment* of all these *prophecies*; nor have I time to consider the many *prophecies* in the *New Testament*, professedly received from Him, and spoken in His name. I shall therefore select one only from among them, the verification whereof is at this time visible to all the World: The *prediction of Antichrist* I mean; the time of whose coming was foretold to be upon the downfall of the *Roman Empire*, when that could no longer *let*, or restrain his Tyranny, *2 Thes. ii. 7.* The manner of his coming was to be with pride and arrogance, *exalting himself above all that is called God, and worshipped*; and yet under the guise of a *minister of Religion*, sitting in the *Temple of God*, and there strengthening his interest by *all power, and signs, and lying wonders*, *2 Thes. ii. 4, 11.* The place of his residence was to be in a *great City*, built upon *seven mountains*; that is, in the *City of Rome*, which only answers this description, *Rev. xvii. 9, 18.* His Reign was to be *tyrannical*, with horrible *persecution of the Saints*. *Rev. xiii. 7,* and elsewhere. Now who can help but see

see an exact accomplishment of these, and many other characters of *Antichrist*, in the *Pope* and *Roman papacy*; and thereby a full evidence of our *Saviour's* Omniscience, in foretelling these events ?

II. HENCE are we instructed in the *Divine Authority* of the *sacred Scriptures*.

THE *Spirit of prophecy*, which every where appears in them, must necessarily be the *Spirit of God*; who only (as we have heard) can be the Author of a true *prophecy*.

THE *Old Testament* has this attestation to its verity and *Divine* original, it being throughout a continued series of *accomplish'd prophecy*. A great part of that blessed Book consists, either of more direct, clear, and express, or more dark and allusive *predictions*, of the *hope of Israel*, and salvation by *Christ*.

BESIDES the more explicit *prophecies* of this great salvation, interspersed through almost every book of the *Old Testament*; What were all the typical persons, the typical actions and ordinances; and what the whole *Mosaic* Institution, with the *Levitical* Priesthood, Rites and Ceremonies; and especially their *Sacrifices*, and bloody *Oblations*; but *Types* and *Shadows* of our
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Blessed Saviour, to keep alive their Faith, Hope, and Desire of His Salvation, before His coming? There are indeed some Historical parts of this holy *Book*, not properly *prophetical*: but these have also their reference unto *Christ*, and not only represent *God's* care, guidance, and government of His *Church*; but also shew us His faithfulness in securing the promis'd *Seed*, in the promis'd line; and in preserving the *Tribes* entire, that our Lord's descent might be, as was promised, from the loins of *Abraham*, the Tribe of *Judab*, and the family of *David*.

THUS was a great part of the *Old Testament* an Index, to point out the Person of *Christ*, with the time, manner, end, and consequences of His manifestation. And the full and bright *accomplishment* of all these things, is not only a verification of the *promises* and *prophecies*; but a declaration from Heaven, that these *Scriptures* were given by *inspiration of God*.

I might here also, as a further evidence that the *Old Testament* is indeed the *Word of God*, consider the many other *prophecies* that had no special reference unto *Christ*. Such were the particular *predictions* of the vastly numerous posterity of *Abraham*; of the
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the children of *Israel's* sojourning in *Egypt*; of the time of their continuance and state of bondage there; of their deliverance, return to *Canaan*, utter extirpating the Inhabitants; and their flourishing circumstances during their obedience in that happy land. ---- Such likewise were the *predictions* of the *Ten Tribes* destruction; of the *Babylonish* captivity, with the term of its duration; of the circumstances of the *Jews* after their return, and of their desolation and dispersion, for their rejecting of *Christ*. ---- And such also were the numerous *prophecies* relating to particular Persons, Kingdoms, or Countries; as well as the *prophetical* description of the *Four* successive *Monarchies*; and of the state of the World, during the continuance of each of them, and after the subversion of 'em all. There are, as you all know, innumerable *accomplish'd prophecies* of this kind, every where in the *Old Testament*, and therein innumerable evidences, that those *holy Books* were the dictates of *God Himself*.

THE *New Testament* has likewise, from hence, surest confirmation of its Truth and *Divinity*; not only by the multiplied *prophecies* therein contain'd, many of which are *fulfilled*, and some are yet to be expected; but

but also by the glorious light reflected upon it, by the *predictions* of this New Dispensation in the *Old Testament*. The *Old Testament* has foretold the coming and Kingdom of the *Messiah*; the *New Testament* assures us that He is come, and has erected His spiritual Kingdom, as was predicted of Him. The *Old Testament* Dispensation consisted of many Types, Shadows, and mystical Ceremonies; the *New Testament* shews us how they were completed in *Christ*, the Substance of 'em all. The *Old Testament* describes the time, circumstances, & manner of this new Dispensation; the *New Testament* every way answers the description, as a copy the original, or the face a well drawn picture, in all the parts, features and lineaments.

Thus we see the *Old Testament* illustrated by the *New*, and the *New* confirm'd by the *Old*, and both contriv'd by *Infinite Wisdom*. For, is it possible that any created understanding could devise and foresee so many and various representations of *Christ* and His Kingdom of *Grace*, all agreeing with the event, at such a distance from their completion? No surely! this must exceed the foresight of every created intelligence. Is it possible that the *Religion* should not be of *God*, which has been pre-

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dicted and confirmed, by a successive series of *prophecy*, from the very earliest ages of time; and joyfully beheld through the prospective glass of the *promises*, by all the faithful, since man's first apostacy? No, certainly! our infidelity would debase us below humanity.

III. HENCE, from the *accomplishment* of past *prophecies*, we have greatest assurance that those yet future shall be also *fulfilled*. For they have all the same glorious *Author*: all depend upon the same power and veracity.

FROM hence may we entertain certain expectations of that flourishing state of the *Church*, when *Antichrist* shall be destroy'd, by the *Spirit of Christ's* mouth and the *brightness* of His coming; when the *fulness* of the *Gentiles* shall be brought in, and all *Israel* be saved; when *Christ* shall have the *heathen* for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the *Earth* for His possession; and when the *kingdoms* of the *Earth* shall become the *Kingdoms* of the *Lord*, and of His *Christ*.

FROM hence may impenitent *Sinners* surely expect a swift approach of their dreadful and eternal wo. They may justly entertain trembling expectations of the

accomplish-

accomplishment of those terrible predictions, of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; of snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, for the portion of their cup: And of their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second Death:

FROM hence also may Believers lay down their heads in the dust with comfort, under a blessed prospect of Christ's glorious Appearing, to change their vile bodies, and fashion them like to His glorious Body: And from a view of that glorious reward, which when He comes He will bring with Him. They may with courage encounter the King of Terrors, and pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death, keeping their promis'd inheritance in view; and looking to that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. They may joyfully make this echo to the promise of His coming, *Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly.* Amen.





A
DEMONSTRATION
 OF THE
Christian Religion

From the **MIRACLES**

Wrought by our **LORD JESUS**
CHRIST, both before and
 after His **Crucifixion**.



ACTS II. 22.

Ye men of Israel, hear these words : Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you ; as ye your selves also know.

THESE words directly lead us to the consideration of the last evidence propos'd, for confirmation of the *Divine Mission* of our *Blessed Saviour*. They were successfully urg'd by the Apostle *Peter*, as an irrefragable Argument of this important

important truth ; and if duly consider'd, cannot fail of yielding us also full and compleat conviction of it.

FOR the right understanding the *words*, we may note in them,

1. A declaration of a matter of fact, that God did work *Miracles, and Wonders, and signs by Jesus of Nazareth.*

THE *Apostle* here considers our Lord *Jesus Christ* in His human nature only, according as He had appear'd to the *Jews*, and was by their wicked hands crucified and slain : And thus consider'd as a *Man*, He could not be the *Author* of these *Miraculous* operations. These were (some of them) effects beyond the capacity, not only of *men*, but of *Angels* ; and therefore the necessary products of *Divine* power and energy. Upon which account these *Miracles, Wonders, and Signs* (words of like signification) are justly here ascrib'd unto the *Deity*, as the sole *Efficient* ; not exclusive of *Christ*, as the *second Person* in the *Godhead* ; but only as He was *Jesus of Nazareth*, or the *Man Christ Jesus*.

2. We may note the *end* and *design* of this declaration, *viz.* To convince the Audience, that our Lord *Jesus Christ* was by these *Miracles* approved of God. [*Ye men of*

of Israel, bear these words: *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by Miracles, &c.*] Peter here takes the advantage of a vast concourse of people, conven'd from all quarters, to the feast of *Pentecost*, to preach a *crucified Saviour*; and by irresistible Arguments, to convince them, that *Jesus of Nazareth* was indeed the expected *Messiah*. This he evinces, first, by the accomplishment of Prophecy, now surprizingly visible to 'em all, in the gift of *Tongues*, newly confer'd on the *Apostles* and company: And then, as a concluding Argument, urges the *miracles* of our Lord, as a declaration from God Himself, of His *heavenly calling*; and as a Testimony from *Heaven*, that the same *Jesus* whom they had crucified, was sent, authorized, and approv'd of God, and by Him constituted *both Lord and Christ*.

3. We may note an appeal to the Auditors themselves, as *Witnesses* of the Facts alledged, [*As ye your selves also know.*] The Argument was founded upon matters of *Fact*; and was therefore more or less forceable, according to the truth or falsehood, notoriety or uncertainty of the *Facts* on which it depended. If they were false or uncertain, the conclusion drawn from them

them must be very precarious ; if true and publickly known, it must be most just and necessary. The *Apostle* therefore concludes the Argument with these words ; thereby intimating, that it must needs be of irresistible force to them, who were themselves *spectators* of these *Miracles*. But we may more particularly consider the Argument, in speaking to this

DOCTRINE, *That the Miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ, are a full and clear evidence, that He was approved of GOD, and had His Mission from Him.*

IN speaking to this *Doctrine*, I propose this method ;

- I. To consider what a *Miracle* is.
- II. To prove, that there were real *Miracles* wrought by our Lord *Jesus Christ*.
- III. To make it appear, that these *Miracles* are full and clear evidence of *Christ's* *Divine Mission*, and that He was the promised *Messiah*.

I. THEN I'm to consider what a *Miracle* is. AND for explaining the nature of a *Miracle*, in the common *Theological* sense of the word, I may observe to you, that a
Miracle

Miracle has been ordinarily described, *An extraordinary operation of God in nature, either stopping its course, or producing some effects, that are above its laws and power.* And it has been the received Doctrine of *Divines*, that the working of *Miracles* is the sole prerogative of *God Himself*. But some very learned men, who have lately written upon this subject, have justly found fault with this *Description*; and made it evident, that a true *miracle* may be wrought by the instrumentality of *Angels*. They therefore chuse thus to define a *Miracle*, *A work effected in a manner UNUSUAL, or different from the common and regular method of Providence, by the interposition either of God Himself, or of some intelligent Agent superior to man; for the proof or evidence of some particular Doctrine, or in attestation to the Authority of some particular person.* But how just soever this description may be of *Miracles* in general; yet there were certainly such *miraculous works* perform'd by our *Blessed Lord*, as exceeded the powers of all the *Angels* of light; and it is upon such operations only, that I shall put the stress of the present Argument: And shall therefore in illustrating the truth before us, consider *Miracles* as extraordinary,
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and immediate operations of God, in producing effects, either contrary to, or different from the common course of Nature and Providence. I call them extraordinary and immediate operations of God, exclusive of all finite power. For allowing that Angels may be able to work some true Miracles; yet there are many of those operations, whereof we are now to treat, that are as much the peculiar prerogative of God Himself, as the creation of the World; as we shall see more particularly hereafter. --- I describe Miracles to be effects contrary to, or different from the common course of Nature and Providence: For though the power of God is as much discover'd in the ordinary works of Nature and Providence, as in those effects that are most contrary to, or different from their common course: Yet those only that are extraordinary, are properly miraculous; as they are evidences, that God suspends the common motions of nature, for some uncommon or extraordinary purpose.

II. I am to prove, that there were real Miracles wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ.

THIS may be fully confirm'd by the following considerations:

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I. THE sacred Writers report, that many such *Miracles* were wrought by our *Blessed Saviour*.

It would take up more than all the time before us, to particularly consider all these demonstrations of His *Mercy* and *Power*, recorded in the *Scriptures*; and yet their number doubtless far exceeded the particular account of them: But were they more or fewer, if such as were the necessary productions of *Omnipotence*, they will sufficiently serve the present purpose, and prove the point under consideration. I shall therefore select some few (and need mention but a few) of those indisputable instances of the *miraculous* works perform'd by our Lord Jesus, both before His death, and after His resurrection; and recorded in the *sacred Writings*.

WE read *Job. ii.* begin. of our Lord's honouring a wedding with His presence; and manifesting the glory of His *Omnipotence*, by turning *water* into *wine* better than the natural blood of the grape. Now though it be possible, that created *spirits* might invisibly remove the *water*, and substitute *wine* in the place of it; yet the *Historian* plainly intimates, that this was immediately done by our Lord's powerful Word;

Word ; and that it therefore was what no less than a *Creating Power* could possibly effect.

A like instance was His feeding *five thousand men, beside women and children, with five loaves and two fishes* : And *four thousand men, beside women and children, with seven loaves and a few little fishes* : And causing the bread to increase by being eaten, and the fragments to exceed the quantity of the loaves, at first set before the multitudes, *Matth. xiv. 19. and Chap. xv. 34.* Tho' in this case it may likewise be easily supposed, that an *Angel* might invisibly bring a fresh supply of bread and fish, in the place of what was eaten ; yet the sacred story represents it as *Christ's* own immediate work, and therefore as a clear manifestation of His *omnipotent power*.

AN equal evidence of His immediate and *omnipotent* agency, was His forcing the Elements to acknowlege their *Sovereign Lord* ; and the Wind and Sea to forget their tempestuous ruffle, and to become calm and quiet at His Word, *Mark. iv. 39.* Tho' it may be possible for created *Angels* to raise or lay storms ; yet this must necessarily be a work of time : and I can as

easily conceive them capable of doing EVERY THING, as of quieting the troubled Air and Sea, without the intervention of time or means; and of making them *instantaneously* obedient to their command: As was the case before us, as appears from *ver. 37.* where we find the ship fill'd with water, and ready to sink, by the impetuosity of the storm; and they yet rescued from the brink of destruction, by an immediate calm.

I might add to this, His curing so many *diseases*, in their own nature desperate, without any visible means, but His own powerful word. And the multiplied instances of His casting out *Devils*; and even forcing the *unclean spirits* themselves to acknowledge and proclaim Him *the Son of God*, as *Matth. viii. 29.*

BUT if any shall except against all these instances, as what might (for ought we know) be the agency of *created Spirits*: There are others yet to be consider'd, that did certainly exceed the utmost stretch of *angelic* power. Such were His giving *life* unto the *dead*, and commanding their departed Souls into their bodies, by the same powerful word, by which they at first had their being. Thus he raised *Jairus's* daughter

daughter to life, to the just astonishment of the spectators, *Mark* v. 41. Thus he stops the mourning train, that were carrying the widow of *Nain's* son to the grave, and delivers him alive to his sorrowful Mother, *Luk.* vii. 14, 15. And thus He speaks life into *Lazarus*, that had been four days dead, and was now corrupting in his grave, *Joh.* xi. 43, 44. I might here also add the testimony born to His *heavenly Mission*, by the *resurrection* of many at the time of His crucifixion, *Matth.* xxvii. 52, 53. Though it be not expressly told us, that these were raised by His power; yet their *resurrection* was plainly done in honour to His *sacred character*, and an express declaration from *Heaven*, that He was verily the *Son of God*.

But the greatest *Miracle* of all was His own *Resurrection* from the grave, which he assures us was perform'd by His *own power*, *Joh.* x. 18. Which (if true) gives brightest evidence of His *Omnipotence*; and that it was true is certain, in that *God* would never have justified a false pretender and impostor, by raising him from the dead: We have therefore a plain declaration from *God* Himself, that *Jesus Christ*
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our Lord is the Son of God, with power, by His Resurrection from the dead.

UPON the whole, it appears plain to me, that all the *Angels in Heaven*, or *Devils in Hell*, could not break the bars of the pit asunder, summon the dead from their graves, and cause 'em to reassume life and action. This must be the work of Him only, who holds the *keys* of life and death in His hands.

BUT after all, were it admitted, that all these mentioned *Miracles* might be perform'd by the interposition of *Angels*; they are nevertheless *God's seal*, to justify *Christ's Person*, and render his *Commission* authentic. They were at least *Extraordinary* works of Providence, wrought in justification of our *Lord's Person* and *Doctrine*; and therefore a *Testimony* from Him, who either mediately or immediately governs all the wheels of *Providence*, to that Truth, which they were wrought in confirmation of; as we shall see more particularly hereafter.

It's true, that if these wonderful works were the agency of *created Spirits*, they would not agree to the *Description of Miracles*, upon which I proposed to found the present Argument. But then, there are

are multitudes of *miraculous* operations, professedly performed in the Name, and by the Power of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; that do not, cannot lie open to any cavil or exception; and in which we have all the assurance of *God's* immediate agency, that is possible to be obtain'd in any case whatsoever.

WHAT I mean are the *Miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, confer'd not only on the *Apostles* and other Officers in the Church, but upon many (if not upon all) *true Believers*, at the beginning of the *Gospel-Dispensation*. The excellent Author of *Miscellanea Sacra*, hath handled this subject with such strength and perspicuity, as to give infidelity a fatal wound, and lay it gasping at his feet. What I now propose is to just give you a few hints out of that admirable Author, to convince you, that *God has born witness to Christianity*, not only with signs and wonders and diverse *Miracles* (such as we have already treated of) but also with these *Gifts of the Holy Ghost*.

JOEL prophesies in Chap. ii. 28. *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your Old*
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men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions ; and also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days, will I pour out my Spirit. And agreeably John Baptist, Christ's forerunner, bare record, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove ; and it abode upon Him ; and I knew Him not ; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, the same is He which **BAPTIZETH WITH THE HOLY GHOST**, Joh. i. 32, 33. The material part of which record, the three other Evangelists give us : Thus Matthew says of John Baptist, Matth. iii. 11. I indeed baptize you with water unto Repentance ; but He that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear ; He shall **BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY GHOST AND WITH FIRE**. To the same purpose in Mark i. 8. and Luk. iii. 16. Here are plain predictions of a prophetic Spirit to be pour'd out upon all flesh ; and of our Lord's baptizing His Disciples with the Holy Ghost and with Fire : But when should this be ? Not while tabernacling here in the flesh, but after His ascension to the Father ; as He Himself assures His Disciples, Joh. xiv. 12.

Verily,

Truly, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father, ver. 36. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, ver. 26. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, He shall teach you all things; and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Our Saviour adds, Chap. xvi. 7. Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away: For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: But if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And after our Lord's Resurrection, He renews the same promise unto them, Luk. xxiv. 49. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with Power from on high. And, Acts i. 4, 5. And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem: but wait for the promise of the Father; which, saith He, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be **BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY GHOST,**

GHOST, not many days hence. See also *Mark* xvi. 17. *Job*. xx. 22.

Thus we have seen the prediction and promise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Let us next consider the accomplishment of these prophecies, which will appear in the clearest and strongest light, by reflecting upon the representation of this matter in the *Acts* and *Epistles*.

THESE gifts of the Spirit were communicated two different ways, either immediately by the Holy Ghost's falling upon them; or mediately, by the laying on of the Apostles hands. Those who received the Holy Ghost in the former way, were said to be *baptized with the Holy Ghost*, to have Him poured out, or shed down upon them; or to be filled, or anointed with the Holy Ghost. See *Acts* xi. 15, 16. *Chap.* ii. 23. and iv. 31. and x. 38. And probably none ever received the Holy Ghost in this immediate way, without the visible symbol of *cloven Tongues like as of Fire*. When the Holy Ghost did not so visibly descend, but was communicated by the imposition of hands, it is called the *giving and receiving the Holy Ghost*, *Acts* viii. 15, 17, 18, 19. And the *ministring of the Spirit*, *Gal.* iii. 5. And *imparting Spiritual gifts*, *Rom.*

ROM. i. 11. I shall endeavour briefly to exemplify both these kinds of Inspirations or Illuminations of the *Holy Ghost*, in some few instances.

THE *Holy Ghost* is said to fall or to be poured out upon the Disciples, but five times only. The first instance of this *miraculous effusion* of the *Holy Ghost*, was upon the *Apostles* and their company. Acts. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord, in one place: And suddenly there came a sound, as of a rushing mighty wind; and it filled all the house where they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven Tongues like as of Fire; and sat upon each of them: And they were all filled with the *Holy Ghost*, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. This company, upon whom the *Holy Ghost* thus miraculously descended, were about an hundred and twenty Men and Women, as appears from Chap. i. 14, 15, who are here said to be ALL with one accord in one place, when the Spirit fell upon them. [From the mixture of Men and Women in this inspired Society, we may remark, as we pass along, the bright accomplishment of *Joel's* prophecy, that the Spirit should be

poURED out upon the handmaids as well as servants of the Lord; and that daughters as well as sons, should prophesy.]

THE second instance of this kind was a new (and probably a like) effusion of the Spirit upon the same Apostles and company, in answer to their prayer for BOLDNESS and Courage, when they were brought before the Council. Acts iv. 31. *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; and they spake the Word of God with BOLDNESS.*

THE third instance was in Saul, who (as a qualification for the Apostleship, unto which he was design'd) was FILLED with the Holy Ghost, Acts ix. 17. compar'd with Chap. xiii. 9.

A fourth instance was in Cornelius and his household, who (that there might be no prejudice against admitting the proselytes of the gate, into the fellowship of the Gospel) had the Holy Ghost poured out upon them, Acts x. 45, and FELL upon them, as on the Apostles and company at the beginning, Chap. xi. 13.

THE fifth and last instance of the effusion of the Holy Ghost, without the imposition of

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of hands, was on the first harvest of *Idolatrous Gentiles*, that were converted to the *Christian Faith*; which was at *Antioch in Pisidia*, *Acts xiii. 16. ad fin.* For it is said of them verse 52, that they were *FILLED with the Holy Ghost*. And there is no mention of any imposition of hands to that purpose.

We are next to consider how the gifts of the *Holy Ghost* were received, in a more mediate way, by the laying on of the *Apostles hands*. Under which Head I shall only observe, that these *miraculous gifts* of the *Spirit* were confer'd upon very many; and probably upon all *true Believers*, wherever the *Apostles* came. This will appear from these considerations:

Our blessed *Saviour* promised this success to the *Apostles Ministry*, That these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out Devils, they shall speak with new Tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them, they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover, *Mark xvi. 17, 18.* And the *Apostle Peter* promises the three thousand, *Acts ii. 38,* That upon their *Repentance & Baptism*, they should receive the gift of the *Holy Ghost*. And he likewise

likewise speaks of the *Holy Ghost*, as given to them (i. e. to all them) that obey him, Acts v. 32. Where he could not mean the sanctifying influences, but must intend these *miraculous gifts* of the *Holy Ghost*: For the *Holy Ghost* is here spoken of, as a witness of the Resurrection and Exaltation of *Christ*, whereof these *gifts* were an unquestionable evidence (see Acts ii. 33.) But not the common sanctifying *gifts* of the *Spirit*; these could be no evidence at all of these truths unto others.

As soon as the *Samaritans* were converted by *Philip*, the Apostles send *Peter* and *John* to them, that they might receive these *gifts* of the *Spirit*: And they laid their hands on them, and they received the *Holy Ghost*, Acts viii. 14,---17. When *Paul* came to *Ephesus*, and found certain Disciples there, he asked them (as a question of course, which he constantly propos'd to all that he did not know) Have ye received the *Holy Ghost*? And finding they had not, he laid his hands on them; and the *Holy Ghost* came upon them, and they spake with *Tongues* and prophesied, Acts xix. 1,--6.

ALL the members of the Church of *Corinth* seem to have had these *gifts* in a very plentiful manner. They spake with *Tongues*,
they

they prophesied, they interpreted, 1 Cor. xiv. throughout. **EVERY ONE** of them had a Psalm, a Doctrine, a Tongue, a Revelation, an Interpretation, verse 26. And that these gifts were not peculiar to the *Corinthians*, but were at least frequent in other Churches also, appears from 1 Cor. i. 7. where the *Apostle* tells them, that they came **BEHIND** in no gift. And from 2 Cor. xii. 12. where he tells them, that they were not inferior to **OTHER CHURCHES**, i. e. in these signs, wonders, and mighty deeds, the evidence of his *Apostleship* among them, as appears from verse 11. Which plainly shews us that these gifts were in the other Churches also, tho' not in a superior degree. The same thing appears from most of the other *Epistles* to the Churches, as may be seen from Gal. iii. 2, 5. *Eph.* i. 13, 17. *1 Thes.* i. 5. and v. 20. *2 Tim.* i. 6, 14. *Heb.* vi. 4, 5. *1 Pet.* i. 12. *1 Job.* ii. 20. With too many other *Texts*, to the same purpose, to be now distinctly enumerated.

THESE gifts of the Spirit, whereof I am treating, were sudden *Illuminations* of the mind whereby the recipients were instantaneously endued, with the knowlege of a vast variety of languages, *Acts* ii. begin-
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and *Chap. x. 46.* With a large extensive knowledge of all needful Doctrines of Religion, whereby they were able to teach the mind of God clearly, and powerfully, *Rom. ii. 10, 11, 12.* and *1 Pet. i. 11, 12.* With the Gift of *Prophecy*, whereby they could foretel future events, *Acts xi. 28.* and *Chap. xx. 23.* And could discern the spirits of others, and tell the secrets of their hearts, *1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, 32.* And also judge of the fitness of persons for peculiar service in the Church, *Acts xiii. 1, 2.* and *1 Tim. i. 18.* They were frequently inspired with new Revelations, *1 Cor. xiv. 30.* With the Gift of *Interpreting*, as well as *speaking* foreign Languages, *1 Cor. xiv. 27.* With courage and fluency of speech upon all occasions, *1 Cor. i. 5.* To all which, and many other Gifts that might be mention'd, I may add, that some of these had the gifts of *working Miracles*, and of *healing Diseases*, as appears from *1 Cor. xii. 29, 30.* And all the *Apostles* were instrumental by laying on of their hands, to impart these gifts to others, wherever they themselves came. — A more summary exemplification of these several Gifts, may be found in *1 Cor. xii. 8, 9, 10.* For to one is given by the Spirit, the Word of Wisdom; to another

another, the *Word of Knowledge* by the same Spirit ; to another, *Faith* by the same Spirit ; to another, the *gifts of Healing* by the same Spirit ; to another, the *working of Miracles* ; to another, *Prophecy* ; to another, *Discerning of spirits* ; to another, *divers kinds of Tongues* ; to another, the *Interpretation of Tongues*.

THOUGH these gifts of the Holy Ghost are sometimes in Scripture distinguished from MIRACLES, particularly in Heb. ii. 4. yet as they are elsewhere expressly so denominated (see Gal. iii. 5. and 1 Cor. xii. 29.) so were they certainly in their own nature, *Miracles* of the highest kind, such as could not have been wrought by the united power and skill of all *created Spirits* : For though we know not what power *Angels* may have ; yet we may certainly know, that it is the peculiar prerogative of the *Father of Spirits*, so to enlarge the faculties of the Soul of Man, as to communicate those degrees of knowledge in an instant, which probably the most capacious mind could not contain, without these *Divine Inspirations* ; and which certainly the most sagacious of human beings could not obtain in an ordinary way, without spending his whole life in the closest application to those studies. No

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man living can conceive how so many *Arts* and *Divine Sciences* could be at once imparted to them, by any but Him, who is the *Author* of our Souls, and can enlarge their faculties as He pleases.

To exemplify this in two of these *Gifts*, which seem to have been common to most of the first *Believers*; the *Gift of Tongues*, and of *Prophecy*. Was it possible for unlearned Men and Women, to instantaneously possess such a vast variety of languages, in such perfection, as to be able to use them with readiness and propriety, upon all proper occasions; without having their minds enlarged, and this knowledge communicated to 'em, by an *Infinite Agent*? Was it possible that any but He, who only foreknows all future events, could inspire these *Disciples* with a *spirit of prophecy*, whereby they could foretel things to come? Or that any but He who knows the mind of the Spirit, and searches the heart and reins, could enable these to *discern the Spirits*, and know the secret thoughts of other mens hearts? No surely! we may as well attribute all the incommunicable *Perfections* of God, to a created being, as these *miraculous gifts* and operations.

Thus

THUS I've consider'd some of those *Miracles* perform'd by our *blessed Lord* in His life, and by His Power and Authority after His crucifixion; which are an evident attestation from *Heaven*, not only to His *Divine Mission* and *Commission*, but to the whole *Christian Institution*. But it's time I proceed to the consideration of some further evidences, that there were such *Miracles* wrought by our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

2. The *Reporters* of these *Miracles* have all the marks of *honesty*, *integrity*, and *honour*.

THE *Doctrines* they taught, shew the innocence and divine excellencies of their *Faith*: The unexampled pains and fatigues they underwent to propagate these *Doctrines*, shew 'em sincere and in earnest in their profession; and make it evident, that they themselves both believed and practis'd what they taught to others: And the most spiteful and malicious of their enemies never did, and therefore we may be sure never could charge them with any impiety and immorality of life.

THAT they were eminent for their *sanctity*, as well as other extraordinary endowments, appears from their *success*. What irresistible *charm* so suddenly conquer'd

the mighty opposition, and insuperable obstacles, in the hearts and lives of men, against the Gospel? What *torrent* bore down those seats of luxury and voluptuousness, those sanctuaries of Idolatry and Devil-worship, that were subjected to the *Cross of Christ*? How came so many People, Cities, and Countries, converted from the opinions and manners which they had embraced from their infancy, to those not only different, but contrary? The despised *Doctrine of the Cross* had no such charms in it, in the eye of carnal reason, as to produce such wonderful effects. The unletter'd *Fishermen*, by whose instrumentality this amazing change was wrought, had no advantage of *military Power*, or of *learned Art* and Eloquence, to force 'em to submission. These things therefore loudly proclaim the innocency and sanctity of their lives, without which they could not have been regarded. Nay more than so, these things clearly evidence that the *Apostles* and other *Disciples*, had themselves *miraculous Gifts*; and did confirm their *Doctrine* by *miraculous operations*; without which Seal of Heaven 'twould have been impossible to have persuaded so many to forsake their lusts and pleasures,

pleasures, their comfort, ease and safety, for a persecuted Religion, and a Crucified Saviour.

THUS we see that the *Witnesses* were above reproach. And if we always allow for truth, what is confirm'd by a number of faithful *Witnesses*, we may well depend upon the joint Testimony of such a number, who could all truly appeal to the World, that they had renounc'd the bidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness; nor handling the Word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, had commended themselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God, as 2 Cor. iv. 2.

3. THESE miraculous works and spiritual gifts reported by the sacred Writers, were matters of fact, in which it was impossible that they themselves could be deceiv'd.

OUR Lord's Miracles were not matters of speculation or science, wherein the understandings of the *Disciples* might be impos'd upon; but matters of fact, that came under the immediate cognizance of their senses; such as they could see, hear, and feel; and be ascertain'd of, by all possible means of certainty. --- They were not dark and obscure performances; they were not done in a corner; but most visibly, in the

the open light, and view of the World; so that there could be no possible opportunity of *Legerdemain*, juggle or deceit. --- They were not only some few and doubtful, but *multitudes* of unquestionable *Miracles*, repeated again and again, in the view of the same persons, who daily waited on their Master, and saw His wonderful Works. --- Nor were these things done before some few ignorant, and brain-sick persons; but in the face of the World, before multitudes of all sorts (beside the twelve *Apostles*, seventy *Disciples*, and many others that followed our *Lord*) who all acknowledged the *facts*; though they were not all converted by them. --- And to sum up all, these same *Witnesses* assure us, that they and many others beside them, had themselves the *miraculous gifts* of the *Holy Ghost*; and were employ'd in working the same or like *Miracles*, in *Christ's name*, and by His Power and Authority.

AND now, will it not out-do the utmost strength of imagination, to find out the means by which these *Witnesses* could be deceiv'd? Is it possible for any man to be more certain that he ever saw the sun, than these could be that they saw the sick healed, the dead raised, their *Lord* expiring upon

upon the cross, restored again to life, eating, drinking, and conversing familiarly with them forty days together, and ascending up to *Heaven* before their eyes? Is it possible to have greater assurance of any thing we do, or can do, than these could have, that they themselves, and multitudes beside them, had the *gifts* of Languages, Prophecy, and other *Miraculous Powers*; and did perform many *Miracles* in the Name of *Christ*? The *Apostles* therefore justly refer to these means of knowlege, as sure evidences, that they could not be deceiv'd in the *Doctrines* they taught. 2 Pet. ii. 16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; but were EYE-WITNESSES of His Majesty.* And 1 Joh. i. 1. *That which ---- we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon; and our hands have handled of the Word of Life.*

4. As these *Witnesses* were incapable to be deceiv'd themselves, in the *facts* reported by them, so were they without any possible temptation to deceive others, by obtruding falsehoods of this kind upon the *World*.

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THE common springs of great actions lay altogether out of their way ; and could be no motive to 'em, to impose upon mankind in this matter. ---- They could not hope for *honour* or *worldly grandeur*, by appearing in the head of a despised *Party* ; and by being of a *Sett* every where spoken against. They could not make their court to *Princes* and the great men of the World, by a *Religion*, which they all oppos'd and persecuted. They could not ingratiate themselves with the *Jews*, nor gain esteem and applause from them, by subverting their darling constitution, and charging the guilt of most precious *innocent Blood* upon 'em. They could not expect *honour* and reputation from the *Gentiles*, by condemning their manners, decrying their *Religion*, and vilifying their *gods*. No ! they had nothing to expect from their *Doctrine* of the *Cross*, but to be (like their *Matter*) *despised and rejected of men*, and every where loaded with contumely and reproach, stripes and imprisonment. This indeed was what their *Lord* had foretold 'em ; and in just expectation hereof they undertook His service.

AND now let us see whether *Riches* and *Wealth* could be their incentive, to publish these

these *Miracles*, and preach a *crucified Saviour*. So far from it, that poverty and penury, distressing indigency and want of all things, were the necessary consequences of their extremely difficult and perillous travels through the World (to preach this *Doctrine*) where they had nothing to depend upon for sustentation; but that *Providence* which giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens when they cry.

OR could a view to *worldly Ease* and *Pleasure* animate them to their undertaking? Could these be expected, by forsaking their country and kindred, by travelling from *Nation* to *Nation*, both by Sea and Land, and running upon the pikes of all difficulty and danger? Did they not know before-hand, as well as find by experience, that they should be *bated of all men for Christ's Name sake*; and that in every city *bonds and afflictions did abide them*?

UPON the whole then, when we can find men in love with misery and ruin, when we can see Men court poverty and hugg contempt, fetters and bonds; and prefer both a miserable life and death, to riches and honour, liberty and ease, then may we imagine that the *Apostles*

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had some forcible motive to impose *forgeries* and *lies* upon us, in the case before us.

But what sets this matter in the clearest light is, that they sealed this *Testimony* with their *Blood*. Though it be possible that men may be *Martyrs* for a *false Religion*; yet it must be when they think the *Religion true*, for which they die, and so are equally acted by the dictates of *Conscience*, in their sufferings, as if it was indeed the cause of *God*. But now there were multitudes, who parted with their lives in confirmation of the *Christian Religion*, that were themselves the coiners and forgers of the *Doctrine*, if it was an *imposture*. They could not themselves be *deceived* (as I have already prov'd) and therefore their report must necessarily be *true*: Or else they must be charged with sacrificing their lives to confirm a *lie* of their *own inventing*; and a *lie* which the most exquisite *torments* could never cause any *one* of 'em to *retract*, or repent of. In a word, they must be supposed to part with all temporal comfort, with all worldly satisfactions, and even with *life* it self; nay and even to destroy both body and soul *for ever*, without any manner of *reason* or *motive*. And I'm sure this is what every body must allow,

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to be so repugnant to humane nature, as to be altogether *impossible*.

THUS we have seen the strongest *evidence* of these *truths*, that any *Facts* in the World were ever capable of: And have thereby stripp'd *infidelity* of all its armour, and found just satisfaction, that the *Apostles* and other promulgators of the Gospel have approv'd themselves the *Ministers of God*, in their *patience*, in their *afflictions*, *necessities*, *distresses*, *stripes*, *imprisonments*, *tumults*, *labours*, *watchings*, and *fastings*, 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5.

5. THE reported Miracles were matters of Fact, in which it was *impossible* that these *Historians* could *deceive* the World at the time when their *Narratives* were *publish'd*.

LET us first consider this case, with respect to the *Miracles* perform'd by our *Lord*, while tabernacling in the flesh. These (as we observ'd before) are said to be done most *publickly* and openly, in the eye of the World, before the most malignant and implacable *enemies* to *Christ*, who by all their vigilance and subtilty could not detect any deceit or imposture; nor did they charge the *Sacred Story* with falshood or forgery. The *Narratives* were written in the place where the *Facts* were

said to be done, immediately after the performance of those wonderful transactions, when they were fresh in every bodies memory; and when no body could be ignorant of their truth or falshood. Had therefore these *Histories* been false, they must have been so far from gaining repute, and making Profelytes, that they had been censur'd, confuted, and testified against, as the most wicked and impudent *forgeries* that ever the sun saw. They could not have been neglected or disregarded, as too mean and trivial for particular notice: For as they were themselves of greatest importance, so were they esteem'd by the *Jews* (among whom these *Miracles* were both acted and published) of two great moment and consequence, to be slightly overlook'd. This appears by their fortified prejudice, flaming rage, and malicious opposition, both to the *Doctrine* and *Publishers* of the *Gospel*. Whence it plainly appears, nothing but full conviction of the truth of these *Miracles*, could silence all opposition, that not a Dog should move his tongue against them.

BUT what very much strengthens this Argument, is not only the adyeriaries tacit assent to these matters of *Fact*; but their explicit

explicit attestation to some of 'em. Thus does *Josephus*, the *Jewish* Historian, give us an Epitome of the life, death, and resurrection of our *Saviour*, whom he acknowledges a worker of great *Miracles*. *Tacitus* the *Roman* Historian informs us also of the time and circumstances of his death; and *Tiberius* the Emperour, upon a letter from *Pilate*, informing him of the *Miracles*, death, and resurrection of *Christ*, mov'd in *Senate*, that He might be numbered among their *gods*, which was rejected by the *Senate*, because the motion was not first from themselves *. I shall pass over many other Remarks of the like kind; and only observe, that the *Jews* universally from that time till now have acknowledged the truth of these *miraculous* operations; and inform us of many of them, whereof there is no mention in the *Gospels*. They indeed sufficiently manifest their spite and malice against *Christ*, by ascribing (in a most ludicrous manner) His *miraculous* works, to wicked and unlaw-

* See *Baxter's Saints Rest*, Chap. 4. Part II. where many Testimonies of the Adversaries to Christianity may be found.

ful Arts: But the *Facts* themselves they have never denied.

AND now let us take a short view of the case, with respect to those *miraculous gifts* of the *Holy Ghost*, of which we have before treated. These, at the first effusion of the *Spirit*, are said to have been most openly manifested, in the view of *devout men, out of every Nation under Heaven*, in a most public time, place, and manner: The whole World therefore had the advantage of discovering the *fraud*, and of contradicting the *Story*, if this Narrative had been false. --- Besides, the *Apostle* in almost all his *Epistles* to the *Churches*, not only mentions these *Gifts*, as what they themselves had experienced, and were vested with: But frequently directs and exhorts 'em to a right use and improvement of 'em; which implies an *appeal* to the *Churches*, that there were such *Gifts* exercised among them. And what adds strength to the *evidence* is, that the *Apostle* reproves the *Romans* and *Corinthians* for their pride and conceit about these *Gifts*, which occasion'd contentions and parties amongst them (see *Rom.* xii. 3, --- 8. and *1 Cor.* xii, xiii, xiv Chapters.) Now can it

it be imagin'd, that any man in an *Epistle* to a Society, where there are heats and parties, would so particularly have directed 'em to the use, and so largely have reprov'd them for the abuse of such Gifts, as they must all know were not in any of them? This were not only ridiculous conduct, but perfect distraction. And what yet further strengthens this evidence is, that the *Apostle* puts the truth of his *Doctrine* and his *Apostolical authority* upon this proof, when some of the *Churches* were in a great measure drawn away from his *Gospel*, and prefer'd the *Jewish* false *Apostles* with their licentious *Doctrines* before him. This was evidently the case of the *Corinthians* and *Galatians*, and especially the former, unto whom the *Apostle* urges this Argument again and again in his *First Epistle* to 'em: And shews 'em that if he was not an *Apostle* to others, yet doubtless he was to them: For (says he) the Seal of mine *Apostleship* are ye in the Lord, Chap. ix. 2. What this Seal or evidence of his *Apostleship* was, appears from his *Second Epistle*, where he resumes the same Argument, particularly in Chap. xii. 12, 13. Truly the signs of an *Apostle* were wrought

wrought among you, in *SIGNS* and *WONDERS* and *MIGHTY DEEDS*: For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other Churches? And thus he puts the truth of his character and his Gospel upon this single evidence. Gal. iii. 1, 2, 5. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the Truth, &c. This only would I learn of you, Received you the *SPIRIT* by the works of the Law; or by the bearing of Faith? He therefore that ministreth to you the *SPIRIT*, and worketh *MIRACLES* among you, doth He it by the works of the Law, or by the bearing of Faith? Now can it be conceiv'd, that the *Apostle* would put the proof of the Truth of his Gospel, and his *Apostolical* character, upon Gifts of the Holy Ghost, confer'd upon 'em by his instrumentality; and that in a dispute with *false Apostles*, rivalling him in those Churches, when there were no such Gifts among 'em? Such a supposition is the height of absurdity. It was utterly impossible, that these Churches could be impos'd upon in this matter: And it was also impossible to impose upon the World about 'em, who had all imaginable advantages and opportunity to examine these

these *Facts*, and to discover their truth or fallhood *.

UPON the whole, it's as clear as the light, that the World was not, could not be impos'd upon by these reports, when they were first publish'd. Whence the *Apostle* boldly makes that appeal to King *Agrippa*, *Acts* xxvi. 26. *For the King knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: For I am persuaded, that none of these things are hid from him: For this thing was not done in a corner.*

6. WE have also good assurance, that these *Narratives* are handed down *uncorrupted* unto the present time.

THE actions recorded by the *sacred Writers*, were notably famous in the World, such as procur'd great revolutions and alterations in States; and even turn'd *the World upside down*, by the conversion of so many from Superstition and Idolatry, to the true worship of *God*. Whence they were worthy the critical notice of every one. The *Records* have been kept pub-

* If any would see this Argument more largely handled, they may read the foremention'd *Miscellaneous Sacra*, from which I have taken these last hints.

lickly in all ages ; and publicly preach'd by the *Ministers of Christ*, which has given the most negligent *enemy* advantage to discover & detect any fraudulent depravation, or interpolation, had there been any such.

AND what makes this clearer, multitudes of most bitter *Adversaries* have in every age been converted to *Christianity*, who could not want means to discover any *fraud* of this kind ; nor could they profess, and even suffer and dy for a known falshood.

BESIDES, the *Doctrine* taught in this *blessed Book*, rendred the professors of *Christianity* uncapable to corrupt it : No less than eternal damnation is therein denounced against him that shall add or diminish one jot or tittle of the *Sacred Canon*. Should an *Angel from Heaven* teach any other *Doctrine* than what is there taught, he is pronounced *accursed*. What temptation then could any have to vitiate these *Records*, who kept them as their *Rule of life*, and *Charter* for future *Glory* ?

THEY that were *friends* to *Christianity* and believ'd the *History* of these *Miracles*, could not corrupt them, on purpose to procure damnation to their own *Souls*. They that were *enemies* to *Christianity* and disbelieved these truths, would not corrupt them,

them, on purpose to prepare Armour against their own Infidelity. From whence then could such a depravation come, when the interest both of *friends* and *enemies* was every way so strongly against it ?

BUT had any man, or Society of men, never so earnestly desir'd, and never so artfully attempted such an interpolation, it must have been without success: For these *Records* in the very words of the *sacred Penmen*, were immediately in the hands of multitudes of People, translated into various Languages, and dispers'd through *all Nations*, which rendred it impossible for the World to be impos'd upon, by such *fraud* and villainy. 'Twere easier to suppose, that a designing Knave could corrupt our *Magna Charta*, frame a new body of Laws for *England*, trump them upon us, and wheedle us into the belief, that these are and always have been the *Statutes* of the Nation; than to imagine the like corruption in these *Statutes of Heaven*. For the *Statute-Books* are in the hands of but one Nation only: the *New Testament* (as I observ'd) dispers'd through the World, and found in every copy of it to agree, in attesting these miraculous Facts.

THUS have we utmost certainty, that the Accounts of these *Facts*, now in our hands, are the *uncorrupted Writings* of the *Apostles* and *Evangelists*. And thus do we see the promise hitherto fulfilled, that the *Word of the Lord shall endure for ever*, even that *Word* which by the Gospel is preached unto us, 1 Pet. i. 25.

WE are now prepar'd to consider,

III. THAT these *Miracles*, which I have prov'd to have been wrought by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, both before and after His passion, are a full evidence that He was approv'd of God, and had His *Mission* from Him.

THIS may be evinced by the following considerations:

I. THESE *Miracles* are certainly the *work of God* Himself: His direct agency is plainly visible in them.

IF it be possible for any created beings to work a true *Miracle*, yet such their agency must be always under God's controul: otherwise the *infernal powers* might interrupt the revolutions of Nature, and bring the World into a *chaos*. Such *Miracles* therefore, whosoever be the instrumental agent, must be acknowledged *the works of God*. God is Himself as near to the effect when

when He useth Instruments, as when He acts immediately without 'em. But I have put the present issue (as you heard before) upon such *Miracles* only, as are the immediate effects of *Omnipotence*; that there can be no room either for ignorance or malice, to raise any cavil in this case. If the *Facts* are true (as I've already prov'd 'em to be) all the World must own, that the wonderful works which did shew forth themselves in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, were the mighty works of *God*; that those *sacred gifts* which we have consider'd, were certainly *Divine*: And that these did as certainly discover *God's* immediate efficiency, as the works of *Creation*. Whence it's certain, that our Lord *Jesus* had this approbation of the *Deity*, and this seal to His *Commission*, that *God* did by Him, and He by His *Apostles*, perform such stupendous works, as justly amazed the World, and infinitely exceeded the power of all created *Angels*. And it was therefore a just and natural inference, made by *Nicodemus*, Joh. iii. 2. *Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God: For no man can do these Miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

2. It's

2. It's contrary to the goodness and faithfulness of *God* to justify an *Impostor*, or confirm a falshood by *Miracles*.

It is impossible that we should in this imperfect state, have better evidence, that any Person or Doctrine is from *God*, than these *Miracles* are. By these we have visibly before our eyes, *God's* own immediate agency ; We see the extraordinary display of His *Omnipotent power* ; we certainly know that there is the immediate finger of *God* in these mighty works. And our Lord *Jesus* produces this seal of *Heaven*, as a voucher to His Doctrine and Authority : He declares Himself to be the expected *Messiah* ; and these surprizing Wonders are wrought to confirm it. He publishes, by His *Disciples*, His Resurrection from the dead ; and His Ascension into *Heaven*, which are also confirm'd by the same evidence. Both *He* and His *Disciples* appeal to the senses of mankind, that He is indeed what He declares Himself, the *Son of God*, and Lord of Life and Glory ; and that He has indeed been declar'd the *Son of God* with power, by His resurrection from the dead. *God* justifies the appeal from *Heaven*, and gives the visible Testimony of *Miracles*, both before and after His crucifixion,

fixion, that He is His *beloved Son*, in whom He is well pleased. Infidelity can therefore have no place of retreat. We must believe in this *Saviour*, or disbelieve the Attestation of the *God* of truth. If we are deceiv'd, the deceit is inevitable; and the best men in the World, who have the most sincere love to *God*; and despise whatever is desirable or terrible, for His sake and service, are deluded in their most important concerns by *God* Himself. Now can it be imagin'd, can we entertain the least thought, that infinite *Holiness* would thus justify a fraudulent Imposture; that infinite *Truth* and *Faithfulness* would thus seal to a lie; and that infinite *Wisdom* and *Goodness* would thus give up the World to unavoidable error and delusion? No surely! To refuse this *Testimony*, is not only stupidity and madness, that transforms men into bruits; but obstinacy and malice, not far distant from the nature of devils.

THUS we see two most faithful *Witnesses*, the *power* and *veracity* of *God*, depos'd to the truth of our *Saviour's* heavenly Mission. Whence we must divest our selves of reason and humanity, or yield to the irresistible force of our *Lord's* Argument,
 Joh.

Joh. x. 37, 38. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not : But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him.*

I may add to all this :

3. THERE is no Religion under Heaven, that can bring the attestation of Miracles for its confirmation, but the Christian Religion only.

HERE all the Patrons of Infidelity may be challeng'd, to produce one instance since the creation of the World, that looks any thing like a parallel to the case before us. Let 'em search all the Histories of the *pagan deities* ; let 'em call in the help of the *Alcoran*, or what other legendary fables they please ; and bring convincing proof of but one single miracle wrought in confirmation of any other Doctrine. --- I'm sensible they can produce *romantick* and *fabulous Histories* enough, that will discover the fruitful invention of the obscure deceitful Authors ; such as *Philostratus's* Life of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, *Mahomet's* night-journey to Heaven, and the infamous *Popish Legends* : But what attestation have they to the truth of these *Facts*, and what to confirm our belief of 'em ;

'em ; but the bare reports of the unknown *Authors* ? Just as much as can be brought to prove the seventy years sleep of *Epimenides*, *Lucian's* true History, or any other idle *Romance*.

IF the wonders wrought by the *Egyptian Sorcerers* be here objected ; the answer is easy. They were none of 'em *Miracles* of this superior kind, which we have now been considering : none of 'em necessarily discover'd the immediate agency of *Divine Omnipotence*. Besides, they were immediately controlled by greater *miracles*, in which the *Magicians* themselves were forc'd to acknowledge the finger of God : And therefore they were an attestation to nothing else, but *Satan's* impotent malice and shameful foil. *God* serv'd Himself of these *Wonders* ; thereby taking occasion to glorify His own *superior power*. And He might probably permit them for that very end. No man could be deceived by 'em, when there was such an obvious preservative. Upon the whole, I may sum up this *evidence*, by applying of that Text to the present case, in Joh. xv. 24. *If Christ had not done such works as none other man could do, we had not had sin ; but now we have no cloak left for our sin of unbelief.*

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BEFORE

BEFORE I proceed to a particular *Application* of this *Doctrine*, I would here more particularly observe, that whatever has been said to verify the *Divine Mission* of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, may equally serve to confirm the truth and heavenly original of the whole *Christian Religion*. The *Doctrine*, and the *Person of Christ*, are authorized of *God*, by the same seal of *Heaven*. If the *Lord Jesus* be indeed the *Son of God* and *Redeemer* of mankind, His *Institutions* must be worthy of His glorious *Nature and Office*. If the *Apostles*, and other holy *Writers*, were indeed *commission'd* and *inspir'd* of Him, they were equally incapable to deceive us, in an affair of everlasting consequence.

If it be demanded, how can we be certain that the *sacred Penmen* were *Divinely inspir'd*, in writing the *New Testament*? I answer, we have the same assurance of this, as of the matters of *Fact* by them reported. They themselves attest it. They have prov'd themselves persons of probity and integrity. They could not be deceiv'd in this matter, but must certainly know whether they were acted by a *heavenly Inspiration*, or not. They could have no temporal inducement, to obtrude false
Doctrine,

Doctrine, any more than false *History* upon us; but sealed both with their *blood*. And we have the same security, that both have been handed down uncorrupted to our times.

To all which we have this additional evidence, that *God* declared from *Heaven* his approbation of their *Doctrine*, by the gifts of the *Holy Ghost* confer'd upon them. *Christ* promised them this seal to their *Commission*, that the works that He did, they should do also; and greater works than these, when He was gone to the *Father*, Joh. xiv. 12. And that He would send the promise of His *Father* upon them; and endue them with *Power* from on high, Luk. xxiv. 49. Which promise was visibly verified to 'em. The *Holy Spirit* did (as was promis'd) descend from *Heaven* upon 'em, and instantly invest them with the knowledge of various *Languages* (so that they could speak them with their peculiar idioms and accents) and with the several other gifts, which we have before consider'd; whereby they were qualified to travel through the *Nations*, and universally publish the glad tidings of *Salvation*. And wherever they went, they made the *Gentiles* obedient, by word and deed, through mighty *Signs and Wonders*, by the *Power* of the *Spirit*

of God, Rom. xv. 18, 19. They every where confirm'd their *Doctrine*, by leaving behind 'em some *miraculous* blessing, either upon the body, or mind, or both. Serpents were tamed, devils ejected, the sick healed, and the dead raised at their word. And we have the most unquestionable evidence of these *Facts*, that we can have of any thing not done in our own sight, as you heard before. We are therefore constrain'd to give a full and entire assent to all the *Doctrines* of Christianity, as *what God has born Witness to, both with signs and wonders; and with divers Miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will,* Heb. ii. 4. But it's time we draw to a

C O N C L U S I O N.

THIS *Doctrine* teaches us what indispensable *obligations* we ly under, to a life of holy *obedience* to this precious *Saviour*, whom the Father hath *sanctified*, sent into the *World*, and thus incontestibly declar'd to be *His beloved Son*, in whom He is well pleased.

I hope, what you have heard, has brought you without any *hesitancy* to conclude
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with Philip, Joh. i. 45. *We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph.* Whence you'll all be ready to address our Lord, in the language of Nathanael, *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.* But it concerns you also to consider, that *Christ came to save His people from their sins, and not in them. He came to redeem us from all iniquity; and to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* And the design of the Gospel is, *to turn men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Christianity consists not meerly in speculation, but in practice. We must not only give our assent to the *truth* of the Gospel, but give up our hearts to *Christ.* The *Faith* which He requires, is not a slight superficial belief, that He is the Redeemer of mankind; but such a *Faith* as will form us into subjection and obedience to Himself.

Do we believe that *Jesus Christ* is our *only Saviour*, what stupidity, what madness then is it, to reject or neglect Him, and His tendered Salvation, to retain our lusts and perish in them! Do we believe the *truth* of the Gospel, and can we notwithstanding

standing be deaf to all its gracious invitations; and despise all its promises and threatenings, as if they were meer *Fables*! Are we lifted up to *Heaven* by the exhibitions of so *great a Salvation*; and shall we nevertheless cast our selves down to *Hell*, by wilfully refusing it, and preferring our sinful pleasures before it! This is not only to reproach our holy profession; but to bring such a degree of guilt upon our own Souls, as will render us most inexcusable, and most aggravatedly miserable at last. Let us therefore *that name the name of Christ, depart from iniquity*. Let His Throne be set up in our hearts, that all our faculties may bow down to Him. Let us chuse Him for our portion, seek an interest in Him with importunate earnestness and diligence, depend upon Him *as the Lord our Righteousness*, and live to Him with our whole hearts. If we thus come to Him, He will in no wise cast us out: But otherwise, our most flourishing profession will not secure us from having our portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers, in the day of *Retribution*.

I am sensible, that there lies an *Objection* yet in our way: Some may be ready to say, *How shall we know in what way to serve*

serve Christ to His acceptance? There are so many particular *Sects* and *Parties* among professed Christians, each of whom censure and condemn the other, that we know not where to find rest for the soles of our feet; nor in which of these different *paths*, to steer our course for *Heaven*.

THIS *Objection*, I confess, may procure trouble and difficulty to some sincere and well-minded persons; as well as offence and scandal to them of a wavering and unsettled *Faith*. I shall therefore spend the remaining time before us, in obviating this difficulty; and in giving you plain directions, how you may be infallibly secure of serving *Christ* acceptably here; and of inheriting the reward of a *patient continuance in well-doing* hereafter.

I. THEN labour to make sure of a *true and lively Faith* in *Jesus Christ*.

No one of what ever *Sect* or *Party* ever did or ever will get to *Heaven*, without a true unfeigned *Faith*; nor will any true *Believer*, however denominated, fall short of *Eternal life*. *Faith* transforms the Soul into the *Divine Nature*; and *God* cannot be displeas'd with His own *Image*, wherever it is. Our great concern therefore is, to fly to the *blood* of *Christ* for cleansing,
and

and to His *Righteousness* for justification ; to ly at the footstool of His grace, with a humble sense of our own nothingness, and with importunate suits for the sanctifying influences of His *Holy Spirit*, whereby we may receive *Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in Him*. If we are chargeable with many mistakes, in matters not essential to Salvation ; yet being cloathed with the *Righteousness of Christ*, we shall appear *without spot and blameless, the sons of God, without rebuke*, in the great day of trial. In that day it will not be enquired, *Who is of Paul ? who of Apollos ? or who of Cephas ?* But who is savingly united unto *Jesus Christ ?* And then shall the promise be certainly verified, in Joh. iii. 16. That *who-soever believeth in Him, shall not perish, but have Everlasting life*.

2. EVIDENCE the truth and sincerity of your *Faith*, by a *holy and heavenly life*.

FAITH without *Holiness* is as a carcase without breath. *Whosoever is born of God, doth not (cannot) commit sin*, 1 Joh. iii. 9. The allow'd practice of any sin, either of omission or commission, is inconsistent with the quality and grace of a Regenerate state. There is no middle between a *Saint* and an *Unbeliever* : So that to entertain
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hopes of our justification, and yet live an idle or sensual life, is to compass our selves about with sparks of our own kindling, that will expose us at last to ly down in sorrow. The best means therefore to discover the sincerity of our profession, and the safety of our state is to *shew our Faith by our Works*. If we are true *Believers*, our hearts are purified by Faith: And if we are pure in heart, we shall see God. Let us then walk as becomes the Gospel of Christ. Let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness, in the fear of God. And God will approve Himself no respecter of persons, but in every Nation, and in every Sect and Party, *he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted of Him*, Acts x. 34, 35.

3. EMBRACE and live upon those *Doctrines* which tend most to *debase your selves*, and *magnify the free grace of God*.

THE whole of our Salvation, from the first corner stone, unto its compleat perfection in Glory, is a continued series of infinite free Grace. *By Grace are we saved through Faith, and that not of our selves, it is the gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. Mercy must shine forth in its brightest glory, if such guilty rebels, as we, are saved, and such

brands are pluck'd out of the fire of sin and hell. Wherefore if we ever hope to find acceptance with our Lord *Jesus Christ*, we must come to Him with an impressed sense, that we are *poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked*, that we deserve nothing but wrath; and can do nothing that will entitle us to His favour. We must come to Him both for power to serve Him, and for a gracious acceptance of our services, for His own sake, and not for ours. We must remember that we are indigent *beggars*, that live only upon Alms; that we are *criminal delinquents*, that are kept from execution by meer sparing goodness; and therefore, have our whole dependance upon *Christ*; to do all in us and for us; *to be of God unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption*. In a word, we must not depend upon *works of Righteousness that we have done, or can do*; but count all as *loss and dung*, that we may win *Christ*, and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the Law; but that which is through the Faith of *Christ*, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith, Phil. iii. 8, 9.

It's remarkable, that most of the *Heresies* that have ever sprung up in the Church, have

have some way or other expos'd those fundamental Articles of our Faith and Hope, the Sovereignty of free Grace in our Sanctification, and the necessity of Christ's imputed Righteousness, in order to our Justification and acceptance with God. But my Soul, come not thou into their secret: mine honour, be not thou united to their assembly, who thus depreciate the grace of God, and the satisfaction of Christ, and thus subvert the whole scope and design of the Gospel. Let us avoid all such errors, as most dangerous shelves and quicksands, in our voyage to Heaven, whoever profess 'em, and with what colours soever they are painted; And venture our Salvation only upon unmerited Mercy, hoping to be justified freely by God's Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ, Rom. iii. 24. ---- Let Christ have all the glory of our Salvation now, that we may hereafter join with those that shall ascribe Glory and Dominion, for ever and ever, to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and made us Kings and Priests, unto God and His Father.

4. RELIGIOUSLY attend all the Ordinances and Institutions of Christ.

LET the Word of Christ be your *Rule of Worship*, your Directory in the service of God. Let it be your care to *keep the Ordinances as they have been delivered to you* in the holy Scriptures; And while you adhere to this Rule, be not ashamed to confess, that *after the way, which some call Heresy or Schism, so worship you the God of your Fathers*. It must be the character of every true *Christian*, that he endeavours to walk in all the *Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord, blameless*, Luk. i. 6. Tho' the means of Grace may want all that external pomp, beauty, or ornament, that will recommend them to a carnal eye, as worthy of special regard; yet how weak and foolish soever they may appear, they are the *institutions of God*, which He will therefore own and bless. *It has pleased God by the foolishness of His Ordinances to save them that believe*, 1 Cor. i. 21. And we have no reason to hope for Salvation, in the contempt or wilful neglect of them. If we would find *Christ*, we must seek him where He walks, *in the midst of His golden Candlesticks*. If we would inherit the blessing, we must *watch daily at Christ's gates, and wait at the posts of His doors*. Whoever pretend any other way to Heaven,

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ven, than this path of Ordinances, which God has mark'd out for us, *after the first and second admonition reject them.*

5. CONCERN your selves as little as possible with matters of *doubtful disputation* : But where you must be of a party *chuse the charitable side.*

THERE will be different sentiments among Christians, as long as we are on this side *Jordan*. We shall not come to an exact *unity* in all Articles of Faith, until *that which is in part shall be done away* ; and we know even as also we are known. But can't we bear with the different thoughts, as well as different complections of those that agree with us in the essentials of *Christianity* ; and receive one another, as *Christ also received us, to the glory of God* ? Have we no way to approve our selves *Disciples of the Prince of Peace*, but by wranglings, contentions, strife and debate ? This is a direct means to destroy all practical Religion ; and wholly root out all serious *vital Piety*.

It's true, we can't our selves be of two contrary persuasions. It's of necessity, that we part ways with those, in some disputed points, with whom we may agree in the main Foundations of our Faith and Hope ;

Hope; and with whom we hope to join in eternal *Anthems of praise*. But how shall *plain and weak Christians* act in this case? How shall they know with what party to join? It's impossible that I should now descend to particular Directions in this case; I must therefore content myself with commending that general rule of the *Apostle*, 2 Tim. ii. 22. *Follow righteousness, faith, CHARITY, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* Never herd your selves with those that are for cutting off all the *Protestant Churches*, but themselves, from the *fold of Christ*; nor expect to be sav'd by damning every body but your selves.

FINALLY, Constantly and fervently commit your Souls to the keeping and conduct of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

WE are liable to a thousand *mistakes*; but we have a safe and sure *Pilot*, upon whom we may boldly depend. *If we commit our way to Him, He will bring it to pass.* If He leaves us to lesser *mistakes*, He will save us from *damning errors*, unless our own sin and sloth put us out of His protection. We must therefore not only carefully and diligently try our selves; but with greatest earnestness and constancy, implore

implore the directions of His *Holy Spirit*; and wrestle with Him by earnest Prayer, that He will *search us and try us, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way Everlasting*: That He will *guide us by His counsel, and afterward bring us to glory*. And in that way, we may with courage conclude with the *Apostle*, 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have trusted; and am persuaded, that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him, against that day.*



F I N I S.

