

Justification is call'd *Justification of life*, because while our sins are unpardon'd, and we are under the sentence of condemnation, we are dead in Law; but being justified and pardon'd, we are, as it were, restored to life again.

2. Because in the Phrase of Scripture we are said to be Regenerate, and Sanctified, and Justified by Faith, as well as saved. 1 *John* 5. 1. *He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* Gal. 2. 20. *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God; speaking of the new life of Sanctification.* And Col. 2. we are said to be *risen with Christ*, that is, born to a new Life, *by the Faith of the operation of God, that raised up Jesus from the dead; and to be justified by Faith*, in innumerable places. So that it is very probable upon these accounts that the Evangelist here, when he says, that *believing you might have life in his name*, doth intend to take in Regeneration and Justification, as well as eternal life, which is the consummation of all the Blessings of the Gospel. I come now to the Observation, *viz.*

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That

That this Faith of the Gospel, which I have described, is truly and properly a Sanctifying, and Justifying, and Saving Faith.

I. I shall shew that it is properly a Sanctifying Faith.

II. A Justifying and Saving Faith.

I. It is truly Sanctifying. I know that this term of a Sanctifying Faith, is not much in use among Divines, and therefore it may seem a little more strange : but they might have used it if they had pleased, for it is every whit as proper to call Faith *sanctifying*, as *justifying* or *saving*. It is true indeed, this express term of a *sanctifying Faith* is no where in Scripture ; no more are the very terms of *justifying* and *saving Faith* : but we are said *to be justified* and *saved by Faith* in Scripture, which is as much as if the terms had been used. And we are said also to be *sanctified by Faith*, as well as *justified* and *saved*, Acts 15. 9. Our hearts are said to be *purified by Faith*. And so likewise, our *victory over the world* that

that is, our conquering and subduing of our covetous, and ambitious, and sensual lusts and desires, are in a peculiar manner ascribed to this *Faith* which I have described, *1 John 5. 4, 5. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

II. That this *Faith* is truly and properly justifying, and saving *Faith*. I put these, *Justification* and *Salvation*, together, partly because they are of the same consideration, as to the influence which *Faith* hath upon them; and the latter follows upon the former; for if we be *justified by Faith*, that is, have our sins pardoned, by the same act of *Faith* we are *saved* from Hell, and consequently made capable of eternal life; I say, by the very same act of *Faith* that we obtain the pardon of our sins, we are saved from Hell, that is the punishment due to sin; for pardon removes the guilt, and guilt is nothing else but an obligation to punishment: and partly, because I find the Scripture useth them promiscuously.

*Believing Jesus to be the Christ,*

culously. When St. *James* disputes about Justification by Faith, he uses the term of being *saved by Faith*, Jam. 2. 14. *Can Faith save him?* Sometimes, of being *justified*, ver. 24. *So that a man is not justified by Faith only.*

In speaking to this Proposition, that the Faith of the Gospel, which I have described, is properly Justifying and Saving Faith, I shall do these *six* things.

1. Shew that Justification in Scripture signifies no more than the Pardon and Remission of sins.

2. That Faith can in no propriety of Language be said to be the instrument of our Pardon.

3. That the influence that the Faith of the Gospel which I have described, hath upon the Pardon of sin, is this that it is the whole and entire condition required on our parts, upon the performance of which God hath promised to Pardon our sins, and to save us.

4. That

4. That the Scripture where it treats of Justification by Faith, speaks of this Faith which I have described, and no other.

5. That no metaphorical descriptions of Justifying Faith are allowable, any farther than as they serve to illustrate and make clear the plain and simple notion of the thing. For if Metaphors once come to be insisted on, and strained, and consequences come to be drawn from them, and Doctrines founded, and Theories built upon them, they are of very ill consequence, and serve to no other purpose but to blind and obscure the plain and simple notions of things, and to seduce and mis-lead the understandings of men, and to multiply controversies without end. And I the rather take notice of this abuse of Metaphors upon this subject, because I do not know any other head of Divinity which hath suffered so much by them, as the Doctrine of Justifying Faith; whereby the plain truth hath been very much obscur'd, and occasion minister'd to many endless disputes.

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6. That

6. That if this plain and simple notion of Justifying Faith were admitted, it would supersede all those controversies about Justification, which have so much troubled the Church. These particulars I shall by God's assistance speak to, not out of a mind to oppose and contradict others; (what a pitiful design is that! and how much below one that is to speak to men, in the name and fear of God!) but out of a hearty desire to bring the truth to light, and to contribute something to the clearing of that which is of so great importance and concernment to Christian Religion.

1. That Justification of a sinner in Scripture, signifies no more than the Pardon of sin. That there are several acceptations of the word Justification in the New Testament, I deny not. Sometimes it signifies approbation in general of a thing, or person. So the word is used, *Luke 7. 29. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the Baptism of John. Justified God, How is that? that is, they approved*  
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and followed his Counsel, as appears Sermon  
evidently by the opposition in the next VIII.  
words; *But the Pharisees and Lawyers  
rejected the counsel of God against them-  
selves, being not baptized of him.* Those  
that *rejected the counsel of God*, are op-  
posed to those that *justified God*. And  
so at the 35. ver. *But Wisdom is justi-  
fied of her children*, that is, is approved.  
And so very probably it may be un-  
derstood in the Parable of the Pharisee  
and the Publican, *I tell you, this man  
went down to his house justified rather  
than the other*; that is, of the two,  
God did rather approve of his hum-  
ble carriage, than the Pharisees proud  
and insolent behaviour. Sometimes  
it signifies any Proof or Declaration of  
a thing. So Rom. 3. 4. *Let God be true,  
but every man a liar, as it is written,  
That thou mightest be justified in thy say-  
ings, and mightest overcome when thou art  
judged*, that is, that all thy words or pro-  
mises might be proved and declared to  
be true, and that thou may'st prevail  
whenever thou art impleaded by men  
of unfaithfulness and unrighteousness.  
And so 1 Tim. 3. 16. Christ is said to  
be *justified in the spirit*; that is, by  
the Testimony of the Spirit concerning  
him;

*Justification and Pardon,*

him, as also by the Miracles which he wrought by the Holy Ghost, and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit which were pour'd forth on the Apostles, he was proved and declared to be the true *Messias*, and the Son of God. And this Phrase of *Christ's being justified by the Spirit*, seems to be of the same sense with that expression, *Rom. 1. 4. Declared to be the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*, that is, he was evidently proved to be the Son of God, by the great Miracle of his Resurrection, which was wrought by the Power of the Holy Ghost. But most frequently, to Justifie, in Scripture, signifies to Pardon.

Thus the word Justifie, doth signifie variously, according to the subject or matter it is applied to: but when it is applied to a sinner, it signifies nothing else but Pardon of his sin. Nor can I possibly apprehend what other notion men can frame to themselves, of a sinner's being Justified, distinct from Pardon and Remission. Indeed if a person be not really guilty, that  
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is unjustly accused of a crime, he may be said to be justified, when he is cleared from the charge and accusation which is brought against him: but if a Man be guilty, he cannot otherwise be said to be justified than by having the guilt removed; that is, by being pardoned. And that the Scripture understands the same thing by Justification, and Pardon, or Remission of sins, is, I think, very evident from these two Texts. *Acts 13. 38, 39. That through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; that is, in and through Jesus Christ the way of Pardon and Forgiveness is declared, and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses; that is, and according to this declaration, all that do believe, are by him, that is, by the virtue of his Sacrifice, acquitted and cleared from the guilt of all those sins, for which there was no way of expiation provided by the Law of Moses, that is, of presumptuous sins, for which there was no Sacrifice, but the Man was to be cut off. Now if the meaning of this Text be this,*  
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that in and through *Christ* the way of Pardon and Forgiveness is declared, and accordingly all that do believe in him are pardon'd, then to be justified and pardoned, are all one in this place; but this is the meaning of the Text, if by the Phrase of being *justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses*, be meant the pardoning of such Sins and Transgressions, for which, by the Law of *Moses* there was no way of expiation: but this must of necessity be the meaning of this Phrase; for what are *those things, from which it is said, we could not be justified by the Law of Moses*, but sinful transgressions and violations of the Law? And how can a Man be said to be *justified from any sin and transgression*, otherwise than by the Pardon and Forgiveness of it? The other Text is *Rom. 4. 6, 7, 8. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. The Man unto whom God imputeth Righteousness, is the Man*  
whom

whom God justifies. Now, how does David describe the blessedness of the Man whom God justifies? Thus, *Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*, which is a Metaphorical expression of the same thing, *covering of sin* being the pardoning of it. From hence I reason, If according to the Apostle those Propositions be equivalent, *Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven*, and *Blessed is the man whom God Justifies*, then according to the Apostle, Justification and Forgiveness of sins are all one: but those Propositions are equivalent, if the Apostle cite the Text out of the *Psalms* pertinently.

2. That Faith can in no tolerable propriety of Language be said to be the instrument of our Pardon, and consequently not of our Justification. An instrument is something subordinate to the principal efficient Cause, and made use of it, by it to produce the Effect; and this in natural and artificial Causes may be understood, but what notion to have of a moral instrument, I confess I am at a loss. But to bring the business out of the clouds,

clouds ; We may thus conceive of the pardon of sin. God in the Gospel hath entred into a Covenant of Grace and Mercy with Sinners ; one of the Benefits promised by God in the Covenant, is pardon of sin. The Conditions upon which we shall be made partakers of the Benefit, are comprehended in this one word, *Faith*, which signifies the whole of Christian Religion, *viz.* such an effectual assent to the Revelation of the Gospel, as doth produce Repentance, and sincere Obedience, and a trust and confidence in *Christ* alone for Salvation. The procuring or meritorious Cause of this Benefit, *viz.* the pardon of our sins, is the death of Christ, which is called his Blood or Sacrifice. The principal efficient Cause of our pardon is God, in the Sentence of the Law, or which is all one, in the tenor of this Covenant, declaring us pardon'd upon these terms and conditions. Now how can Faith, which is an act on our parts, and the condition to be performed by us, be said to be an Instrument in the hand of God of our Pardon ; unless men will think fit to call a  
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*of our Justification:*

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Sermon  
VIII.

Condition an Instrument, which I think  
no propriety of Language will allow.

I should now proceed to the *third*  
particular which I propos'd, but shall  
refer that to my next Discourse on this  
Argument.

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this is truly and properly Justifying and Saving Faith, in speaking to which, I propos'd to shew *six* things.

1. That Justification in Scripture signifies no more, but the Pardon and Remission of sins.

2. That Faith can in no propriety of Language, be said to be the Instrument of our pardon. Thus far I have gone, and now proceed to what remains, *viz.* to shew,

3. That the influence which Faith hath upon the Pardon of sin, is this, that it is the whole and entire condition, required in the Gospel, of our pardon, upon the performance of which God hath promised to pardon sin; which appears thus. All the conditions the Gospel requires on our part in order to Pardon, may be reduced to these *four* heads.

(1.) An Assent to the Truth of the Gospel.

(2.) A Trust and Confidence in Christ as our only Saviour.

(3.) Re-



(3.) Repentance from dead works.

(4.) Sincere obedience and Holiness of Life. But I have already proved at large, that all these are comprehended in the New Testament notion of Faith, which signifies the whole of Christian Religion. And that Repentance and Obedience are Conditions of our Pardon, and consequently of our Justification, appears from these Texts, *Acts 3. 19. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* Doth not this imply that upon condition we do repent and be converted, God will Pardon our sins? *1 John 1. 9. If we confess our sins, (that is, with a Resolution to leave them; as it is said elsewhere, he that confesseth, and forsaketh his sins;) he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* *Matt. 6. 14, 15. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses.* And to the same purpose, *Matt. 18. 35. So*

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*The Faith which justifies, comprehends likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. Luke 6. 37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. Luke 11. 4. And forgive us our sins: for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. Where doth the Scripture make any thing more plainly a Condition of Pardon, than it here does our forgiving of others? upon condition of the performance whereof he promises to forgive us; and without which he threatens not to forgive us. I know not what a Condition is, if it be not that which if we perform we shall receive the benefit promised; if we do not, we shall fall short of it.*

4. That the Scripture where it speaks of Justification by Faith, speaks of this Faith, and no other, of such a Faith as takes in the whole of Christian Religion. The principal places where the Scripture designedly treats of Justification by Faith, are the 3d  
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and 4th. Chapters of the Epistles to the *Romans*; the 2d. and 3d. to the *Galatians*; and the 2d. of *St. James*. In the *Romans* and *Galatians* *St. Paul* doth plainly oppose Faith to the Law, and the Righteousness of it to the Works of the Law; and it will clearly appear to any one that will carefully read over these Discourses of *St. Paul's*, that by Faith is meant the Dispensation of the Gospel, and by the Law the Mosaical Administration: and the result of all those Discourses is, that men are not justified by performing the works which the legal Dispensation required; but by assenting and submitting to the Revelation of the Gospel. And this is agreeable to what he says, *Acts* 13. 38, 39. *Through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins; and by him, all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

It is true likewise, that the Apostle, in the Epistle to the *Romans*, doth not only dispute against those who simply contended for Justification by the legal Dispensation; but were falsn al-

so into the gross error and mistake, that they did merit Justification and Pardon at God's hand ; which is impossible : for Pardon is free, and of grace, or else it is not Pardon. Therefore the Apostle asserts, that we are so justified by Faith, that neither our Assent to the Gospel, nor our Obedience to the Commands of it, do merit this at God's hands ; for this would directly contradict Justification by the Faith of the Gospel. For how can any Man possibly think, that he merits Pardon by his believing and obeying the Gospel, when this is part of the Gospel which we believe, that Christ died for our sins, and purchased our Pardon at so dear a rate ; which had been very unjust, if we our selves could have done any thing to have merited it.

And that Faith is taken for the Revelation of the Gospel, in opposition to the legal Administrations, will appear by considering these Texts. *Gal. 3. 23. But before faith came, we were kept under the law ;* by which the Apostle plainly means this, that before the Revelation of the Gospel to the  
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World, we were under the legal Administration: for he adds afterwards, *We were shut up unto the Faith that should afterward be revealed*; and what is *the Faith that should afterward be revealed*, but the Gospel? which in the fulness of time was to be revealed to the World, till which time we were held under the dispensation of the Law: and ver. 24. *Wherefore the law was our Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by Faith*; that is, The Law was a Discipline preparatory for the Gospel, that when that came, we might be justified by it: and ver. 25. *But after that Faith is come, we are no longer under a Schoolmaster*, that is, After the Gospel was revealed, we were set free from the severe and harsh Dispensation of the Law; and our Assent and Submission to that Revelation, is that whereby we are said to be justified. Rom. 3. 23. *Even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Gospel, unto all, and upon all them that believe.* And ver. 26. *That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*; τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, *the justifier of him that*

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yields

yields Assent and Submission to the Gospel of Christ. And this Faith is said to be *imputed to us for Righteousness*, Chap. 4. 24. *But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; that is, If we assent and submit to the Revelation of the Gospel, which God hath confirmed by that eminent Miracle of raising up Christ from the dead.*

St. James tells us most expressly, that the Faith which justifies doth contain Obedience in it: and if it do not, it is dead, and false, and ineffectual to all purposes of Pardon and Salvation: and that if any Man pretend to Faith, and that Faith be destitute of the proper and genuine Effects of true Faith, it will be unprofitable to him, and not at all avail to his Justification and Salvation. The sum of his Discourse is, that the Faith which justifies and saves us, must not only be a bare Assent of the understanding to the Truths of the Gospel; but must include in it Obedience to all the Commands of the Gospel: and if it does not, it does no more deserve the name  
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of Faith, than good words to a Man in want, deserve the name of Charity. *Chap. 2. ver. 14, 15, 16, 17.* Sermon IX.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath Faith, and hath not works? can Faith save him? If a Brother or Sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit? Even so Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. And to this purpose he instanceth in Abraham, and Rahab, and shews that the Faith which justified them, did include in it the Effects of Faith, viz. Obedience, and good Works, ver. 21, 22. Was not Abraham our Father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the Altar? Seest thou how Faith wrought with his works, and by works was Faith made perfect? And, ver. 23. And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for Righteousness. But if Abraham were justified by works, viz. by offering up his Son upon the Altar, in Obedience to

to God's Command, as he says before, at the 21. verse, how was the Scripture fulfilled, which saith, that Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness, that is, He was justified by Faith; unless Faith take in the works of Obedience? From whence he concludes, that by works a man is justified, and not by Faith only; not by naked Assent to the truth, but by such a Faith as includes Obedience; which he farther illustrates by a similitude at the last verse; *As the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without works is dead also.* A living Faith doth as truly contain Obedience in it, as a living body contains a Spirit.

And those distinctions which are commonly applied to this Discourse of St. James do not clear it, but contradict the express design of it. Some say that *fides quæ est viva justificat; sed non qua viva.* Faith which is living justifies; but not as a living Faith. Others say, (which is much to the same purpose) *Fides justificat sine operibus; sed fides sine operibus non justificat.* Faith justifies without works; but Faith with



without works does not justify. But St. James says expressly, that we are justified by works. How then is that true, that Faith justifies without works? And he says that Works are the Life of our Faith. How then can any Man say, that tho' Faith justifies; yet not as it is a living Faith, when we are justified by that which is the very life of our Faith, and that is Obedience?

There are two other distinctions whereby men endeavour to elude this plain Text, which I did not mention before; that Faith justifies the Person; and Works justify the Faith, and that this is St. James his meaning. But what ground for this, when the Text speaks expressly of the Person being justified by works, as well as Faith? Was not Abraham our Father justified by Works? ver. 21. You see then that by works a man is justified; and not by Faith only. Ver. 24. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works? What colour is here for any Man to say, that St. James does not speak of the Justification of the Person by works; but of the Faith? Or what

what necessity of framing this distinction, but only to serve an opinion? But at this rate a Man may maintain any thing, tho' it be never so contrary to Scripture, and elude the clearest Text in the Bible.

The other distinction which is much to the same sense, is that the Apostle doth not here speak of a real Justification before God ; but a declarative Justification before men. But according to this, what sense can be made of *ver. 14. What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say, I have faith; and have not works? Can Faith save him? That is, according to this explication, can Faith without Works save him before men?*

And this doth not contradict St. Paul, who saith *Gal. 2. 16. that A man is not justified by the works of the law: but by the Faith of Jesus Christ.* For how does this, that we are justified not by the legal Dispensation, but by the Faith of the Gospel, which includes Obedience and good works, contradict what St. James lays, that we are not justified by a bare assent  
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to the Truth of the Gospel, but by Obedience to the Commands of it? Sermon IX.

And I do not see that upon the contrary supposition, *viz.* that the Faith of the Gospel doth not include Obedience in it, it is possible to reconcile these two Apostles. Suppose this was St. Paul's meaning, that *we are justified by Faith*, as the only Condition and Instrument, call it what they will of our justification; but not by Obedience or good Works, as a condition of our Justification; by what kind of Comment can St. James his words be brought to this sense? What Man would allow that those words at the 21. *ver.* *Was not Abraham our Father justified by works, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar,* should be explained by this sense? Was not *Abraham*, when in Obedience to God's Command he had offer'd his Son upon the Altar, and upon this Act of Obedience was justified, was not he justified by Faith only, and not by any work or act of Obedience? Or that those words at the 24. *verse,* *Ye see then that by works a man is justified; and not by Faith only,* should be interpreted

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*False notions of justifying Faith.*

ed, Ye see then that by Faith only a Man is justified, and not by Works? And unless they be thus interpreted, they are not to be reconciled with the sense of *St. Paul's* words, which many fasten upon them: but if *St. Paul's* words be taken in the most plain and obvious sense they are capable of, *viz.* that *we are not justified by the works of the law*, that is, by performing the works required by the legal Dispensation; *but by the faith of Jesus Christ*, that is, by assenting and submitting to the Revelation of the Gospel; we do not strain *St. James* his words, to reconcile him with *St. Paul*.

And thus I have shewn, that where the Scripture speaks of Justification by Faith, it speaks of this Faith which I have described. I add, and of no other; not of a bare appropriation of the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel; that is, in plain *English*, this is not justifying Faith, to believe that I am pardoned, and justified; nor to have a firm assurance of this. For if we be justified by Faith, we must believe before we can be justified; but if this be justifying Faith to believe,  
or

or be assured we are justified, we must be justified before we believe; or else when we believe that we are justified, we must believe that which is not true. Nor is this justifying Faith, to lay hold of the Righteousness and Merits of Christ for the Pardon of our sins; that is, to trust and confide only in that, as the meritorious Cause of our Pardon. For tho' this be part of the notion of justifying Faith, it is not all; tho' this be one of the Terms or Conditions upon which we are justified; yet it is not the whole and intire condition; which besides this takes in an assent to the whole Gospel, Repentance from dead works, and Obedience to all the Precepts of the Gospel. And if any Man can produce any one Text which saith, that the Faith which justifies, consists only in the trust and confidence in the Merits of Christ, for the Pardon of sin, or any thing to this effect, I will be most ready publickly to acknowledge my error: but if no body can do this, I shall beg their Pardon if I do continue still of the same mind I was.

I have now done with the *fourth* thing I propounded: but before I speak to the *two* heads which remain, I must remove an Objection or two, that my former Discourse may seem liable to.

Objection *first*, To make Obedience a Condition of Pardon seems to take away the freeness of God's Grace in pardoning sinners.

1. God's Grace in pardoning a sinner is said to be free, not because it is not suspended upon any Condition; for the Scripture tells us plainly, that it is upon the condition of Faith, and Repentance, and forgiving others, and the like: but it is free because God was pleased freely to give his Son to die for our sins, and to accept of his Sacrifice for the expiation of them, and to impose easie and reasonable Conditions upon us, in order to our enjoying of this benefit; and upon such Conditions, tho' they have nothing of Virtue or Merit, of any Natural or Moral Efficacy to deserve,

deserve, or procure such a Benefit as the Pardon of our sins, for the sake of his Son, whom he gave to be a ransom for us, to receive us to Grace and Mercy; and I think this abundantly enough to make our justification very gracious and free, tho' not absolutely free from all condition.

2. Our Salvation is said in Scripture to be as free as our Justification; we are said *to be saved by Grace*, as well as *justified freely by his Grace*. But will any Man say, that we are saved without any Conditions, who reads these Texts? *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. If ye walk after the flesh, ye shall die: but if thro' the spirit, ye mortifie the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* So that he who can understand how we may be saved by Grace, tho' our Salvation be suspended upon the Condition of Faith, Repentance, and Holiness, and Obedience of life, may, if he please, understand

derstand how we may be justified freely by God's Grace, tho' it be upon the same Conditions. So that if men were not monstrously perverse, it is impossible they should not see the weakness of this Objection.

Objection the *second*. This is the Doctrine of the Papists, that Obedience and good Works are a Condition of our justification.

*Answe*. 1. I am for the Doctrine which is evidently contained in Scripture, whoever hold it. A Man ought not to be frightened out of the truth by any name.

2. But there is a wide difference between the Doctrine of the Papists about justification, and this Doctrine. They say that Obedience and good Works are not only a Condition of our justification, but a meritorious Cause of it; which I abhor as much as any one. It is the Doctrine of *merit* that the Protestants chiefly oppose in the matter of justification; and if some also oppose the Papists about good Works being a Condition, I know no  
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body that thinks himself obliged to hold every opinion that any Protestant hath maintained against the Papists: and the like I say to the Objection of *Socinianism*, and *Arminianism*, and a hundred names more, if people think fit to fasten them upon it.

Sermon  
IX.

And now I might compare this Doctrine with the contrary. All that may be said against it is, that it diminisheth the Grace of God: but that I have shewn it doth not; but then it hath these advantages. It is so far as I can judge, (and mine own judgment must govern me) much more plainly contained in Scripture, and it is a Doctrine more *according to godliness*, it tends more to quicken men to Obedience and a holy life, to believe that they cannot have their sins otherwise pardon'd, than to believe that they may have their sins pardon'd without Obedience and a holy life; and if Obedience be not a necessary condition of Pardon, it is plain that men may be pardon'd without it. For Example, if a Man promise me a thousand Pounds, only upon this condition; that I will believe him and trust him, but

without any Condition of doing what he shall command me, and he shall declare thus much to me ; If I can trust this Man's word, I need not doubt but I shall have the sum promised, tho' I should disobey him in every thing that he commanded me to do: this is just the case ; and if it be, it is no wonder that men are so loth to disbelieve this pleasant opinion, which gives men comfortable hopes of the Pardon of their sins upon such easie terms. Not that I am so uncharitable, as not to acknowledge that our Worthy and Excellent Divines, who have been of this Judgment, have always press'd the necessity of Holiness and Obedience : but I am sorry they could not do it with so good advantage, according to their Principles, the natural consequence of them tending to licentiousness, and a neglect of the Precepts of the Gospel, to which purpose they have been sadly abused by several Libertines in these and former times, ever since *Luther's* days, and I could never yet see how *Antinomianism* could solidly be confuted upon those Principles.

5. That

5. That no Metaphorical descriptions of justifying Faith are allowable any farther than as they serve to illustrate the plain, and proper, and simple notion of Faith. My meaning is, he that would teach men what Faith is, he must first acquaint men with the thing, and describe it in as proper and simple words as can be, and not by Figurative and Metaphorical Phrases. Indeed after a Man hath delivered the simple notion of a thing in proper words, he may afterward illustrate it by Metaphors: but then these are not to be insisted upon, and strained to the utmost extent of the Metaphor, beyond what the true notion of the thing will bear: for if consequences once come to be drawn from Metaphors, and Doctrines founded, and Theories built upon them, instead of illustrating the thing, they blind and obscure it, and serve to no other purpose, but to seduce and mislead the understandings of men, and to multiply Controversies without end; and (as I told you before) I do the rather take notice of this abuse of Metaphors upon this subject, because

I do not know any other head of Divinity which hath suffered so much by them, as the Doctrine of justifying Faith, whereby the plain Truth hath been very much darkned, and occasion ministred to many endless disputes. But this will best appear by some particular instances. Justifying Faith hath usually been described by these Metaphors, *resting*, and *relying*, and *leaning upon Christ*, *apprehending* and *laying hold*, and *applying of Christ*, *receiving of Christ*, and *coming to him*. Now concerning these, I shall briefly speak these *three* or *four* things.

(1.) That none of these Metaphors, except the two last, *receiving of Christ*, and *coming to him*, are any where used in Scripture, to describe justifying Faith by; and therefore there is no reason why they should be so much used and insisted on. Let any Man shew me where justifying Faith is any where in Scripture described by *resting*, and *relying*, and *leaning upon Christ*, by *apprehending* and *laying hold*, and *applying of him*.

(2.) If

(2.) If these Metaphors were explained and turned into proper and plain words, they can signifie nothing else, but that Faith which I have been all this while describing. For what can any Man understand by *resting*, and *relying*, and *leaning* upon Christ, but to trust in him as the Author of our eternal Salvation, under which word all the Benefits which Christ hath purchased for us are comprehended? Now can any Man be said to trust in Christ, as the Author of his Salvation, otherwise than by assenting to the truth of the Gospel, and complying with the terms and conditions of it? And what can any Man understand by *apprehending*, and *laying hold on*, and *applying* Christ, other than this, to make use of him for all those ends and purposes for which God hath appointed him? And what those are the Scripture tells us; that *he is made unto us of God, Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.*

(3.) As for those Scripture Metaphors of *receiving* Christ, and *coming*

to him, the Scripture useth them but sparingly, and I dare say, for once that it useth these Metaphors, it doth twenty times describe Faith by plain and proper words; and where it does make use of these Metaphors, it doth sufficiently explain them. So you find *coming to Christ*, is explained by *learning of him*, *Matth. 11. 28, 29. Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. That is, come to me as Scholars and Disciples to be taught by me; in order to which, it is requisite that we should believe him. Oportet discentem credere, he that will learn, must believe him that teacheth him, and trust his skill. And so for receiving him, lest the Metaphor should seduce men, St. John had no sooner used it, but he tells what he means by it, John 1. 12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name; that*

is,

is, believed him to be the person promised to be the *Messias*, and Saviour of the World; as appears by the opposition in the Verse before, *He came to his own, and his own received him not*; that is, rejected him, did not own him to be the true *Messias*. But now if we will strain such a Metaphor as this, beyond the intention of it, and because *believing* is call'd a *receiving* of Christ, and we receive things with the hand, and the hand is an Instrument, will from hence infer, that Faith is an Instrument of our justification; what may not men make of the Scripture at this rate?

Sermon  
IX.

(4.) I will add this concerning Scripture Metaphors in general, that where the Scripture useth Metaphors which were very familiar in those Languages in which the Scripture was writ, and well understood by those who spoke that Language, but are very obscure and uncouth to us, and not at all used in our Language, as most of the Scripture Metaphors are, the proper work of a Minister is not to insist in such cases upon Scripture Metaphors, to darken his Discourse by them,  
but

but to explain them, and make them intelligible, to translate them into *English*, and instead of them to use such Phrases as people are more familiarly acquainted with, and are used in our own Language. For a Man may be a *Barbarian* that speaks to People in *unknown Phrases* and Metaphors, as well as *he that speaks in an unknown tongue*; and the very same reason that obligeth us to put the Scripture into a known Language, doth oblige men to explain the Doctrines contain'd in it by such Phrases and Metaphors as are known and used in that Language.

6. That if this plain and simple notion of justifying Faith were admitted, it would supersede all those Controversies about justification, which have so much troubled the reformed Churches. Those who have been curious to enquire into these matters, have reckon'd up at least twenty several opinions among the Protestants concerning justifying Faith. I do not desire to acquaint my self with those differences; he that would know what justification, and justifying Faith are, shall sooner come to understand the  
Nature



Nature of them, by diligent reading of the Scriptures, than by reading over all the controversial Writings of Divines about them; and if men would but content themselves with those plain and simple Descriptions, which the Scripture gives us of Faith, there could not be any great difference about it; this would cut off most of those disputes which have been commenced upon Metaphors, and figurative speeches. And here I had thought to have descended to a particular consideration of the Controversies about justifying Faith, but I am weary of the work; and therefore shall only make some brief Reflections upon this whole Discourse, and then apply it to our own Use. But this, God willing, the next opportunity.



# SERMON X.

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The Condition of the Gospel Covenant, and the Merit of Christ, consistent.

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The Fourth Sermon on this Text.

J O H N XX. 31.

*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his Name.*

I Have in my former Discourses on these words treated largely of the Nature of Christian Faith, particularly as it Sanctifies, Justifies, and Saves men. All that I farther propose  
is,

is, to make some reflections upon this whole Discourse, particularly that which relates to justifying Faith, and then to apply all to our own Use.

I have already taken notice of *two* Objections, to which my Discourse may seem liable; and if yet there remain any prejudice upon any Man's Spirit against this Doctrine, I would desire such calmly to consider it, and the agreeableness of it not to the opinions of men, but to the Word of God, and the suitableness of it to the great design of Christian Religion, every where express'd in the Gospel, which is to bring men to Holiness and Obedience. And what Argument and consideration can be more powerful to take men off from sin, and to excite them to the practice of Holiness, than this, that Repentance and Obedience are an indispensable Condition of our Justification and Pardon? And this is the very point in difference, whether the Gospel do not make Repentance and Obedience conditions of our Pardon and Justification, as well as an assent to the Truth of the Gospel, and a trust in Christ

as the meritorious cause of our Salvation. That they are, I have endeavoured to prove from Scripture ; and for the farther clearing of it, I desire that the Nature of the Gospel-Covenant may be well consider'd, which I take to be this. On God's part there are certain Benefits promised, Justification, and Pardon of sin, and eternal Life and Salvation. On our part there are certain Conditions required before we can be made partakers of those Benefits ; these are, to assent to the truth of the Gospel, trusting in Christ as our only Saviour, Repentance from dead works, and a sincere purpose and resolution of Obedience, and a holy life ; these make up the whole and entire Condition of the Gospel, and are often exprest by this one word, *Faith*, which signifies the whole duty of a Christian ; because he that truly believes the Gospel, will do whatever the Gospel requires. And hence it is, that to be a Christian, and to be a Believer, are in the Phrase of the New Testament all one. Now the matter in controversy is plainly this ; whether this whole Condition be required of us in order to our Pardon  
don

don and Justification, as well as in order to our Salvation. That Repen-  
 tance, and Obedience, and Holiness  
 of life, are Conditions of our Sal-  
 vation, I think is universally agreed;  
 I am sure it is clearly exprest in these  
 two Texts, *Christ is the author of  
 eternal Salvation to them that obey him,*  
 Heb. 5. 9. *Without holiness no man  
 shall see the Lord,* Heb. 12. 14. And  
 that the Condition of our Justification  
 and Salvation are the same, I think is  
 every whit as clear both from Scri-  
 pture, and from the general acknow-  
 ledgment of Divines by necessary con-  
 sequence. From Scripture, St. James  
 says, that the same thing that justifies  
 us, saves us: for when he disputes,  
 whether we are justified by Faith  
 only, or by Faith and Works, he hath  
 this expression, *What doth it profit,  
 my brethren, tho' a man say he hath  
 Faith, and have not works, can faith  
 save him?* From whence the inference  
 is plain, that upon the very same  
 condition that we are justified, we  
 are saved. And 'tis evident by neces-  
 sary consequence from the general ac-  
 knowledgment of Divines; for I think  
 this is universally agreed by Divines,  
 that

that whatever puts a Man into a state of Justification and Pardon, puts a Man into a state of Salvation; and if this be true, it necessarily follows, that the Conditions of our Justification and Salvation are the same: and if assent to the truth of the Gospel, and trust in Christ as our only Saviour, be the only Conditions of our Justification, then they are the only Conditions of our Salvation; and Repentance and Obedience are not Conditions of our Salvation: but if they be Conditions of our Salvation, then they are of our Justification. And I will be bold to say, that this hath as much of demonstration in it, as any thing in Divinity is capable of; and I wonder extremely how any Man, that considers the Nature of the Gospel-Covenant, can imagine that we should be made partakers of any Blessing or Benefit promised in the Covenant, without performing the whole Condition of the Covenant.

And now if any Man ask, *Cui bono?* To what end is all this? Suppose it be true, to what purpose is it to awaken differences, and stir up controversies  
T about

*The necessity of asserting, that*

about these matters? In order to these *two* Ends, which I take to be very considerable.

1. That we may be able to answer the Papists, who charge us with *Solifidianism*; as if we were of this opinion, That if a Man do but trust in Christ, that is, be but confidently persuaded that he will save him, and pardon him, this is sufficient; and consequently, he that is thus persuaded, need not take any farther care of his Salvation, but may live as he list. And I do not see how this can be avoided; especially if this be true, which our Divines universally assert, That whatever puts a Man into a justified state, puts him into a state of Salvation; I say, I do not see how this Charge can be avoided, unless we own Holiness and Obedience to be Conditions of our Justification, as well as Trust in Christ. I know no other middle way between *Popery* and *Antinomianism*. But,

2. Which is more considerable, Without this we can give no satisfactory and reasonable account of our Religion



ligion to a Heathen. Suppose a Heathen should say thus, Your Religion gives a very good account of the corruption and sinfulness of Mankind, and hath provided a very probable Remedy for the expiation of it, by the death of the Son of God: but this seems to me very unreasonable, and to contradict the most natural notions that we have of God's Justice and Holiness, that he should pardon men, as you say he does, tho' they do not repent of their sins, nor are resolved to leave them, nay, tho' they be resolved to go on in a wicked course. Did ever any wise Prince pardon a Traitor upon these terms; But whoever says that repentance, and a sincere purpose and Resolution of Obedience, are not the Condition of our pardon, says that God will pardon men without Repentance, tho' they are not at all sorry for what they have done, nor resolved to change their course: for that is a Condition without which a thing cannot be; and if Repentance be not a Condition of pardon, a Man may be pardoned without it. And if this be true, Christianity is the most lewd and

*The necessity of asserting that senseless Doctrine in the World. For what can be a greater encouragement to sin than this, to tell men that they may be pardoned without Repentance? That is, tho' they live in sin, and continue so to do. Paganism never taught any such thing. Nay, they may add farther, That this which you teach as the Doctrine of your Religion, seems expressly contrary to your own Books, which you say contain your Religion. Does not the Bible say that he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy? And doth not this plainly imply, that Repentance is a Condition of pardon? Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Doth it not say, that if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you? Can any words more plainly express a condition than these do? How should we be able to defend our Religion against such an assault, unless we disclaim this Charge, and tell them plainly, and without a distinction, That*

our Religion teacheth that Repen-  
tance and Resolution of Holiness and  
Obedience are Conditions of our Par-  
don and Justification? I would to God  
men would consult the honour of  
Christianity, and when they hold any  
opinion, they would consider not the  
interest of a Party, but the universal  
Concernment of Christian Religion.  
If we had to deal with subtile Hea-  
thens, as the primitive Fathers of the  
Church had, we should see a necessity  
of laying aside such unreasonable opi-  
nions. I would fain have any Man  
shew any one clear passage out of  
any of the ancient Fathers and Wri-  
ters concerning Christian Religion,  
which says, That Trust in Christ for  
Salvation is the only Condition of  
our Justification, and that Repentance  
and Obedience are not; or that ex-  
plains Justification by Faith alone, in  
this sense. I know it is usually said,  
the ancient Fathers and Christians  
were ignorant of the Doctrine of Justi-  
fication in a great measure, and knew  
very little of the Mystery of the Go-  
spel. I know not what they mean  
by *Mystery*: but I am sure they defined  
Christian Religion better, and gave a

more reasonable and satisfactory account of it, than any of those do, who are so apt to slight them.

The *Use* of this Doctrine is as follows.

*First*, To persuade men to place all their hope and confidence of Salvation in *Jesus Christ* the Son of God; that is, to believe that through the alone merit of his Death and Sufferings, God is reconciled to us, and that only upon the account of the Satisfaction which he hath made to Divine Justice, we are restored to the favour of God, and our sins are pardon'd to us, and we have a title to eternal life. Not but that there are Conditions required on our part, to make us capable of these Benefits, Faith and Repentance and sincere Obedience and Holiness of life, without which we shall never be made partakers of them: but that the Satisfaction of Christ is the only meritorious Cause of these blessings. And to persuade men to the belief of this, I shall endeavour to satisfy them of these *two* things.

1. That

I. That Christ hath properly merited these Blessings for us.

II. That he only hath done it. The *first* of these Propositions is directly levell'd against the *Socinians*: the *second* against the *Papists*. I shall speak but briefly of them.

I. That Christ hath properly merited these Blessings for us. And this being purely matter of Revelation, we are to rely upon Scripture only for the proof of it. *Matth. 20. 28. The Son of man came not to be minister'd unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many, λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν, a price of Redemption, instead of that which should have been paid by us. John 6. 51. And the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. John 10. 11. Christ is call'd the good Shepherd that lays down his life for his Sheep. John 15. 12, 13. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Matth. 26. 28. For this*

is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins. Rom. 5. 6. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 1 Cor. 15. 3. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. 2 Cor. 5. 14, 15. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge; that if one dyed for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and and rose again. Eph. 1. 7. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Col. 1. 20, 21, 22. And (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight.

sight. 1 Thess. 5. 9, 10. For God hath not appointed us to wrath: but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us. Heb. 2. 9. That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Heb. 9. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifyeth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first Testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. And ver. 25, 26, 27, 28. Nor yet that he should offer himself of-

ten, as the high priest entreth into the holy place every year with blood of others: ( For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: ) but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation. Heb. 10. 11, 12. And every Priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God. 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Pet. 2. 21, 24. Because Christ also suffered for us; who his own self bare our sins, in his own body, on the tree. 1 Pet. 3. 18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the jus-  
for



for the unjust, that he might bring us <sup>Sermon</sup> to God. 1 John 2. 1, 2. My little <sup>X.</sup> children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 3. 16. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 1 John 4. 10. Herein is love, not that we loved God; but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Rev. 1. 5. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Rev. 5. 9. Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. From these and many other Texts, it seems to be very plain and evident, that Christ died for our sins, and suffered in our stead, and by the Sacrifice of himself hath made an atonement for us, and reconciled us to God, and hath paid a price and ransom for us, and by the merit of his death hath purchased for us forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among

*among them that are sanctified.* And I do not know any Doctrine of our Religion, that is founded and establish'd upon more and plainer Texts, which cannot be understood in any other sense, without offering great violence to the first and most obvious meaning of them.

I know the *Socinians* have framed evasions to all these Texts, which I have not time now to produce and examine ; nor would it be worth the while. I shall only say this to them in general ; that there is no Principle of Religion so plainly laid down in the whole Scripture, but may be overthrowed by the same, or the like evasions. Suppose Christ had died in our stead, and made satisfaction for sin, and God had intended to declare so much to us ; in what plainer and more express and proper words could he have done it, than the Scripture hath already done ? If God had said in the Scripture expressly, that *Christ had died in our place and stead, and had satisfied for our sins* ; these very expressions, by the same arts of interpretation, might have been strained and  
wrested

wrested to some other sense. So that if God did not intend to express to us by these Texts, that *Christ satisfied for the sins of men*, yet they are so obvious to be interpreted to that sense, and so hardly, if at all, capable of any other, that we cannot imagine, without a great reflection upon the Wisdom of God, that he should deliver his mind to men in words and expressions so exceedingly liable to a quite different sense from what he intended. Besides that there is nothing more unreasonable than to deny that to be the meaning of Scripture, which if it had been the meaning, could not have been expressed in plainer and more advantageous words; especially when this is done, not in one or two Texts, but very many; and not by one form of expression, but several, and all inclining to the same sense; and which is worst of all, this violence is offer'd to Scripture in a matter which does neither contradict other Texts, nor the Reason of Mankind, *viz.* That one Man should suffer in another's stead, and make satisfaction for the crimes and faults which another hath committed; supposing the party offended

be

be willing to accept of the Commutation, and the Party that suffers in anothers stead do voluntarily do it.

II. That Christ only hath merited these Blessings for us, and that he had no partner with him in this; or there is no other hath merited these Blessings for us, nor can we our selves merit them.

I. No other hath merited these Blessings for us. Not to take notice of what the *Papists* say of the meritoriousness of our works of *supererrogation*, which go into the Treasury of the Church, and make up a publick Stock of Merit, to be disposed and dealt out by the Pope at his Discretion; they have by a most unparallell'd Blasphemy joyned the *Virgin Mary* with Christ in the work of our Redemption, and some of them been so impiously bold, as to parallel the Virtue of her Milk with the efficacy of Christ's Blood. And tho' Christ say, that *he trode the winepress of his father's wrath alone, and of the people there was none with him*; yet *Bonaventure* in his Meditations ventures

to corrupt the Text, by this foolish Sermon  
 gloss, *Nullus erat tecum. Recte domine,* X.  
*sed erat tecum femina; right, Lord, there*  
*was no man with thee, but there was a*  
*woman, viz. thy mother.*

2. Nor can we our selves do any thing whereby we can merit these Blessings at God's hands. Considering that we received our Being, and all that we are and have from God, and upon account of these benefits are obliged to love him and serve him to the utmost; what a senseless piece of arrogance is it to say, that a Creature can merit any thing at God's hand? Whatever we give God is of his own, and when we have done all we can, we have done no more than our duty. And can any Man challenge any reward for doing what he ought to do? Can any Man make satisfaction for a fault that he hath committed, by doing his duty? that is, by not committing another? It is a sure Rule, *Debitum debito non solvitur.* We are indebted to God by the breach of his Law: but we can't quit this debt, and satisfy for this breach, by not  
 breaking

breaking it again, because we owe to God all possible Obedience.

Besides that all our Obedience is imperfect, and is so far from meriting, that it stands in need of Pardon; and can a Man demerit, and merit by the same Action? Can he who deserves to be punish'd for an action, because he did it no better, deserve to be rewarded for the same action, because he did it so well? And to say that Christ hath merited that our imperfect Obedience should merit, either signifies only this, that Christ hath merited that our imperfect Obedience should be accepted by God, notwithstanding its imperfection; (and this is true, but nothing to the purpose of merit;) or else it signifies, that Christ hath merited that *that* which is no wise meritorious, should be so; that is, that the Nature of things should be alter'd; which is not only false, but senseless.

*Secondly,* To perswade us to live as we believe. If we profess to believe the Gospel to be true, then let our hearts and lives be suitable to those Truths

truths which we believe. If we believe *Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God*, we believe the Doctrine which he deliver'd to the World to be from God, and consequently to be true; we believe the Precepts of it are Holy, and Just, and Good, and that they are necessary to be observed by us, as being in order to our Peace and Happiness; we believe that the Promises of the Gospel are *all yea, and amen*, and shall every tittle of them be made good; we believe that the threatnings of the Gospel shall all punctually be fulfilled. Now how ought men to live that believe all this? Having a Law given us which hath the sanction of such Promises and Threatnings, ought we not to conform our lives to it; and charge our selves with Obedience to all those Precepts of Piety towards God, and Purity and Temperance in the government of our selves, and Justice and Righteousness in our dealing with others, which are contained in this new Law of the Gospel? If the Gospel have promised eternal life and happiness to those who do conscientiously abstain from sin, and follow Holiness; *having*

U *these*

*these promises, ought we not to cleanse our selves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God? If the Gospel hath threatened, that at the end of the World, Christ will come in flaming fire, &c. If we believe these things shall be, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?*

I have formerly shewed at large, how unbecoming it is for any Man, that professeth himself a Christian, to live unsuitably to his profession; that it is the greatest disparagement to the Gospel, and the highest reflection upon it that can be; and that it is infinitely dangerous to us: and tho' these be very proper Considerations, yet because I have formerly urged them, I shall not now enforce my Exhortation with these Arguments; but shall mention *two* other Considerations, and so conclude.

*First,* If our lives be not answerable to our belief, our Faith will be ineffectual to all intents and purposes.

*Secondly,*



*Secondly,* A life unsuitable to our belief is the high way to Infidelity and Atheism.

*First,* If our lives be not answerable to our belief, our Faith will be ineffectual to all real intents and purposes.

1. It will be ineffectual to give us the Reputation of Christians among wise and discerning Persons. We profess to believe the Gospel: but if we live contrary to it, our profession is *protestatio contra factum*, and therefore not credible; because our actions contradict it. The constant tenor of a Man's actions is a more credible and emphatical declaration of the inward sense of his heart, and shews better what the Man believes, than the most solemn profession in words. When our words are not confirmed by our actions, they are but an empty sound, and signifie nothing. I may allude to that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 13. 2. *Tho' a man have all faith, yet if he be destitute of the true Effect of Faith, Charity, he is but as a sounding brass, and a*

*tinckling cymbal.* St. James doth very well set forth the inefficacy of such a Faith, by this similitude, James 2. 15, 16, 17. *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit? Even so Faith, if it hath not works, is dead.* Men are not so easily cozened, as we think they are. Discerning men will not be imposed upon and put off with a formal and empty Profession of Faith, when there is nothing in our lives to answer it. It is not standing up in the Church, and professing that we believe in God, and in *Jesus Christ*, that he was Born, and Died, and Rose again, and at the end of the World will come to Judge the quick and the dead, that will perswade men that we are Christians. Men will look into our lives, and examine our actions, and enquire into our Conversations; by these they will judge of the Truth and Reality of our Profession. Let us not delude our selves, and think to pass for Christians upon these terms,

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among any that know how to make a true judgment of things. We may cozen our selves: but we cannot cheat others, who are not so partial to us, as we are apt to be to our selves. It is not our winking, that hinders others from seeing us.

Nay, I go farther, It is not an earnest contending for fundamental Articles of our Christian Faith, if we live contrary to them, that will satisfie any wise Man that we believe them; much less an intemperate zeal for indifferent Opinions in Religion. Such were the Doctrines concerning the Necessity on the one hand, and the Unlawfulness of Circumcision on the other: but the Assent to the one opinion or the other in these matters, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith that worketh by love, the new creature, the keeping of the commandments of God,* as the Apostle in several places expresseth it. Men stand much upon the title of *Orthodox*, by which is usually understood, not believing the Doctrine of Christ or his Apostles, but such Opinions as are in vogue among such a

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Party, such Systems of Divinity as have been compiled in haste by those whom we have in admiration; and whatever is not consonant to these little bodies of Divinity, tho' possibly it agree well enough with the Word of God, is Error and Heresie; and whoever maintains it, can hardly pass for a Christian among some angry and perverse people. I do not intend to plead for any Error; but I would not have Christianity chiefly measur'd by matters of Opinion. I know no such Error and Heresie as a wicked life. That Man believes the Gospel best, who lives most according to it. Tho' no Man can have a worse opinion of the *Socinian* Doctrine than I have, yet I had rather a Man should deny the satisfaction of Christ; than believe it, and abuse it to the encouragement of sin. Of the two I have more hopes of him that denies the Divinity of Christ, and lives otherwise soberly, and righteously, and godly in the World, than of the Man who owns Christ to be the Son of God, and lives like a Child of the Devil.

2. Such a Faith as hath not an answerable life, will be ineffectual to the purpose of Justification and Salvation. St. James tells us, it is a *dead Faith, and profits nothing*, that no Man is justified by it, nor will it save any Man. *Christ is the author of eternal Salvation to them who so believe his Doctrine as to obey it; he will come in flaming fire, to render vengeance, not only to them that do not believe, but to them that do not obey the Gospel.* It will not be sufficient at the day of Judgment, to plead our profession of Faith in Christ, and to say *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out Devils, and in thy name have done many wondrous works?* Doing all this in Christ's name, implies that they profess to believe in him: but notwithstanding all this, if they be *workers of iniquity*, Christ will say to such, *depart from me, I know you not.* If our Saviour make a true and proper representation of the day of Judgment, and the proceedings of it, *Mat. 25.* mens Faith shall then be tried by the real Fruits and Effects of it; then the enquiry

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shall be, how men have lived? what good they have done, or omitted and neglected? and accordingly sentence will be past upon them. Nay, such a Faith is so far from saving, that it will be an aggravation of our condemnation, and sink us the deeper into Hell. *There is one that condemneth you, even Jesus in whom ye trust.*

*Secondly,* A life unsuitable to our belief is the high way to Infidelity and Atheism, to bring others and our selves to it.

1. To bring others to Infidelity and Atheism, and to confirm them in it. What can be a more effectual bar to keep Heathens, and Jews, and Turks, from entertaining the Gospel? What can be a greater confirmation of them in their infidelity, than so to misrepresent Christian Religion to them, as we do by our unsuitable lives? What can be a stronger prejudice against it, to men who do not look narrowly into it, but only see it at a distance, than to see what Fruit it produces in the lives of Christians? May they not invert

vert that proverbial Speech of our Sa-  
viour's, *Does a vine send forth thorns?* Sermon  
X.

If Christianity were such a holy Institution, how comes it to pass that Christians are so wicked? If *Jesus Christ* were so excellent a Master, we should see it in his Scholars; *ſc̄ Christus ſancta docuiſſet, Christiani ſancte vixiſſent*, as *Salvian* ſpeaks. And it is the way to bring men to Atheiſm. What more like to take men off from all Religion, than to ſee the Religion, which pretends to be the beſt in the World, repreſented by the lives of Christians at ſuch a diſadvantage, as if it were a barren, and fruitleſs, and ineffectual thing, and as if they who profeſs it, did believe it to be a lie, and gave no credit at all to the Doctrines of it?

2. It is the way to bring our ſelves to Infidelity and Atheiſm. As an erroneous Judgment and Underſtanding hath uſually an evil influence upon mens lives, ſo much more a vicious and corrupt life hath a bad influence upon mens underſtandings. It is ſo  
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uneasie a thing for men to act contrary to their Reason, and against the dictates of their Understandings, that men for their own quiet, and in their own defence, will bend their Judgments, and make them comply with the interest of their Lusts. Mens Affections, which way soever they incline, set a byals upon their Understandings; and this doth not only proceed from the Nature of the thing, but from the just Judgment of God. *2 Thess. 2. 10, 11, 12.* the Apostle tells us, *that those who receive not the truth in the love of it, that they may be saved; God will send them strong delusions, to believe lies; that they all may be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.* If men once *have pleasure in unrighteousness*, it will not be long before they give over *believing the truth*, because God by his just Judgment will give them over to themselves, to follow the byals of their own corrupt hearts, which inclines them *to believe lies*. Of all persons in the world, a wicked and unholy Christian, is most like to turn a speculative Infidel and Atheist; and none so like to fall into this  
gross



*according to our belief.*

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gross darkness, as those who resist and quench so great a light as that of the Gospel is, which they profess to believe.

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Sermon  
X.

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# SERMON XI.

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Of the Miracles wrought in  
Confirmation of Christi-  
anity.

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H E B. II. 4.

*God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

**W**Hoever impartially considers the Christian Religion, cannot but acknowledge the Laws and Precepts of it to be so reasonable; and the Practice of them so evidently to tend, not only to the Happiness of particular Persons, but to the Peace and Welfare of the World; and the Promi-

Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel, which are the great Motives to persuade men to the Obedience of those Laws, to be so agreeable to the natural hopes and fears which Mankind were always possess'd withal; that upon this Consideration, it might justly be expected, that the Doctrine of Christianity, upon the first publication of it, should have been entertain'd with a readiness of mind proportionable to the reasonableness of it.

Or if the bare Reasonableness of it be not thought inducement enough, we may easily imagine, how God, if he had pleased, could upon the first appearance of this Religion in the World, have given it such advantages, as would mightily have contributed to the more easie reception and entertainment of it. He could have ordered things so, that our Blessed Saviour, the Author of this Doctrine, should have been, as the *Jews* expected, a great Temporal Monarch; he could have rais'd him to that dignity, and have armed him with that Authority, as must have given him a  
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mighty power and influence over Mankind, and would have gained the Great, and the Wise, and the Learned, to have been active instruments in the propagating of this Religion, and in perswading men to the embracing of it.

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But he, *whose ways are above our ways, and whose thoughts are above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth*, did not think fit to have it promoted and carried on this way; nay, he seems on purpose to have strip'd it of all secular advantages, that it might be perfectly free from all suspicion of a worldly interest and design, and that it might be evident to all the World, that it was *a plant which his own right hand had planted*; and that it did not owe its establishment to the Authority, and Wisdom, and Contrivance of men, but to the power of God, and to the immediate favour and contrivance of Heaven.

And now being thus destitute of all worldly assistance, tho' never so reasonable in it self, it was not likely that

it should be able with success to grapple with the Lusts and Corruptions of men, to which it was so directly opposite ; not with the strong Prejudices of their Education in a contrary Religion, which are always hard to be overcome ; nor with the temporal Interests of men, which were all at that time to be renounced and quitted for its sake ; unless it had some other advantages to make way for it, and to recommend it to the minds of men: For having no secular baits and allurements to tempt men to the profession of it, no earthly contrivance and assistance to support it and bear it out ; but on the contrary, the most violent and powerful opposition raised against it ; it was necessary that those who offer'd it to the World, should be able to give Credit to it some other way, and to produce very sensible and convincing Arguments of another kind: otherwise they might have despaired of ever conquering the Prejudices of men against it, and of perswading them to embrace that Religion, which was so apparently contrary both to their inclinations and interests.

So that in these circumstances, in order to the full conviction of men, that those who publish'd this Doctrine to them came from God, and were commissioned and sent by him to teach the World, it was very fitting, that God himself should give some remarkable Testimony to the first Preachers of it: and this the Text tells us he did, by *bearing witness to them, with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost.*

For the better understanding of these words, we shall do well to reflect upon the design of this Epistle, which was to establish the *Jews*, who had but newly embrac'd Christianity, in the stedfast belief and profession of it, notwithstanding the troubles and persecutions which attended it; and to this end the Apostle represents to them that the Gospel was deliver'd with more Authority, and had a greater confirmation given to it, than the Law. The Law was delivered by *Angels*; but the Gospel by *the Son of God*: and if the contempt of the Law was

*Miracles necessary, when*

so severely punish'd, what might they expect would be the fate of those who should slight and reject the Gospel? *If the word spoken by Angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him! God also bearing them witness, with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own will.* ΣΥΝΕΤΙ-μαρτυροῦντες τῷ θεῷ, *God adjoyning this farther testimony of signs and wonders. The Apostles testified what they had heard from our Lord; and to give credit and confirmation to their testimony, God was pleased to endow them with miraculous gifts, he bare them witness with signs, and wonders, and miracles. So likewise, Acts 14. 3. it is said, that God gave testimony to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by the Apostles. Sometimes there are more words put together, to express the giving of this miraculous Power. Acts 2. 22. Jesus of Nazareth approved of God by*  
*mira-*



*the Gospel was first publish'd.*

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*miracles, and wonders, and signs.* 2 Cor. 12. 12. St. Paul, speaking of himself, says, *The signs of an Apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and miracles.* These were the marks of an extraordinary and immediate Commission, such as was that of the Apostles.

It is to no purpose nicely to enquire into the difference of these words, σημεῖα, τέρατα, δυνάμεις; *signs, wonders, and miracles,* because in all probability, there is no difference intended, it being the manner of the Hebrews, when they would express a great thing, or a great degree of any thing, to heap several words together, signifying the same thing. So we find Deut. 6. 5. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,* that is, Greatly, with a very ardent and intense degree of affection. So likewise in the Text, God is said to *bear witness to the Apostles with signs, and wonders, and miracles,* that is, in a very eminent and extraordinary manner, by great and wonderful Miracles.

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From

*The description of a Miracle.*

From these words, *three* things offer themselves to our Consideration.

*First*, That Miracles are a Divine Testimony given to a Person or Doctrine. *God bearing them testimony, by signs, and wonders, and Miracles.*

*Secondly*, That God gave this Testimony to the Apostles, and first Preachers of Christianity, in a very eminent manner: for so the Phrase signifies, so many words being multiplied to express the greatness of the thing.

*Thirdly*, We will consider the Reason why Miracles are now ceased in the Church, and have been for several Ages, so that there have been no footsteps of them for a long time.

*First*, That Miracles are a Divine Testimony given to a Person or Doctrine. *God is here said, to bear witness to the Apostles, with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles*; that is, the Miracles which God enabled them

to work, were an evidence that their Doctrine was from God.

And because there is some difficulty in this Argument, therefore, that we may the more distinctly understand of what force this Argument or Testimony of Miracles is to prove the Divinity of any Person or Doctrine, it will be requisite clearly to state these *two* things.

I. What a Miracle is.

II. In what Circumstances, and with what Limitations, Miracles are a sufficient Testimony to the Truth and Divinity of any Doctrine. The clearing of these *two* things shall be my work at this time.

I. What a Miracle is. The shortest and plainest description I can give of it, is this, that it is a supernatural Effect evident and wonderful to sense. So that there are *two* things necessary to a Miracle.

1. That it be a supernatural Effect.

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2. That

2. That it be evident and wonderful to sense.

1. That it be a supernatural Effect. By a supernatural Effect, I mean such an Effect, as either in it self, and in its own Nature, or in the manner and Circumstances of it, exceeds any natural Power that we know of to produce it. For there are some things that are miraculous in themselves; others that are only miraculous in the manner and circumstances of their operation. For instance, the Resurrection of one from the dead, is a thing which in it self is supernatural, and an Effect above any Power that we know of in Nature to produce; but the healing of several Diseases, and the speaking of Languages, are not things which are in themselves, and in their Nature supernatural: for we see that they may be acquired by natural skill and industry: but to heal all sorts of Diseases, in an instant, and by a word, and without the application of natural means; and on a sudden to speak Languages which a Man never learned; these are things, which  
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tho' they be not in their Nature, yet in such Circumstances as these, they are supernatural.

I say, that a Supernatural Effect, is that which is above any natural Power that we know of to produce ; by which I do not mean, that Miracles are always an immediate Effect of the Divine Power, and consequently that God alone can work them: For Angels good or bad may do such things, as exceed any natural Power known to us, and such as we cannot distinguish by any certain Marks and Characters from those Effects which are wrought by the immediate Power of God ; and if we cannot distinguish them, they are equally Miracles to us. When the Angel slew 185000. in the Camp of the *Assyrians* in one night, this ought in all reason to be reckoned a Miracle ; and yet this, tho' done by the Command of God, an Angel might do by his own Power and Strength ; for *they excell in strength* : but what limitations to set to their Power, we cannot tell, only it is finite ; so that excepting those things, which the Scripture hath peculiarly

appropriated to God, we cannot say what it is that an Angel cannot do.

The same may be said concerning evil Angels. The Devil may work wonders, or assist his Instruments to work them. So *Pharoah's* Magicians wrought several Miracles by the power of the Devil, and did some of the very same things that *Moses* and *Aaron* did, either really or in appearance, and it is all one whether. For he, who to mens Senses, turns a Rod into a Serpent, works as great a Miracle to me, as he who really does it; and if I am not to believe a thing to be a Miracle, when to my Senses it appears to be wrought, I am never to believe any, unless I could make some difference between those Miracles which are real, and those that only appear to be wrought; for if we know not how to distinguish them, they are to us all one as if they were real: but if they may be distinguish'd, then there will be need of another Miracle, to shew which are real and which not; and the same question and doubt will

will arise about that Miracle, and so without end.

So that I do not see what is gained by saying, that *Pharaoh's* Magicians did only delude mens Senses, but did not turn their Rods really into Serpents, as *Aaron* did his; because this may be said on one side, as well as on the other: for to the standers by there was no difference, but the one seemed to the Senses of the beholders, to be as real as the other; and the Text makes no difference, but says, *The magicians did in like manner; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became Serpents, only Aaron's had this advantage, that his rod swallowed up their rods*: but the main difference was here, *Moses* and *Aaron* wrought such Miracles, as the Magicians could not work, neither really, nor in appearance: for when *Aaron* by smiting the dust with his Rod, had turned it into lice, it is said that the Magicians attempted to do so with their Enchantments, but could not, and then they yielded and acknowledged that it was *the finger of God*. And if they had not been thus plainly overcome, but could to  
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*The description of a Miracle.*

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all appearance of sense, have done all those things which *Moses* and *Aaron* did, it might justly have been disputed which had been the true Prophets.

So that the Devil and his instruments may work Miracles. *Moses* plainly supposeth that a false Prophet, who comes to seduce the People to Idolatry, may work a true sign or wonder, *Dent.* 13. 1, 2. *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder; and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods. And our blessed Saviour expressly foretells, Matth. 24. That false Christs and false Prophets shall arise after his death, and shew great signs and wonders.*

From all which it is evident, that it is not of the Essence of a Miracle, ( as many have thought ) that it be an immediate Effect of the Divine Power. It is sufficient, that it exceed any natural Power that we know of to produce it. And if such Effects be not

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to be esteemed Miracles, a Miracle would signifie nothing ; because no Man could know when it is wrought, nor distinguish it from those Effects which appear to be miraculous, but are not. This is the *first* Property or Condition of a Miracle, that it be supernatural, that is, such an Effect as exceeds any natural Power that we know of to produce it. But then,

2. There is another Condition also required to a Miracle, that it be an Effect evident and wonderful to Sense : for if we do not see it, it is to us as if it were not, and can be no testimony or proof of any thing, because it self stands in need of another Miracle to give Testimony to it, and to prove that it was wrought ; and neither in Scripture, nor in profane Authors, nor in common use of Speech, is any thing call'd a Miracle, but what falls under the notice of our Senses ; a Miracle being nothing else but a thing wonderful to sense ; and the very end and design of it is to be a sensible proof and conviction to us of some thing which we do not see.

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And for want of this Condition, Transubstantiation, if it were true, would be no Miracle : it would indeed be very supernatural, but for all that it would not be a Sign or Wonder ; for a Sign or Wonder is always a sensible thing, something that is wonderful and astonishing to Sense, otherwise it is no Sign or Wonder. That such a change as is pretended in Transubstantiation should really be wrought, and yet there should be no Sign and Appearance of it, is a thing very wonderful ; but not to Sense : for our Senses perceive no change, the Bread and Wine to all our Senses remaining just as they were before. Now that a thing should remain to all appearance just as it was, hath nothing at all of wonder in it. We wonder indeed when we see a strange thing done : but no Man wonders he sees nothing done.

So that to speak the truth, Transubstantiation, if they will have it a Miracle, is such a Miracle, as any Man may work, that hath but confidence to face men down that he works it,  
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and the fortune to be believed. And however they of the Church of *Rome* are wont to magnifie their Priests, chiefly upon the account of this Miracle, which they say they can work every day, and every hour, if they please; yet I cannot understand, how it magnifies them so much: for when this great work (as they call it) is done, there is nothing more appears to be done, than if there were no Miracle. Now such a Miracle, as to all appearance is no Miracle, I see no reason why a Protestant Minister may not work as often as he pleaseth, as well as they: Or if he can but have the Patience to let it alone, it will work it self: for certainly nothing in the World is easier than to let a thing be as it is, and by speaking a few words over it, to make it just what it was before. In short, a Miracle is a wonder to Sense, and where a Man sees nothing that is strange done, there is no Miracle: for if he will call it a Miracle, when things remain just as they were, and no sensible change is made in them, every Man may every day work a thousand such Miracles. I come now in the

II. Place,

II. Place, To consider in what Circumstances, and with what Cautions and Limitations Miracles do give Testimony to the Truth and Divinity of any Doctrine; for Instance, of the Christian Doctrine: and for the clearing of this Matter, I shall lay down these Propositions.

1. That the entire Proof of the Christian Doctrine or Religion, consists of many Considerations, which taken together, make up a full Demonstration of the Truth of it, when perhaps no one of them, taken singly and by it self, is a convincing and undeniable proof.

The Christian Religion hath all the Characters of Divinity upon it, which any Religion can be expected to have, whether we consider the Doctrine of it, in which there is nothing unworthy of God; for it makes such a representation of God, and gives such directions concerning his Worship, as is most agreeable to those apprehensions which the wisest of men have always had of God, and of that service which is  
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most proper to be given to him. Indeed it declares something concerning God, which is very mysterious and past our Comprehensions: but this ought not to offend us, since natural light always did acknowledge the Divine Nature to be incomprehensible.

The Precepts likewise of this Religion as hardly reasonable, and such as plainly tend to the Perfection and Happiness of humane Nature; and the Arguments to enforce these Precepts, are not only very powerful in themselves, but very suitable to the natural hopes and fears of men.

Or if we consider the Author of this Doctrine, our blessed Saviour, he will appear to be a Divine Person, and *a teacher sent from God*, by the clear Predictions concerning him long before he came, which when he came were exactly fulfill'd in him; by the Miracles he wrought to give testimony of him; by the eminent Holiness and Virtue of his life; and by innumerable things which he foretold concerning himself, the Destruction of *Jerusalem*,  
and

*Many Considerations concur*

and the dispersion of the *Jewish Nation*, and the success of his *Doctrine* in the *World*, which were all afterwards punctually accomplish'd. All these proved him to be an extraordinary Person. But he was likewise declared to be *the Son of God*, by a voice from Heaven, and by his Resurrection from the dead.

Or if we consider the first Publishers of this *Doctrine*, to whom *God bare witness, with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost*, and the wonderful success they met withal, notwithstanding the outward meanness of their Persons, inso-much that their *Doctrine* very suddenly prevail'd, and past like lightning through the *World*, and in the space of a few years, spread it self beyond the utmost bounds of the vast *Roman Empire*, and this in despite of the most powerful opposition and fiercest Persecutions that ever were raised against any Religion; so that like the Children of *Israel* in *Ægypt* it did thrive under affliction, and the more it was oppress'd, the more it grew  
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and multiplied ; because there was a Divine Power that did visibly accompany the first Publishers of it, and men were not able to resist the spirit whereby they spake.

All these together make up a full and convincing Demonstration of the Truth and Divinity of the Christian Doctrine : and yet perhaps no one of these alone is a sufficient proof of it. For tho' a Doctrine be never so reasonable in it self, this is no certain Argument that it is from God, if no Testimony from Heaven be given to it ; because it may be the result and issue of humane Reason and Discourse : and tho' a Doctrine be attested by Miracles, yet the matter of it may be so unreasonable and absurd, so unworthy of God, and so contrary to the natural notions which men have of him, that no Miracles can be sufficient to give confirmation to it ; and therefore in some cases the Scripture forbids men to hearken to a Prophet, tho' he work a Miracle. *Dent. 13. 1, 2, 3. If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth*

*giveth thee a sign, or a wonder; and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whercof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet: And the reason is given, ver. 5. Because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God. From whence it is plain, that a Miracle is not sufficient to establish the Worship of a false God.*

The sum of what I have said is this, That we do not found our Belief of Christianity upon any one Argument taken by it self; but upon the whole Evidence which we are able to produce for it, in which there is nothing wanting that is proper and reasonable to prove any Religion to be from God.

2. But yet Miracles are the principal external Proof and Confirmation of the Divinity of a Doctrine. I told you before, that some Doctrines are so absurd, that a Miracle is not a sufficient proof of them: but if a Doctrine be such as is no ways unworthy of God,



nor contrary to those notions which we have of him, Miracles are the highest Testimony that can be given to it, and have always been owned by Mankind for an evidence of inspiration. And therefore *Nicodemus* takes it for an acknowledg'd Principle, that Miracles are a sign of a teacher sent from God, John 3. 2. *We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for none can do these miracles which thou dost, except God be with him.* And the Scripture constantly resolves the Divinity of any Person or Doctrine into Miracles, as the chief external Evidence that they are from God. This was the Testimony which God gave to *Moses*, to satisfy the people of *Israel* that he had sent him, *Exod. 4. 1.* *And Moses answered, and said, But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.* Upon this God tells *Moses*, that he would give him a power of Miracles, to be an Evidence to them that they may believe, that the God of their Fathers, of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, hath appeared unto thee. And all along in the Old Testament, when

God sent his Prophets to make any new Revelation, or upon any extraordinary Message, he always gave credit to them, by some Sign or Wonder. And when he sent his Son into the World, he bare Witness to him, by more and greater Miracles than *Moses* or any of the Prophets had wrought. And to this Testimony both our Saviour himself and the Apostles appeal, as the great Evidence of the Divinity of their Doctrine. When *John* the Baptist sent his Disciples to our Saviour, to be satisfied whether he were the *Messias*, he refers them to his Miracles, *Matth. 11. 4, 5.* *Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up. And John 5. 36.* *But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the father hath sent me. And Acts 2. 22.* *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, ἀπὸ τῆ θεῶν ἀποδεικνυμένον εἰς ὑμᾶς, a man demonstrated by God to you, by miracles,*  
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and wonders, and signs, which he did in the midst of you. And Acts 14. 3. it is said, that when the Apostles preached the Gospel, God gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. From all which it is plain that our Religion appeals to Miracles, as the great external Confirmation of it.

3. Especially if Miracles have all the Circumstances of advantage given to them which they are capable of; if they be many and great, publick and unquestionable, and universal, and of long continuance. And such were the Miracles wrought by *Moses*, and by our Saviour and his Apostles, which for their Nature and Quality, for the number and continuance of them, and for all other Circumstances that may give credit to them, and argue them to be from God, are in no degree to be equalled by those which any other Religion hath pretended to.

And in these Circumstances, Miracles alone are in most cases a sufficient proof of the Divinity of a Doctrine:

for there is a great deal of difference in reason to be made between one or two strange and miraculous Effects, and those not of the highest and most unquestionable rank of Miracles neither, privately wrought, and before few witnesses: and a long continued series of Miracles of all kinds, and such as are universally acknowledged to be above the Power of Nature, and those publickly wrought in the face and view of the World, in every City and Country, by a great many Persons for many years, yea for many ages together. The former may be doubted of, but the latter carry so sensible a conviction with them, that it is not credible, that the Divine Goodness should permit so great and overpowering a Testimony to be given to a falshood.

4. It cannot be denied, but that God doth sometimes permit Miracles to be wrought for the countenancing of a false Doctrine. This the Heathens pretended to at their Temples and Oracles; and it is not incredible, that God should permit the Devil to do several strange and extraordinary things, tho' it be certain  
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that there was a great deal of cheat and imposture mingled with them. To be sure the Scripture owns the working of Miracles by false Prophets. *Moses* takes notice of it in his Law, and provides against it as a case that might happen; and our Saviour expressly foretells it, *Matth. 24.* and so does *St. Paul, 2 Thess. 2.* that the man of sin should come after the working of Satan, with power and signs, and wonders of lies; that is, should work Miracles to countenance his false and impious Doctrines. And the Scripture likewise tells us, for what reason God does sometimes permit this to be done. For the tryal of the good. *Deut. 13. 3.* For the Lord your God proveth you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your hearts. And for the hardning of the wicked, by the just judgment of God. *2 Thess. 2. 10, 11, 12.* Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them ἐνέργειαν πλάνης, the efficacy of imposture that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

5. And lastly, God never permits Miracles to be wrought for the Confirmation of a false Doctrine, but he affords sufficient marks, whereby those who are free and impartial inquirers after Truth, and sincere lovers of it, may distinguish Truth from Imposture. So our Saviour tells us, that *the elect*, that is, the true and sincere Christians, should not be deceived by the *signs and wonders of the false Christs and false Prophets*. And therefore he was not afraid of having the credit of his Doctrine weakened by foretelling that false Prophets should work Miracles; because he knew when the Devil had done his utmost, the difference would be apparent enough between the Confirmation which he had given to the Christian Doctrine, and what the Devil should be able to give to his Instruments. As,

1. Either the Doctrine would be absurd in it self, and such as no Miracles can confirm. As in the case which *Moses* instanceth in, of a Miracle wrought to seduce them from the Worship of the one true God, who is naturally

naturally known, to the Worship of Idols. Or else,

2. It would be contrary to that Doctrine which had already had a far greater, and more Divine Confirmation. And this likewise is another reason intimated by *Moses*, why the people should not hearken to a Prophet that would seduce them to Idolatry, tho' he should work a Miracle; *because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, that is, from that God who had demonstrated himself to them by such a series of great and unquestionable Miracles, as ought in all reason to bear down any single Sign and Wonder.*

And the case is the same, if Miracles should now be pretended for the confirmation of any thing plainly contrary to the Christian Doctrine, which being establish'd by such Miracles as never were wrought in the World upon any other occasion, it cannot be thought reasonable, that any Evidence inferiour to this, should be able to  
controul

controul it, or to give credit to any thing that contradicted it. And in this case the Apostle hath expressly forbidden Christians to hearken to a contrary Doctrine, *tho' they themselves, or an Angel from heaven should preach it, Gal. 1. 8.* Therefore St. Paul expressly lays down this Rule, whereby we may judge what miraculous Powers are from the Spirit of God, and what not, *1 Cor. 12. 1. Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant, that is, what miraculous gifts are from the Spirit of God, and what not; and then, ver. 3. he gives this Rule, Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy Ghost; that is, if any Man pretend to be inspired, and to be endowed with a Miraculous Power, and yet blasphemeth Christ, this Spirit is not from God: but if any Man be endowed with this Power, and acknowledge Christ, we may safely conclude this Power to be from the Holy Ghost. The very same Rule St. John lays down yet more plainly, 1 John 4. 1, 2, 3. Believe*



*lieve not every spirit, that is, not every one that pretends to the Gifts and Inspirations of the Spirit; but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the spirit, of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. And ver. 6. We are of God; he that knoweth God, heareth us: he that is not of God, heareth not us: hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. This seems at first sight to be a very odd Rule, and what every false teacher, and every sect may law down in favour of themselves, he that knoweth God, heareth us: he that knoweth not God, heareth not us; and nothing can make it reasonable, but the consideration that the Christian Religion being already so abundantly confirmed beyond contradiction, is it self become a Rule to try Spirits or Miracles by.*  
Or,

3. The Miracles which false Prophets work, are presently confuted  
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and upon the spot. Thus *Moses* confuted and conquered *Pharaoh's* Magicians, by working Miracles which they could not work, which forced them to yield the cause, and acknowledge that it was *the finger of God*. And so likewise *Simon Magus*, who had gained so great a Reputation among the people by his Sorceries, as to be call'd *the mighty power of God*, was confuted by the Apostles, who by the laying on of hands, conferr'd a miraculous Power on men, which he not being able to do, would have purchased it with Mony. And so *Elymas* the Sorcerer was struck blind by *St. Paul*. And the Miracles of the Heathen Temples and Oracles, upon the Preaching of the Gospel, ceased, as being ashamed of themselves; as *Porphyry*, one of the bitterest Enemies of Christianity, does expressly acknowledge. Or else,

*Lastly*, The Miracles wrought, or pretended to be wrought to confirm false Doctrines, are such as do some way or other confute themselves; or if they be real, are sufficiently detected to be the pranks of the Devil, and  
not

not the great and glorious Works of God. Such were the Miracles of the heathen deities, wrought so privately and obscurely, and confessedly mix'd with so much of Imposture, as to bring a just suspicion upon them, that when they were real, the Devil was the Author of them. And such were the Miracles which are attributed to *Mahomet*; either grossly absurd and ridiculous, as that of part of the Moon coming down into his sleeve, and his remanding it to its place again; or else destitute of all proof and witness, as that of a *Camel's* speaking to him by night; and his *Pigeon* whispering to him in the Ear; which if it had been intended for a Miracle, the *Pigeon* should not have whispered, but have spoken out, that others might have heard it. But *Mahomet* was so conscious to himself of his own defect in point of Miracles, that he laid no weight upon them, being, as he said, *not sent to convert the world by Miracles; but to conquer them by force of arms.*

And now I am sorry I have occasion to say it, but it is too true, that  
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the Miracles pretended to by the Church of *Rome*, for the confirmation of their erroneous Doctrines, are of the same stamp with these, taxed by several of their best Writers of Imposture and Forgery, of Fable and Romance, so extravagant and freakish and fantastical, wrought without any necessity, and serving to no wise end, that they are so far from giving credit to their Doctrines, that they are a mighty scandal to them, and to our common Christianity: whereas the truly Divine Miracles, reported to us in Scripture, how unlike are they to these? How venerable in themselves, and in all the Circumstances with which they are related? never wrought but upon great Necessity, and for excellent Ends, full of Benefit and Advantage, of Mercy and Compassion to Mankind; and in a word, such as are every way worthy of their Author, having plain Characters of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness stampt upon them.

And thus I have done with the *first* thing I propounded to speak to, namely, that Miracles are a Divine Testimony;

mony ; and in what Circumstances, and with what Cautions and Limitations they are so. I shall at present only draw some Inferences from what hath been discoursed upon this Argument.

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XI.

I. What hath been said may satisfy us of the Truth and Divinity of the Christian Doctrine, which had so eminent a Testimony given to it from Heaven, and did at first so strangely prevail in the World, contrary to all human probability, *not by might nor by power ; but by the spirit of the Lord.* No Man can suppose a Religion in Circumstances of greater disadvantage, and upon all human accounts more unlikely to sustain and bear up it self, than Christianity was. The first appearance of it was so weak, its beginnings so small, and the instruments employed in the propagation of it so mean and despicable, that no Man but would have concluded it must presently have sunk and come to nought ; and no other reason can be given of the strange success and prevalency of it, but that *it was of God,*  
and

and therefore *it could not be overthrown.*

2. From hence we may judge how groundless the pretences are, which men now a-days make to inspiration and infallibility ; because this is not to be proved, and made out any other way but by Miracles. For either we must believe every pretence of this kind ; and then we are at the mercy of every crafty and confident Man, to be led by him into what delusions he pleases : or we must only believe those who give some Testimony of their inspiration : but the evidence of Inspiration was always Miracles. This is the Testimony which God hath always given to those whom he hath sent upon an extraordinary Message to Mankind. And this is that which we reasonably demand of our modern Enthusiasts, and of the great pretender to infallibility, the Bishop of *Rome* ; because nothing can be more vain, than for men to pretend to Inspiration, and an infallible Spirit, without Miracles. And yet I cannot learn that the *Popes* themselves, among  
all

all their boundless Privileges and Powers, do so much as pretend to a Power of Miracles, which yet is the only thing that can in Reason support their Pretences to Infallibility.

3. You see what an immediate Testimony from Heaven God was pleased to give to the first Preachers of the Christian Doctrine, to qualify them with any probability of success, to contest with the violent and almost invincible Prejudices of men educated in a contrary Religion, and which had the secular Authority and Laws on its side. For having this Divine Seal given to their Commission, they did as it were carry the Letters Patents of Heaven in their hands, and an Authority paramount to that of humane Laws. And therefore the Wisdom of God, which does nothing which is superfluous and unnecessary, did not think the Apostles sufficiently armed and appointed for this Design, by a Commission from the Mouth of the Son of God, without this Divine Seal and Testimony

*The Power of the Miracles*

mony of Miracles, as a visible Evidence of their Divine Commission. And therefore our Saviour after he had commissioned them to *preach the Gospel to all Nations*, commanded them not to enter upon this work, nor to depart from Jerusalem, till they had received the promise of the Father; that is, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, *Acts* 1. 4. And so our Saviour explains it, *Luke* 24. 47. where, after he had commanded, *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his Name among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem*, he adds, *ver.* 49. *And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be indued with power from on high.* And to the same purpose, *Acts* 1. 8. *But ye shall receive power after that the holy Ghost is come upon you; by which, he tells us, they were qualified to be witnesses unto him, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.*



4. And *lastly*, The Consideration of what hath been said, doth justly upbraid us, that our Religion, which hath such evident marks of Divinity upon it, and comes down to us confirmed by so many Miracles, should yet have so little Efficacy upon the lives of the greatest part of those who call themselves Christians. 'Tis true, Miracles are now ceased among Christians, our Religion being sufficiently establish'd by those that were wrought at first; and now the greatest Miracle in these latter Ages, is a good Man, a true and sincere Christian: but the Laws of Christianity are still the same; and the Motives and Arguments to a good life are the same; and tho' the miraculous Gifts of the Spirit have left the World, yet the Sealing and Sanctifying Gifts of the Holy Ghost do still remain. We cannot now speak all Languages, as the Apostles did: but we may do that which is much better, and more pleasing to God; we may live holy and virtuous lives. We

*The Divinity of Christianity.*

have not that Faith which works by Miracles: but we may have that which is far more excellent, the *Faith which works by Charity*; which, if we believe St. Paul, is more than *to speak with the tongues of men and angels, more than to prophesie, and to understand all mysteries and all knowledge.*

The admirable Piety and Virtue of the first Christians, are still upon record for our imitation: but I know not how it comes to pass, we chuse rather lazily to admire those Patterns, than vigorously to imitate them; as if the Holiness of those times were also miraculous, and not intended for the imitation of succeeding Ages; as if it were impossible for us now to lead such lives as they did; as if Heaven and Earth, God and men, and all things were alter'd since that time; as if the Christian Religion were now quite dispirited, and had lost all its vigour and force; and as if the Holy Spirit of God had to all intents and purposes forsaken the  
World,

World, and were retired to the Father.

But our Religion is still the same it was; the Precepts of it as Reasonable, and the Promises of it as Powerful as ever. God is still the same he was; and *Christ* still at the *right hand of God making intercession for us*; and the Holy Spirit of God still ready to assist us, *to every good word and work.*

To conclude, We have, beyond comparison, the best and most Reasonable Religion in the World; a Religion which carries along with it the greatest Evidence of its Truth, which contains the best Rules and Directions for a good life, which offers the most powerful assistance to the Obedience of its Laws, and gives the greatest encouragements thereto, by the assurance of a blessed immortality in another World. Now the better our Religion is, our case is so much the worse, if we be not made good by it. Philosophy had some Effect upon the World to make  
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some men temperate and chaste, and just and honest in their lives. And the *Jewish Religion* (as weak and imperfect as it was, and tho' it was but *the shadow of good things to come,*) hath yet left us many eminent Examples of good and holy Men. What then shall become of us, if the best Institution in the World, the blessed Gospel of the Son of God, have less Effect upon us than the Doctrine of *Pythagoras*, and the Law of *Moses* had upon them? *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him! God also bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own will. To which blessed and glorious Trinity be all honour and glory, now and for ever.*

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# SERMON XII.

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## Of the Miracles wrought in Confirmation of Christi- anity.

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The Second Sermon on this Text.

H E B. II. 4.

*God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

I Have begun to discourse upon these words, from which I told you, three things offer themselves to our Consideration:

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*First,*

*First*, That Miracles are a Divine Testimony to a Person or Doctrine. God is here said to bear witness to the Apostles, by signs, and wonders, and miracles.

*Secondly*, That God gave this Testimony to the Apostles, and first Publishers of the Gospel, in a very eminent manner; for so the phrase signifies, God bearing them witness with signs, and wonders, and miracles; so many words to the same sense, being purposely used to signify the greatness of the thing.

*Thirdly*, The Reasons, why Miracles are now ceased in the Church, and have been for several Ages; so that there have been no footsteps of this miraculous Power for several Ages past. The *first* I have spoken to, and proceed now to the

*Second* Thing which I proposed to consider, *viz.* That God gave Testimony to the Apostles, and first Publishers of Christianity, in a very eminent manner; for so the expression in  
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*by many and great Miracles.*

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the Text signifies, where so many several words are used for the same thing, to express according to the manner of the *Hebrew* Phrase, the greatness of the thing, *God bearing them witness both with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, that is, with many and great Miracles, Καὶ μερισμῶν, and distributions of the holy Ghost, according to his own will* ; that is, God distributed these several miraculous Powers and Gifts among the Apostles and first Preachers of the Gospel ; not all to every one of them, but some to one, and some to another, as to him seemed best, and was most for the Benefit and Edification of the Church.

The History of it in short is this. When our blessed Saviour ascended into Heaven, he promised to send down his Spirit in miraculous Gifts upon his Apostles, to give credit to his Doctrine, and to qualify them for the more speedy planting and propagating of it in the World ; and accordingly, not many days after he was ascended into Heaven, as an Evidence of the Power and Glory he was invested

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*The Apostles endowed with*

ed withal, he, according to his promise immediately before his Ascension, sent down the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles in a visible manner, that is, in the form of fiery cloven Tongues, as an emblem of one of the principal Gifts they were endowed withal, *viz.* the knowledge and ability of speaking several Languages, which they had never learned. And this happened upon the day of *Pentecost*, that so the Gospel might exactly correspond to the Dispensation of the Law, which was the type and figure of it. And therefore as our Saviour dyed at the time of the Jewish *Passover*, which was the type of his Sufferings; so the Gospel, which was the Perfection and fulfilling of the Law, began to be publish'd at the very same time that the Law was given from Mount *Sinai*, *viz.* at the end of the seven weeks after the *Passover*. For at this time the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles in miraculous Powers and Gifts; *when this new law was to come forth out of Sion, and the law of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

And



And among these Gifts, the *first* we find mentioned was the gift of Tongues; without which, the Gospel must of necessity have been very slowly propagated in the World: for had the Apostles been first to learn the several Languages of the Nations they were to Preach to, how tedious a work would that have been? it requiring the industry of some years, to gain so perfect a mastery of a strange Language, as to be able to use it with that freedom and readiness which is necessary for such a work.

And this Gift all the Apostles had, because they had all occasion for it, being designed by our Saviour to be the chief Publishers of his Gospel to the World. And this Gift did also continually reside upon them, and not only at some times, as some other Gifts did, because they had constant use of this Gift of Tongues.

The interpreting of things spoken in a strange Tongue was also a Gift distinct from the Gift of Tongues, tho' attending it; insomuch that some  
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Persons had one, and some the other. So the Apostle tells us, *1 Cor. 12. 10. To one is given divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues.* The occasion of which was plainly this; it might happen, and often did, that the Auditory might consist of people of several Nations; now because no Man could speak more than one Language at once, it was convenient others should have the gift of interpreting what was spoken, to those who understood not the Language in which it was spoken, that so all might receive the benefit of what was delivered, and be edified thereby. So that here were two several Gifts serving the same end, *viz.* the conveying of the knowledge of the Gospel to Mankind, in a more speedy way than it could have been done by ordinary means; and these were very plain and sensible Miracles, unquestionably supernatural, and evident to the senses of all men. So that the Gospel, where-ever it was Preached, carried its own Testimony along with it, and was confirmed by the very manner of its conveyance and delivery: and well might men entertain

entertain it as a Divine Doctrine, when  
the very Manner and the Means  
whereby it was publish'd was a Mi-  
racle.

And here I cannot but take notice,  
how contrary the arts and the ways of  
the Church of *Rome* are, to the me-  
thods of God ; and that when he was  
at the expence of so many Miracles to  
publish this Doctrine to the World,  
they should use so much industry and  
violence to conceal it. God was pleased  
to endow the first Preachers of it with  
the Gift of Tongues, that *their sound*  
*might go into all the earth, and their*  
*word to the end of the world,* that there  
might be no Nation nor Language  
where this saving knowledge might  
not come, that the Sermons which  
they Preached, and the Prayers which  
they put up to God in publick, for  
themselves and the people, and all the  
Offices of Religion which they per-  
formed, might be fully understood by  
all, and that all might joyn in them,  
and have the benefit and comfort of  
them ; that their understandings might  
be informed and enlightened by what  
was spoken, and their affections raised  
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*The methods of the Romish Church*

and warmed by their understandings, and their wills excited by their affections, and that the Effect of all this might appear in their lives and practice. Thus it was in the Primitive Christian Church: but in the Church of *Rome*, things are managed in a quite contrary way, and have been for several Ages. The Doctrine of Salvation, as it is contained and delivered in the holy Scripture, is a *sealed book*, which the people are not thought *worthy to open or look into*. This *bread of life which came down from heaven*, is like the *shew-bread among the Jews, which none may eat but the priest only*, unless it be by extraordinary favour and particular Licence from the Bishop. The people indeed come together, and are present at the Prayers and Devotion of the Priest; but the Priest *that prays is a barbarian to them*, and all the while *the understanding of the people is unfruitful*, and they cannot say Amen, because they understand not what he says.

But let any Man shew me the least intimation in Scripture or Antiquity,  
that

that our Saviour, or his Apostles, or the Primitive Church, ever used this way; and yet the danger of error and heresie, was as great then, as it is now: So that the Church of *Rome* must pretend themselves wiser than our Saviour and his Apostles; and to be more careful to prevent heresie in the Church, than they were. This they are loth to say; and yet they must say it, if they will justify their own doings. But the plain truth is, there is another and truer Reason for it, tho' they are not willing to own it, and that is this; If the Scriptures were permitted to the people in a Language which they understand, the Errors of their Church would be discovered and laid open, and men would plainly discern how contrary many of their Doctrines and Practices are, to those of our Saviour and his Apostles: for *every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered.*

*Secondly,* The next miraculous Gift I shall mention after the Gift of Tongues, is the Gift of Prophecie, or foretelling things future, which was  
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*The Apostles endowed with*

always looked upon as an Evidence of inspiration. And this we find mentioned, *1 Cor. 12. 10. To another Prophecie*, and in several other places; and to this Gift, the Apostle gives a great preeminence, *1 Cor. 14. 1. Covet spiritual gifts: but rather that ye may prophesie*; because foretelling of things to come, was always esteemed by Mankind an Evidence of a Person divinely inspired, and consequently, was one of the greatest Testimonies of the Truth of Christianity. And this the Angel that appeared to *St. John* particularly takes notice of, *Rev. 19. 10. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophesie*. The Prophecies of that Book were to be a standing Testimony of the truth of Christianity in all Ages of the Church.

*Thirdly*, The next Gift is that of healing all manner of Diseases. And this the Apostles seem generally to have had, and the Elders of the Church also, whose peculiar office it was to pray over the sick, and to anoint them with Oyl; and upon their Prayers, God was pleased to grant miraculous recoveries, as we find expressly promised,

fed,

*the Gift of healing.*

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Sermon  
XII.

fed, James 5. 14, 15. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.*

This miraculous Power we find likewise mentioned to be conferred on the Apostles in our Saviour's lifetime, when he first gave them Commission to Preach the Gospel to the Jews, Mark 6. 12, 13. where it is said, that *They went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*

And now that this miraculous Gift is ceased, there is no reason why the meer Ceremony of *anointing with oil* should continue; which yet is still used in the Church of Rome, and made a *Sacrament*; tho' it signifie nothing: for they do not pretend to heal men by it; nay they pretend the contrary, because they never use it, but in ex-

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tremity, and where they look upon the Person as past recovery ; and if they did not think so, they would not use it.

But besides the healing, with this solemnity of anointing with Oil and with Prayer, which seems to have been used by the Elders of the Church only upon those who were members of the Church, there was likewise a general Gift of healing, which the Apostles exercised upon all occasions where-ever they came ; and this was performed only by laying their hands on the sick. And this we find promised by our Saviour to his Apostles, when he gave them Commission to Preach the Gospel to all the World, immediately before his Ascension ; and not only to the Apostles, but to those who should believe upon their preaching, *Mark 16. 17, 18. These signs shall follow them that believe : in my name shall they cast out devils, &c.* And then it follows, *they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

*Fourthly,*



*Fourthly*, The Power of raising the dead, which hath always been esteemed one of the greatest and most unquestionable Miracles of all other. A principal part of the Apostles Office was to be witnesses of our Saviour's Resurrection from the dead, whereby he was so powerfully demonstrated to be the Son of God. But because this was a strange Relation, and not easie to be credited, by those who were strangers to the Apostles, and had never known them before; therefore that they might witness this with more Authority, God was pleased to endow them with a miraculous Power of all kinds; and particularly with a power of raising the dead: and then there was no difficulty in receiving their testimony concerning our Saviour's Resurrection, when men saw them in his name raise others from the dead. And of this we have two instances in the *Acts* of the Apostles; of St. Peter's raising *Dorcas*, *Acts* 9: and St. Paul's raising *Eutychus*, *Acts* 20. And *Irenæus*, who lived in the Age after the Apostles, tells us, that

in his time this power continued among Christians.

*Fifthly*, Another miraculous Gift was that of discerning Spirits; the principal use of which was, to try and judge who were true Prophets. And of this the Apostle speaks, *1 Cor. 14. 29. Let the prophet speak two or three, and let the other judge. And, ver. 32. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.* And this is likewise call'd by the same Apostle, *the gift of discerning spirits. 1 Cor. 12. 10. To another is given the discerning of spirits.* Those who pretended to this Gift, were tryed by the Bishops and Elders of the Church, as the Prophets were tryed among the *Jews*, by the *Sanhedrim*. And of these kind of Assemblies among the Christians, for the tryal of Prophets, *Eusebius* speaks particularly in his *5th. Book.*

And it should seem likewise that this gift of discerning Spirits, extended also to the discovery of the secrets of mens hearts; by the revealing  
whereof,

*the gift of discerning Spirits.*

whereof unbelievers were many times suddenly struck and convinced; as may very probably be collected from 1 Cor. 14. 24, 25. *But if all prophesie, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned; he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*

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And upon this miraculous Gift of knowing the secrets of mens hearts, it seems to be very probable, that that which is commonly call'd *the power of the Keys* did depend, I mean *the power of remitting or retaining sins*: for they who had the priviledge of knowing mens hearts, might do this upon certain grounds, and were secured from mistake in the exercise of their power upon particular Persons; which the Priests and Ministers of the Church now are not, nor can be; because they cannot see into mens hearts, whether they be truly penitent and qualified for forgiveness or not. For I cannot easily believe but

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that

that those words of our Saviour, *whose sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose sins ye retain, they are retained,* were intended to signifie something more than a meer declaration of the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel, which any Man might make, as well as the Apostles and Ministers of the Church. For that God will forgive the penitent, and that he will not pardon the sinner, except he repent, is as true from any Man's mouth, as from an Apostles: and as to the absolution of this or that particular Person, tho' a Minister by the skill and knowledge of his Profession, is ordinarily and reasonably presumed by virtue of his office, to be a better judge of a Man's Repentance, than other persons are, and therefore may with more Authority and Satisfaction to the penitent, declare his judgment and opinion concerning him; yet not being able to see into his heart, he may be mistaken concerning him; and if he be, his declaring his sins to be forgiven, that is, his absolution of him, will do him no good: and on the other hand, his refusal to absolve him, if he be truly penitent, will do him

him no harm. As the judgment of a skilful Lawyer is of greater Authority, and more satisfactory to us concerning our title to an Estate, than the opinion of another Man, who is not of the Profession, nor presumed to have the like skill: but yet for all this, his judgment does not alter the case; and if in truth the Law be otherwise, our title is bad, for all this skilfull Man's opinion of the goodness of it.

And thus much is granted by the Church of *Rome*; that if the Priest be mistaken in the use of the Keys, and gives absolution to one that is not truly Penitent, his sins are not remitted; or if a person be excommunicated that is not truly guilty, his sins are not retained; what *he binds on earth, is not bound in heaven; and he whom he looseth and absolves on earth, is not absolved in heaven.* But the Protestants go farther, and do not only make a mistaken Absolution or Excommunication void in it self; but they do not make the Absolution of the Priest at all necessary to the forgiveness of sins, but only convenient for  
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the satisfaction and comfort of the Penitent. For which reason, our Church does not require a formal Absolution to be given to the dying penitent, unless he himself desire it; which is a certain Argument, that in the Judgment of our Church, the Absolution of the Priest is not necessary to the Forgiveness and Salvation of the Penitent. For had they thought it necessary, they would have enjoyned the Priest to give it to every one whom he judged Penitent, whether he desired it or not.

So that the Absolution of the Priest, having only the Authority of a Man, presumed to be skillful in his office, but no certain Effect, in case he be mistaken (as he very easily may be, and if he be, as he ought to be, a Charitable Man, no doubt often is) I cannot think but that this Power of *remitting and retaining sins*, so solemnly conferr'd on the Apostles by our Saviour, had something in it that was miraculous and extraordinary, and did suppose the knowledge of mens hearts, and that they  
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were not mistaken in the application of this Power to particular Persons; and consequently, that in that miraculous and extraordinary degree, it was peculiar to the Apostles and their times. For I cannot easily be brought to believe, that the meaning of this great Promise to the Apostles should be only this, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, if ye be not mistaken, as in many cases ye will be, and in any case ye may be, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.* And if more be meant than this, it must suppose a miraculous Power of discerning the sincerity of mens hearts.

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And therefore when the Power of the Keys is conferred on the Ministers of the Gospel, in our Form of Ordination, I suppose that only one or both of these *two* things is intended by it, *viz.* a Power to admit Persons into the Christian Church by Baptism, in which is sealed to them the remission of sins; and  
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to cast persons out of the Communion of the Christian Church, by Excommunication and the Censures of it: and an authority, by virtue of their office, to declare to men the terms of pardon and forgiveness, which cannot be that infallible Power of Absolving which the Apostles had.

And I am the rather induced to think so, because I find it promised to the Apostles, together with the miraculous Power and Efficacy of Prayer, which *St. Chrysostom* reckons among the miraculous gifts, which he says were ceased in his time. That it was thus promised, you may see *Matth. 18. 18, 19. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.* But surely no man will pretend that any two Christians or Ministers have now this Power, that whatever they shall agree together  
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to ask of God, which is fit and lawful in behalf of any person, God will certainly grant it upon their request. In the same sense I understand several other Texts, concerning the Efficacy of the Prayers of the Apostles and first Christians, as in a great measure miraculous, and peculiar to the first times of Christianity. And I think any man that attentively considers them, will think that they cannot well be understood otherwise. Such as these, *Matth. 21. 22. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Mark 11. 24. I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. John 14. 14. If ye shall ask any thing in my Name, I will do it; and Chap. 15. 17. If ye abide in me, and my Words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you, 1 John 3. 22. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him; and Chap. 5. 14, 15. And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask,*

*we*

*we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. These Promises I take to contain something extraordinary, and peculiar to the first times of Christianity. And this will appear exceeding probable, if we consider the occasion and circumstances of these Promises, which are so often joyned with the Promise of a miraculous Power, as in the place I mentioned before, Matth. 18. 18, 19. where after the Power of binding and loosing, it immediately follows, that if two of you shall agree on earth touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, which is in heaven. Matth. 21. 22. and Mark 11. 24. says our Saviour there to his Disciples; Have faith in God: for verily I say unto you, whosoever shall say to this mountain; be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. And then immediately it follows, Therefore I say unto you; whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them; that is,*

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whatever ye desire of God to do, he shall miraculously do it, upon your Prayers. So likewise *John* 14. 12, 13, 14. *Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father, And whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my Name, I will do it.* Still you see this extraordinary Efficacy of Prayer is joyned with the Power of Miracles, as one part and branch of it. More particularly, we find the forgiveness of the sins of those whom they prayed for, expressly promised. *1 John* 5. 15. *And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* And then it follows; *If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for the sin that is not unto death.* Where forgiveness of sins, upon the Prayers of Christians for one another, is promised, except in the case of a *sin unto death*, by which is meant Apostacy from Christianity

to the Heathen Idolatry, which is the reason of the caution which follows ; *Little children, keep your selves from Idols.* And this extraordinary Efficacy of Prayer, we find promised in a more especial manner to the Elders of the Church, *James* 5. 14, 15. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord : And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up : and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

In comparing of all these Texts, it seems plain, that both the Power of *remitting* and *retaining sins*, and the strange efficacy of Prayer, which were promised to the Apostles and first Christians, had something miraculous and extraordinary in them, and were peculiar to the first Ages of the Church. I will not be peremptory in these things ; but this seems to be the most genuine and reasonable interpretation of these Texts.

*Sixthly,*

*Sixthly*, And besides these which I have mentioned, there was likewise a Power of inflicting Corporal Punishments and Diseases upon scandalous and obstinate Christians; which is in Scripture call'd, *a delivering men up to Satan, for the destroying or tormenting of their bodies, that their souls might be saved at last.* And of this kind were those Diseases which befell the *Corinthians*, for their disorderly and irregular carriage at the Sacrament, of which the Apostle speaks, *1 Cor. 11. 30. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep;* that is, to some of them these Distempers proved mortal. And we find that this Power did in some cases extend to the inflicting of sudden and present death; as in the case of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*. And indeed considering that Christianity was at first destitute of any countenance from the Civil Power, some such Power as this was necessary to maintain the Authority of the Apostles against the

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the Contumacious and Disobedi-  
ent.

And then, *lastly*, there was the Power of casting out Devils in the name of Christ, which was common to the meanest Christian, and continued in the Church a long time after most of the other Gifts were ceased, as *Tertullian*, *Minucius Felix*, and *Arnobius*, do most expressly testify concerning their times.

Thus you see that there were almost all imaginable kinds of miraculous Powers conferred upon the Apostles and first Christians, to give the greater Establishment and Confirmation to the Christian Doctrine.

All the reflection I shall make upon what hath been said, shall be this. Since our Religion comes down to us confirmed by such miraculous Powers, *we ought to take the more earnest heed to it, to believe*  
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*to cast out Devils.*

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it more stedfastly, and to practice it more carefully in our lives. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

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R. P.

S. E. H.

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 S E R M O N XIII.
 

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 Of the Miracles wrought in  
Confirmation of Christi-  
anity.
 

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The Second Sermon on this Text.

H E B. II. 4.

*God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

**I**N these words *three* things offer themselves to our consideration.

*First*, That Miracles are a Divine Testimony given to a Person or Doctrine.

*Secondly*, That God gave this Testimony to the Apostles and first Publishers

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lishers of the Gospel, in a very eminent manner. Of these *two* I have discours'd at large, and now proceed to the,

*Third*, and *last* thing which I propos'd, *viz.* The reason why these Miracles are now ceased in the Christian Church, and have been for a long time, so that there have been no footsteps of this miraculous Power for many Ages. And in the handling of this Argument, I shall do these *three* things.

I. Shew that these miraculous Gifts and Powers have ceased in the Christian Church for several Ages.

II. I shall assign a plain Reason of the ceasing of Miracles after such a time.

III. Answer the Objection from the innumerable Miracles which have been, and are still pretended to be wrought in the Church of *Rome*.

1. I shall shew, that these miraculous Powers and Gifts have ceased in the Church for several Ages. That they are now ceased we find by certain experience; nor are they pretended to at this day, by any part of the Christian Church, except the Church of *Rome*, where yet they are nothing so plentiful now a-days, as they were in those ignorant Ages, from the time of the degeneracy and corruption of the Western Church, down to the Reformation; and now chiefly pretended to in those parts of the *Roman* Communion, where their Religion reigns without any contradiction, and people are under the awe and lash of the *Inquisition*, so that they dare neither gainsay, nor offer to detect the forgery and imposture of them; and yet here is less need of them, because the people are all of a mind, and believe as the Church would have them, and dare not for their lives do otherwise. For where the *Inquisition* rules, and ignorance, the Mother, not of true Devotion, but of Credulity and Superstition, is carefully preserved,

there is no need of Miracles, to make people believe what they have a mind to: but in other places, where their Religion is opposed, and there is great occasion for them, both to confirm those of their own Religion, and to reduce Hereticks and Unbelievers, there is little or no pretence, to them, as I shall shew by and by.

So that all over the Christian Church, except in the Church of *Rome*, all pretence to these miraculous Powers and Gifts is now ceased, and hath been for many Ages. *St. Chrysostom* speaking of his time, which was about 400 years after Christ, says that these miraculous Powers were then ceased, and speaks as if no footsteps of them were left in the Pastors and Governours of the Church, much less among private Christians; for which he gives this substantial reason (which I shall speak to afterwards) that Christianity being now already establish'd by Miracles, there was no reason to expect the continuance of them. *St. Augustine* indeed, sometime after, speaks of many miraculous things done at Sepulchres

Sepulchres of the Martyrs. But this doth not contradict what St. *Chry-  
sostom* had said, because he speaks of the living Teachers and Members of the Church, in whom these miraculous Gifts and Powers were ceased: but that some miraculous Cures were wrought upon the Prayers of Christians, at the Tombs of the Martyrs, is a confirmation of the thing, that God designed to honour the Primitive Christians and Martyrs with these Gifts, and not to continue them to the succeeding Ages of the Church; and therefore God was pleased that so many wonderful things should be done at their Sepulchres, to shew that he did intend, that these miraculous Powers and Gifts should dye with them, and continue no longer in the living members of the Church.

II. I shall now assign a plain reason of the ceasing of these miraculous Gifts after such a time; namely, because there was not the like necessity and occasion for them, that there was before. They were at first in a great degree necessary to introduce the Go-

spel into the World, which was destitute of all other helps and advantages; to recommend it to the esteem and liking of Mankind; to give credit to a new Doctrine and Religion, so contrary to the inveterate prejudices of men, bred up in another Religion very different from this, and so opposite to the lusts and interests of men; to make way for the more speedy and effectual planting of this Religion in the World; to strengthen the hands of the first Publishers of it, and to give credit to their Testimony, concerning that strange relation of theirs, of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead; to be a sensible evidence and conviction to men, of the Divinity of that new Doctrine which was preached to them, and to support and confirm them in the Belief and Profession of it, against those terrible Sufferings and Persecutions, which for the sake of it they were exposed to. For these reasons God was pleased to shed abroad so plentifully these miraculous Gifts, among the first Preachers and Professors of Christianity; and as these reasons ceased or abated, so did these

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miraculous Powers and Gifts: and therefore as soon as the Gospel was planted, which it was in a great part of the then known World, during the life of the Apostles, the Gift of Tongues ceased, and we hear no more of it, because there was no farther use and occasion for it. Other Gifts did continue longer, but abated by degrees, according as Christianity gained ground and establishment, and they grew less frequent, as there was less need of them. The Power of casting out Devils, which was most common (for every Christian had it) continued longest; and there was reason it should continue so long as the Devil reigned, and the Pagan Idolatry was kept up, to shew that the Spirit of Christ was superiour to the Devil, and would finally overcome him and overthrow his Kingdom, according to that of *St. John, 1 John 4. 4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* And this appeared in that they were able in the Name of Christ to cast him out wherever he had taken possession, which

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God permitted to be very frequent in those times, for the more glorious manifestation of his Power, in *casting out the Prince of this world*. But when the Powers of the World became Christian, and the heathen Idolatry was every where overthrown, and Satan's Kingdom every where destroyed, then this miraculous Gift also ceased, there being no farther occasion for it. And now that *the kingdoms of the world were become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ*, and that the Gospel was planted, and had taken firm root, and was fully settled and establish'd, these miraculous Powers, which were at first necessary to ballance the mighty difficulties and oppositions which Christianity met withal, and to supply the want of all manner of countenance from the Civil Authority, were withdrawn, and did cease, because there was no need of their longer continuance.

Besides that it is to be considered, that those miraculous Powers which manifested themselves in the first Ages



ges of Christianity, were intended by God to give a standing confirmation to it in after Ages; as the Miracles that were wrought at the giving of the Law, and the bringing of the Children of *Israel* into *Canaan*, were designed for a standing confirmation of the *Jewish* Religion, the memory whereof was so carefully preserved and transmitted to after Ages, that they needed not to be repeated.

I come now in the,

III. and *last* Place to answer that Objection from the innumerable Miracles which have been, and are still pretended to be wrought in the Church of *Rome*. And so indeed we find that the *Arians* and other Hereticks in former times pretended to Miracles, for the confirmation of their Errors a good while after Miracles were generally ceased in the Christian Church, which shews that this is no new or strange thing.

In answer to this Objection, I desire

fire these following particulars may be considered.

*First*, That the most Learned and Judicious Writers of the *Roman Church* do acknowledge, that there is no necessity of Miracles now, and that Christianity is sufficiently establish'd by the Miracles which were wrought at first to give Testimony to it ; and therefore not being necessary, without manifest evidence of fact, it is not necessary to believe that they are continued.

*Secondly*, The Miracles pretended to by the Church of *Rome* are of very doubtful and suspected credit, even among the wisest Persons of their own Communion ; and therefore I hope they do not expect we should give much credit to those Miracles, of the truth of which they themselves are in so much doubt, that they are generally looked upon by the more Prudent and Learned among them, as pious frauds, to raise and entertain the Devotion of the weak and ignorant. Several of them have been convicted

victed of fraud and imposture, not only here in *England*, in times of Popery, and at the beginning of the Reformation; but in other Countries, where that Religion bears sway.

And it is observable, that the greatest part of the History of these Miracles (which they call *Legends*) were Written in the *Romance Age*, and much in the same style, with the like wantonness and extravagancy of fancy, and fulsom absurdity of invention, and it is to be feared with the like regard to Truth. And I know not whether *Romances* had not their name, as well as their original, from these *Roman Legends*, of which they are exact Copies and Imitations; and as these were *Sacred*, so those were a sort of *Civil Legends*, in which they represented their *Hero's* doing the like absurd Feats and Miracles in *Chivalry*, as their Saints in their *Legends* are said to do in *Religion*; and they were both Written by the lazy and unlearned Monks, and by them drest up and fitted to the gust of those ignorant and superstitious Ages.

And

And yet these *Legends* of *lying wonders* have not only been put into the hands of the people, but Lessons out of them have been taken, as out of the Scriptures, and distributed into the publick Offices of their Church, to be read there, as the Scriptures are, and instead of them; only with this difference, that the people are permitted to have the Scriptures only in an unknown Tongue, but the *Legends*, out of which these Lessons are taken, they are permitted to have at home in their own Tongue; as if there were no danger of Error or Heresie from false stories, but only from the word of Truth. And herein is remarkably fulfill'd that Prophecie concerning the followers of Antichrist, 2 *Thess.* 2. 11. That *because they received not the truth in the love of it, God would send them strong delusions, ἐνέργειαν πλάνης, the efficacy of imposture, that they should believe a lie.* And how could they more solemnly declare the belief and love of lies, than by putting these ridiculous Fables into the publick Offices of the Church,

Church, in place of the Holy Scriptures? and at the same time that they deny to the people the use of the Scriptures in a known Tongue, to permit them the use, and to recommend to them the Reading of these *lying Legends*, out of which these ridiculous Lessons are taken?

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*Thirdly*, The Miracles of the Church of Rome, supposing several of them to be true, have such Marks and Characters upon them, as render it very suspicious that they are not operations of God, or good Spirits; but *the working of Satan*. If any Man have but the patience to rake into these Dunghills, and to read over these *Legends*, even as they have by the later Collectors and Compilers been purged and reformed, he shall find the Miracles recited in them to be generally of one stamp, very foolish and absurd, frivolous and trifling, wrought without any necessity, upon no good occasion, to no wise end and purpose; so that one may know them by their very countenance to be the tricks and pranks of the Devil; and not the  
great

Volume XII. great and glorious works of God, such as are the Miracles recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

*Fourthly,* The Miracles of the Church of *Rome*, taking them for true, are very impertinently and unreasonably wrought. When and where there is no need and occasion for them, they are very rife and frequent: but where there is greatest occasion for them, and most reason to expect them, they are either not at all, or very rarely so much as pretended to. In times and places where their Religion did most absolutely bear sway, and few or none durst oppose it, and where the Doctrines, which they pretended to confirm by these Miracles, were most generally believed, as in those long dark and ignorant times before the Reformation, and now in *Italy* and *Spain*, where the *Inquisition* forceth them all to be of one belief, or to profess to be so, in these times and places, where there was least need and occasion for Miracles, then and there did they most abound, even more (if we may believe their Histories) for

for several Ages before the Reformation, than in the times of our Saviour and his Apostles. But since the Reformation, and that many of their Doctrines are called in question and disbelieved, Miracles are grown rare, and almost ceased even in Popish Countries; and they have had but very ill success with those few they have pretended to; witness the Miracle at *Angiers* in *France*, of a Child appearing over the Altar in the time of *Mass*, to convince all people of the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, with which the Papists made such a noise here in *England* about fourteen or fifteen years ago, and which at last was discovered to be an artificial juggle and contrivance of some cunning Priest, and publish'd to the World for a cheat, by the honest and worthy Bishop of that place.

But where there seems to be most need of them, they are most wanting: as for the conversion of Heathens; and the conviction of Heretick Infidels. For the Conversion of Heathens, in which case, if men did sincerely de-

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sign the propagation of the true and uncorrupted Christianity, I do not see why Miracles might not yet reasonably be expected ; but yet for all this, we hear of very few Miracles, not so much as the Gift of Tongues, even upon this occasion. In the first Planting of the *West-Indies*, we hear of no Miracles, except the most prodigious cruelties that ever were in the World, to the infinite scandal of the Christian Name. And in the *East-Indies*, and *China*, *Xaverius* and the first Missionaries speak with no assurance of any Miracles wrought by them ; and since that time they have so depraved the Christian Religion there, by concealing a most essential part of it, the Death and Sufferings of our Saviour, as if they were *ashamed of the Cross of Christ*, that it is not credible, that God should vouchsafe the countenance of Miracles to those who *preach another Gospel*.

And then for the conviction of Hereticks ( as they are pleased to call us *Protestants* ) one would think Miracles ( since they have that Power )  
would



would be very proper for that purpose to be wrought among them; as now here in *England*, where they are continually endeavouring (but especially of late with more than usual vigour and hopes) to restore their Religion: and yet for all this we cannot prevail with them to favour us with the sight of one Miracle, in order to our Conviction; but if they have any, they keep them private among themselves, tho' both Reason and Scripture tell us, *that Miracles were not intended for them that believe; but to convince them that believe not.*

*Fifthly*, He from whom, of all Persons in that Church, we might expect the most and greatest Miracles, does not, so far as I can learn, pretend at all to that Gift, I mean the head of their Church, the Pope, who both as he is *Vicar of Christ*, and *Successor of St. Peter* in his full Power and Office; or if he be not his *Successor*, yet as he is his *Shadow*, and pretends to be his *Successor*, might fairly pretend to a power of Mira-

*The pretence to Miracles in the*

cles above any in that Church; and I have often wonder'd why he does not: but it seems he contents himself with Infallibility, which is privilege and power enough for one Man; and indeed if he had it, and could satisfy others that he hath it, *that* would serve his turn without Miracles: but the mischief of it is, there is no other external evidence, and which can reasonably satisfy others of any Man's inspiration or infallibility, but Miracles; and therefore the Pope hath done very unadvisedly, in pretending to one without the other, when he hath the same right and title to both, that is, none at all.

*Sixthly*, Most of the Doctrines in difference between us and the Church of *Rome*, which they chiefly pretend to confirm by these Miracles, are not capable of being confirmed by them. There are *three* sorts of Doctrines, *two* of which are in their own Nature incapable of being confirmed by a Miracle, and a *third* upon supposition of its contrariety to the Christian Doctrine

ctrine

ctrine, which hath already had an unquestionable Divine Confirmation.

1. No Doctrine which is contrary to Sense, is capable of being confirmed by a Miracle, as Transubstantiation; which because it necessarily requires the renouncing of our senses, in order to the belief of it, for that very reason Miracles can give no credit to it. For that which depends on the certainty of Sense, as Miracles certainly do, can be no competent Argument to prove that which is contrary to Sense, as Transubstantiation evidently is.

2. No Doctrine that does countenance or enjoin Idolatry, is capable of being confirmed by a Miracle. This is evident from *Deut.* 13. where *Moses* supposeth that a Prophet might work a Sign or a Wonder; but if it was to seduce them from the Worship of the true God, who is naturally known, to the worship of Idols, in that case they were not to hearken to him, notwithstanding

standing he wrought a Miracle: but the Church of *Rome* teacheth Idolatry in their worship of Images, and of the Host, and in the invocation of Saints and Angels.

3. No Doctrine, contrary to any part of the Christian Doctrine, which hath already received an unquestionable Divine Confirmation, is capable of being confirmed by the Miracles pretended to in the Church of *Rome*, if they were real. For I hope they have not the face to pretend their Miracles, to be equal to those of our Saviour and his Apostles, either for the certainty, or greatness of them; and I have already shewn, that they notoriously want both the credit and certainty of our Saviour's Miracles, and the marks of their Divinity.

Now several of the Doctrines of that Church are directly contrary to, or inconsistent with the Doctrines of Christianity. Their endeavour to conceal from people the Doctrine of the Gospel, contained in  
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the Holy Scriptures, is a notorious contradiction to the design of the Gospel, and to that particular Miracle whereby the knowledge of it was conveyed to the World, the Gift of Tongues; and then the Service of God in an unknown Tongue, which is inconsistent with true Devotion, contrary to Edification, and to the plain Scope and Design of a whole Chapter of *St. Paul* to the *Corinthians*. And so likewise is the Communion in one kind, to our Saviour's express Institution: and the repetition of Christ's Sacrifice, to as express a declaration of the Apostle to the *Hebrews* to the contrary, as is possible for words to make.

*Seventhly* and *lastly*, which falls heaviest upon them of all, the chief Prophecies of the New Testament, which are concerning false Prophets, and concerning Antichrist, have mark'd him out by this Character, that he should be a great worker of Miracles, and magnifie himself upon this pretence. *Matth. 24. 24.*

*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very elect. And 2 Thess. 2. 9, 10. St. Paul foretels there, that in the great degeneracy and falling away of the Christian Church, the man of sin should come after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and wonders of lies, that is, either false Miracles, or Miracles wrought to confirm false Doctrines, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, all the legerdemain and juggling tricks of falshood and imposture: and certainly nothing was ever more visible than these are in the Church of Rome; whether we consider their impudent forgeries of Writings; (which they have not the face now to deny) or the Nature and Character of their Miracles. So that tho' Bellarmine is pleased to make Miracles one of the Marks of the true Church, yet the Miracles of the Church of Rome; if we consider all the Circumstances of them, are one of the plainest marks of Antichrist, and the very*  
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brand of the Beast, as we find him described, *Revel. 13. 13, 14. And he doth great wonders, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do.*

And now the Church of *Rome* may be allowed to work Miracles; and yet Divine Miracles, such as were wrought for the first Confirmation of Christianity, may be ceased in the Church: which is a sufficient answer to the Objection, and upon the whole matter shews, that the Miracles pretended to in the Church of *Rome*, are so far from giving any confirmation to her Doctrines, that they are rather an evident proof that she is the Apostate and Anti-Christian Church.

I might now draw *two* or *three* Inferences from this whole Discourse. As,

I. We have great reason to admire the Wisdom and Goodness of God in the Dispensation of the Gospel,

spel, that by the sending down of his holy Spirit to endow the first Publishers of this Heavenly Doctrine with such Miraculous Gifts and Powers, he hath given such abundant Testimony to the Truth of our Religion, and such firm grounds for our Faith to rely upon.

II. The consideration of what hath been said convinceth men of the great sin of Infidelity, and the unreasonableness of it, after so clear conviction and demonstration as God hath given to the World of the Truth of Christianity.

III. and *lastly*, They who believe the Gospel, are utterly inexcusable, if they do not obey it, and live according to it: for this is the great end of all the Miracles, which God hath wrought for the confirmation of Christianity, that by the belief of the Gospel men might be brought to *the Obedience of Faith*, and live conformably to the Precepts of that Holy Religion, which the Son of God by so many Miracles hath  
planted



planted and preserved in the World.  
But these I have \* discours'd of on a-  
nother occasion, and therefore shall  
insist upon them no farther at this  
time.

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Sermon  
XIII.  
\* See Vol.  
10. Sermon  
10.

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 S E R M O N XIV.
 

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 The Advantages of Truth, in  
Opposition to Error.
 

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The First Sermon on this Text.

I JOHN IV. 4. 5.

*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

**I**N the beginning of this Chapter the Apostle cautions Christians against the false Teachers, and false Prophets, intending more especially those of the *Gnostick* Sect, as is plain  
plain

*The Advantages of Truth*

plain from the Scope of the whole Epistle, who were so busie to seduce Christians to their impious ways, and to tempt them to apostatize from the Christian Religion to the Heathen Idolatry, for fear of Persecution.

And to encourage them who had hitherto continued in the Truth, and resisted the seducing Arts of those false Prophets, still to persevere in their holy Profession and Practice, he tells them what advantages they, who have embraced the Truth, and lived according to it, have above those who seduce men to errors, or are seduced by them. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* That which gives Truth, and the Professors of it, the advantage over Error and Seducers, is, that Truth is from God, and the Spirit of God dwells in those who sincerely embrace and obey it.

*Ye are of God*, that is, Ye are taught by him, and instructed in the Doctrine which is from God, and relish Divine Truth, which our Saviour calls *favouring the things which are of God*, in opposition to *the things of the world*, the lusts and interests of the World which sway and rule in those false Prophets and seducing Spirits. For so it follows in the next verse, *They are of the world*, they are acted by worldly lusts and interests: *therefore speak they of the world*, they teach things suitable to their worldly affections and interests; *and the world heareth them*, they who are of the same temper, are seduced and led away by them.

So that the Apostle's design in these Words, is plainly to shew the great advantage which Truth and the sincere Professors of it have above Error and the Teachers and Disciples of it.

*Ye are of God.* This phrase is very frequently, and very peculiarly used

*The Advantages of Truth,*

used by St. *John*, it signifies to belong to God in a special and peculiar manner, and is the same with *being born of God*, and *being the children of God*. Chap. 3. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God.* Where you see to be of God, and to be the children of God, are the same thing: and so to be children of the Devil, and to be of the Devil, are by this Apostle used in the same sense, Chap. 3. 8. *He that committeth sin is of the Devil.* And, ver. 12. *Cain who was of that wicked one, that is, a child of the Devil, as he had called such before, ver. 10.* And because Children do resemble their Parents in nature and disposition; therefore those who are of a Divine temper and disposition, who relish the things of God, and are apt to embrace the Truths of God when they are duly propounded to them, are ready to be taught of God, are said likewise to be of God, John 8. 47. *He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.* So here in  
the

the Text, *Ye are of God* ; ye are of a temper and disposition apt to relish Divine things, ready to embrace the Truths of God, and ye have entertained them, and are his Children, and are led by his Spirit, and have the Spirit of God dwelling in you ; and this makes you victorious. *Ye have overcome them.* He had spoken immediately before of *false Prophets* and *Anti-Christ*, by which he doth point out not one particular person, but the whole number and faction of false Teachers, as he tells us, *Chap. 2. 18.* That *now there are many Antichrists.* *Ye are of God and have overcome them.* This hath enabled you to resist those seducing Spirits, and made you too hard for them, that *ye are of God* ; because *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The force of the reasoning is this ; *Ye are of God*, that is, ye are taught of God, and have received his Doctrine, and are born again by the word of God, and are his Children, and being his Children, ye have his Spirit ; and the Spirit of Truth and of God is a stronger

Principle, than that Spirit of Error and Seduction which is in the World, that is, the Devil. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The Spirit of Truth is more powerful than the Spirit of Error and Seduction; and consequently, they that are of God, who sincerely embrace and obey the Truth, are able to overcome all the Temptations of the World to Apostacy from the Truth.

My work at this time shall be to shew what advantage good men, and those who sincerely embrace and obey the Truth, have to secure them in the ways of Truth and Holiness, against all the Temptations of the Devil and the World. I say in the ways of Truth and Holiness, because there is a strict connexion between a hearty embracing of the Truth of God, and a sincere Obedience to it. And the Apostle speaks of both, in opposition to the *Gnosticks*, who did not only endeavour to seduce men to Apostacy from the Christian Faith, but likewise from the practice of a  
holy



holy Life. Now to secure men against Temptations to both these, they who *are of God*, who sincerely embrace and obey the Truth, have a great advantage, because that Spirit and Principle which rules and sways in them, is more powerful than that Spirit which rules in the World and in the Children of Disobedience. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world* ; and that in these three respects.

*First*, Divine Truth carries greater evidence along with it.

*Secondly*, The Motives to persuade men to adhere to Truth and Holiness are more operative and powerful.

*Thirdly*, There is a greater and more immediate Assistance accompanies the Truth of God, and they who entertain it are acted by a more powerful Principle than that which is in the World.

*Doctrines which are from God,*

*First*, Divine Truth carries greater Evidence along with it. As will appear, if we consider these *three* things.

I. The Doctrines that are from God have more intrinſick goodneſs in them, and teach ſuch things as are more worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him.

II. The external Confirmation of theſe Doctrines is greater, and hath more Conviction in it:

III. The Spirit of God doth illuminate the minds of good men, and is concern'd to lead them into the Truth, and to ſecure from dangerous and damnable Errors.

I. The Doctrines which are from God have a more intrinſical goodneſs in them, and teach ſuch things as are more worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him. Whoever ſuppoſeth God to make a Revelation of himſelf to men, whereby to conduct them to happineſs, muſt in all  
reason

*intrinsically good.*

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reason suppose such a Divine Doctrine to contain plain Rules and Directions to that End, and powerful Helps, Motives, and Encouragements to enable and excite men to the observation of those Rules. For a man would naturally reason, That God who is so infinitely Good, would in revealing his will to men aim at no other End, but the happiness of his Creatures; and that he being infinitely Wise as well as Good, the Means would be proportionable, and consequently that the Laws and Precepts which he gives would apparently tend to the Happiness of Mankind: and because, if men have immortal souls, and are designed to live for ever, their greatest Happiness is that of another world: therefore it is reasonable to conclude, that those Rules and Directions should principally regard the eternal Happiness of men in another life, and in subserviency to that, should respect likewise the temporal Happiness of men in this World.

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And

*Doctrines which are from God,*

And such Laws and Rules being supposed, the next thing to be expected is that God should consider the Condition and Circumstances of Persons to whom those Laws are given; and if they be averse to them, that they should be awaken'd and quickned to the observance of them, by such Motives and Encouragements as are proper and powerful to that end; and if they be weak and impotent to the performance of what God's Laws require, that they should be enabled and assisted by a proportionable strength.

Now the Doctrine of the Christian Religion, which our blessed Saviour reveal'd to the World, and (as we Christians say) by Divine Commission and Authority, hath all these Marks and Characters of Divinity upon it. The Laws of it are plain and obvious to the common understanding of Mankind; all men know what the Precepts of Piety, and Goodness, and Mercy, and Righteousness, and Integrity, and Truth,  
and

*intrinsically good.*

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and Faithfulness, of Meekness, and Humility, and Patience, and Forgiveness, and Forbearance, and Charity, mean ; and so I might instance in Temperance and Chastity, and all those other Virtues and Graces which the Christian Religion requires of us, and recommends to us. These all tend to the Advancement and Perfection of our Natures, and make us like to God, and capable of the enjoyment of him in the next life : and besides this, they do apparently conduce in all respects to our temporal Happiness in this World. And excepting the case of Persecution, ( to which God hath promised abundant recompence in another World ) the Practice of these Virtues is evidently to the Advantage of particular Persons in this World, and to the Peace and Happiness of Human Society.

And because of the great corruption of Human Nature, and the strong inclination of it to Vice, the Gospel offers proportionable Arguments and Encouragements to men to perswade them to their duty ; an Act of Oblivion

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vion and Pardon for what is past ; perfect Reconciliation to God in and through the Merits and Mediation of our blessed Saviour ; and the eternal Rewards and Punishments of another World ; which to men that believe the immortality of their Souls, and are not stupidly insensible of their interest, are the most powerful Considerations in the World to take men off from sin, and to bring them to goodness.

And because the Corruption of Human Nature hath brought a great weakness and impotency upon Mankind, God is pleased in the Gospel to offer to men the powerful assistance of his Grace and holy Spirit, to enable them to perform all this which he requires of them. And beyond this, what can we expect God should discover to men, in order to their Happiness in this World, or the other ? And in all these respects the Doctrine of the Gospel, revealed from Heaven by the Son of God, hath to any impartial considerer infinitely the advantage of *Paganism* or *Mahometism*, or any other  
Doctrine

Doctrine or Institution that ever the  
World was acquainted withal.

But now if we bring the Doctrines of false Prophets and seducing Spirits, whom St. *John* calls *Antichrists*, to this tryal, we shall find that they are quite of another stamp, destitute of goodness, and calculated not for the Happiness and Benefit of men, but for base and unworthy ends; whereby it is evident that the teachers of them are *not of God, but of the world, and therefore they speak from the world, and the world heareth them.* And of this I will give *two* instances; one in those false Teachers the *Gnosticks*, intended by the Apostle in this Epistle; and the other in a sort of Seducers nearer to us in our own times.

As for the *Gnosticks*, besides their contradicting and virtual renouncing the main Principles of Christianity, by denying that Christ was really come in the flesh, or that he really dyed, or rose, affirming all this to be only in appearance; the summ of their  
Doctrine

Doctrines were either a heap of unintelligible words and phrases, under a pretence of high Mystery ; or a Doctrine of Liberty, as to all manner of vice and wickedness, under a pretence of Perfection, and that whatever they did they could not sin ; both which at the first sight are as plain evidence as any reasonable Man can desire, that such a Doctrine could not be from God ; nothing being more unlikely to be a Divine Revelation, than such absurd and confused stuff as no Man can understand, and which hath no tendency to make men better. But above all, nothing can be more unworthy of God, nor more unlikely to proceed from him, than such a Doctrine as gives encouragement to vice and wickedness of life, under what pretence soever it be. For what can be more contrary to God, and a great affront to the Reason of Mankind, than to let men loose to do the vilest and lewdest things, under pretence of Perfection in Goodness.

The other instance I intend is nearer at hand, and concerns us more,  
and



and that is in the Church of Rome, and those false Teachers which she sends abroad into the World, and which at this day swarm among us; and never did any Character more unluckily agree to any sort of men, than this of the Apostle does to that Church and the Teachers of it, that *they are of the world, and therefore they speak of the world, and the world heareth them.*

In which words there are *three* remarkable Characters given of false Prophets and Teachers.

1. That they are acted by a worldly Spirit, and carry on a secular Interest and Design, *they are of the world.*

2. That they teach things suitable to their worldly Interest and Design, and therefore they speak *ἐκ τῆς κόσμου*, *from the world*, according to that worldly Spirit that acts them and rules in them.

3. Those

3. Those that hearken to them are a sort of people like themselves, of worldly Affections and Interests, *the world heareth them.*

1. They are acted by a worldly Spirit, and carry on a secular Interest and Design, of Greatness and Ambition, of Dominion and Tyranny, of Riches and Wealth. Any Man that considers the Church of *Rome* at this day, and by what steps and degrees, by what worldly ways and unworthy means she hath attained to that Power and Wealth and Greatness, to that Dominion and Tyranny, which now for several hundred of years she hath exercised, not only over the Consciences of men in the most cruel manner, but even over temporal Princes and States, in commanding their Treasures and Armies, in deposing Kings, and disposing of their Kingdoms, and in all imaginable instances of secular Dominion and Tyranny, cannot but be satisfied by what Spirit they are acted, and that they as visibly carry on a worldly Interest  
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*to worldly Designs and Interests.*

and Design, as the most ambitious Secular Prince ever did.

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2. They teach things suitable to their worldly Designs and Interests. Let but any Man impartially survey those which are the proper Doctrines of the *Romish* Church, and which we challenge for innovation and corruption of the truly ancient Catholick and Christian Doctrine, and it will at first sight be evident to him, whether these Doctrines tend, and that they do not serve the Ends of Religion, but of worldly Greatness and Dominion. What greater instance of Ambition, than the claim of the universal Supremacy of the Bishop of *Rome* over all Christians and Churches in the *World*, without the least ground, or indeed colour of ground either from Scripture or Antiquity; and not only of an universal Spiritual Power over Christians, but of an indirect temporal Power over Princes in order to spiritual Ends, which may be extended to any thing, and hath been upon occasion to the Donation of Kingdoms, and the deposing of Princes, and the transferring  
of

of Temporal Dominion from lawful and Hereditary Princes, to those who had no manner of Right or Title? What more arrogant and directly tending to the enslaving of Mankind, than their pretence to Infallibility, which yet they could never agree among themselves where to place? What greater tyranny can be exercised over Mankind, than to oblige them to an implicit Faith, and blind Obedience, to believe what the Church believes, tho' they do not know what it is; and to do what the Church commands, tho' they doubt never so much of the lawfulness of it? Than to hide the word of God from them, and to lock it up in an unknown Tongue, and to deter them from the free use of that which was designed by God to be the great instrument of the Salvation of Mankind? than not to let men exercise their Understandings in the Service of God; nor when they joyn in publick Prayers, to suffer them to know what it is they ask of God; as if *the Priest's lips* were so to preserve knowledge, as to keep it all to themselves, and not  
to

to make use of it for the Benefit and Edification of the people? And lastly, to impose upon men, under pain of damnation, the belief of Doctrines, not only contrary to the true Sense of Scripture, but to all the Sense and Reason of Mankind, as is the Doctrine of Transubstantiation? How is it possible to bring people into a greater subjection to the Priests, and dependance upon them, than by Auricular Confession, and that unreasonable Doctrine of making the Efficacy of the Sacraments to depend upon the Intention of the Priest; and consequently to put into the Power of a malicious and bad Man to damn all his Parish? And to mention but one thing more, what better contrivance could be thought of to enrich the Church, and drain the Purses of the People, than their Doctrines of Purgatory, and Prayers for the dead, of Indulgences and Satisfaction, and their Farm of sins and vices of all kinds, call'd *the Tax of the Apostolick Chamber*? Can any Man think that these and such like Doctrines are *of God*, which do so directly serve the Ends  
of

of Covetousness and Ambition? Any one that does not wilfully shut his Eyes, may plainly see that such Doctrines, and such Teachers, are *of the world*, and that they *ſpeak* and *teach* theſe things out of a *worldly* Intereſt and Deſign.

And here I might take notice like-  
wiſe, that *they ſpeak from the world*  
alſo in another ſenſe, by ſhewing what  
worldly and indirec̄t Means (not to  
ſay wicked and ſinful Arts) they com-  
monly make uſe of to make Diſci-  
ples and gain Proſelytes, by Flattery  
and Falſhood, by concealing and miſ-  
repreſenting their own Doctrines and  
Practices, by defaming their Adverſa-  
ries with known Fictions and Calum-  
nies, tempting men from their Reli-  
gion by Promiſes of temporal Advan-  
tages, which, when they have gained  
them, they do not always perform  
and make good. Can any thing be  
more oppoſite to the genius of true  
Religion, than to promote it by Means  
ſo plainly contrary to the very Nature  
and Deſign of it?

3. Thoſe

3. Those who hearken to them, and are seduced by them, are generally like themselves, *they speak from the world, and the world heareth them.* Not but that men of very honest and sincere minds may be seduced into great Errors, through prejudice, or weakness, or a melancholy superstition: but generally such a Religion as is calculated for the promoting of Secular Interest, and is carried on by Secular Arts, does gain upon carnal and worldly minds, and it is usually some worldly consideration or other that prevails with men to embrace and profess it. A Religion that can find out ways to save men without sincere repentance and a good life, is very fit to make Profelytes in the world; they that teach such Doctrines *speak from the world,* and *the world* is very apt to hear *them.*

And thus I have done with the *first* thing, whereby it appears that Divine Truth carries great Evidence along with it, namely, that the

E e Doctrines

Doctrines which are from God have more intrinſical goodneſs in them, and teach ſuch things as are more worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him. I will be briefer in the reſt.

II. The external Confirmation of Divine Doctrines is greater, and carries more conviction along with it. By external Confirmation, I mean chiefly that of Miracles. And tho' the Pagan Religion pretended to ſome, and our Saviour plainly foretold that *Antichriſts* and *false Prophets* ſhould ariſe, and ſhould ſhew *ſigns and wonders*, and St. Paul hath told us, that *the man of ſin* ſhould *come with ſigns and wonders and mighty power*; yet none of theſe are of any great conſideration, in compariſon of the many, and great, and unqueſtionable Miracles which were ſo univerſally wrought for the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian Religion, and continued for ſome Ages; they bear no manner of proportion to them, neither for the nature, nor number, nor circumſtances of them, ſo as to  
shake



shake or weaken any man's belief of the Christian Religion, which had so much a greater Confirmation given to it; especially when our Saviour did foretel that false Prophets should do some things of this kind. For after a Religion is established by plain and unquestionable Miracles, such as for their number, nature, publickness, and continuance, and all imaginable circumstances of advantage, were never upon any occasion wrought in the world, I say, after this, it is not reasonable, that one or two single Miracles or Wonders pretended to, or really wrought by a false Prophet, should bring in question the truth of a Religion confirmed by a long series of the greatest and most unquestionable Miracles.

Besides that the Doctrine of it is such as is worthy of God, and most likely to proceed from him. \*

As for the Miracles pretended to by the Church of Rome, they are generally so fantastical and ridicu-

\* See of this more at large in the 3 l<sup>ts</sup> foregoing Sermons.

lous, and so unlike the works of God, and wrought so to no end and purpose, not among Unbelievers for their Conviction, which was always the great End of Miracles, but among themselves; and so destitute of credit, that the wisest among themselves are so far from believing them, that they are heartily ashamed of them, so that we need not trouble our selves about them, for they are not like to give any great Confirmation to any Doctrine, which stand so much in need of Confirmation themselves.

III. ' Besides the Goodness of the Doctrines which are from God, and the external Confirmation of them by Miracles, which is a great advantage to the reception of them, the Spirit of God doth likewise illuminate good men, and those who are desirous to know the truth, and hath promised to lead them into it, and to assist them in discerning between truth and falsehood. So our Saviour hath  
assur'd

assur'd us, *John 7. 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.* Besides that the Doctrines which are from God do commonly carry the Marks and Characters of their own Divinity upon them, the Providence of God is likewise particularly concerned, that good men, and those who are of honest minds, and sincerely desirous to know the truth, should not be deceived in matters of so great consequence to the happiness and salvation of Mankind. To the same purpose is that Promise, *John 14. 21. He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him; and will manifest my self to him;* God is always ready to reveal his Will to those who are sincerely desirous to do it, and will not suffer men of honest minds to err dangerously in matters wherein their eternal Salvation is concern'd.

Thus you see what Advantage the Spirit of Truth hath above the Spirit of Error and Seduction; that Divine Truth carries greater Evidence along with it, both in respect of the Goodness of the Doctrines which are *from God*, and the great Confirmation that is given to them, and the extraordinary Illumination of God's Spirit, which is wont to accompany the Truths of God to the minds of good men, who are ready and disposed to give entertainment to Divine Truth.

I should now have proceeded to the *Second* Advantage which the Spirit of Truth hath above the Spirit of Seduction, namely, that the Motives to persuade men to adhere to Truth and Holiness, are more powerful and operative upon the minds of men, than the Motives to the contrary.

And then, *Thirdly*, That those who embrace and obey the Truth of God, have a greater Assistance, and are acted by a more powerful Spirit

*in opposition to Error.*

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rit and Principle, than any is in the World. And this seems to me more especially the meaning of that in the Text, *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them : because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* But these I shall not now enter upon.

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 S E R M O N XV.
 

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 The Advantages of Truth, in  
Opposition to Error.
 

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The Second Sermon on this Text.

1 JOHN IV. 4, 5.

*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world: They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

**I** Proceed to the *Second* Advantage which the Spirit of Truth hath above the Spirit of Error and Seduction, namely, that the Motives which good men have to perswad  
 theme

them to adhere to Truth and Holiness are more powerful, than the Motives to the contrary. They who embraced the Christian Religion did firmly believe the eternal Rewards and Punishments of another World ; and this Principle of Faith being fix'd and rooted in them, made them victorious over all the temptations of the World, over all the allurements and terrors of it ; because they were fully perswaded of the Happiness and Misery of another world ; the Happiness of those who continued steadfast in the Faith and Obedience of the Gospel, and the dreadful Misery and Punishment of those who disobeyed the Gospel of Christ, or apostatized from the Profession of it. Hence it was that they were not to be moved by any temporal Considerations, either of Ease and Advantage, or of Trouble and Persecution in this World. Their eternal interest lay so near their hearts, and they were so fully possess'd with the belief of the everlasting Rewards and Punishments of another life,



*than those to Error.*

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life, that they overlook'd the goods and evils of this life ; and all temporal Considerations, put into the Scales against their everlasting interest, were of no weight and moment with them.

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And this our Apostle very particularly insists upon in this Epistle, *Ch. 5. 4, 5. Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world ; the Children of God are victorious over the temptations of the World ; and then he tells us what it is that makes them so, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ? The believing that Jesus is the Son of God, infers the belief of his Doctrine, and consequently of that eminent part of it, the eternal Recompence of another World, which whosoever firmly believes, will be able to resist and overcome all the temptations of this World. For by the belief of the Christian Religion, and Faith in the Son of God, we are fully assur'd of the reality*  
and

and certainty of the mighty Rewards and Punishments of another World, tho' they be future and at a distance; and a firm persuasion of these things, makes them in some sort present to us as to their Efficacy and Operation: for to a wise and considerate Man, a great good, or a great evil, which he believes will certainly befall him, according as he manageth his affairs well or ill, tho' it be at some distance, is of greater force than a far lesser good or evil which is present and nearer at hand. And of this we see many instances in the temporal Concerns of men. A prudent Man will forego his present ease and pleasure, and part with a present advantage, lay down ready Mony, upon the certain prospect of a far greater benefit that will come to him some years hence; and will undergo present pain and trouble, to prevent a far greater mischief and inconvenience; and upon this Principle of the belief of future good and evil, all the great affairs of the world are managed. Upon this Principle men Plow and Sow, and  
venture

venture their Estates in Traffick to foreign parts, and trust out their present Stock, and purchase Reversions, and take Physick, and cut off a Limb, and run all those hazards of Estate and Life, which we see men every day do ; and all this for the securing of some great advantage, or the preventing of some great mischief, which tho' it be future and at a distance, yet they probably or certainly foresee will happen to them.

And this Principle is so much the stronger, and of greater force and efficacy, in matters of greater moment and importance, where the good hoped for, or the evil feared, is infinitely great, and concerns us for ever. If we firmly believe the reality and certainty of it, no temporal advantage or affliction can come in competition with them, in the calculation and account of a wise Man ; because there is no proportion between finite and infinite, between the goods and evils which are *temporal*, and those which are *eternal* ;

*Motives to Truth more powerful,*  
 Volume XII. *ternal ; tho' the one be seen, and the other not seen ; tho' the one be present and near to us, and the other future and at a great distance.*

Upon this Principle the first Christians continued firm and stedfast in the belief and obedience of the Gospel, and were bold and open in the Profession of it, notwithstanding all the cruel assaults of Persecution, tho' they hazarded the loss of all that was dear to them in this World, and exposed themselves to the suffering of whatever is grievous and terrible to flesh and blood. They *gloried in tribulation ;* and did not only patiently submit to the greatest sufferings, but heartily praised God, who *accounted them worthy to suffer for his name ; they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and more enduring substance ; they were tortur'd, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection ;* and when they were harrassed with all the evils and calamities of human life, yet they *fainted not, knowing that their light afflicti-*

*than those to Error.*

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XV.

*on which was but for a moment, would work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, having their minds fix'd, not upon the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; the things which are seen being but temporal, but the things which are not seen being eternal.*

Thus they overcame the World, not by the Force and Power of this World, but by the belief of another World, and of the mighty Rewards and Punishments of it. And this *Faith purified their hearts*, and reformed their lives, and made them *steadfast and unmoveable* in their holy Profession, and raised their minds above all the temptations and terrors of present and sensible things.

Let us now see on the contrary what kind of Motives and Arguments false Teachers use to seduce men to their pernicious ways. *They speak from the world*, and commonly make use of base and low and temporal Considerations, of little tricks and devices, and *all deceiveableness of un-*  
*righteous-*

*righteousness* ( as the Scripture calls it ) to make Disciples, and gain Profelytes. They terrifie them with temporal dangers and inconveniencies, and represent to them Suffering and Persecution and death, in all their frightful shapes, to deter them from Profession of the true Religion : they set before them all manner of worldly baits and allurements, Ease, and Wealth, and Preferment ; they promise them liberty from the strictness of those Laws and Rules which Religion ties them up to. By these Arts and Arguments the *Gnosticks* of old used to tempt men from Christianity, and to shake their constancy in the Profession of it : and the same ways are still put in practice by Seducers at this day. They tell men of a glorious Church that hath great power and interest in the World ; they amuse them with a great deal of outward pomp and ceremony ; they promise them preferment and great worldly Advantages by coming over to them ; they threaten them with Fire and Faggot, with Persecutions and Massacres ; and where they  
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have Power, they hold them fast when they have gained them, by the terrour of an Inquisition ; they promise them liberty, and what by the looseness of their casuistical Divinity, and by the easiness of their Penances and Absolutions, and the cheats of their Indulgences, they have devised ways to reconcile almost the worst life that any man can lead, with fair hopes of getting to Heaven at last. They tell them indeed, they must make some stop in Purgatory : but they have so many ways to release men from those Sufferings, as do very much abate the terror of them to any man that hath but credulity enough to believe them : for besides the vast Treasure of Merits in the common Bank of the Church, which the Pope hath in his disposal, and which no body ought to doubt but that they are faithfully employed by him for the ease and deliverance of Souls in Purgatory ; I say, besides these, there are so many particular ways of effecting this business, that a man of ordinary discretion, with an indifferent Purse, may so order

the matter, that he shall only pass through Purgatory, but need not make any stay in *that place of torments.*

But tho' these be their common Motives and Inducements to draw men to their Communion, yet they do not wholly omit the Arguments taken from the eternal Happiness and Misery of men in another world: for to give them their due, there are no people in the world more prodigal of eternal Salvation and Damnation; they promise the one upon the easiest terms, and threaten the other upon the least displeasure: if a man be in their Communion, he can hardly fail of Salvation; and if he be out of it, and differ from them in the least point of Faith, tho' but of their own making, he is sure to be damn'd, tho' he had the Graces and Virtues, the Sanctity and Charity of an Angel: and this is the true Reason why these Arguments, which are so powerful in themselves, signify so little from their mouths; because every man that hath read the  
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Bible, and understands the Christian Religion, plainly sees that they have made terms of Salvation and Damnation quite different from those which God hath constituted ; so that these Motives, which are so strong and mighty in themselves, quite lose their edge and force, when they are managed by Seducers in so undue a manner, and to ends and purposes so cross to the main Design of Christianity. This is the *Second* Advantage which the Spirit of Truth hath above the Spirit of Error and Seduction, that the Motives to perswade men to adhere to Truth and Holiness are really in themselves more powerful than the Motives to Error and Seduction.

*Thirdly,* Those who sincerely embrace and obey the Truth of God, have a greater Assistance, and are acted by a more powerful Spirit and Principle, than that which is in the world ; and this seems more especially to be the meaning of the Reason here given in the Text, why the Spirit of Truth is victorious over the Spirit of Error and Seduction ; *Ye are of God,*

*The Spirit of God, and the Devil,*

God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world; that is, The Spirit which is in good men, is more powerful than the Devil, that evil Spirit which inspires and acts *the children of disobedience.*

For the farther Explication of this, I shall do these *three* things.

I. Shew that there are these two Principles in the world, the Spirit of God, and the Devil, very active and powerful in good and bad men.

II. That the Spirit of God, which is in good men, is greater than he that is in the world.

III. In what ways the Spirit of God doth move and assist good men.

I. That there are these two Principles in the world, the Spirit of God, and the Devil, very active and powerful, the one in good, the other in bad men. This is very credible  
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in the general, from the universal Tradition and Consent of Mankind, in the belief of good and evil Spirits attending men, and prompting them to good and evil: but we, who embrace the Revelation of the Gospel, have a much firmer and surer ground for it, nothing being more plain and frequent in Scripture, than that the holy Spirit of God guides and assists good men in doing the will of God; and that the Devil *works in the children of disobedience*, and is always ready to tempt men to, and promote any evil Action or Design. From hence it is that the Scripture does almost every where ascribe all good motions and actions to the operation and influence of God's grace and holy Spirit upon the Minds of men; and the sins of men to the temptation and suggestion of the Devil; and this is so well known to any one conversant in the holy Scriptures, that I need not cite particular Texts for the proof of it.

'Tis true indeed, that the Motions of God's holy Spirit, and the

Suggestions of the Devil, are very secret to us, and imperceptible by us, so that no man can say certainly, that this good inclination or action is an immediate Motion of God's holy Spirit in me, or that evil Thought and Design is an immediate Suggestion of the Devil; it is sufficient for us, that we are assured from Divine Revelation in general, that the Spirit of God very frequently does, and is always ready to assist good men in the doing or suffering of God's Will; as the evil Spirit, where God permits him, is always busy to tempt and seduce men to evil. And this ought not to be strange to us, because our Saviour hath expressly told us, that the Spirit of God works in men after an imperceptible manner, *John 3. 8.* *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Tho' we do not know the manner of the Spirit's working, nor perceive the operations of it upon our minds, yet we find the Effects of it in the renovation and sanctificati-

on of our hearts. Thus by undeniable Arguments men are assured of a Divine Providence governing the world, tho' men do not always see, nor can make out to others, the particular interpositions of it, so as to say that this or that was an immediate Effect of Divine Providence. To know certainly that a thing *is*, it is not necessary that we should be able to give a particular account of all its operations, and the manner of them; these may be hidden from us, and yet we may be sufficiently assured by other Arguments that there is such a thing. Men are sure they have Souls, tho' they can give no account how the actions of Understanding, and Remembrance, and Sensation are produced by them: so it is in the present case, we are sufficiently assured from the Word of God, that good and bad Spirits have a great influence upon the Minds of Men, tho' we be not conscious to their operations, and the manner of them.

II. The Spirit of God, which is in  
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good men is greater than he that is in the World; he is more able and ready to assist men to Good Purposes, than the Devil is to tempt and help forward that which is Evil. And this will appear, if we consider these *three* things.

1. The Spirit of God is more powerful than the Devil; and this is so evident of it self, that it needs no proof.

2. The Spirit of God is as forward and willing to assist men to Good Purposes, as the Devil is to the contrary. That extremity of Malice and Envy which is in evil Spirits does no doubt make them very forward and active to do all the Mischief they can to Mankind, by tempting and seducing them to sin: but on the other hand, the utmost Perfection of Goodness which in God is more and greater than the Malice of the Devil, will incline more strongly the holy Spirit of God to pity, and aid, and help good men, than the Malice of the Devil can urge him to procure the  
Harm

*more powerful than the Devil.*

Harm and Mischief of Mankind ; and if we could suppose their Will and Inclinations equal ; yet our Comfort in their Power is not.

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Sermon  
XV.

3. The Spirit of God hath a more free and immediate access to the Minds of good Men, and a more intimate conjunction with and operation upon them, than the Devil. The Spirit of God is always present to us, and willing to dwell and abide in us, and ready to help and assist us, if we be ready to obey his dictates, and comply with his holy and blessed Motions ; if we did not resist, and quench, and grieve him, he would always take up his abode and habitation in us, and would be continually exciting, and guiding, and assisting us to that which is good ; he knows our Hearts, and sees all the secrets of our Souls ; knows all our Inclinations, knows our weakness and our danger, what Assistance we want, and when it will be most seasonable ; and is as intimate to us, and as conscious to all  
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the Motions of our Spirits, as we our selves are.

But now the Devil is under great restraint, and cannot make nearer approaches to any man than God permits him; he does not know our hearts, nor can pry into the secret of our thoughts. God *knows*, but the Devil does but *guess* at the Thoughts, and Designs, and Inclinations of men; he hath no power over us, nor no access to us, but what we give him, or God permits. By Obedience to God's Will, and resisting the Temptations of the Devil to sin and disobedience, we may not only keep out the Devil, but keep him at a great distance, and make him *flee from us*, so that we shall have little trouble or molestation from him: for tho' he be unwearied in his malicious Attempts to ruin our Souls, yet because he cannot be every where, he haunts those most where he hath greatest hopes of success, and is too eager and intent upon Mischief to employ his time and temptations where he hath been

been



been often foiled, and hath reason to despair of victory. So that if all things be consider'd, it is our own fault if we want the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, or if the Devil have any great power over us: for God does not usually, but upon great provocation, take away his Holy Spirit from men, and lay them open to the assaults and temptations of the Devil. If any be *led captive by the Devil at his pleasure*, it is those who have wilfully forsaken God, and *sold themselves to do wickedly*.

III. We will consider in what ways the Spirit of God doth move and assist good men. These *two* ways.

1. By exciting good Motions in us, and enabling us to bring them to effect.

2. By supporting us under Persecution for Religion.

1. By exciting good Motions in  
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*The ways in which the Spirit of God*

us, and enabling us to bring them to effect. These the Apostle puts together, *Phil. 2. 13. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* It is he that stirs up good Inclinations in us, and carries them on to effect. And this he makes an Argument why we should be diligent and industrious in the work of our Salvation, because God is so ready to assist us; *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

2. By supporting us under Persecution for Religion. In case of extraordinary Temptations, and violent Assaults upon our Constancy in Religion, by fierce and cruel Persecutions, God affords immediate and extraordinary Supports to good men, whereby they are many times born up under the greatest Sufferings, not only with patience, but with Comfort and *joy unspeakable and full of glory.* Where ever God suffers good men to be  
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be tempted above Humanity, he affords them an immediate Divine Assistance, to bear them up and make them victorious. So St. Peter tells us, *1 Pet. 4. 4.* That those who suffer and are reproached for the name of Christ, the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon them. So likewise St. Paul, *1 Cor. 10. 13.* speaking of those who had not yet been set upon by any sharp Persecution, *No temptation hath taken you, but such as is common to man, εἰ μὴ ἀνθρώπινον,* nothing but what is humane, what the Spirit of a man may bear: but if such a case happen, of Temptation above Nature, and the spirit of a man be too weak to support it self under it, God will in that case afford men immediate and extraordinary Supports and Comforts, *God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it;* and then it immediately follows, *Wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from Idolatry;* because God hath promised such an extraordinary assistance, in case of Persecution

secution for Religion, therefore he encourageth them to continue steadfast in the profession of Christianity; and cautions them against Apostacy to the Heathen Idolatry.

The Inference from all this Discourse, is to encourage us to continue steadfast in the Truth, and in the practice of our holy Religion, *to hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering,* and not to suffer our selves to be *shaken with every wind of Doctrine, by the arts and cunning of those who lie in wait to deceive;* who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sins, and led away by divers lusts. You see what kind of persons these false Teachers used to profelyte; women of no virtue, of a prostituted reputation, *laden with sins, and led away with divers lusts;* a Character that notoriously agrees to some Seducers of our times.

Therefore let us *continue in the things which we have heard,* and not suffer our selves to be *moved from*  
*our*

*our steadfastness.* The more we consider our Religion, and compare it with the unquestionable Revelation of God in the holy Scriptures, the greater Reason we shall see to adhere to it. The Doctrines of our Religion are *of God*, plainly contained in his Word, and such as are worthy of him, and likely to proceed from him, and tend to the Good and Happiness of Mankind, to make men really better, and to qualifie them for that happiness which God hath promised to holy Souls. The Doctrines of our Religion are free from the Suspicions of a worldly Interest and Design. But if we consider the Doctrines and Innovations of that Church which pretends to be the only Christian Catholick Society in the world, we shall find that they are of another stamp, and of a quite contrary tendency, that they favour so rankly of a worldly Interest, that any impartial man would at first sight judge them to be the Contrivances of worldly, covetous, and ambitious men, and  
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that they did not look like Divine Truths, and Doctrines that are of God, but that they are of the world, and therefore they that propagate them, and would seduce men to them, speak from the world, and the world heareth them.

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