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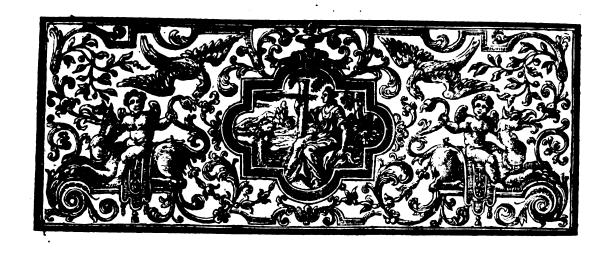
RELIGION.

By RICHARD FIDDES, B. D. Rector of Halsham, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable Robert Earl of Oxford, and Earl Mortimer.

LONDON:

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TO THE

Most Reverend Father in GOD,

WILLIAM,

By DIVINE PROVIDENCE,

Lord Archbishop of YORK.

May it please Your Grace,



OUR high station in the Church renders the following work, consider d in the nature and design of it, pro-

per to be address'd to Your Grace. But my relation to Your Lordship, as a Pastor under Your immediate charge and government, leaves me no scope A for

for deliberation; whether I should aspire to the patronage of any other

great name.

YET, my Lord, abstracting from the publick character of authority wherewith Your Grace is invested, I had been readily determin'd in a choice, to which Your personal qualifications ap-

pear so eminently favourable.

Among these, my Lord, the native candour of Your Temper, improv'd by the most polite and generous Education, is one considerable ornament. Not that all persons, who have had the happiness of being well born or educated are equally recommended by the same temper; yet we must naturally expect to find, and not indeed without reasonable grounds, that it should discover itself, and shine with the greatest lustre in such persons.

IT would certainly, my Lord, conduce very much to preserve the Honour and Dignity of the ministerial Order in particular, could we, on occasion of this, and every other bright quality proper to civil life, always unite the idea of a Gentleman with that

DEDICATION.

of a Clergyman; there being feveral things, which, tho not effential to a character, yet when found in conjuction with it, are highly ornamental and praife-worthy. For it is ordinarily not fo much the thing done, as the doing it after a becoming manner, or with what we call a good grace, that gives it all the force and impression upon our minds, which it ought to have, or whereof it is capable.

But there is no instance, my Lord, which renders the truth of what is here observed more conspicuous, than where any person exactly knows how to reconcile the Dignity of the sacred function, in the highest order of it, with the greatest condescension and sa-

cility of address.

My Lord, a vein of piety, which runs through all Your writings; which animates Your whole conversation, and discovers itself in every branch of Your Pastoral office and government, was a farther motive, upon which I was induced to address a work to Your Grace, whose principal design was to promote true and solid piety, upon clear and con-

DEDICATION.

convincing reasons, in every part of it. For tho the speculative truths of Religion are distinctly considered in the first volume, and resolved, so far as I was capable of resolving them, into their true and proper grounds; yet practice being the great end of knowledge, I have endeavoured to treat of them in such a manner, yet without formally drawing any practical inferences from them; that while they are intended to convey light to the mind, they may have some power, at least, to move and affect the heart.

And, indeed, the speculative doctrines of Religion, especially of the Christian Religion, have, in the direct tendency of them, on one account or other, a visible and proper influence, both towards the advancement of our piety, and the perfection of our nature. There are no doctrines, whether of natural or reveald Religion, if we do but pursue them in their genuine or plain consequences, whereof some good and practical improvement may not be made.

WHAT

What I here observe, is applicable to the most sublime, and even to the most inexplicable mysteries of our holy faith. For what are they, so far as we know them in part, but mysteries of divine love and goodness? Two of the most powerful motives to obedience, which divine wisdom itself, according to the measure, whereby we are able to judge of it, could have

propos'd to ingenuous minds.

To this we may add, that a piety, which is not founded in any clear or distinct principles, is commonly apt to employ itself in the exterior forms of Religion, or the efforts of a heady and indifcreet zeal; which yet is seldom or never to be depended on in the day of adversity, or of any severe tryal. And tho' it is too evident, on the other hand, that men do not always act according to knowledge; we observe nevertheless, that where they do not distinctly understand the grounds, especially the fundamental articles of Religion, all their pious resolutions are much easier shaken, and themselves, under any violent circum**ftances**

DEDICATION.

stances of temptation, in far greater danger of falling away. We seldom, indeed, see men wholly corrupt in their morals or practice, but where they are either very ignorant, or very much corrupted with false principles.

My Lord,

Your Grace will observe, that in this address I have not confin'd my self to the common forms of a Dedication. I thought it rather incumbent on me to fay fomething in relation to the following work, and for that reason most proper to be laid before Your Lord-Thip, than to attempt an essay on Your Lordthip's many excellent qualities; which, I believe, would have been less acceptable to Your Grace, the more I had been capable of doing justice severally to them. I shall only beg leave to observe, my Lord, that, in the judgment of a most excellent, pious, and discerning Princess, they were thought worthy, without the ordinary delays of proceeding or confultation, on the like important occasions, to recommend You to that high station in the Church.

DEDICATION.

Church, which You fill so well, and to the universal satisfaction both of the Clergy and Laity committed to Your charge. That Your Grace may long fill it, and with equal Dignity and Honour, is the prayer of,

My Lord,

Your GRACE'S

most bumble,

most obedient,

and dutiful Servant,

RI. FIDDES.

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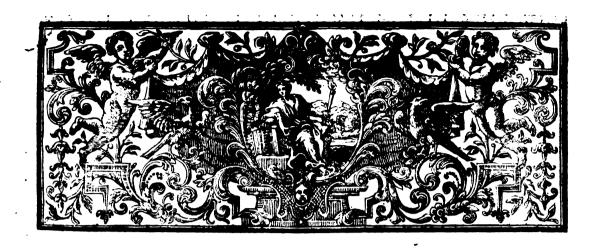
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THE



T H E

PREFACE.



T will be expected, that I should say something, by way of introduction, to the following work; in regard to the importance of my subject; the manner, wherein I have prosecuted

it; and the motives, upon which I was induced to undertake it.

I. The subject of this great work, if we consider it in point of speculation only, is, of all others, at once the most sublime, and entertaining: There is nothing, upon which we can employ the mind, capable of giving it so high a taste of intellectual pleasure. And indeed, as one

one part of our future happiness will consist in a clear and open view of divine truths, it is but reasonable in the nature of the thing, that according to the gradual advances we are able to make towards a discovery of them here, we should find the greater and more sensible delight, in our present meditations upon them. The natural thirst of the soul after knowledge and, in a more particular manner, after divine knowledge, sufficiently appears from hence; that we observe persons, who consider it simply as a persection of the mind, and without any respect to the influence it ought to have on their conduct, yet frequently applying themselves, and with much assiduity, to the pursuit of it.

If there be some very wicked men, who are less affected with the desire and beauty of truth, it is because they would sin with the greater security, and are unwilling to open their eyes to a light, which reproves, and makes manifest their evil deeds; discovering to them with an evidence, they are not able to resist, their present guilt, and, at the same time, the just reasons of

their future condemnation and misery.

But when men have no interest, or sinister ends to divert them from considering the great truths of religion, whether of a more abstract nature, or practical, they must readily grant, that Theology is, in both respects, the noblest subject of a rational disquisition. None but the most stupid, or most abandon'd of mankind, in whom the common light of reason is in great measure, if not wholly extinct, can refuse to pay to truth, in right of its native excellency, at least the duty of inward admiration and esteem.

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But do not fact and experience lie more generally than we are willing to allow, against what has been faid concerning the power, which speculative truth must naturally have over the minds of men? How many persons are there, in whose conduct we discover nothing very irregular, and that do not even appear according to the rules of charity, to be far from the kingdom of God, who yet have little or no relish for abstract and metaphysical truths, tho' relating to the most important articles of religion, and propos'd after as just and perspicuous a man-

ner, as the nature of them will admit?

But this insensibility to the power of speculative truths, which some persons discover, arifes merely from an accidental cause, and not from any thing disagreeable in such truths, simply consider'd, to human understanding. Good men are not always happy in a great extent and force of thought; or perhaps where God has, in these respects, given certain persons greater abilities, yet through an ill education, or a habit of idleness, the native strength of their mind may have been weaken'd, or the capacity of it narrow'd to fuch a degree, that they have now both less inclination and power to exert the proper faculties of them. For it is industry and application, whereby the life and vigour of the mind, like those of the body, are ordinarily preferved and augmented. Now as the pleasure of speculation always rises, in proportion to the force and freedom of thought which attends it, where men have by any means contracted a certain weakness or indolence of mind, the labour of attention to speculative truths must necessarily be, for that reason, more painful to them. And, at the same time, the pleasure wherewith

wherewith their labour is rewarded, will, by a

like necessity, become less sensible.

But what must we then do to make people more attentive to speculative truths, and more powerfully affected with them? Why, we must render, if we can, the difficulties of their attention less, and the pleasure of it greater; there is no other way of engaging men in the search after divine truth, with that resolution and alacrity, which will bring them at last to the place of her habitation.

We shall lessen the difficulty of their attention, by proposing the speculative points of religion in a clear and methodical manner; and by avoiding, so much as we are able, all ambiguous and equivocal expressions; which not only put a stop to the progress of the mind in its disquisitions, but sometimes perplex and confound it in such a manner, that it knows not which way to take, but grows weary and discouraged without a desire of carrying its fruitless and intricate pur-

fuits any farther.

We may make the pleasure of attention to the speculative truths of religion greater, by propounding them in a lively and agreeable manner. This is not only done by an easy flow and vivacity of expression, but by intermixing such occasional thoughts, or foreign ornaments which do not tend to break the series of any argument, we may think sit to employ, but only to brighten or illustrate it. They, who have the greatest strength of mind, cannot long bear a steddy and uninterrupted view of the same object. The spirits which, according to the present laws of union between the soul and the body, are the occasional cause of the mind's operating in a more free and lively manner, can-

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not always be kept up to sustain such a view, or supply the brain continually with sufficient recruits to perform its operations, with equal vi-

gour, and facility.

Towards remedying this natural defect, which, more or lefs, the mind of every man is subject to, some have thought proper to intermix their writings with incidental reflections of their own, or those of other men; by which means the soul may gain some respit from a continued application to one thing, and without losing sight of it, transiently touch upon another: As to relieve the fatigue of the body, seats are plac'd in a long walk, on which it may for a time repose itself, and then proceed forward, without going out of the way.

I have endeavour'd to accommodate my self to both these methods of recommending speculative truths to the reader. My style, I hope, will be found generally clear and significant; it has been my particular care to use such terms, as are most free from ambiguity, or may give an idea of any thing foreign to what they were in-

tended to stand for.

Yet I am fensible, as to some articles, the obscurity of the subject matter, may render the manner of proposing it, what caution soever has been us'd as to the expression, less obvious and agreeable. But inconveniences of this kind in treating of very abstract and difficult subjects, are unavoidable. Few persons are capable at first view of comprehending uncommon principles, upon which they have never accustomed themselves to meditate, how careful soever we may be to express them in clear and common terms. But if there are some truths, as some there are, of the greatest importance, which require

quire more attention, the pains of it will be abundantly recompens'd by that complacency, which arises in the mind from such discoveries, as it finds itself by degrees at least capable of making

concerning them.

Young divines especially, for whose sake I principally write, ought not to complain, if there are some things in divinity hard to be understood. In desiring the office to which they are call d, they desir'd a good work; but withal so great and difficult a work, that they cannot use too much pains or application to qualify themselves for a worthy discharge of it. They, whose duty it is to teach religion, are under a peculiar engagement from their character to know religion in all the parts, and all the reasons of it; that they may make full proof of their ministry, and by manifestation of the truth, commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Especially at a time, when the principles of atheism and infidelity, for which free-thinking is of late substituted only as a softer name, do so openly discover themselves; it is incumbent upon the younger students in divinity to apply themselves with greater zeal and assiduity towards laying in a competent stock of divine knowledge, that they may in all things approve themselves as the ministers of God; and be more able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainsayers.

But how shall they qualify themselves for these ends, without a general notion of the principles of religion, and particularly of the fundamental truths, upon which the proofs of it subsist. When they, who bear the sacred character, are found desicient in this respect, the enemies of their order, who are generally enemies of all

all revealed religion, have an occasion of infulting them, agreeable to their desires, and which, where they have skill, they have always malice enough to improve. This consideration should excite the younger clergy to fortify themselves, as much as they can, against the attacks of unbelievers from what quarter soever; lest an advantage be obtained over them, in prejudice to their own character, which cannot be too carefully supported, but more especially to the dishonour of him, whose, by a peculiar designation, they are, and whom

they Serve.

I shall not therefore make any apology to them, if in some points, and especially concerning the being and attributes of God, I have enter'd into the detail of certain metaphysical enquiries; whereof those, who have less taste or capacity for a strict examination, may proceed to other points, which admit of a more plain and obvious explication; and which I have illustrated by expressions borrowed from the holy scriptures, without considering them, as having the fanction of divine authority. general, I have endeavoured to accommodate my way of writing to the taste and capacity of my readers, and in consulting their edification, have not thought it improper to intermix fuch occasional reflections, as might render the means of instructing them more pleasant and agreeable. If it be objected against such a method, that theological subjects require a solemnity in our treating upon them, which will not admit of it; and that it is below the dignity of facred truths, and the profound veneration they challenge from us; that we should deviate in our search after them from the strictest rules of

of reasoning. I answer, that this objection will be found of little force if examined by the method of propounding divine truths, observable in the holy scriptures themselves. Particularly, in the prophetical writings, and the discourses of our bleffed Saviour, which contain the most sublime and important truths of religion, there are frequent transitions to things, of affinity indeed with the main subject, but which do not appear so much to have a necessary, as an useful and easy connection with it. We may observe in fact, that discourses, wherein an author takes the liberty I am contending for, are generally in the greatest reputation and esteem. Why do not men read the works of the angelick, or those of the subtile doctor with as much pleasure as Montaign's essays? It will be granted these two authors, of the first distinction in the schools, had both of them a great extent of thought, with a strong, copious, and fruitful imagination. the dry scholastick way, wherein they treat of the most weighty and moving subjects, makes the reader, who would always, if he could, find his. pleasure and entertainment in his instructions, less sensible of the force and evidence of them.

M. Malebranch, whose writings are so agreeable to those who have any capacity or strength of mind, has preserved in them a middle way between the irregular and loose excursions which authors, in other respects polite enough, have affected; and the hard fense of those, who confine themselves wholly to a stiff and close way of argumentation, without regard to such ornaments, as might be proper to relieve too long

and laborious an attention of the reader.

Whatever incidental thoughts this celebrated author makes use of upon any subject, he always has.

has it in his eye. I do not here speak of his errors; he has advanc'd some notions, that are by no means tenable; but I speak of his manner and qualifications in general, as a writer. Whereever he diffuses light in the mind, he has an irresistible power of moving the heart. force and delicacy of his thoughts, with a certain dignity of mind, that animates every thing he says, do sometimes even gain our assent before we well know what it is we affent to. And he, who would excel in these characters, especially in the latter of them, will perhaps no where find the method of attaining them sooner, if nature have not render'd all human methods unnecessary to that end, than by being much conversant in the writings, which this father of the oratory has publish'd.

I cannot here omit to mention, what was obferved to me by a very great man, and whose sole authority is of more weight with me, than every thing but evidence, concerning the liberty which some authors who write upon abstract subjects take towards facilitating the attention, and contributing to the pleasure of their readers. It was his opinion, that subjects of a more abstract nature do not easily admit such a liberty. He that would form a system of mathematicks would, for instance, proceed very unsuccessfully in his work, should he go about to embellish his maxims, postulates, or problems, at every turn, with moral or political reflections, how just and curious soever in themselves, or in a more proper place.

But I take it with all submission to so great a name as that of the present bishop of Bristol, there is a difference as to the matter in question between the mathematicks and speculative

points

points of divinity. In mathematicks, the relations of things are so various and complicated, that the least diversion of the mind breaks the chain by which those relations are to be connected; so that we must begin its progress again to find out with certainty the reasons of that connection. To which I may add, that the sensible representation of what the mathematician is in fearch of, by lines and figures, gives a fort of amusement to the mind, which lessens, in some measure, the severity of its applications. But in speculative points of divinity, as the relations are not so complicated, the understanding in its enquiries is more abstracted from all fensible ideas; and every thing, that may be proper to affect the imagination, and so is kept to continual labour in a naked and steady view of truth, without any other object to divert or relieve it. However, I have endeavoured not to make use of any incidental reflections, where either they might tend to lessen the force, or too much confound the method of my reafoning.

As the study of theology is most pleasant in speculation, it must be granted most prositable with respect to the greatest and most desirable advantages which mankind can propose to themselves. Theological truths are those, wherein we are above all others, most interested; especially such of them, as discover to us the reasons, motives, and ends of a religious practice; and are necessary to the regulation of our conduct, both with regard to our present, and such appiness

ture happiness.

Upon this confideration, one would think, how infensible soever men may be to the force of truth purely speculative, yet as to what con-

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cerns them in fo near and tender a point, as that of interest, they should be more desirous to. discover the light, which leads them to it. The most dull and stupid of mankind are sometimes observ'd to have a strange sagacity, in what relates to the principles or maxims of self-love, in promoting which, their industry and application are no less visible. And yet it must be own'd, that practical divinity itself, which, in regard of our greatest interests, is of the last importance to us, is not always in that credit and esteem with those, who apply themselves to reading, and have a fine capacity for it, as books relating to human learning, or civil life, or even those perhaps, which are written in a more loose and immoral strain.

What can be the reason of so irregular and unequal a judgment? It cannot arise from the subject matter of divinity, and must therefore be owing to something less agreeable in the method, according to which it is commonly treated of. For as to the several principles whereof it is composed, they certainly afford us at once the noblest topicks of invention, and the greatest supply of arguments proper to move the heart, that can possibly be proposed to the mind.

The reason therefore why practical discourses on the subjects of religion have not always those sensible effects on the passions of men, which might be expected from the natural force of them, is to be charg'd on some defect as to the manner of propounding them; wherein it must be granted, that very learned men, and great divines, are not always the most happy; nay, the more learned men are, they sometimes happen to be less elegant and polite; their reasons

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are dry and stiff; they force their reader, indeed, to go along with them, but they give him no respit to breathe in, or to look about him. A close and exact way of argumentation, tho' upon subjects which immediately relate to practice, is more peculiar to the genius of our English writers. But whether such a method be so edifying, as if men, who think regularly, should yet sometimes stoop to the weakness of those, who are not able to carry a long and weighty train of proofs, may perhaps admit of dispute. Whatever the occasion of it be, there is cause to suspect, that the number of those, who read books of history and humanity, or perhaps of humour, and which are principally address'd to the imagination, is much greater than of those, who apply themselves with equal pleasure and attention to the reading of divinity, whether speculative or practical. which the most probable account to be given, is, that other writers take a greater scope, than divines commonly do, in applying to the passions and affections of men, and discover for that reason a greater art in touching the secret springs

Yet a man, you will fay, who travels, is not oblig'd to make any observations upon the road, but what tend to forward him in his journey; to stand upon taking a survey of the fine seats or landskips, the woods or rivers that successively present themselves to his eye, is foreign to his main business. He is to hasten, especially if the affair he goes upon be very important, as soon as he can, to the place, for which he designs, without amusing himself with things of no concernment to him. Few travellers will be pleas'd with such maxims, as few readers are able to follow

low a continued and abstract view of truth, without being sometimes entertain'd with those incidents, which offer themselves most naturally

by the way.

Another reason, why books of divinity are less read, tho' upon subjects relating to moral life, is from the reproach which some compositions of that kind are observ'd, I will not say how deservedly, to lie under. Generally speaking, there are, I should rather perhaps say, there have been no performances in our language more just, methodical, and moving, than our sermons: And yet there are few things publish'd, which less answer the end of their publication, to those who are concern'd in it. Whether the discredit, which compositions of this kind are so visibly fallen under, may be owing to any little arts of flattery and infinuation, whereby to recommend themselves to favour, preachers sometimes make no scruple to prostitute and debase their character, I shall not take upon me to determine. This must be granted, that whatever personal charge may lie against a preacher, it does by no means alter the nature or quality of what is well, and methodically faid by him. Tho' it is too natural indeed for men, when they have taken what they apprehend a cause of just prejudice against any preacher, from his handling the word of God deceitfully upon some sinister prospects, to entertain a secret contempt of every thing that comes from him; and there could be no great hopes to fuch a one, how authentick foever his commission may be, of having any good success in this part of his ministry, tho' he could speak with the tongue of men and angels.

This common prejudice, from what cause soever it arises, against reading of sermons, has ill

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effects towards prepoffelling the minds of men, against all treatises of divinity, and sometimes against the very function of divines; the, with respect to some modern sermons, perhaps other prejudices may arise from considerations affecting the composition itself; which often wants that elegance and manly force, whereby our best preachers have been distinguished in such a manner abroad, that, however foreigners might dispute with us for superiority with respect to arts and sciences in general, yet the prize of eloquence has, I think, been universally yielded to our English divines, with respect to their character, as preachers.

II. I am, in the next place, to give a particular account of the manner wherein I have profetuted this work.

My first and greatest design was to give a rational account of the principles both of natural and revealed religion, and to resolve them into their true and proper grounds. I know there have been some pious and learned men in the church of Rome, who have endeavour'd to prove by reason, that we ought not in matters of religion to make use of reason. But, besides the inconsistency of such an attempt, we may observe, that the inspir'd penmen both in the old and new testament frequently consist what they say, in a human method of arguing, and sometimes, without descending to any express argument, by appealing to the common light and evidence of our own minds.

2. I have consulted, and especially upon articles of greater importance and difficulty, the best authors, and on certain occasions have quoted them; but omitting, so much as I could, to make

make a shew of that mechanical fort of learning, which some writers affect to discover by a multiplicity of quotations; but which every man of a tolerable judgment, and in a good library. may easily know how to make himself master of: Yet where authority was proper to be cited, I have endeavour'd to pay a due regard to it, and may, on some occasions, perhaps, be thought to have charg'd my margent with too long and fuperfluous extracts. To which I shall only an= Iwer, that as I did not design to compile this work, wholly out of other authors, so I would not appear to shew any want of a just deference to them. I judg'd the middle way between these two extremes the most eligible; but, whether I have succeeded in it, must be left to the judgment of the reader. It has been often thought of indeed, as a work, which might be of very great service, if a system of divinity were compos'd from a judicious collection of our English sermons. It may probably be allow'd, that most of the heads of divinity have been treated of after as accurate and just a manner in them, as in the works of the most celebrated authors now extant. This method was under confideration, by some of my friends, but I could not for several reasons come into it. The trouble of making continual transcripts, tho out of the best authors, is what I readily acknowledge my self unqualify'd for. Those who are in a temper to fustain the pains of compiling dictionaries, collating manuscripts, or digesting what they call common places, feem more peculiarly form'd by nature for fuch a defign. Not but that works of this kind are very useful to the publick; upon which account the authors of them, cannot be too well rewarded. The pennance they undergo.

dergo, and wherein the body appears to have as great a share as the mind, admitting of so little pleasure, what they have chiefly in prospect must be supposed the common good and benefit of mankind; and therefore to proceed from the most generous principle that can be

conçeiv'd to influence any human action.

After all, the office of a transcriber is not only the most painful, but it always requires more time, to collect proper passages to be transcribed, and after we have run from book to book, from place to place, backwards and forwards, to digest them into a proper order, than is requisite to furnish out a composition of one's own; provided an author is in any measure capable of a ready and regular way of thinking, and has, by reading or reflection, laid in a com-

petent stock of materials to work upon.

Besides, the labour of making extracts, and the difficulty of connecting in a just and imperceptible manner, the sentiments of other writers; there is nothing more apt to break, or divert the attention of the reader, than a sensible inequality of style, which I need not observe is very distasteful to most, if not to all readers. Where several persons indeed are introduc'd in any discourse, a different manner of speaking, according to their different characters or circumstances, is not only allowable, but necessary to please; what is natural and just, having always a certain agreeableness in it to the mind: But an author who in a continued discourse on the same subject, at every turn takes upon him a new character, and varies his diction, must in consequence of the same reason, render it very harsh and distasteful.

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Upon these considerations, tho' I am sensible that neither my sentiments, or diction, are so just or elegant, as those of several persons, from whom I might have made large citations, yet my work has the advantage of being in both respects more of a piece. However, if there be any person, who in pursuance of a method so often talk'd of, may think proper to extract a body of divinity out of our English sermons, as he may be supply'd with materials for his purpose, especially as to modern personmances, at a very easy rate, so his pains in putting them together, may deserve, for any thing I know, to be very well received by the publick.

It may notwithstanding be sometimes of great advantage, and especially in cases of difficulty, when there are very strong presumptions on both sides of the question, to cite the opinion of great and learned men; to which, without imposing it as an article of faith, some deference at least ought to be allow'd. It is also an argument of a becoming dissidence in any writer, where he is not able to demonstrate, to shew at least that he is not singular or assuming, but has great authorities to countenance and support him. Tis disingenuous then to charge those extracts or references to the vanity of an author, which we ought to suppose he has employ'd, upon reasons of modesty.

Yet if some authors may possibly be suspected of vanity, in multiplying a number of quotations, there are others no less vain in affecting the reputation of being furnish'd with so large a stock of knowledge, or learning, that they have no occasion to borrow the least supplies from other men. But there was never, perhaps, a greater instance of affectation, in this respect, than Epicurus. Diogenes Laertius observes, that

in three hundred volumes, which that atheistical wit publish'd, he had not so much as one quotation. But this was rather an argument that he excell'd in a copious invention than a good understanding; except he had been so happy, which does by no means appear, as to have made a better judgment than all other writers before him, in all the points whereof he treated. Or, perhaps, he thought so peculiar and extraordinary a character of his works might give them the greater air of the marvellous, and so supply the defects of his reasoning in them, by raising the passion of admiration for himself.

Without making any farther reflections on the pride of this philosopher, who after all, without acknowledging it, ow'd a great part of his works to the writings of Democritus; the narrow extent of our faculties, the long time requir'd to cultivate and improve them, and the difficulty of rendring our selves perfect masters of any one science, make it necessary that we should be fometimes beholden to the labours and industry of other men. Persons of the first distinction in the learned world, have chosen to embellish their works with borrow'd fentiments and illustrations. Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, and, on many occasions, Aristotle, have not thought it below them to use this method, and owe a great many beauties in their writings to it. For, after all, perhaps it requires more wit to apply a good thought on a pertinent occasion, and in a proper place, than originally to invent it. We may farther observe, that when any great authority, when a dead author especially is introduc'd speaking to us, what is said does naturally surprize us, and has a greater force force towards awakening the attention, at the fame time we are more apt to be preposses'd in favour of the author we read, when he shews us what company he desires to appear in, and that he has had at least some transient acquain-

tance and conversation with great men.

3. In citing other authors, or referring to them, I have generally gone to the fountain, tho' fometimes in cases of less importance, or where I could not well come at the original, I have trusted to the fidelity of others, or to my own memory. Such a liberty should rarely be taken, except as to things of a more indisterent nature, and where a sentence or testimony seems to stand alone, without any necessary dependence on what goes before or follows. Where there is occasion to suppose any such dependence, it is absolutely requisite in justice to an author; and to the end, we may know his true sentiments, that we should have immediate recourse to his writings.

4. Tho' I have not deduced, on all occasions, the fundamental articles of natural or reveal'd religion in a chain of propositions; yet in proving the truth and certainty of divine revelation, I have taken this method; and even in my first book, where I prove the being and attributes of God, tho' the proofs of them are not formally so deduc'd, the reader, I hope, will observe they are not altogether without a pro-

per and fenfible connection.

of my second, and third head; for the the proofs of the creation and a providence might be clearly made out from the principles of natural reason, yet, it must be acknowledged, we are capable, by the assistance of divine revelati-

on, to treat of them after a more distinct satisfication manner, and in a more ample extent. Besides, that there are certain discoveries, as well as dissiculties, with respect to both these heads in the holy scriptures, which deserve to be considered, but could not properly have fallen under our consideration, while we had nothing, but the natural light of our own minds, to direct us.

6. It has been my endeavour, in the conduct of this great work, to lay afide all prepoffessions, and to examine the state of my several subjects, without regard to any other interests, but those of pure and naked truth. The profound deference I owe to the principles and decisions, of that excellent church, whereof I am an unworthy member, has not hinder'd me from confidering some articles with a freedom, that becomes one, who is defirous above all things, to inform himself concerning what he is to believe and to do, to be fav'd. I have more especially taken care, that no private or party confiderations should influence my enquiries, towards a resolution in so important a point. And indeed, as party zeal is often the most vicious and irregular, the greatest caution should be us'd, that no religious principles should be grafted on any fecular projects or defigns.

The reason of this caution was visible in the controversy about the five points both here at home and abroad. Distinctions in church and state were form'd upon them, and those, who went into such distinctions, were alternately play'd, according to the prevailing and different interests above, against one another. But when these points were no longer consider'd in relation to those, who presided at the helm of affairs.

affairs, and it became indifferent to them, which party should have the ascendant, truth soon grew more prevalent; and those doctrines, which were once generally received, now that people are at liberty to examine them, without any regard to their dependencies on great men, or their expectations from them, have been justly and almost universally exploded. Something of this nature may possibly have happen'd to divide us, concerning the divine right of episcopacy; and the invalidity of lay-administrations, in things, properly relating to the pastoral office. The dissenters bear a considerable share in the state, they are for that reason to be tenderly us'd. All times will not bear found doctrine. And 'tis allowable, where a just and righteous cause is distress'd, to employ foreign auxiliaries, and to treat them with a regard and condescension, which, when the danger upon which they were call'd in is over, may not be so absolutely necessary: There is a time for all things.

How far these reasons ought to have any weight, in order to justify a temporary condescension to the necessity of affairs, or iniquity of the times, I shall not take upon me to judge; the reader may determine upon so nice a point as he sees sit. All I would infer is, that when it shall please God to put a period to our civil distinctions, the doctrine of those, who oppose the divine right of Episcopacy, and the invalidity of lay-administrations, will be as universally exploded, as that of Calvinism at present in the five distinguishing articles of it: At least, men will not be in danger of suffering the greatest miseries of life, which human nature can suffer for adhering to the contrary doctrine.

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7. I have occasionally said something before concerning my diction, but think proper to add here something farther upon that article. I have endeavour'd then, as much as I could, to express my self in a pure and chaste style, without adopting foreign words, except in some very sew instances, where our own language is visibly desicient; and without employing forc'd and harsh metaphors, or indeed any figures or schemes of speech, but what in my opinion might tend to silustrate my argument, rather than to shew a talent, I neither have any pretensions to, nor ought to shew, if I could, in treating of the most facred and sublime truths.

Wit, which may be allow'd to sparkle in conversation, in essays of satyr or humour, and is, in its proper sphere, of good service towards exposing the follies and common corruptions of mankind; yet has too low a character to be admitted in discourses upon divine and religious subjects. For, besides that persons who excel in this talent, have not always the best taste or judgment, and that a man often reasons the worse for having a lively imagination, and abundance of animal spirits in the fibres of his brain; reason, where it appears in a just light, does not need those little arts, which wit so commonly employs towards procuring favour and atten-Nay, those arts, even where men reason justly, create a fuspicion, that there is some defign of imposing that for reason upon us, which at the bottom is false and irrational, and intend-'ed not fo much to convince the mind, as to dazle it by a sprightliness and surprizing turn of thought, or expression. So that a man of wit without judgment or 'probity, (and these three characters do not always concur) is of all others

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the most dangerous, not only in his writings, but his conversation. As he speaks well and sluently, men are attentive to what he says, and as he speaks with an air of considence, especially when his vanity is a little excited by the homage paid to him, and that air of submission which his admirers put on in his presence, he domineers over them, and makes himself master of their understandings at pleasure.

I have here observed one fruitful occasion of error, both in civil and religious life, and wherewith even persons of a good understanding, and great modesty are sometimes too apt to be imposed upon. And, for this reason, when religion is the subject of our discourse, whether in conversation or writing, we cannot too cautiously avoid every thing, that has the appearance of ar-

tifice, or any indirect infinuation.

I the rather observe this, because it has been objected against certain of our English divines, that in treating concerning the most facred and sublime truths of religion, they have sometimes given too great a scope to their imagination; and to shew their wit descended below the dignity of their subject, in diminution of their character, to things trisling and ludicrous. It has been observed, and perhaps upon too just grounds, concerning the discourses of a late very eminent and learned divine, that they abound with too much wit; and that the orator has, on certain occasions, been induced to exert this quality after a manner which was not altogether so consistent with the gravity of the preacher.

Yet because there are persons who will be very difficultly persuaded, that it is a crime for any man to have wit, or to shew it on any occasion, I shall endeavour to confirm what I say by instancing

instancing in two books, both of them full of just and excellent arguments, and compos'd much upon the same subject: I mean, The decay of christian piety; and, The causes of the present corruption of Christians. In the former, there are a great many important truths propos'd and prov'd after a manner that is very just and solid. There are also in condescention to the taste of the age, wherein that work was compos'd, a great many beautiful turns of wit, and elegancies of expression. In short, the author feems to have accomodated his way of writing both to the judgment and imagination of his readers. In the latter of these books, the style is plain and simple, but withal, the reasoning so strong, lively, and penetrating, that he must be perfectly insensible to the greatest beauties of human composition, who is not affected in a very moving and high degree with it.

Yet I am sensible young divines, whose benefit I more particularly intend, are apt to admire that talent which I have been contending against the use of, in discourses on religious subjects; for that reason I have the rather enlarged on this topick. I would prevent the gradual advances of time and experience, towards correcting their fondness for outward pomp and gaiety; and be instrumental, if I could, towards turning their thoughts upon just and solid reasoning: Not but that in respect to their age, they may be now and then allow'd to adorn themfelves with fome flowers, provided they be feasonable and well chosen. But strong, clear, and, where the nature of the subject admits it, plain reasoning, is adapted to the taste of all ages, and what will always please. The author of, The

The whole duty of man, excels in these three characters; and 'tis owing to them, that the learned and the illiterate, the weak and the wise, are in common affected with that admirable book, and do so indifferently concur in making the same judgment of it.

III. I am in the next place to account, as well as I am able, for the motives, which induc'd me to engage in so great and difficult an under-

taking.

1. I have a right to expect, if not from the principles of common ingenuity, at least from those of christian charity, that my readers will suppose the following work, however executed, yet to have been form'd upon good, and pious considerations. And tho' no person is so apprehensive, as my self, of my being unequal to it; vet as there is not any work, that I know of in our language, wherein the principles of natural and reveal'd religion are clearly and particularly stated in the full extent of them, I thought it might be more eligible to contribute my weak endeavours to this end, than that it should be wholly unattempted. Why should our young divines be so much oblig'd to form themselves upon foreign systems? Wherein there is yet reason to suppose they frequently lay the foundation of their theological studies, and from which it is therefore natural to them even to borrow supplies of matter for their sermons. The character we bear every where for folid and rational divinity, seems to render it the more reproachful to us, that we should draw so much on our friends abroad. And tho' I cannot flatter my self that I shall be able to remove that reproach, yet I shall make an essay towards re-H

moving it, commendable at least in itself, and which may possibly one time or other put some person better qualify'd upon a more successful

attempt.

2. I was the more willing to engage in this great design, on account of the incapacity of discharging my ministerial function, in some of the most important duties of it, which it has pleas'd the divine providence for some years to put me under: I could not answer to my self, under all the discouragements I have met with, the charge of being perfectly idle; and that favourable reception, wherewith the publick has been pleas'd to entertain the other works I have publish'd, gave me some grounds to hope, that my labour, even in this great work, might not be altogether in vain in the Lord.

3. These considerations, I own, had the greater force towards animating my endeavours, upon my having the honour to observe, that so great a number of the brightest and most eminent characters in the church and civil life, were pleas'd to countenance and encourage them.

But allowing those, I have mention'd, as the principal motives to my engaging in so great a work, to have something reasonable in them; it will still perhaps be question'd, whether there were not certain considerations to dissuade me from it, more than sufficient to out-balance those motives. It may not therefore be improper to say something here, in answer to the animadversions upon this undertaking, which I have occasionally met with. And,

1. The incapacity of any one person for so great a work has been, more than once, objected to me. If this objection be well sounded in general, I readily acknowledge, there is no person,

whom

whom it can more affect in particular. But why should a work of this nature appear so impracticable by one person? It cannot be so from the nature of it; to say this, would be in effect to infinuate, that the proofs of the several articles of religion are too difficult to be clearly made out, except in the way of combination; which is to bring a charge, not so much against any particular person, who endeavours to make them out, as against religion itself, and seems more proper to be urg'd by an atheist, or a deist, than a christian; as implying, that there is something in christianity, so unintelligible or obscure, that no one christian is capable of giving a reasonable and succinct account of them.

If it be said, that a work of this nature is too long, for any one to think of accomplishing: This again seems to reflect on the wisdom of God in the revelation he has made to us, as if it would require more than a reasonable portion of the age of man, to instruct people in the principles, and duties of it.

Had it been my defign to collect all that has been faid by the fathers, the schoolmen, and commentators upon the several heads of divinity, this had been a work of a vast compass indeed; but when I only proposed to argue in a rational manner, concerning things necessary to be believed and done, as deducible from the light of reason, and the authority of divine revelation, without descending to questions of more subtilty than use, why should an attempt of this nature, how formidable soever in the first design of it, yet be thought altogether impracticable?

So far as I am affected in particular with this objection, I ought, were I more capable of answering

2. It has been farther objected to me, that upon the several heads, I have propos'd to treat of, there are already very excellent treatifes in our own language. I was a little surprized at an objection, which, if it proves any thing, proves too much. We have fermons upon most of the doctrinal and practical texts of scripture, and many upon the historical; therefore no more fermons ought to be compos'd; the old will ferve as well, and perhaps, on feveral occasions, better. The foundation of this reasoning is also probably false. It may be question'd, whether we have any work so complete, but what in one respect or other, will admit of improvement. One of the most perfect and valuable works of its kind, is that of bishop Pearson on the creed; yet he who confults it upon the subject of God's omnipotence, will be far from finding this attribute treated of after such a manner, that there is nothing wanting to give us a more perfect idea of it, or to satisfy all the difficulties which may arise in our minds concerning it.

It may be farther consider'd, that unbelievers are continually renewing their attacks against the principles, and libertines against the morals of the Gospel. This is one good reason, were there no other, why we, especially to whom the word of reconciliation is committed, should still appear in the defence of sacred truths, by taking into consideration whatever is advanced anew,

with

with any appearance of argument against them, that so the advocates, whether of infidelity or corruption, instead of pretending an occasion of triumph from our filence, may, by the blesfing of God upon our repeated endeavours, be put to filence themselves, and at length brought to the acknowledgment of the truth, that they may

be sav'd.

3. Another charge has been brought against me, to which I am very willing to allow all the force, whereof it may be thought capable. It has been represented to me, even by several of those, who have been pleased to favour my design, that however practicable it might be, yet I had confin'd my self to too short a compass of time for the execution of it. As I desire upon all occasions to submit to reason, I have taken a farther space for the publication of my first volume, than I propos'd and intended. I hope my subscribers will not be too much offended on account of my disappointing them in an expectation, that I ought not indeed to have given, but which it had been perhaps more culpable in me to have answer'd, by precipitating so great and important a work.

4. It is necessary that I should in particular take notice of one objection against the scheme itself, upon which I had propos'd to form my first volume. It was said, that if I should proceed in every point according to the method laid down in my Proposals, there would be a necessity of my making several repetitions, that might perhaps prove no less distastful to the reader, than inconvenient to my felf. This confideration appear'd to have so great weight, that having treated in the other parts of my work, concerning the several subjects, upon which the articles

articles of the church of *England* are drawn up, I thought proper to leave the fifth general head, as I had propos'd it, out of the first volume.

There is yet one particular, which to fatisfy an expectation, my readers may probably entertain, I think my felf obliged to fay fomething to. It will be natural enough for them to conclude, that I did not engage in so great an undertaking, without consulting some persons of distinction in the learned world, whose advice might be most necessary towards directing me in the conduct of it.

I readily embrace this occasion of acknowledging the honour done me, by certain eminent fathers of our church, upon my laying this design, with the heads, upon which I had proposed to pursue it, before them. And the I had not their instructions, in so full and particular a manner, as might have rendered my work more perfect, yet what they were pleased to say to me in general, has not, I hope, been without its

proper influence and use.

The first of them I shall presume to name, is the most reverend father in God, the Lord Archbishop of Tork. Upon my acquainting his Grace, that I had form'd a scheme of so great an undertaking, he was pleas'd to impart his thoughts of it to me with that candour, and to treat me with that condescending goodness, which he is, in so eminent a manner, known, on all occasions, to exemplify; animating at the same time my endeavours with those sentiments of piety, which might have become the character he bears, in the first and purest ages of the church.

I had the honour of some private conversation with the Bishop of Rochester on the same subject; who has all the great talents, from which

proper

proper directions may be expected in any part, whether of theological, or of human and polite

learning.

The fine and exact method of reasoning, with a justness and perspecuity of expression, which distinguish the writings of Bishop Gastrell, discover how fit a person he was to be address'd to,

upon the same occasion.

I need not say any thing, concerning the reafons of my application to Bishop Potter, who, besides his consummate knowledge of the language, wherein we are principally to feek for the great truths and records of our holy religion, and his known qualifications in general as a divine, does at present sustain a peculiar charge in reference to that character, and fills the divinity chair, in the most famous and learned university of Oxford, with so just and universal applause.

The Bishop of Bath and Wells has not only been pleas'd to encourage my design, but to advise the prosecution of it, in terms, so very favourable to me, that I should not be excus'd for mentioning them. His exemplary piety and goodness, with a primitive, shall I call it, or apostolical manner, the simplicity whereof so visibly tends to preserve the dignity of his order, never fail to excite in all those, who know him, a strong idea of veneration, even without their attending to his other qualifications of learning, charity, and an unbyass'd integrity.

It is with particular satisfaction, that among the persons to whom the scheme of this work was first communicated, I here mention the Deans of Ely and Chichester, whom I had a proper opportunity indeed of mentioning before, when I was speaking in terms, which may perhaps be thought too general and free, concerning

our

our modern discourses from the pulpit. I could not have produc'd two brighter, or more proper instances against what was observ'd on that head; tho' I was far from designing to insinuate, as if we had not at present a considerable number of as eminent and able preachers, as have at any time distinguish'd themselves in this church.

But the right reverend person to whose instructions I am in the highest measure indebted, is the present Bishop of Bristol, who did not only condescend to read over some part of my work, but to observe certain errors and mistakes, which had escap'd me in it. Had his leisure permitted what his singular humanity dispos'd him to, a greater part of it would probably have been recommended by his Lordship's perusal; and if the expression be not too arrogant, by his corrections.

What affiftance I owe to any person in the composition will be acknowledg'd, as I shall have occasion to mention the articles upon which I receiv'd it. And tho' I am far from satisfying my self with a general acknowledgment to many persons of distinction, who have been pleas'd after a more liberal manner to encourage my studies on the present occasion, yet I ought not perhaps in the opinion of my reader, to detain him with particulars, wherein I am personally concern'd, and which have no necessary relation to the work before him.



THE

CONTENTS.

Book I.

Of the Existence and Attributes of God.

PART I.

Of the Existence of God.

Chap. I. TX Hether the existence of God ought to be p	rov'd. or
Chap. I. Whether the existence of God ought to be p can be prov'd from the principles of	natura
reason?	Page 1
	Page 1
Ch. II. The first proof of a God deduc'd from the follow positions.	ing pro-
Ch. III. That the being, which we have prov'd to be God,	is not a
material being.	, 20
Ch. IV. That the being, which we have prov'd to be God	l, cannoi
be the one substance of Spinola.	32
Ch. V. The proof of a God from the necessity of supposing	g a first
cause of motion.	3 <i>7</i>
Ch. VI. The proof of a God from the consideration of an i	ntendino
cause of things, and of the uses to which they are adapted	d. 42
Ch. VII. The argument of the Epicureans answer'd, against	the ne-
cessity of supposing an intending cause from the form	ation of
things,	-
	46
Ch. VIII. The arguments of the Epicureans answer'd, against	
cessity of supposing an intending cause, from the several	-
things; with an animadversion or two upon des Cartes.	49
Ch. IX. The proof of a God from the idea of a being, tha	t has all
po/fible perfection.	-53
Ch. X. Whether the existence of God may be prov'd from	general
consent?	5 <i>7</i>
Ch. XI. Whether we have any innate idea of God?	6r

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PART

PART II.

Of the Attributes of God.

Ch. I. Of the divine attributes in general.	P. 65
Cli. 1. Of the atome and soules in general	
Ch. II. Of the incommunicable attributes of God: And, first	, 0, 1515
simplicity.	70
Ch. III. Of the immutability of God.	78
Ch. IV. Of the eternity of God.	79
Ch. V. Of the immensity of God.	86
Ch. VI. Of the unity of God.	95
Ch. VII. Of the vital attributes of God: And, first, of the	e life of
God in general.	99
Ch. VIII. Of the happiness of God.	102
Ch. IX. Of the knowledge of God.	103
Ch. X. Of the wisdom of God.	112
Ch. XI. Of the will of God.	117
Ch. XII. Of the power of God.	120
Ch. XIII. Of the moral attributes of God in general.	124
Ch. XIV. Of the holiness of God.	126
Ch. XV. Of the justice of God.	129
Ch. XVI. Of the veracity of God.	135
Ch. XVII. Of the goodness of God.	140
	•

কাৰিক **কাৰিক কাৰিক কাৰিক কাৰিক**

Воок П.

Of divine Revelation and the holy Scriptures.

PART I.

Of divine Revelation.	P. 147.
Prop. I. First, that divine revelation is, in the nature of possible.	of the thing,
possible.	149
Ch. II. Prop. II. That a divine revelation was highly exp	pedient. 156
Ch. III. Prop. III. That there are certain characters, and external, whereby persons, to whom a divine renot been immediately made, may yet have reasonable ent grounds to believe it: And, first, of such character are internal.	both internal evelation has and Suffici-
Ch. IV. Of the external proofs of a divine revelation.	193
Ch. V. Prop. IV. That God has in fact made a reve	lation of his
will.	209

PART



PART II.

Of the holy Scriptures.

Ch. I. That the revelation, which God has made of his will to mankind, is contain'd in the writings of the Old and New Testament. P. 214

Ch. II. That no material alterations, or such as may tend to destroy their authority, have happen'd in the writings either of the Old or New Testament.

Ch. III. That the revelation, contain'd in the writings of the Old and New Testament, is sufficiently plain and intelligible, with respect to all the great ends, for which it was originally made. 228

Ch. IV. That the revelation, contain'd in the Old and New Testament, is perfect, with respect to all the ends, for which it can be thought expedient, that any divine revelation should have been made.

BOOK III. Of Creation and Providence.

PART I. Of Creation.

Chap. I. \(\frac{1}{N}\) what sense creation is to be understood.	P. 24a
Chap. I. IN what sense creation is to be understood. Ch. II. When, and in what space of time, the	world
was created.	247
Ch. III. Whether the formation of things was perfected at once?	249
Ch. IV. Against the mechanical hypothesis of Cartesius.	254
Ch. V. Of intelligent and immaterial beings: And, first, gels.	of an- 258
Ch. VI. Of intelligent and immaterial beings: And, second	lly, of
men.	267
Ch. VII. Of human understanding and will.	27 I
Ch. VIII. Of the liberty of human will.	272
Ch. IX. That there can be no such thing as moral good or even ward or punishment; nothing blameable or praise-worthy, out a freedom of will; as it imports a liberty of choice or so	with-
indifferently.	
	277
Ch. X. An objection or two answer'd against freedom of will,	
fore stated.	280

PART

PART II. Of Providence.

Ch. I. That there is a divine providence; and, first, over the	- M/I-
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
	282
Ch. II. A farther argument for a divine providence over the	nate-
rial world, from the ends for which God created it, respe	
mankind, and other animals.	285
Ch. III. The necessity of acknowledging a divine providence	over
mankind, consider'd as intelligent beings, endow'd with a prin	ıciple
of liberty, as social creatures; as expos'd to ill accidents; as	sub-
jeH to errors in judgment; and to other defects.	287
Ch. IV. A farther argument for the providence of God over	man-
kind, with respect to the ends of religion.	291
Ch. V. That all the dispensations of divine providence are just.	295
Ch. VI. That God is holy in all the dispensations of his providence.	
Ch. VII. That the goodness of God is conspicuous in all the disp	ensa-
tions of his providence.	318
Ch. VIII. That the wisdom of God is conspicuous in all the disp	ensa-
tions of his providence.	324

我我我我我我我我我我我我我我我我我我我我我我**我我我我我我我我我我我我**

Воок IV.

Of the Articles of the Christian Faith as contain'd in the Creed, commonly call'd the Apostle's Creed.

ARTICLE I.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

	•
Chap. I. T Believe.	P. 330
Sect. 1. Of liberty of judgment.	334
Sect. 2. Of belief, or affent in general.	337
Sect. 3. Of the grounds and motives of affent.	339
Sect. 4. Concerning the degrees of assent.	342
Sect. 5. Of faith.	344
Sect. 6. Of the dependence of faith upon the will.	356
Scct. 7. Of the grounds and certainty of faith.	359
Sect. 8. Of the certainty of faith and reason compar'd.	361
Sect. 9. Primitive faith compar'd with traditional.	366
Sect. 10. How far faith is a necessary or moral virtue.	368
	Chap.

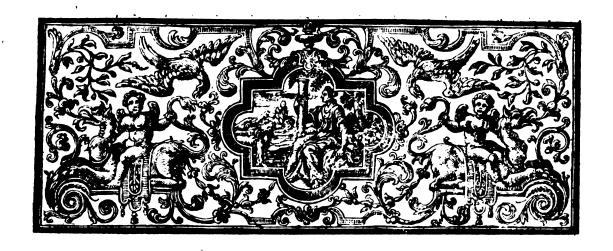
Ch. II. —in God the Father.	P. 371
Sect. 2. Of God the Father, consider d as one God to the doctrine of the Trinity.	_
Sect. 3. Upon what grounds, and in what sense	377
whole three Persons, the one God.	
Ch. III. —Almighty.	386
Ch. IV. —Maker of heaven and earth.	396
- Line of boator and cares.	490
ARTICLE II.	
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lo	ord.
Chap. I. And in Jesus Christ.	· P. 40 j
Ch. II. —his only Son.	408
Sect 2. Testimonies concerning the divinity of the S	on, from other
parts of the New Testament.	423
Sect. 3. A summary account of the catholick doctri	ne, concerning
the divinity of the Son.	433
Ch. III. —our Lord.	436
ARTICLE III.	•
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the	Virgin Mary.
Chap. I. Who was conceived.	P. 442
Ch. II. —by the Holy Ghost.	415
Sect. 2. Why our Savioar was conceived after so e	xtraordinary a
manner.	118
Sect. 3. Upon what accounts the union of the two no	atures in Christ
was necessary.	455
Sect. 4. How far this union of the two natures in	Christ is made,
so as to constitute but one person.	458
Ch. III. —born of the Virgin Mary.	46 6
Sect. 2. Of the manner, time, and place of Christ's	birth. 473
A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY	right for the second state of the second state of the second seco
ARTICLE IV.	
Suffer'd under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead,	and bury'd.
Chap. I. Suffer'd under Pontius Pilate.	P. 483
Ch. II. —was crucified.	490
Ch. III. —dead.	494
Ch. IV. —and buried.	513
Angeres W	,
ARTICLE V.	
He descended into hell, the third day he rose again fr	om the dead.
Chap, I. He descended into bell.	P. 515.
Ch. IIthe third day he rose again from the dead.	552
L	ARTICLE

ARTICLE VI.	
He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand the Father Almighty.	of God
Chap. I. He ascended into heaven.	P. 532
Ch. II. —and sitteth on the right hand of God.	538
Ch. III. —the Father Almighty.	541
ARTICLE VII.	
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the	dead.
Chap. I. From thence he shall come to judge.	P. 544
Sect. 2. Concerning the person, who is to judge the world	
Ch. II. —the quick and the dead.	554
ARTICLE VIII.	
I believe in the Holy Ghost.	
Chap. I. I believe in.	P. 557
Ch. II. —the Holy Ghost.	559
ARTICLE IX.	
The holy catholick church, the communion of sain	ts.
Chap. I. The holy catholick church.	P. 566
Ch. II. —the communion of faints.	575
ARTICLE X.	
The forgiveness of sins.	P. 588
ARTICLE XI.	٠.
The refurrection of the body.	P. 601
ARTICLE XII.	
And the life everlasting.	P. 617
Book V.	
Of the Rewards and punishments propose the Old and New Testament.	s'd in
Chap. I. Of the rewards and punishments proposed in the	Old Te-

Chap. I. A the rewards and punishments proposed in the	: Old Te-
Chap. I. Of the rewards and punishments proposed in the stament, respecting this life, and whether	they re-
spect this life only.	P. 625
Ch. II. Of the rewards and punishments, respecting this la	ife, pro-
posd in the New Testament.	629
Ch. III. Whether the civil magistrate bas a power of propo	osing re-
wards and punishments to men, on any other account,	
they are members of civil society?	639
Ch. IV. Of the future rewards propos'd in the gospel.	648
Ch. V. Of the future punishments threaten'd in the gospel.	652

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SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

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BOOK I. Of the Existence and Attributes of GOD.

PART I. Of the Existence of GOD.

CHAP. I.

Whether the existence of God ought to be provid, or can be provid from the principles of natural reason?



FORE I proceed to shew by any formal and direct proofs that there is a God, it may be proper to enquire whether this be not a principle, that, instead of requiring any proof at all, should rather be suppos'd, and taken absolutely for granted. For if the

idea of God be naturally imprinted on the minds of men, it will be thought needless to prove his existence, tho such other Arguments could be produc'd for it, as might carry with them the clearest evidence of demonstration: Or if the method of proving his existence, instead of satisfying the objections of atheistical men against it, or confirming the faith of believers, should only tend to render, this fundamental article of religion more precarious or doubtful, then indeed we ought not to attempt any proof of it, out of pure regard to the interests of religion, and the peace and tranquillity of those, who already profess it. Or again, if, according to Socious, tho' in this point the most celebrated of his followers have diffented from him, we can have no good or solid proof that God exists, but from divine revelation, it will be altogether in vain for us to employ any argument in proof of his existence, which may be drawn from the principles of natural reason; we shall then have nothing to do in order to evince this grand truth, but to prove in general the truth and divinity of the holy Scriptures.

THAT I may not therefore undertake a work, either altogether unnecessary, or on any account prejudicial to the ends of religion, or in the nature of it impracticable, I shall previously examine the force of these several arguments, which are brought to dissuade us from entring upon the formal proofs of a Deity, either from the principles of reveal'd religion, or from such considerations, as the

natural light of our minds may afford. And,

First, Whether the idea of God be naturally imprinted on the minds of men, is a question, I shall afterwards have occasion distinctly to consider: but taking it at present for granted, no reafon appears why we ought not therefore to infift on this, or any other proof, which is usually urg'd for the existence of God; since those, who contend for such a natural impression, must either be oblig'd to affert, that the persons who deny it, oppose a most evident truth, and whereof they are at the same time self-conscious; which is to charge, if I mistake not, the far greater number of good and learned men with an infincerity, to say no worse, whereof they ought not to be suppos'd capable; or else it must be acknowledg'd, that the idea of God, tho' naturally impress'd, does not discover itself with equal clearness to all men at all times; and if this be admitted, as in respect to the common probity of men we cannot but admit it, then it will be a reasonable inference, that the idea of God, with what force soever originally impress'd, yet through want of education, from gross ignorance, or a long corruption of manners, may be in great measure defac'd; or the minds of men may be fo wholly taken up with worldly affairs and amusements, that they will feldom or never find proper intervals of attending distinctly to it.

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It is necessary therefore, supposing men to have an innate idea of God, that this idea should be sometimes awaken'd in them; and that they should be made to feel the impression and evidence of it, in a more powerful manner; as we cause ignorant and heedless persons to take notice of the beauties of a building, or a statue, which they would otherwise pass by without making the least observation upon them.

And what method can be more useful to awaken this idea of God in the minds of men, and to excite afresh the perception of it, than by propounding to them such collateral proofs of his existence, which shew, that tho' no idea of him had been originally imprinted, yet he has not left himself without a witness in the common and obvious deductions of reason. Thus all our other ideas are naturally excited in the mind by such things, as bear the most lively and strong resemblance to them, or wherewith they

have some proper and visible connection.

We are not, at all times, actually conscious of the impressions, which have been formerly made on our minds by the most moving and affecting objects; but when any sentiments occur to our thoughts of affinity with those objects, the little cells in the brain, wherein the images of them were reposited, open, as it were, of their own accord, and we become anew sensible to their force and activity. We may suppose, in like manner, that if there be really any natural character of God in the soul of man, it was originally so impress'd, that it should not unfold itself but by degrees, at certain times, and upon certain conditions, or the inter-

vention of proper occasional causes.

Secondly, As to what may be objected from the effect, which the common methods of proving a Deity are sometimes observ'd to have on the minds of atheistical men, who, instead of being convinc'd thereby, pretend, that their difficulties remain still unaccounted for; or that perhaps they even find fresh matter, whereupon to question the existence of God, from the weakness or intricacy of those arguments, which writers produce for it: We answer, that this effect is only accidental, and that if there be any force in what is precarioully objected on occasion of it, men must resolve not to write at all, nor upon any subject; seeing the strongest and the clearest arguments do not irresistibly operate conviction, but require some previous dispositions, some strength and liberty of mind in those, to whom they are propounded. The fault therefore may be, not in the writings of those, who assert the existence of a Deity, in the best manner they are able; but in the prepossession of their readers, or their want of capacity and attention.

But

But let us suppose, what ought not to be granted, that the error of the atheist lies wholly in his understanding, and that he is ready to open his eyes to the light of truth, and to follow it, whenever 'tis clearly presented before him; but that, consulting some books, which treat on the existence of God, he does not find the arguments for it in the method they are propos'd, of such weight or perspicuity, that any reasonable and inquisitive person can be persuaded to acquiesce entirely in them; yet still we say this objection is rather personal, and owing to what happens in some particular cases, than sounded in the reason of the thing against which it is brought. For it does not in the least affect the cause of theism, or the reasonableness of appearing in defence of it; but only the manner wherein it is sometimes by accident not so well

prosecuted or defended, as might have been expected.

IT must be granted indeed, that all persons who have undertaken to prove the existence of God, and to expose the folly and unreasonableness of atheism, have not equally succeeded; and that even some of those, who have had in common opinion the greatest success, yet are complained of as not being altogether so clear and intelligible in certain material points, as the importance of them seem'd to require. This defect might in great measure proceed from the nature of their proofs, and would easily be accounted for, if only illiterate persons, or such as never accustom'd themselves to abstract reasoning, had taken notice of it; who being unacquainetd with the terms, wherein metaphysical truths are propos'd, must necessarily find themselves perplex'd with very obscure ideas of such truths: Yet where men write for the learned, or those who have already acquir'd some competent force of mind. one would think, that in a strong and significant language, they might easily render those proofs, how metaphysical soever, clear and intelligible to others, which are really so to themselves. monstrations especially, where they are pretended to, should be set in the most full and obvious light: As in the nature of them they are suppos'd to arise, and in the construction of them to proceed, upon the most incontested and distinct principles: So that if the complaint be true, that some of the most learned and celebrated treatises, on the subject I am considering, are in certain articles of the highest consequence very obscure and difficultly understood, even by those who do not want a common capacity: It were to be wish'd, that the authors had taken greater care to express themselves in a more perspicuous, and intelligible manner.

IT must be granted however, that the books which have been writ in proof of a Deity, and against atheists, have been in general attended with very good and wholsome effects; and that atheism

was never more ashamed to shew itself in any learned or philosophical age, than in the present. If some persons, more athestically inclin'd, have taken occasion from any books to pretend, that instead of conviction, they have rather discover'd in them farther reasons of their incredulity; this, we say, is either a general charge arising from prejudice, and without proof, which may therefore with equal reason be deny'd; or if it could be prov'd, it only, as we observ'd before, affects particular authors, and in particular instances, which none therefore, but the authors themselves, are concern'd to give an answer to.

But the great difficulty lies in the other branch of this objection, which concerns honest and well-meaning, tho' ignorant persons, who, without meditating on the proofs of a God, implicitly embrace, and profess the belief of him: And why should we to no end disturb the peace and repose of illiterate people with a long pompous train of arguments, and especially with curious, and nice speculations? Were it not better to let them go on in the persuasion wherein they are already settled, and which perhaps they never question'd the truth of, than to amuse them with unnecessary enquiries, or, it may be, to start up difficulties in their way, which they are not able to solve themselves, nor distinctly to perceive our solutions of?

For these, or the like reasons, some have thought, that it were more adviseable for divines, not to argue to the people either concerning the existence of God, or other general truths of religion, which they are presuppos'd to yield their assent to, as first and un-

deniable principles.

IT will appear, notwithstanding, that the advantage of insisting sometimes on the proof of a Deity (and the reason holds with respect to all other fundamental articles of religion) is much greater than the accidental inconveniences, that are here objected against

the use of such arguments. For,

r. An implicit faith, which it is thought the people should rather be left blindly to the conduct of, than have the grounds into which it may be resolved, particularly explained to them, cannot be presumed in cases of very great and violent temptations, to lay any effectual restraints upon them. Men are not ordinarily willing to quit a certain and important interest, for the sake of an uncertain principle or prospect; both of which may at least be uncertain, for any thing they know to the contrary. Besides, it does not seem reasonable in the nature of the thing, that any person should expose himself to the greatest difficulties and dangers in defence of a persuasion, for which he can give no reason, how true soever such a persuasion may be in itself.

2. THE belief of a God is not at all times equally lively and strong in all persons, nor perhaps in any person. According to the degrees of evidence, which we have for any truth, our affent to it will be in proportion fortify'd: and consequently such a truth must be less evident to those who have seldom or never consider'd the grounds of it, than to those who have examin'd them with the strictest application, and in a clear and distinct view; yet even fuch persons will find it of great advantage to be sometimes stirr'd up by being put in remembrance of what they already know. the wifest and best of men will impartially examine themselves, when they have fallen into any great error or disorder, they may observe that it was not so much for want of good principles subfisting, tho' latent, in them, as from inadvertency, and their not allowing themselves time to make proper reflections upon them, or to pursue them in their natural and direct consequences.

AND if this be the case of persons, who have meditated most on the fundamental truths of religion, and most clearly discover'd the grounds of them, what shall we expect from those, who have only a general and confus'd notion of God and religion? Or what impieties may they not be in danger of committing, were it not our duty on proper occasions to confirm their belief, by instructing them in the particular reasons of it, and to the end it may ope-

rate in them with a due and genuine force?

IT is not then from an opinion of the strength of those arguments, whereby atheism is supported, that divines set themselves formally to confute it, and prove the existence of God; but because 'tis necessary, that those, who already believe in him, should fometimes by proper arguments, whereby they may be differently affected, according to the different manner of propounding them, have their belief more effectually confirm'd, and be made more attentive to the force and evidence of it. As to the confutation of atheists, it ought perhaps to be no farther design'd than as subfervient indirectly to these ends: Seeing it may be a proper question, whether there be really a speculative atheist in the world: or who professes atheism on any other motive, than that of gratifying an affectation of false glory, or some strong prejudice against those who profess religion, or, lastly, of a certain rage, to which an ambition of being thought superior to the rest of mankind, subjects those, who are under the power of it: But which may Itill be suppos'd to act with greater force on a soul, which the Spirit of God has abandon'd.

3. The scriptures themselves reason upon natural principles in proof of a God, and consequently suppose, that such principles being reasonable in their own nature, may, and ought to be employ'd

ploy'd by us as such. A text or two to this purpose, which I shall presently have occasion to recite, are strictly argumentative, from the structure and visible beauties of the world. The fathers in the first ages, when religion was in the greatest simplicity, particularly insisted on this argument, and display'd their eloquence in the amplification of it: And indeed it must be own'd, that this is an argument most obvious and level to common apprehensions, as well as most affecting to mankind in general.

HERE we are supply'd with an answer, to what has been infinuated, that the common proofs of a Deity may be apt to raise doubts and scruples in the minds of illiterate persons, on occasion of the difficulties arising from their being unable to comprehend This objection, I say, cannot be of the least force, where we reason to the people from the nature of efficient or final causes. A man needs no great capacity to be made sensible, that this world must have had a beginning, that it could not form itself into the state and order, wherein we now behold it; and therefore must owe its original, and the many admirable ends and uses, for which the several parts of it are no less admirably contriv'd, to some most wise and powerful and beneficent being. And it was but reasonable, as all men without distinction were concern'd, to believe the existence of such a being, that their belief should depend on a simple proof, and the most easy and obvious to every man. to other proofs of an abstract nature, which may be very usefully employ'd, those who apprehend themselves in any danger of being thereby perplex'd or embarrass'd, are under less obligation to consider them.

Thirdly, Neither are the objections of Socious against our employing the natural proofs of a Deity of any more weight. As to his opinion that such proofs are not solid or conclusive, this depends upon the nature and construction of them, to which we must therefore refer, and whereby his opinion is to be try'd. But the explication he gives of certain texts of Scripture to justify what he afferts, ought to be more distinctly examin'd; and the rather, because he has in particular endeavour'd to wrest one or two of these very texts from us, which have been all along understood to refer us to the visible works of God, for a proof of his existence. The words of the Apostle * have been constantly cited to this purpose. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead: Which words, according to Socious, are to be interpreted after this manner. "The

" secret designs of God's providence towards his church from the "time he created the world, are now clearly discover'd by the " miraculous works of holy and inspir'd men, especially of Jesus " Christ and his Apostles: Hereby we come even to the know-" ledge of his decrees, and the certain accomplishment of his " promises *. But, besides that this interpretation is a force put upon the most natural and obvious sense of the words, it appears from the context to be in itself manifestly false. For the Apostle is not here speaking concerning the members of the jewish or christian church in particular, but concerning mankind in general, yet with a more immediate regard to such of them as made philosophy their profession; who, as he argues in the words directly following, were without excuse, because that when they knew God, from the sensible effects of his power and providence, in the frame and order of his works, they glorify'd him not as God, but professing themselves wise, they became fools. If it be said, that they knew God by a constant and uninterrupted tradition, transmitted from one generation to another, of that original discovery which God first made of himself to Adam; we ask, how this tradition, if the truth it convey'd had not likewise been visibly founded in the natural reason of things, came to be preserv'd so uncorrupt and intire, through so long a tract of time, and to so many different nations. The way of communicating knowledge in any kind, by word of mouth to successive ages, is very uncertain and precarious, even where the greatest care is requir'd, and should be taken, to perpetuate the subject of it in the minds of men. We have a remarkable instance to this purpose, in what happen'd to the Jews during the time of their sojourning in Ægypt, when Moses was commanded by God to go and acquaint them with his gracious intention of effecting their deliverance from the miserable servitude, under which they were reduc'd. This prince made a difficulty of the message, and said unto God, Behold when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, what is his name? What shall I say unto them? Exod. 3. 13. It is not indeed evident from hence, that no general notion of a God was still preserv'd by that people, but only that they had forgotten by what particular name the God of Israel was formerly

pleas'd

^{*} The criticism of Socinus, and upon which he principally sounds this explication of the text, is not just: He observes, that the Apostle according to the faith, of all the Greek copies, does not say ἐκ κτίσεως, but ἀπὸ κτίσεως; and he argues, that this preposition ἀπὸ is not properly us'd, when we would express any thing, as a means of knowledge or information, but rather as a mark of time, from which we are to compute. But to shew this is a false criticism, we need only consult the following passages. Mat. 7. 16, 20.

pleas'd to distinguish himself. Yet were it not that the belief of a God slow'd from the natural light of their minds, there is much greater cause to think, that a tradition, which only concern'd them in common with the rest of mankind, would sooner have been lost among them, than a tradition of the noble works which God had done in the days of their fathers, and the promises he had made to themselves, as a chosen and peculiar people.

But should we grant that the philosophers knew God by tradition, it will not therefore follow that they had no other means of knowing him; all we can infer from this concession is, that we may come to the knowledge of things by different means, and that God, when he sees sit, may confirm any natural truth, by a divine authority; which irresistibly persuades, and silences all disputes.

I shall but take notice of one passage more, which Socious has endeavour'd to pervert the common sense and use of. It is that of the psalmist, ‡ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. He supposes, there is no more intended by these words, than that those who already believe a God, discover the glorious effects of his power and wisdom, in the structure and motion of the heavenly bodies. And tho' he cites certain * authorities to support this interpretation; yet in effect, and by clear consequence, he justifies the interpretation commonly receiv'd. For whatever expresses the glory of God, except we could conceive his glory to subsist separately from his being, or without a subject, must necessarily lead us to the knowledge of his being: And whatever discovers his handy-work, by direct implication discovers him to be the author of it, without any necessity of a previous revelation from himself, that he is so. fore it may be question'd, whether God ever made any express revelation to mankind concerning his existence. The texts of scripture which would most probably be cited to this end, do not so much declare his being in an absolute sense, as the nature, the unity, and other attributes of it. But that the psalmist is not here speaking to the Jews, who had the benefit of a divine and standing revelation, exclusive to the nations of the earth in general, appears from the sequel of his argument, where he shews that this voice of nature, which declares the glory of God, is equally intelligible to all mankind; that there is no speech or language, where it is not heard; that it extends itself through all the earth, and to the ends of the world t.

THERE are other texts, wherewith Socious more directly attacks those, who are of opinion, that the being of a God may be so-

[†] Psal. 19. 1. * Job. Campensis, G. Buchanan, Zuinglius. † Psal. 19. 3, 4.

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lidly prov'd from natural reason. From the example of *Enoch*, who pleas'd God, and the impossibility of pleasing him without faith, and the necessity of believing that he is, by those who come unto him †, he forms this conclusion, that the notion of a God could not, as is here suppos'd, be of faith, if at the same time it were natural to men, or could be clearly deduc'd from any natural proofs. But this is an argument, as *Logicians* term it, of imperfect enumeration. For why may not a different medium be employ'd to prove the same truth; or why should faith, which may in general signify our assent to any truth deducible either from the principles of reason, or the testimony of divine revelation, be here resolv'd into the authority of divine revelation only.

His reason why all faith must solely repose on divine authority, because, as the Apostle asserts, faith comes by hearing ‡, is equally inconclusive. Faith in this place having wholly such doctrines or facts for its object, as were reported from heaven, and which we acknowledge, could not have been otherwise known, or as-

sented to.

It may afford matter of speculation, by the way, that this famous head of a sect denominated from him, who, in other articles, wherein human reason is not altogether so competent a judge, has advanc'd the power and prerogative of it so high, should yet in a case upon which it has so clear a right to judge, have endeavour'd to depress it so low, as to render it wholly insignificant.

THERE is one reason, still in reserve, why it may be necessary, for divines especially, to insist on the particular proofs of a Deity, even in regard to pious and well dispos'd persons, and whose faith in him is already establish'd on good ground. The arguments whereby we prove the existence of God at the same time they are proper to strengthen and animate our faith, have a direct tendency to give us the most sublime ideas of him, and the most ardent and pious motions towards him. They at once affect our minds with such a prosound admiration, and penetrate our hearts with so instant a love, as cannot fail of influencing our practice, and exciting in us still stronger and stronger desires of uniting our selves after a more persect and intimate manner to him.

In a word, there is something, in the contemplation of this infinitely perfect being, so great and transporting, as must necessarily, if we be not altogether insensible, inspire us with the most exalted strains of devotion, and make us break out into these, or the like passionate expostulations of holy David; My soul is atherst for God, for the living God—whom have I in heaven but thee?

And there is none upon earth, that I desire in comparison of thee?

—O send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me; let them bring me unto his holy hill—My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.

AND indeed it is but reasonable in the nature of the thing, that the contemplation of the greatest and most perfect object, should be attended with the most strong, the most lively, and grateful sensations.

CHAP. II.

The first proof of a God deduc'd from the following propositions.

I. HERE is fomething which exists.

II. Something has existed eternally.

III. Something has been eternally self-existent.

IV. WHAT is self-existent, must have all the perfections that any where exist, or in any subject.

V. What is felf-existent, must have all possible perfections, and every perfection in an infinite measure.

VI. WHAT has all possible perfection, and every perfection in an infinite measure, is God.

If I can shew, that these propositions are founded on certain and evident truth, and that there is a necessary connection between them, the inference I would draw from them, is clear and undeniable.

I. THERE is something which exists. This is a principle sounded on the strongest evidence we can have for any thing, that of self-consciousness, to say nothing concerning the evidence we have of things existing without us. I shall be thought wrong perhaps in asserting, what the most sceptical person will not deny, and what the very denyal of would, by necessary implication, confirm. But we cannot proceed, in the proof a Deity, upon too clear and incontestable grounds.

II. Something has existed eternally. This proposition will admit of no dispute: For if something had not always existed, nothing could ever have existed. To suppose any being to begin to exist antecedently to all other beings, is to suppose it the cause of its own existence, and by necessary consequence to act before it is; but since there can be no operation either in order of time,

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or of human conception, previous to the subject of it, to say, a thing may act before it is, is in other words to say, that a thing may be, and may not be at the same time; than which, if we may judge according to our natural ideas of things, and we have no other way of judging, there cannot be a more express and slaming contradiction.

III. Something has been eternally self-existent. That is, something has eternally existed after such a manner, that it did not owe its existence to any previous cause either from within, or without itself. To suppose such a cause from within, is to suppose a cause of the existence of that, which existed already; to suppose such a cause from without is equally absurd, and would prove nothing, could it possibly be granted. For either upon such a concession we must be directed to some immediate cause, absolutely self-existent, or else be led on, in a continued progression, till we necessarily come at last to one cause or other, that is so, which is what we contend for; a cause without cause, either foreign, or, properly speaking, internal, of its own existence, and existing, by an absolute necessity, whatever that be, of its own nature.

IV. What is self-existent, must have all the persections, that any where exist, or in any subject. Since nothing can arise out of nothing, and there can be no persection, but what has some subject of inherence, every persection must have been eternally some where or other, or in one subject or other, into which it must ultimately be resolved; or else it could never have been at all, without admitting, what of all things we are the least able to comprehend, an infinite progression of efficient causes. Now the persections attributed to the self-existent being, are either the modifications of his own substance, and then they reside all of them formally in him, or else they are communicated in a less persect manner to the creatures from him, and then they reside, as the schools speak, eminently in him; so that whatever persection we observe in any being, must have been originally and eternally in the self-existent being.

V.What is self-existent, must have all possible perfection, and every perfection in an infinite measure. It will be granted, perhaps, from what has been immediately said before, that knowledge, wisdom, power, and goodness, and whatever we annex the idea of perfection to, must have one subject or other to reside in, to discover the original whereof, we must proceed by gradual steps, till we come at last to some self-existent being, the sountain of all perfection. But does it therefore follow, that the perfections we attribute to it, must be in the highest degree possible. Knowledge and wisdom, strength and

and goodness, are considered as perfections in mankind, and men possess them in a very different measure; but those, who share them in the greatest, do it after a most impersect and limited manner. What necessity then is there hitherto of supposing, that the original cause of these perfections, improperly so term'd, whereever we can find it, should possess them in so very high, and superior a degree, above what we observe in the effect? Much less does there yet appear any necessity of his possessing them in an infinite degree. This is the difficulty I am now proceeding to confider and account for, as well as I am able.

WE have prov'd, that there is some being or other, which has

been eternally self-existent; and therefore have discover'd one infinite attribute, at least, of this self-existent being, that of eternity. We have prov'd farther, that knowledge and wisdom, strength and goodness, which we call perfections in men, must be found in equal degree at least in some original and self-existent cause: So that we have not only discover'd a being, who was eternally selfexistent, but who is intelligent and wise, powerful and good. The question now is, whether from one infinite attribute, belonging to any subject, it will follow that all the other attributes of it must

be too?

To this it is answer'd, that all properties essentially follow the nature and condition of their subject, and must be commensurate to it. Thus extension, impenetrability and figure being properties of matter, all matter, so long as it continues such, must be always, and in every part of it, necessarily extended, impenetrable and figur'd; nothing can be suppos'd to restrain or limit the properties necessarily resulting from any subject, but the nature of the sub-

ject, from which they result.

For this reason we say, that wisdom, power, and goodness, being properties of an infinite subject, or such a subject, which is the substratum of one infinite perfection, all the other perfections belonging to it, must be also infinite. So that the same being, to whom we attribute infinite stability, if he be wise and powerful and good, which is now taken for granted, must be infinitely wise, powerful, and good: Otherways the same subject, consider'd as a subject, would be infinite in one respect, and yet, at the same time, finite in another, which, if it be not a contradiction, feems to border so very near upon one, that we cannot comprehend the possibility of it.

BUT let us try, if we can, to discover, that 'tis no contradiction; and whether, after all, some reason may not be given, why the fame felf-existent subject, for so it is here considered, should be limited in one attribute or property, and yet not limited in another.

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If any reason can be assign'd for such a limitation, it must proceed from one or more of these grounds, either that a self-existent subject may limit itself, or may be limited by something extrinsick to it; or else that the attribute so limited is incapable, from some absolute impossibility in the nature of the thing, of any farther or higher degree of persection. But,

not limit itself, because it must necessarily have existed, and from all eternity, what it is, and the same in all the properties essentially inherent in it, even antecedently to any act, or volition of

its own.

- 2. Much less can such a being be limited by any thing external to it; for besides that self-existence necessarily implies independency, properties, which are effential to any subject, can admit of no encrease or diminution, or the least imaginable change, without destroying the essence itself of such a subject. Thus it being an effential property of matter to be extended or folid, divest it of its folidity or extension, and 'tis no longer matter, 'tis gone, 'tis annihilated, and we are not in the least able to form any idea There is not a more certain truth, than that the effential properties of all things, are immutably without limitation, or any variation whatever, the same, and can only be destroy'd with the essence of those things themselves, which they are severally the properties of; but this argument, if it might admit clearer degrees of evidence, would hold still the stronger, with respect to the effential properties of a being, eternally and necessarily selfexistent.
- 3. There can be no absolute impossibility in the nature of the thing, that the perfections inhering in an infinite subject, should be in the highest, or even in an infinite degree. From whence can this impossibility arise? Not from the nature of the subject, to be sure; which seems rather to infer the direct contrary, and that 'tis not only possible, that all the perfections in an infinite subject should be infinite, but scarce possible to us, for the reasons already mention'd, to conceive how it should be otherways. Neither can this impossibility arise from the nature of the perfections themselves: To say, that 'tis impossible for an infinite being to have all possible perfection, is a contradiction in terms; and to fay, that 'tis impossible for an infinite subject to have the perfections inherent in it, to an infinite degree, or that there should be a being infinitely wife, powerful, and good, is a contradiction to the common apprehensions and sentiments of mankind.

If the perfections then of a self-existent being, cannot be limited by itself, nor by any thing external to it, nor from any invincible

cible repugnancy in the nature of such perfections themselves, I conclude, that the self-existent being, must not only have all possible perfection, but every perfection, in an infinite degree.

This argument, to shew the connection between the idea of a self-existent, and that of a most perfect being, or a being that has all perfection possible, may be proposed after another manner. To say a thing is possible, is to say, that there is something, some power or other capable of producing it. For nothing, or what has no power, can produce no effect. The power therefore which is to bring what is possible into being, is necessarily supposed already to exist. Otherways a perfection might arise out of Non-entity, or without a cause; and what we conceive possible, would be real-

ly impossible.

Nothing can be reply'd to this, but that when we say, a thing is possible, we mean no more than that implies no contradiction or impossibility in the nature of the thing to existence. But it does not therefore follow, that it actually exists, or ever will do so, as all perfections are suppos'd to do in God. It implies, for instance, no contradiction in the nature of the thing, that a tree should grow up as high as the moon, or that a man should perfectly understand all languages, with the history of all nations, and the genealogy of every family, whereof they are severally compos'd. But we are not therefore to conclude, that there ever was, or ever will be, either a tree of so prodigious a height, or a man of so very wide and extensive a knowledge.

To this we say the case is altogether different between a limited, and a self-existent being: A limited being may be capable of perfections which it has not, or of having those it is already possess'd of, in a more eminent manner; so that in such a being, the capacity indeed of certain possible perfections does not infer, that it actually possesses them, or in any considerable degree. But there being no power or capacity, but what must necessarily derive from the self-existent being, nothing can be more evident, than that it may virtually at least contain every perfection in it; and how can any thing be supposed to want any perfection in its own

power *?

It must therefore be granted, that the idea of something possible infers the existence of something to which it is possible, or else, which implies the greatest impossibility of all, that we may

conceive

^{*} Bishop Gastrell in his excellent discourse concerning the certainty and necessity of religion in general, p. 46, 47. has given this argument all the force, whereof it seems capable; and propos'd it with that clearness and perspecuity, which distinguish him in all his writings.

conceive a thing possible, for which we can conceive no possible foundation.

But perhaps you will say this consequence is not just; a thing may not have an actual, and yet may have a possible foundation, upon which it is sufficient to ground the idea of something possible to it. But admitting this answer should hold good, with respect to our having an idea of something possible, upon a chimerical imagination of some subject to which it may be thought possible, tho such a subject does not really exist: As we may conceive it possible for Peter to go to Rome, in consequence of our supposing there is such a person as Peter, when really there is no such person; yet, I say, this answer is altogether impertinent, when we speak of a self-existent being, because actual existence is necessarily imply in the idea of such a being; and indeed without the previous supposition of such a being, nothing can be supposed to have had so much as a possibility of existing.

VI. WHAT has all possible perfection, and every perfection in an infinite measure, is God. This proposition needs no proof or illustration: For self-existence, and all possible perfection being the primary characters of God, and included in the common, and generally receiv'd notion of him, to what being soever we prove that these characters belong, we prove that same being to be God, from which the conclusion, that there is a God, does ne-

cessarily follow.

AFTER all, it may perhaps be objected, that what I have said in proof of a God, only proves that all perfections must have had their original in one being or other, and that from all eternity; but it does not prove, that several perfections could not have been deriv'd from several beings, which have existed eternally, or that they are any thing more than a complication of certain qualities resulting from such beings, which yet they had not really in themselves, as by mixing a proper number of ingredients, we produce a compound, which has several virtues that were not separately in those ingredients before.

To this I might answer in general, that my design here is not directly to prove the unity of God; the proof of that I shall endeavour to make out afterwards, and in its proper place. It is sufficient to the consutation of atheism, that there is some being, or beings, endow'd with all those perfections, which are contain'd in the common idea, men have ever agreed in, concerning the divine nature. However, since the ill effects of any prejudice, which may arise from what is here objected, cannot be too timely prevented, I shall, by the way, propose the following particu-

lars to be consider'd.

- 1. It is only supposed in the objection, and without any manner of proof, that notwithstanding what has been said, there may exist more beings, to whom we attribute all perfection, than one. And for the same reason we say, there may exist, but one.
- 2. If the common reason and judgment of mankind be of any weight to determine us in this point, they have almost universally concurr'd in the belief of one God. The greatest Polytheists have ever acknowledg'd some supreme Deity, which if they had been requir'd to account for the supremacy of, or to explain what they meant by it, they must by necessary construction have understood, and confess'd the unity. It was from the belief of this article, tho' few had the courage, especially after the death of Socrates, openly to affert it, that those who were charg'd with atheism, incurr'd that imputation; and therefore Vossius * seems in the main to judge very right, in saying, 'tis reasonable to think, they were falsly call'd atheists; by the christians, because the heathens reputed them atheists, and represented them so in their writings; by the heathens, because they look'd upon their gods, as really no Gods. Tho whether the judgment of this learned man, be universally true, will admit of some dispute. It will be hard, in particular, to acquit Epicurus, and his followers, from the charge of atheism upon it. As to the philosophers who publickly oppos'd atheism, and yet conform'd to the idolatrous rites establish'd by the laws, we are to consider them in general only as occasional hypocrites, who consulted their temporal ease and safety, more than the inward peace and satisfaction of their minds. This reflection is certainly just with respect to Plato, one of the greatest men among them, who in his book of Laws banishes the Greek superstition out of his common-wealth, and in feveral places of that and his other works exposes it both with solid arguments, and in a fine vein of raillery; yet in another place he not only recommends conformity to the idolatrous rites of his country; but upon this confideration, that they derive their original from heaven; which is the more to be admir'd, because few writers, heathen or christian, have express'd themselves concerning the simplicity of the divine nature in a more just, moving and sublime manner. But we are the Jess surpriz'd at a practice among the heathen, contrary to the real sentiments of their minds, which we have known in the reason and foundation of it, even openly contended for by those, who profess christianity.

3. To

^{*} Rationi magès consentaneum est, atheos vocatos; à nostris quidem, quia sic apud gentiles legissent; à gentilibus vero. Quia deos gentium pro diis non haberent. De idolat. l. 1. c. 1.

3. To suppose more Gods than one, is not necessary towards enabling us to account either for the origin, the formation, or government of the world: Nay, the supposition of a plurality of Gods does rather tend in all these respects to embarass and perplex us. And tho' we cannot indeed infer from this maxim, nature does nothing in vain, that there is but one being, who is the author of nature, because nature is only to be consider'd as a subsequent law or institution; yet so far this may seem a reasonable rule to us, and has been thought so in the present argument, that we ought not to multiply beings, or any causes whatever, without necessity, or the least visible occasion for them.

4. A self-existent being, which we have prov'd there must be some where, or other, exists by the most absolute and unbounded

necessity, that can be imagin'd. But to say there are more self-existent beings than one, is to imply not an absolute, but a limited necessity of their existence, which restrains them to a definite number: For an absolute and unlimited necessity, must in all respects have an absolute and unlimited effect. Except therefore it should be said, what I think was never yet said, that the Gods are insinite in number, it seems the most reasonable, not to say absolutely necessary, to conclude for the unity of God; a unite being

the number, that comes indeed the nearest to infinity, and gives us the best representation of it. But I shall more particularly consider the proof of this attribute, from the idea of self-existence, in

the sequel.

5. As to what is objected, on account of certain qualities arifing from compound bodies, which were not separately, in those bodies before, we answer, that the objection proceeds upon a false supposition, as if such qualities were really inherent in the bodies themselves; whereas if we may in an improper sense attribute them to bodies, they are at most but the several parts of bodies, and which therefore actually existed before, put into a different site But in truth, what we call qualities in bodies, are and motion. only certain sensations in our selves, which bodies are the cauies, and perhaps merely the occasional causes of. Let us compound bodies as much as we please, there will be nothing still in them, or what we can conceive properly belonging to them, but magnitude, figure, place, and motion. We attribute, for instance, the quality of heat to fire, because fire produces, or is the occation of producing the sensation of heat in us. But a man may with equal reason suppose pain in the sword, wherewith he is wounded, or pleasure in the fruit, which he tastes, as that fire is really hot in itself. It is nothing but the violent and rapid motion of certain particles of matter, which entring the pores of the body.

body in great numbers, like so many fine and pointed lancets, make us sensible of what we call heat; but which, for any thing we know to the contrary, might, if God had so pleas'd, as well, and by as natural an efficiency, have given us the sensation of cold.

IT must be own'd this error, that there are certain real qualities in bodies, like what we feel from the impressions they make on us, is very ancient; as indeed most errors proceeding from the illusions of sense are. Ocellus Lucanus, in his treatise concerning the eternity of the world, tells us, that honey does not only affect us with a sweet taste, but is really sweet of itself, or in its own nature *. This is more pardonable however, than his argument for the eternity of the world, from the uniform and spherical figure of it. How are the fathers infulted, when among many good arguments in confirmation of what they advance, they happen to employ one that is weak, or improper; or which perhaps is not delign'd strictly so much for an argument, as an illustration; and yet this is the argument wherein one of the greatest authority with the atheists seems to place his + main strength and confidence; but who was no atheist himself; for he acknowledges not only the existence of God, but of Dæmons, and very justly ascribes certain appetites and inclinations of human nature to the gift of God ‡. Yet in the main, the reasonings of that celebrated book, since I have mention'd it, are very weak and trifling, and there is very little to recommend the performance, except that he concludes, with certain moral instructions, which yet are dry enough, by way of advice to those, who would enter into the marry'd state, or educate their children to advantage.

But to answer still more sully to the point in question; supposing more self-existent beings than one, they cannot be conceived to combine, by means of certain powers jointly resulting from them, towards the production of any quality or perfection, which was not before separately and severally in them. Because there being the same absolute necessity for the existence of them all, they must all have absolutely the same perfection. For how can the perfections of one be thought different from those of another?

^{*} Έξ ἐαυτε̃.

[†] It must be acknowledg'd his argument, that what communicates any perfection, must have that perfection more eminently in its own nature, is very true and just, when consider'd in itself; but can be of no significancy in the place where it stands, or in order to prove the eternity of the material world, except he could have prov'd that matter, under any possible conjunction, might be capable of the perfections we deny to it. This was the thing in question, or ought to have been; and therefore what he argues from it, as a thing taken for granted, is of no consideration at all.

Or what perfection can be wanting to them all, and which they must therefore concur to the production of, when none of them could have any other principle of existence, but absolute perfection itself? Those, who contend there may possibly be more Gods than one, are so sensible of this, that they suppose them so equally powerful, wise, and good, and in all respects so equally perfect, that there is no other way of distinguishing them, but by their separate existence. On all other accounts, they are so perfectly one, that the distinction between them is without any manner of conceivable difference.

AFTER all, what is brought to illustrate the objection I have been speaking to, is altogether foreign and improper to the purpose. Let us admit that certain sensible qualities may really inhere in bodies, or result from certain combinations of them; yet what is this to such perfections, which cannot proceed, or be imagin'd to proceed, from any system of matter, however modify'd, or compounded, but can only reside in a subject that admits of no composition; and therefore must of necessity be deriv'd from something, as I shall have occasion to shew more particularly afterwards, that is not matter, but of a nature and substance, wholly different from it.

CHAP. III.

That the being, which we have provid to be God, is not a material being.

HE attribute of God, which occurs to our thoughts previous to all his other attributes, and must necessarily, as we have seen, belong to him, is that of self-existence. Let us consider with all the attention we can, first, whether there be any thing in the nature or idea of matter, upon which this attribute may be reasonably founded, or apply'd to it; and, secondly, whether on the other hand, tho' we should really suppose matter self-existent, there are not certain powers or perfections observable in the present state of things, the origin whereof cannot be accounted for from any known properties of matter, or the parts of matter, under any possible combination.

1. How attentively soever we examine the properties of matter, and the nature of it can only be known from what is observ'd concerning its properties, we are not able to discover any thing, that may

may give it the least pretension to this superior character of self-When we look upon any part of matter without life, or sensible motion, it appears at first view to be a rude, impotent, and stupid mass; so far from having any appearance in its own nature, of necessary existence, that we wonder, by what other power it was brought into being, or how it could ever have been, by virtue of omnipotent power itself, in any capacity of ex-This, I take it, will be granted, that, notwithisting at all. standing the evidence of sense, the arguments even against the actual existence of matter, are much stronger than any which can be produc'd to shew, that it might possibly have existed of itself. A felf-existent being, does not indeed imply any thing whatever antecedent to its existence, yet in the natural order of our ideas, it seems necessarily to imply some active internal principle in its own nature, and the most active, we can possibly conceive, which, tho' not prior to its existence, must however be suppos'd eternally concomitant with it. But to suppose an absolute necessity of existing in a being, the nature whereof infers no such necessity, but rather destroys the conception of it, is to suppose an absolute necesfity, without any necessity, or any imaginable grounds for it.

2. Let us make a step farther, in order to support the claim of matter to this high prerogative of self-existence. Let us no longer consider it, as a dead and stupid being, or at rest, but in all the beautiful variety of motion and life; yet still we are no nearer to the proof of its necessary existence, or to any visible way of conceiving it. For belides, that matter is so far from necessarily including in it the idea of motion, that we are not able to apprehend how it should possibly move itself, but on the other hand, are certain, even to demonstration, that it cannot move itfelf, nor could ever put itself originally in motion; not to infift, I say, on this consideration, whatever different effects we may obferve in the world of motion or life, matter consider'd as the subject of them, is still specifically, and in all the natural powers and virtues of it the same. The dirt we tread upon, has all the essential properties of matter, with the diamond, whose lustre we so much admire; it is only a different contexture of parts, and a different light, which occasions the mighty difference, in the account we make of them, and causes us to despise and avoid that substance in the one, which we so much value, and desire to posfess in the other.

The reason is the same with respect to things that have life, whether vegetative or animal. The slower, which with a delicate mixture of colours tempts the eye, or the ripening fruit, which provokes the appetite, are only the parts of matter disposed

pos'd and actuated after a different manner. And therefore we may observe, the finest flowers, and the most delicious Fruits, sometimes owe their nutriment and increase to such kind of matter, as is most offensive to the senses, which themselves have the

greatest power to gratify.

As to animals, whose construction is yet more admirable, if their operations be purely mechanical, they are nothing but matter still differently mov'd and modify'd. But what connection is there between the idea of a self-existent being, and a being capable of such and such modifications, and which, after all, is not capable of modifying itself. If animals be not mere machines, or there be any intelligent faculty in them, above the power of matter, however modify'd, to produce, this is nothing to the question concerning the self-existence of matter, but rather proves, that there is some other being, distinct from matter, to which the origin of such a faculty must necessarily be ascrib'd.

3. If matter be self-existent, every particle of matter is evidently so too, and so contrary to what we have inferr'd, there would be more self-existent beings than one. For parts, as to their existence, necessarily follow the nature and reason of the whole. There can be no possible cause assign'd or imagin'd, why the parts, whereof gold is form'd, should have an eternal and necessary existence, and those, which form water or dust, should only have a temporary and contingent existence. Much less are we able to conceive, how the same parts of gold, or of any piece of gold, which are indefinite at least in number, should admit of such a distinction. Now what is divisible, into separate parts; may be separately number'd, and must therefore consist of as many parts, as it may be divided into. For tho' we talk abstractedly both concerning matter and mind, as if they were respectively but one being, yet one part of matter is really and numerically as distinct from other parts of matter, as the foul of one man is from that of another *. Tho' there is this defect indeed in the illustration, that no one part of matter, how minute soever, can be assign'd, which is not divisible into more parts; a consideration, which may be farther improv'd to shew, that matter cannot be the self-existent being + 1 fince whatever consists of parts, is not a simple, but a mix'd be-

^{*} What Mr. Lock says on this occasion, is very just. "Though our general or specifick conception of matter, makes us speak of it as one thing, yet really matter is not one individual thing; neither is there any such thing existing as one material being, or

[&]quot;one fingle body that we know, or can conceive.

† Lastantius assigns it as the reason, why Epicurus deny'd the Gods to have consisted of any combination of atoms, because he believ'd them eternal. Last. de Ira. cap. 10. But this reason would have held the stronger, if to the idea of eternity, he had added that of self-existence.

ing, and all compounding parts must be, in the natural order of our conceiving things, before what is compounded, or at least absolutely necessary to the composition of it; so that the compound would not be absolutely and necessarily self-existent, but only the constituent parts previous to it. And these again being infinitely divisible, the argument, by involving those who oppose it in a labyrinth, must still hold incontestably good.

BUT allowing, there is no weight in any of these arguments against the self-existence of matter, and that they are all to go for

nothing; let us proceed to enquire,

Secondly, WHETHER, tho' we should really suppose matter selfexistent, there are not certain powers and perfections observable in the present state of things, the origin whereof cannot be accounted for from any known principles of matter, or parts of matter,

under any possible combination.

We need not go far for the discovery of such powers and perfections, they are not in heaven alone, that one should say, who will go up for us to heaven, and bring the report of them down unto us, that we may hear it. There indeed they are in the highest degree of elevation, and in the greatest extent possible, but we posses them in some inferior measure our selves; we are conscious of them in the operation of our own minds, and can no more

question their existence, than our own.

AND for this reason, one would think, there should be no question in nature, more obvious or natural to us, than how we came by fuch characters of distinction? And to what we owe the origin of them? 'Tis an amazing thing to consider, that several of the ancient philosophers, who travell'd far and wide in their search after knowledge, and made considerable progress in discovering the reasons and causes of other things, yet seem never to have enquir'd, except in a very superficial manner, whence they deriv'd the very capacity of making their discoveries. This was not only the defect of those great men, who went in quest of the sciences to visit foreign countries, but of all the great men, in general, of antiquity. It may be faid, without reproaching them unjustly, they were like persons, who are always roving abroad, and very inquisitive after things, of no significancy in themselves, or that do not in the least concern them, while they neglect the state of their own affairs at home, and which are of the last importance to them.

We may here observe the true occasion why so many persons of the brightest talents, and the most indefatigable industry, run severally into almost infinite errors; and the generality of them, into the common principles, upon which the idolatry and superfuperstition of the heathen world were founded. For never so much as once examining, or with any due attention (what, it may be thought, of all other subjects could not have easily escap'd them) how they came to be thinking beings, and what the proper distinguishing characters of such beings are; but taking it for granted, that there was nothing in the world but matter and motion, it is no wonder they not only believ'd a supreme material Deity, but multiply'd the inferior deities to so vast a number. Tho' indeed, if matter were the original parent of all the Gods, the supremacy of one God above the rest, was only a precarious supposition; for it was possible for the same common cause, acting in variety of instances, to produce the same common effect.

It will appear however, admitting this principle, that what is not intelligent of itself, may produce what is intelligent; or a thinking being is not really distinct from a material being; it will appear from hence, I say, that the Theology and Polytheism of the heathens had at least a possible foundation. For if the Gods were first produc'd from a certain fermentation of any suppos'd chaos, or any other particular disposition of matter, if they deriv'd their divinity and being from Gods, which were themselves, or by nature, no Gods, why may we not more easily suppose them successively generated, or multiply'd afterwards by marriage, and to as great a number, as Varro records in his time, or

rather without any definite number at all.

Upon this hypothesis, the theology of Hesiod will have nothing in it, so very romantick or ridiculous, as it is commonly represented to have; matter being once put in motion, and producing an intelligent being, there is no contradiction at least in the nature of the thing, to say, it may produce more such beings than one, or any determinate number of them, we may think sit to

assign.

And the temper of atheism is such, that we shall in vain attack or pursue it, with all the force our reason is able to supply, while we leave it so much as a possible refuge. Allowing it then not impossible for certain parts of matter, after infinite trials and rencounters, to fall at last in some happy critical moment, into that exact order, and with that stated degree of motion, which is necessary to the production of thought; should we represent to an atheist the difficulty of conceiving how such parts of sluid matter should continue for any time in a state, which depended on a concurrence of ten thousand accidental causes, and which has now no one visible cause to preserve so admirable a system, or hinder its constituent parts from slying off one from another; should we ask him, whether it be not more likely, that some new accident

should disturb and subvert such a state, than that any accident, much less so inconceivable a number of accidents, should have originally conspir'd to effect it; or, when once effected, how it should be able to produce another state of things, out of which a series of thinking beings should continually arise, or be propagated after a regular and uniform manner; should we ask him farther, if it be not much more reasonable to suppose, that there is some other being distinct from matter, who knows exactly the figure, order, and degree of motion in the parts of it, necessary to preferve the wonderful system we are speaking of, and to whom all matter is entirely subject. Tho' on all these accounts the atheist will own himself press'd with great difficulties, yet still he pretends his scheme is possible, and consequently that the proofs of an eternal or immaterial being, are not such, as he is necessarily oblig'd to assent to, or to quit the great pleasures, and advantages in this world for the fake of, seeing; after all, there may be no fuch being. I need not observe this is a very wrong way of arguing; there is reason, however, to believe, it may have something in it too common, and ought therefore to be number'd not only among the general causes of error and incredulity, but those too of corruption.

This principle then, I repeat it again, that a thinking being is not really distinct from a material being, but only a certain modification of it, cannot be too strongly oppos'd. As it has been one occasion, at least, of milleading the greatest men, I may add, a far greater part of mankind, into the most gross absurdities in point of doctrine, it has also tended very much to promote vice and impiety; so that divines especially are concern'd to employ all the force they can bring against it, and, if possible, to explode it out of the world, both upon a theological, and a moral account. It has been already observ'd, how much Polytheism and idolatry were originally owing to it. And perhaps in those kingdoms or countries, where Paganism at this time prevails, they are still principally supported by it. The great men, indeed, of antiquity, who were carry'd away with this common notion, differ'd somewhat in the particular account they gave, concerning the origination of their Gods. Some with Anaximenes suppos'd them generated from air, some with Thales from water, most of them from one or other of the four elements, but, which came to the fame thing, almost all of them from matter. It was this principle which spead itself, like one universal corruption, through all the writings of the ancients poets, who were the great oracles of religion, and in whose books the people sought for the articles of their faith. Homer, in particular, whom a celebrated critick *, and not without appearance of reason, makes the great father of Polytheism, has given so very ridiculous a reprefentation of his Gods (which we are less to wonder at by the way, when 'tis consider'd how he derives their origin †) that notwithstanding the superior excellencies of his poem, and many pious and moral reflections that occur in it, it may be question'd, whether the good effects of them, have ever been a sufficient antidote against the poison of his theology, or whether they are able, as to young and injudicious persons, at present, to balance the ill impres-Those, who consult the passages of Plato, wherein he attacks Homer on occasion of his ascribing to the Gods an original and manners so very unworthy of them, will observe, that the philosopher, tho', as we have confess'd before, he outwardly conform'd to the religion of his country establish'd by the laws, yet had a great zeal for afferting the dignity and perfection of the divine nature. This prompted him to lash Homer for the characters of his several deities, with a satyr, that might have become the severity and ardour of a christian father, except perhaps that in some places his wit is too luxuriant for the gravity of his subject. true reason, it is probable, why Plato was acted with so strong and just a zeal against the pagan and poetical deities, proceeded from the discovery he had made concerning the necessity of acknowledging an immaterial substance distinct from matter, and in consequence concerning the falshood of that ‡ principle, whereby such deities had been at first introduc'd.

But the same principle, where-ever it is entertain'd, has also a visible tendence to favour corruption. When men once believe, that their thoughts, or their sensations of pleasure and pain, are nothing but the refult of matter and motion, depending on the present mechanical structure of the body, they will be apt to conclude, that when the mechanism of the body is dissolved, they can have nothing farther to suffer or enjoy, but will undergo

[†] Ωκεανόν τε Θεῶν γένεσιν ὰ μηθέρος τηθύν. ‡ Yet, it must be own'd, Plato, in several places, speaks concerning the Gods in the common dialect, and more like a citizen than a philosopher of Athens. This he does, as himself acknowledges, in complaisance to the traditions, and generally receiv'd rites of his country, and even in his Timeus, where he afferts the unity of God, and argues for it. But this acknowledgment, we may justly suspect, was made for some indirect end, and contrary to his real judgment; especially since he tells us in the same book, that 'tis impossible for us not to believe, what has been reported concerning the children of the Gods, tho' founded on no great appearance of truth or probability. 'Αδύναθον εν θεῶν παισίν απισείν, καίπες ἀνευ τε εἰκότων κὰ ἀναγκαίων ἀποδείξεων λέγεσιν. Tim. p. 40. Whereas it is so far from being impossible, not to believe the fabulous and chimerical accounts concerning the genealogy of the Gods, that 'tis scarce possible to think, that ever any man did really give credit to them, or that Plato, in particular, could believe them, upon his own principles.

a change, that will terminate all their hopes, and all their fears at once. It will be natural, I say, for such men, to express themselves in the language of those libertines, who are introduc'd by the author of the book of wisdom, and to follow their maxims. Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things, that are present, and let no flower of the spring pass by us: Let none of us go without his part of voluptuousness. And indeed, when we turn our eyes upon the present state of christians themselves, it may be assign'd as one very probable reason, why the spiritual truths of the gospel, and the future rewards it promises, make so little impression on them, that, following the illusions of sense, they are not thoroughly convinc'd of a being, distinct from matter, or a corporeal substance. It may be doubted, whether a great number of men professing christianity, have not been so ill instructed concerning the spirituality of the divine nature, that should we press them to explain their sentiments upon this article, they would not be much different from those of the ancient Anthropomorphites. Under this prejudice, it is no wonder, if nothing, but sensible objects, have any power to influence or move them; or that we can, without the greatest difficulty, persuade them, there are really any objects subsisting without a body. This makes their imagination reprefent death to them, whereby their bodies are to be dissolv'd, as a kind of annihilation, at most as a perfect state of insensibility. This reason, why so many christians want true faith, and are confequently less regular in their lives, is perhaps more general, than men commonly suppose.

THE concession even of those, who say matter may be capable of thought, by virtue of a power superadded to it by God, seems to do no great service to religion; I know this concession is made in honour to the divine omnipotence, but, besides that there is no necessity of making it on this account, the power of God not extending to things, which are not possible objects of any power, it is also of dangerous consequence to faith: For either matter is dispos'd by God in the composition of a human body, or more immediately of the fibres of the brain in such a certain order, or with that determinate degree of motion, which will produce thought; and then, what ought not to be granted to the atheist, there is a posfibility, at least, that matter, one time or other, might have fallen exactly into the same curious structure itself: Or else it must be said, the power of thinking superadded to matter, is superadded as a thing really distinct from it, as the pen I write with is superadded to the paper upon which I write; yet after such a manner, that what thinks shall maintain some kind of union and entercourse with matter, so that the impressions made upon the body,

shall occasion certain sensations in the soul, and the soul in its turn, by a pure act of the will, shall excite certain motions in the body. But then we affert still, it is not matter which thinks, but the power thus united in an improper sense to matter; no more than it is the paper, if so inadequate an illustration may be allowed, which produces the thoughts of a writer, tho it be an occasion of communicating them to the world.

If it still be objected, that matter has not in itself a power of motion, and yet God has superadded such a power to it, so that qualities may confessedly be impress'd on things, which, without an external cause, could never have resulted from the nature of them; and that thought therefore may be a quality of the same

kind.

I answer, it is not true, that a power of motion, in the sense here intended, has been superadded by God to matter. In every motion two things are to be consider'd, the moving force, and the thing moved. We grant, that matter has a capacity of being mov'd, but that does not prove any thing against us, except it could be made appear, that matter has a power of moving itself, or exciting motion, as the mind does thought, from some internal principle. Motion, with respect to the thing mov'd, is purely passive, and infers no more, than change of place, which only gives an external denomination. But we cannot conceive therefore, how a being should have an active principle communicated to it, which it cannot in its own nature, according to any possible way we have of arguing from our ideas, be the subject of.

It should not then be said, that motion is a quality superadded to matter, therefore thought may be superadded to it. But it should be said, a moving force is requir'd to put matter in motion, therefore motion being only a passive principle, adds no real quality to matter, but only supposes it in a tendency towards a different situation. But what is this to a principle, which, we are conscious, acts by an internal determination of itself, and not only may be conceiv'd as subsisting independently, which motion cannot, of the subject, it is suppos'd to inhere in, but let us put our thoughts never so much on the stretch, and turn them what way we please, can never be conceiv'd to have any natural or immediate connection with such a subject.

YET lest all this should be thought precariously spoken, let us discover, if we are able, any method, how matter may be conceived capable of thought, upon any account whatever.

All matter must either be suppos'd at rest, or in motion; matter at rest, or perfectly in a state of inactivity, that is, having no immanent immanent action, can much less have any action that is influential towards producing an active principle, which the corporealists will acknowledge that of thought to be. For then there would be something in the effect, which is confessedly not in the cause; from whence this plain contradiction would follow, that something

may be caus'd by nothing.

In order therefore to suppose that matter has a power of thinking, we must necessarily give it motion. But then again, either every particle of moving matter will have such a power, or only matter moving in a certain order, and to a certain degree. It will not be said, that all matter once put in motion, necessarily thinks, and at all times. The doctrine of the schoolmen, which atheistical wits have so often charg'd as an absurdity upon them; that ten thousand angels may stand at once upon the point of a needle, would be nothing to such a supposition: for from the insinite, or if that should not be granted, the indefinite divisibility of matter, it would follow, that a needle's point would actually include a much greater number of thinking beings, or rather a number, which by continual addition, we could never be capable of computing.

IT would follow farther, that the least atom, matter is capable of dividing into, is, not only a thinking being, but a wise, self-conscious, and in all respects most perfect being; seeing every perfection must, as we have prov'd before, have originally subsisted in one eternal cause, but cannot possibly be conceiv'd to arise from any complication of material causes, and must therefore if there be no causes, but what are material, be whole and entire in

every individual part of matter.

But perhaps it may be still objected, that whatever reasons we may urge against the materialists on this head, they have experience against us; and therefore, tho' every part of matter in motion should not be endow'd with the power of thinking, yet thought may result from a combination of several parts of it, moving after a certain manner; since there are in fact qualities resulting from a due and proper composition of material parts, which they had not separately in themselves, and those not merely sensible qualities, as colour, sound, and the like, which must be allow'd to have no real existence, unless in the perception, but such powers or qualities as are evidently in the things themselves, whether we have any perception of them or not, as weeping, sighing, and laughing, the latter of which is particularly objected on this occasion by Lucretius,

Et ridere potest ex non ridentibu' factus.

To which we answer, that these appearances, tho' they have a real foundation in the things themselves from which they arise, yet are not really distinct from matter, but are only the parts of matter in a different polition, or moving by certain mechanical laws; and there is nothing in them, but may be easily accounted for from the known affections or properties of matter. Thus laughing, for instance, is nothing else, but the motion of certain organs or muscles proper for that purpose, which occasions a different fite or contexture of the lips, with a certain vibration of the air, which communicates itself to our ears. The poet might with equal reason have urg'd, that sound is really distinct from matter, in this or any other case. Yet we are so far from being able to apprehend, how there should be any sound without matter or motion, that the ideas of found, of matter, and motion, when we compare them, are necessarily and inseparably connected. But will any one say, there is so necessary and inseparable a connection between the idea of matter and motion, and the idea of thought, that they cannot be conceiv'd apart. This is so far from being true, that we have no way of uniting them by any common or intermediate idea, but are forc'd to resolve the communication that is betweem them into the immediate power and action of God.

But because this is a subject of the last importance, let us purfue it, till we see whether the materialists have yet any possible retreat; or if matter moving after a certain determinate manner, may not be still capable of thought. It will be granted, that the fame individual matter, which now thinks in any person, did not think seven years before he was born, but only that in consequence of the organization of his body, it began at a certain time to think, and still continues to do so. I ask, whether all the parts of matter in the composition of this man think, or but some one part of it? If all the parts, he would necessarily have so many different sensations, and be as many ways self-conscious, as there are animal spirits playing in the fibres of his brain. If but one of the moving particles think, it must be because there is something peculiar in the motion, figure, or situation of it, from which thought necessarily proceeds. But still this is only supposing, without any manner of proof, or giving us the least light towards discovering the possibility of the thing. For what more evident connection is there as yet between motion, figure, or place, and thought, than between thought and matter perfectly at rest?

SETTING aside experience, and the consideration, that thought seems to perform all its functions by occasion of the animal spirits, in some part of the brain, there is no more connection in the natural reason of the thing, between thought and the animal spi-

rits, than between thought, and the nails of our fingers. To fay, after all, that the animal spirits may be the instruments of thought, not as occasional, but efficient causes, tho' we cannot conceive how they should be so, and even contrary to all our ideas of the nature and properties of matter, which are the only soundation of our reasoning concerning them, is by a plain inference

to leave us no foundation to reason upon in any case.

DEMOCRITUS was so sensible of this consequence, that if every atom be destitute of a soul, every combination of atoms must be so too, that there was no particular atom, to which he did not assign a soul. And the Epicurus, who borrow'd in a manner all his materials from this author, if we believe Cicero *, look'd upon this principle as taken for granted, or only precariously advanc'd to serve an hypothesis, and therefore, concluding it more becoming a philosopher, to assign some cause or other of things, rather than none at all, resolv'd the cause and origin of thought into certain modifications of matter; yet it is not easy to determine which of the two, for they were both in the wrong, had the greater appearance of reason on his side. To suppose thought originally, and in fact effential to matter, without assigning any cause, why it should be so, seems altogether as reasonable, as to suppose that by certain motions or strictures, it may in time acquire a power of thinking, without being able to shew, how it can possibly do so. We must grant however, the attempt of Epicurus to account for every thing from the two principles of matter and motion, has by accident done the cause of theism this fervice, that at the same time it discovers his wit and invention, it exposes the weakness of the most specious arguments that can be produc'd for his hypothesis, which has occasion'd men to make more strict and methodical enquiries concerning the nature of matter, and the origin and structure of the material world †.

^{*} Quid est in Epicuri physicis, non à Democrito? Cic. de nat. deor.

+ Fasse and ill founded, as the Epicurean hypothesis is, yet it has given occasion for philosophising, after a more just, and strict manner. Burnet's Archeol.

CHAP. IV.

That the being, which we have prov'd to be God, cannot be the one substance of Spinosa.

HO' what has been said, in the last chapter, is in general sufficient to overthrow the system of Spinosa, founded on his principle of one substance, yet there being other arguments, whereby this apostate may be personally attack'd, and which 'tis impossible for his followers to evade the force of, it may be of some service to the cause of religion, to employ them in a distinct chapter. But before we proceed to examine or consute the hypothesis of Spinosa, it will be proper to give a summary account of it.

This atheistical writer then maintain'd, that there is but one infinite substance in the world, endow'd with infinite attributes, and modifying itself infinite ways; that all beings in the universe, are but that one substance differently modify'd, who continually produces in himself whatever exists, and is the sole and immediate subject of every property, passion, and action in the world, and, distinct from whose substance, there neither is, nor can possibly

be conceiv'd any thing.

THE old doctrine concerning the foul of the world, if it had been methodically explain'd, would have differ'd very little from They, who believ'd the world actuated, and inform'd by one common foul, diffus'd through the several species of beings, did not take it for a substance really distinct from matter, but only for a certain spirituous faculty, or sublimated power of it. This power was ordinarily express'd by that equivocal term, nature; a word, which tho' it had no certain of determinate idea itself, yet ferv'd to explain every thing else. If you ask'd, how the sun came to be plac'd at such a distance from the earth, as to cause the variety of feasons, and to distribute through the course of his annual revolution an equal share of light to the several parts of it, why, it was nature that gave him that happy and advantagious situation. Here was one answer, in a word, that solv'd all difficulties; nature produc'd, and did every thing. Whereas those very persons, who attributed fo much to nature, had they carry'd their enquiries concerning it in the least forward, must have discover'd, that either it was an intelligent being, really distinct from the material world, or else, that it was only a term of amusement, which in truth had no fignification at all.

THE modifications of the one substance of Spinosa, tho' he has digested his principles into a regular system, are only a different expression for that of nature, and as precariously advanced. For he attributes the same effects to those modifications, which the ancient philosophers did to nature, and with as little reason. They have equally taken the main point in question for granted, and which it was impossible for them to prove, that the idea of a thinking, and the idea of an extended being, were applicable to the same subject. Nature with them was the cause of all that infinite variety of things, which has happen'd in the world; body with him has a power of modifying itself infinite ways. They are equally deficient in explaining, how a passive principle, incapable in its own nature even of motion, should modify itself, or be capable of thought; or how it should communicate those powers and perfections, which are not contain'd in the idea, nor can be conceiv'd to result from any known or imaginable properties of it.

It is no wonder, that Spinosa, in consequence of his principles, deny'd miracles. For miracles being above the power of material causes, or those laws whereby the one substance necessarily acts and modifies itself, were for that reason impossible to his Deity, seeing he must have exerted a power in them, above his power. But, for the same reason, Spinosa ought to have deny'd, there is any such thing in the world as cogitation, to produce thought out of senseless and stupid matter, appearing, upon an impossible supposition, to be the greatest miracle of all.

STRABO * thererefore, with whom nature was the only principle, is justly consuted by Lastanius † in the sollowing passage. "It is idle to suppose, that any thing should have a power of generating a living or sensitive creature, which in itself is without iffe, sense, or sigure. The argument would have held much stronger with respect to reasonable and free agents. And to suppose thought, with Aristotle ‡, a quintessence drawn off from certain material ingredients, like spirits of wine from the lees, would afford us but a very poor solution to this argument. Matter however sublimated or resin'd, being nothing still but matter, and acquiring no powers or properties distinct from it. The fifth essence therefore of this philosopher ought to be placed in the same rank, with his substantial forms, being an abstruse term, without any

‡ Quintam quandam naturam. Cic. Tusc. q. lib. 1.

proper

^{*} Omnem vim divinam in natură esse censet, que causas gignendi, augendi, minuendi habeat, sed careat omni sensu, & figură. Cic. + De ira. cap. 10.

proper fignification, or, as Cicero * observes, admitting of no o-

ther word or expression to explain the meaning of it.

Another principle, upon which Spinosa founds his system, demonstratively false, and, if I mistake not, now allow'd by all the learned world to be so, is that of a Plenum. The reason of his supposing matter infinitely extended, was, that he thought the indivisibility of his one substance could not be otherways tenable; or because, if he had allow'd it divisible, or consisting of separate and distinct parts, he apprehended, perhaps, that the following argument could receive no folid or fatisfactory answer. God is a corporeal being, and yet a being which has perfection, the perfection of his nature, is found in all the individual parts of his body, or in one alone, or in some power or quality resulting from the contexture of them all. If in all the parts of his body, then there is, at least, a plurality of Gods; if but in one part, all the rest are superfluous and unnecessary; if in certain powers and qualities resulting from the whole, the corporeal Deity must have been in order of time, perhaps many ages before the intelligent Deity; and so God, which Spinosa would not admit, consider'd as an intelligent being, had not been a necessary or eternal, but merely a temporary and contingent being.

ANOTHER attribute of the God of Spinosa, and which he found it necessary to ascribe to him, is immutability. But how an unchangeable being can be subject to all the variety of accidents and events, which happen in the world, is wholly unaccoun-

table.

When we say, that man is a changeable being, we do not mean with respect to his substance, or that he will one time or other be annihilated; but with respect to the state of his body or mind. Yet, according to Spinosa, a man may continually alter in the temper or qualities both of body and mind, without suffering any alteration in either. He may every moment acquire new modifications, walk or sit still, be easy or in pain, and yet be always in the same state, and have the same sensations. For all these different circumstances do not produce or destroy one particle of the matter, whereof he is compos'd; that has ever been, and ever will be unchangeably one substance.

This, by an obvious deduction, is Spinosa's argument; but what does it conclude? When we speak of an immutable being, a being that is confessedly self-existent, certainly we do not understand, that he is immutable as to his existence; that admits of no dispute; but only as to the manner of his existence, or the qua-

lities

^{*} Quintum genus vocantes, vacans nomine. Cic. Tusc. q. lib. 1.

lities proper to him. And in this respect the God of Spinosa is so far from being immutable, that he suffers ten thousand changes every moment. The Metamorphoses, which poets ascribe to the heathen deities, are nothing to those, he suffains continually, without the least intermission.

Since a substance, for example, can only act or suffer, for modes do nothing, and are incapable of either action, or suffering, the one substance, if there be no more than one, must at the same time act all the injustice, and suffer all the pains of the whole world: And yet impious and irrational, as such a supposition would be, this farther absurdity is necessarily consequent to the doctrine of Spinosa, that the same individual substance would be at once in a state of pleasure and pain, of sickness and health, maintain contrary principles, be possessed with contrary passions, and pursue inconsistent designs. If God, I say, be the subject of every thing, and all the modifications in the universe be only so many modifications of himself or his own individual substance, these with a great many other consequences, which piety will not suffer to be mention'd, would unavoidably follow.

And yet destructive as the system of Spinosa is, if we argue by a just deduction from it, to all the perfections of the divine nature, and in particular to the felicity of it, there appearing to be in the world, an equal proportion at least of misery to happiness, if not a much greater on the side of misery, both which are only different modifications of the divine substance: Setting aside, I say, these and the like consequences, which directly flow from the principles of Spinosa, his system is perhaps in itself the most plaufible, and the best digested, of any atheistical system, that has ever yet appear'd; and were it not for the necessity of supposing a thinking and a corporeal being two distinct substances, would still be more difficultly overthrown. But as the distinction between these two substances, is the main ground upon which, as I take it, atheism under any appearance, can be solidly confuted, I apprehend my self in the less danger of being condemned for enlarging so much, wherever a proper occasion offer'd, either in asserting, or illustrating this distinction.

Spinosa, after all, was not the first, tho' father Raynaudus *, a learned Jesuit, represents him the first, who suppos'd but one substance in the universe, and that all things are only different modifications of it. David of Dinant † expressly asserted, that God was the first matter; whom Thomas of Aquin for that reason par-

^{*} Dist. 6. n. 6. thol. nat.

[†] Deum esse primam materiam asserebat. Prateolus in Elench. Hæres. sub. tit. David Dinant.

ticularly took upon him, in his book against the Gentiles, to cenfure and confute; and whose own books had been publickly or-Almaricus *, of whom David of Dinant was der'd to be burn'd. a follower, and who for his impious and atheistical principles was him self condemn'd to the flames, maintain'd, that God, he meant the substance of God, is visible in his creatures, or the modifications of himself, as light is in the air; that the ideas in the divine mind generate, and are generated; and that the foul of a contemplative and good man loses itself in its proper substance, and returns into that ideal substance, which it had before in the mind of God. As if we were to suppose the little globes of air that are rais'd upon the surface of a river, and inclos'd in so many thin watry membranes, immediately, so soon as those membranes are broken, diffusing themselves again into their proper element, and incorporating with it. Tho' this illustration is far from being just, or capable of explaining, how the foul, when a man dies, returns into the substance of God. Since, if there be but one substance, nothing can conceal or divide the foul of any particular person from it, or intervene between them, like the watry vehicle, we mention'd, between the external air, and the air it incloses. There is one passage in Seneca + himself, which seems to favour the do-Arine of one only substance, and will difficultly bear a sound interpretation, tho' he could not intend it should be taken in the most strict and literal sense. R. Maimonides ‡ also has on a certain occasion express'd himself concerning the substance of God after a manner, which at first sight does not seem very capable of an orthodox sense. For he speaks of God, as having a body like that of Spinosa's deity, tho' 'tis probable he did not mean by body, any thing properly material, but only an intelligible extensi-But I refer the reader for both passages to the margin; and have only mention'd these particulars to shew how cautiously we ought to refrain from all such expressions, as have the least tendence to confound our ideas of a thinking and a corporeal being, much more from those expressions, which directly infer them to be one and the same individual being.

^{*} Deum non videri in se, sed in creaturis, sicut lumen in aere. Ideas quæ sunt in mente divina creare & creari posse. Mentem contemplativi seu beati perdere suum esse in proprio genere, & redire in illud esse ideale, quod habuit in mente divinà. Id. sub. tit. Almaric.

† Totum hoc, quo continemur & unum est, & deus; & socii ejus sumus & membra. Sen.

nat. quæst. lib. 2. c. 45.

† Corpus dei non est compositum ex conjunctione particularum ejusmodi individuarum, quales ille creavit; sed corpus unum continuum, nullam nisi in cogitatione admittens divisionem. Doctor. perplex. p. 176.

Снар. V.

The proof of a God, from the necessity of supposing a first cause of motion.

Have hitherto consider'd certain persections, or qualities, observable in the nature of things, whereof matter is altogether an incapable subject, and which must therefore owe their origin to some being, distinct from matter. But there is one thing, matter is allow'd capable of having impress'd upon it, by some external force, which yet no power or force, inherent in itself, could ever have produc'd or excited, and that is motion; without which it is evident the material world could never have been form'd according to the present model and admirable order of it. Those who contend therefore, that matter once put in motion may be capable of thought, could they demonstrate what they affert, yet would prove nothing against the existence of a being distinct from matter, and superior to it, except they were able to prove antecedently, either that matter is capable of moving itself, or that it has been, tho' without any power of moving itself, eternally in motion.

If it be faid, that supposing matter originally mov'd by some external agent, it does not therefore follow, such an agent would be that being we call God, or have all the perfections, which we ascribe to the divine nature. For the soul of man, confessedly a finite, imperfect, and dependent being, is not only capable by a mere act of the will of exciting motion in his body, or in several members of it, at the same time; but also of altering the course or direction, wherewith several bodies without him are mov'd. We answer, it is granted at least from hence, that there is some power or other superior to matter, capable of putting it in motion, and acting upon it. But then this power, when we attribute it, for instance, to man, if it be properly a power, is only deriv'd, as those other perfections are, whereby he is distinguish'd, and with them must therefore, by a necessary progression, ultimately termimate in the fountain of all power, and perfection. Tho' 'tis more reasonable to think, that the power, man has of moving his own body, or some part of it, and even of accelerating or retarding the motion of certain bodies without him, is not strictly and properly a power inherent in himself, but only an occasional effect of the supreme power acting in him. Some of the most able philosophers, and who have carry'd their pursuits in search of nature to the greatest length, being of opinion, that under any consideration of power, whether physical or civil, there is no power, but of God. Tho' vain and ungrateful man, who upon this principle, cannot so much as move his arm, without the immediate action of God, because he does not see or sensibly experience his action, blindly imagines, that what he is only the occasion or instrument of doing, is really done by his own strength; and so, if his operation be attended with any considerable and important consequences, without taking the true cause into the account, arrogates to himself the homage, due to it, and thinks he has a right to do so.

IT appears indeed highly reasonable from the nature of the thing, that no power, but that which made matter, should be capable of moving it. Seeing no natural tye or connection can possibly be conceived between the body and the soul of man, it is as easy to apprehend, how a finite being should make matter, as how it should have a power of putting it in motion, when made; except by virtue of those admirable laws of union, whereby matter and mind now act, reciprocally upon one another, and which laws infinite power alone could establish.

But whether man act only as an occasional instrument in the hand of God, or whether God may possibly communicate a power to him, by which he may be capable of acting immediately himfelf; we must still have recourse at last to some independent, and eternal power; we must carry our views upward on the chain of causes, if I may use a heathen illustration, till we discover the foot to which the first link of them is ty'd, and which gives motion

immediately, or mediately at least to them all.

Should it be granted then, that motion is not a direct and immediate proof of a God, it must however be admitted a proof of him by direct and necessary consequence. Except it should be said, that matter, tho' it have no inherent power of moving itself, yet has been for ever actually in motion. But this is to assign an effect, without any real or imaginable cause to produce it; and which, not arising from the nature of its subject, but being evidently above the power of it, must either have been eternally communicated to it by some eternal foreign cause, or else what no body will have the assurance to assert, must have been caus'd by nothing.

This argument from motion, as well as that taken from a series of dependent successive beings, clearly proves, that the material world could not have been eternal; I mean eternal in the strict and absolute sense of the word, and as it implies independency of any cause. But whether an eternal cause could not from all eternity have produc'd the same state of things, wherein we now behold

behold them, which was the opinion of Aristotle, wherein most of the schoolmen have follow'd him, is rather a question of nice speculation, than of any real importance in the present argument. It is sufficient, that whether we allow the world, in this more restrain'd sense, eternal, or suppose it produc'd at any assignable period, we must of necessity, at the same time, suppose an external cause, both of motion, and successive generation.

It is difficult, however, to account for the opinion of those philosophers, or the reasons of their embracing it, who suppose matter was originally put in motion, and form'd by God into this beautiful scene and order of things, and yet look'd upon it, as a

being, eternally coexistent with him.

IT was very unphilosophical, in the first place, to suppose a being eternally, and independently existent, in the nature and properties whereof, they could observe no imaginable signs or reasons of self-existence; they found it, indeed, actually existing, but they faw, at the same time, it was in a passive state. And there do not feem to be two more opposite or contradictory ideas in the world, than that of a passive, and that of a self-existent being. Self-existence, as we observ'd before, necessarily implying, since a selfexistent being can have no external cause, the strongest immanent principle of action and life, that can possibly be conceiv'd. I add immanent principle, to prevent all mistakes concerning the signification of the word, self-existence; or as if it imply'd any cause or necessity whatever in the nature of things, or even in conception, antecedent to the being, which self-exists, which in either respect would import some power, or efficiency, prior to the divine nature, or at least imply, that God was the cause of his own existence.

It seem'd also highly irrational in these philosophers to conclude, that matter, which, in their opinion, was essentially independent of God, as to its being, should depend on him, as to the modifications of it. For since the properties of things follow the nature of them, how came that, which was independent in its nature, to be dependent in its properties?

Besides these physical reasons against the self-existence of matter, there is a moral one that *Hierocles* * has produc'd, and which

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^{*} This philosopher, who liv'd in the fifth century, would infinuate, that Plato had the same sentiments concerning the temporary existence of matter; and he writes against the Platonists for perverting the doctrine of their master on this head. But it is plain, Plato held the eternal concourse and co-existence of matter with God. Hierocles therefore could not borrow this argument from his writings, where it is not to be found, but either form'd it of his own head, or took the hint of it from some part of sacred writ, perhaps the Mosaick history of the creation; but for the honour of Plato conceal'd the true occasion of it.

does by no means appear contemptible. He argues to this effect, that matter notdepending, as is supposed, of God for its existence, God could have no right of dominion over it; and that it was contrary to the eternal rectitude of his nature, to make it the subject of his action: For why should he disposses of its natural state a co-ordinate being, and eternally co-existent with him.

But it may perhaps be urg'd, that all these arguments are precariously advanc'd, and only upon a supposition, without proof, that matter cannot possibly have a power of moving itself. Let us therefore enquire a little more particularly, whether there be no possible way of conceiving how matter may be mov'd, without

any external cause to excite a motion of it.

Now if matter can be suppos'd, upon any account, endow'd with a power of motion, such a power must either be essential to it, or only accidental. Motion cannot, without a foreign cause, be accidental to matter, for this plain reason, that all accidents in matter, are the effects of motion, and therefore do not produce, but

necessarily pre-suppose it in order to their own production.

If a power of moving itself be essential to matter, it must be so to every particle of matter, as partaking of the same nature with the whole. But this is an impossible supposition *; for either the particle to be mov'd must have its motion determin'd one way, or have indifferently a tendency to motion every way. A motion determin'd one way, and essential to the thing moving, can never be diverted out of that way, or have the line of its direction in the least vary'd, the essences of things not being subject to change. But if the particle to be mov'd, have indifferently a

tendency

^{*} Dr. Clark having set this argument, in answer to a pernicious opinion, as he justly calls it, in a very good light, I shall take the liberty to recite it in his own words. "The effential Conatus to motion in every one, or of any one particle of matter, in an imaginary infinite Plenum, must be either a Conatus to move some one determinate way at once, or to move every way at once; a Conatus to move some one determinate way, cannot be essential to any particle of matter, but must arise from some external cause, because there is nothing in the pretended necessary nature of any particle, to determine its motion necessarily and essentially one way rather than another: And a Conatus equally to move every way at once, is either an absolute contradiction, or at least could produce nothing in matter, but an eternal rest of all and every one of its parts. Demonstration of the being and attributes of God.

Dr. Cheyne has also an argument to prove motion cannot be essential to matter, from the infinite possible varieties of its directions; which I shall also here take occasion to transcribe. "Laying aside the consideration of all other bodies, or supposing a body "moving in vacuo, it must move in one certain direction. Now what it is that determines it to this direction, rather than to any other of the infinite variety, no reason can possibly be assign'd, why it should move rather in this, than in any other of the infinite number of directions; and it cannot possibly move in more than one of them at once, and therefore it will of itself move in none of them; i.e. it will not of itself move at all. His preceding argument from the pressure of a sphere by two other equal spheres with equal forces and contrary directions, seems also very just and conclusive. Philosophical principles of religion. p. 114.

tendency to move every way, it is evident it can move no way, feeing the endeavour towards motion, would then be perfectly equal on all sides of it; and no reason could be given why it should determine itself one way rather than another.

THAT motion is not essential to matter, appears farther from hence, that the idea of matter is not inseparably united with that of motion. Solidity, extension, and figure, are properties which we always attribute to matter, and can never be conceived to subsist apart from it. We can have no conception of any particle of matter, which does not include these three properties; but we can easily conceive matter without motion. When we speak of a body being at rest, we have a clear and distinct perception of what we say; which yet we could not have, if motion were essential to matter, we could then no more separate matter from the idea of motion, than from that of solidity, extension, or figure.

Another argument against a natural power of motion in matter, is taken from what I have so often had occasion to observe, its being a passive subject; so far indeed as we can observe, the influence of all moving bodies upon one another is reciprocal; they are impell'd, and they impell; they sly from, and embrace; they supplant, and give way to one another. But still we are no nearer towards apprehending, how motion was at first communicated, and when or by what means this continued circulation of it first began. That it could not derive from any inherent power or principle in matter itself, sufficiently appears from all the foregoing considerations; it must therefore have been impress'd upon matter by some active principle of a nature and power superior to it, which must either immediately, or however in the last resource of it, be that being, whom we call God.

Снар. VÎ.

The proof of a God from the consideration of an intending cause of things, and of the uses to which they are adapted.

Phould we now admit, in contradiction to what has been clear-Iy prov'd, that matter is self-existent, and that motion is esfential to it, or that by some strange accident, it was, without any external cause, one time or other, put in motion. We shall notwithstanding be unable, even upon this concession, to shew, how the present contrivance and order of things can be accounted for upon the sole principles of matter and motion. To say nothing of the magnificent structure and vast extent of the world, or the wonderful variety of objects, that every where present themselves in it. For tho' all these considerations are arguments of power, and are apt to give strong and lively ideas of it; yet power, however extended, not having so evident a connection with thought, whereof I still suppose matter incapable, as wisdom and design, I have chose rather to insist on the proof a God, upon the regular and useful, than the vast fabrick of this material system. what indeed represents to us the regularity and uses of it, naturally leads us to confider at the same time, that almighty power which first made, and still continually sustains it in being.

But without a design of weakening any arguments, which may be drawn from the visible effects of the power of God, to prove his existence, what I am more particularly to observe from the formation of the world, is, that we see in it, and in the several parts of it, the most surprizing effects of thought and deep con-

If we take a survey of the mundane system in general, what a number of great bodies do we see, some of them of a magnitude, but of a distance too one from another almost incredible, yet moving in the most exquisite order, and which is established by a law, that cannot be broken. Now who was it that appointed this admirable order? Who made the law, whereby it was afterwards to substift; and without which the beautiful harmony, that results from the motion of the several orbs, preserving their proper distances, would soon have terminated in the greatest discord, and consust on imaginable.

If we consider, in particular, the two great luminaries, I speak with the scriptures according to appearance and common apprehension, but which have certainly the greatest influence on this terraqueous globe, with what wisdom are they plac'd in their respective spheres, how admirably contriv'd are their motions, for the common benefit of all things within the compass of their acti-

vity, and how regularly do they move?

Now who was it, that made a tabernacle for the sun in the heavens, among an infinite variety of stations, precisely in the place, the most commodious for him, out of which he should appear to go forth every morning, like a bridegroom out of his chamber, with new light and joy in his face, and rejoicing as a giant to run his course? Or who was it again that prescrib'd him, I argue still upon the common notion, the stated times of his going down; and who appointed that the moon also, should so exactly know her seasons?

If we descend from heaven, or a consideration of the greater constituent parts of the world, to take the least view of the human microcosm, what a fresh and glorious scene of wonders immemediately opens itself to us? How fearfully with respect to our bodies and wonderfully are we made; and by what strange and admirable laws of mechanism do we live and move? And tho' we find by a sensible experience, that we have some power over matter, to change the figure of it, to transpose it, or alter the course of its motion; yet how unable are we, let us make use of all the powers and privileges of thought as much as we can, to compose the least part or organ, towards the formation of any animal. How much more unlikely was it, or rather impossible, that matter, to which we here allow a power of moving itself, should without thought or design; have ever been able to compose all the organs of the human body together, and, as it were, at one effort, wherein wisdom and thought display themselves, in such a vast and inexhausted variety of instances.

THERE is no animal whatever, in the construction whereof we do not observe very surprizing effects of wisdom and contrivance; to say nothing of the curious formation of trees and plants, and the regular methods of their propagation, their nutriment, and growth; to which all the art and industry of man, is so far from being capable of producing any thing like, that those who have made the deepest researches into the works of nature, can upon no mechanical principles whatever, account for any one of these

appearances.

A person would be thought very unreasonable, who should say, that the construction even of a watch, is not owing to the opera-

tion or contrivance of some artist. But what is this poor machine, with all the pomp, we sometimes observe about it, to the mechanism, I do not say of the most inconsiderable insect, but of a pile of grass, or a common flower of the field; which, in the judgment of him who made the world, and best knows the admirable formation of its several parts, is more splendidly array'd, than Solomon was in all his glory.

Now if the world, in the present state of it, were produc'd by any casual motion of the parts of matter, how comes the effect to be so much above the character and quality of the cause; or what account can be given, that so many wonderful instances of thought and contrivance should be owing to that, which is neither

capable of thinking, or contriving?

THE arguments of Lactantius on this head, are proposed after that clear and elegant manner, wherein he so much excells: "We " observe *, says he, nothing in this world, wherein the signs of " a great and confummate wisdom are not visible; and which be-" ing so far superior to all human wisdom and contrivance, to what " can we justly ascribe the effects of it, but to the providence of "God? Is reason and art requir'd to form an image, or the sta-"tue of a man, and shall we suppose man himself to have been " form'd by the casual motion of certain particles of matter, " blindly impelling, or adhering to one another. He adds a little after to the same purpose: † What reasonable man can ima-" gine, that an effect, which all the reason and design in the " world is not capable of producing, should be produc'd by an " accidental concourse or combination of undeligning or sense-" less atoms?

THE force of which reasoning lies in this, that the effect ought always to bear the signatures of the cause, and be proportion'd, in some measure at least, to the power and influence of it; and consequently that 'tis the highest absurdity to suppose this regular, uniform, and beautiful state of things, wherein there are so many visible characters of a wife and designing agent, should arise from a principle, which has neither wisdom nor design, but acts at the most, if chance may be said to act all, by a blind and necessary causality; a state of things, in a word, which affords us all the arguments in proof of an intelligent and wife cause, which could

atomorum passim cohærentium perfici potuisse. Id. ib.

have

^{*} Videmus enim nihil esse in omni mundo quod non habeat in se maximam mirabilemque sapientiam. Quæ quia supra hominis sapientiam & ingenium est, cui rectius quàm divinæ providentiæ tribuenda est? An simulacrum hominis & statuam ars sinzit, ipsum hominem de frustis temere concurrentibus sieri putabimus? Lactantius de irâ. c. 10.

† Quisquamne igitur sanus existimat, quod homo ratione & consilio non possit, id concursu

have been afforded us, on supposition that such a cause had really existed.

We not only observe in the structure and formation of things, the admirable effects of wisdom and art, but in the several uses for which they appear to be contrived and formed in the manner, pro-

per to them.

EVERY thing in the world, to the formation whereof there seems to have been the least intelligence requir'd, has its proper use, and is directed to some wise or good ends, both with respect to its own being, and that of the whole system; but more particularly as it is subservient to such beings, as border upon it, and with whom it has a nearer communication. This has been ever look'd upon by wise and thinking men, as a clear and incontestable proof of some one original being, the architect of this visible world, who prepar'd and model'd the several materials that compose it. They justly conclude, that without his special direction and appointment, things could never have fallen into so useful an order, or been adapted to all those excellent ends, which they so duly pursue in general, and every one of them respectively in its private situation.

Learned men, to create in us a greater idea of the wisdom of God, in the various uses for which his creatures were form'd, have enter'd into the * detail of this subject, illustrated it by a curious induction of particulars, and compos'd whole volumes upon it. But it is not consistent with my design to pursue such a method, but only to observe summarily the proper inference to be drawn from a just prosecution of it; which is, that things, in a numberless variety of instances, fitted to so many wise and useful ends, must have deriv'd the powers which were given them towards attaining those ends, from some wise, informing, and superior being. Otherways we must again recur to that inconsistent supposition of an effect without a cause; or, which comes to the same thing, of a cause, altogether impotent towards producing its effect, and unequal to it; and when we speak of intelligent beings, plainly communicating perfections, which it has not in its own nature.

This proof of the existence of God, from an intending cause, with regard both to the formation and uses of things, ought to be the more insisted upon, as it lies the most open of all other proofs to common apprehension; there is no need of much learning or application to discover the force of it. The most ignorant persons are capable enough of perceiving, that no effect can exceed

^{*} Galen, Theoph. Raynaud. Boyle, Ray, Derham.

the power of its cause, but must necessarily be in some measure

proportion'd to it.

It is no less obvious, that things in themselves wholly senseless and incogitative, could never have form'd the several species of beings in the world, after a manner proper to pursue and attain so many excellent ends, and wherein there appear all the characters of a most wise, and designing agent.

But because there are two specious arguments of the *Epicureans*, and wherein they seem to place their main strength, which may be thought in some measure to invalidate this proof, I shall proceed in the two following chapters distinctly to examine the force

of them.

CHAP. VII.

The argument of the Epicureans answer'd, against the necessity of supposing an intending cause from the formation of things.

An eternal motion of an infinite variety of atoms, to speak in the person of an Epicurean, must necessarily, and successively produce every possible combination of them. And such an effect is so far, whatever it may seem, from being merely contingent or fortuitous, that the nature of things requires it should

one time or other unavoidably happen

Let us take that very instance, which Grotius has urg'd, and is commonly urg'd, against the possibility of this present system of the world from the casual motion and concourse of atoms: Let us suppose, I say, that the letters of the Roman alphabet, had been eternally transpos'd, or chang'd in their order by successive turns; it could not possibly have been otherways, but that the Eneid must upon one conjuncture or other, have been produc'd exactly in the order we now have it. So far upon this supposition would it be necessary to suppose that work to have been a contrivance of art, that it must have been some time the result of an absolute, and, if I may speak so, mechanical necessity itself.

THE argument therefore, which learned men have employ'd against the Epicureans, from the absurdity of supposing that a casual change of letters, should ever produce a rational or well digested poem, instead of having any force towards subverting their

principles,

principles, rather tends to confirm them by a sensible and apt illustration. For since all systems, in an infinite duration, must one time or other take place, this system was necessarily to come in course some time; that period has happen'd at last; but 'tis owing to chance, and not to any design or contrivance, that it did not happen sooner, or had not been deferr'd for an incommensurable duration longer.

In answer to what is thus objected, I shall not insist that the e-ternal motion of matter is here taken for granted, without being prov'd, and, as we have fully evinc'd before, without any possibility of proof; yet I now suppose it, and argue notwithstanding, that we can never account for the origin of the mundane system from it. I shall only therefore by way of removing this objection, propose the following particulars to be consider'd. And,

1. In the first place, a casual combination of atoms, which without an external cause or impulse could never have combin'd, is here precariously assum'd. For either these atoms must have mov'd in order to their coming and uniting together in a direct, or in an oblique line. 'Tis most reasonable to suppose their motion would be in a direct line; where there is nothing to obstruct or divert a body in motion, we can have no possible conception how or by what means the course of its motion can be alter'd; but an infinite number of atoms falling continually in strait and parallel lines, as they could never approach nearer to those, which descended collaterally with them, so neither could they possibly overtake those, that fell before them, or be overtaken by any, that follow'd in the same column after them; but must in both respects eternally have kept the same order and distance, in their respective columns. So that they could never touch or cohere; tho' we should farther grant, that they are of a different shape and texture, or that their coherence might be clearly explain'd upon natural or mechanical principles; in both which respects the Epicureans will find themselves press'd with very great difficulties. But setting these difficulties aside, they were forc'd however to suppose *, that the descending atoms did not fall in a line truly or mathematically perpendicular, but declin'd a little from it; and the deviation, how small or inconsiderable so ever, occasion'd that concourse and coherence of them, whereof no account could be otherways given.

Lucret.

^{*} Quod nisi declinare solerent, omnia deorsum,
Imbris uti guttæ, caderent per inane prosundum,
——ita nil natura creasset.

But this was answering one difficulty, whereby they found themselves embarrass'd with another: For to assert this declination of
atoms, either from any occult quality in the nature of them, or
from any unknown external cause, was notoriously to beg the question, and, as Cicero * justly observes, to assert a thing, without
any reason for it; and I may add, contrary to the most natural
law, we can conceive, of gravitation, that bodies should continue
their motion in a direct, rather than an oblique line, unless their
striking upon other bodies might vary the determination of it. If
we once suppose, that any moving particle of matter may, without an external impulse, deviate in the least from a strait line, we

may with equal reason suppose it to describe any line.

But let us allow the *Epicureans*, since that is their favourite, tho' a most groundless siction, and without which their whole scheme falls in pieces, let us allow them, I say, to the end their atoms may more easily embrace and unite, that their motion is somewhat oblique, and bending from a right line; what will they gain by this concession? If all atoms equally decline, they will still be as far from uniting, as they were at first; if they do not all equally decline, then the suppos'd declination is not essential to them. From what accident then, or by whose determination, upon the *Epicurean* system, can this difference in their motion arise? Here again the patrons of that system, are forc'd to assert, and lay down as a principle, what has no appearance either of reason, or probability †.

2. This objection supposes an infinite number of atoms, and yet a void space wherein they move; the whole force indeed of what is objected lies in this supposition, which notwithstanding destroys the *Epicurean* hypothesis. For an infinite number of the particles of matter must be of infinite extent, otherways we may suppose a number capable of being added, and filling up those vacant spaces, to which they do not extend; which implies a contradiction, and quite enervates all the force of this argument. For if the number of atoms be not infinite, 'tis impossible that infinite combinations should follow from them. But if they be according to the *Plenists* infinite, and there are no void spaces, but what they fill, then 'tis impossible, that they should either move, or gravitate at all.

3. Tho' we should admit the number of atoms to be infinite, and that infinite combinations of them would necessarily one time

^{*} Quam declinationem sine causa sieri si minus verbis, re (Epicurus) cogitur consiteri. Cic. de sato.

⁺ Nam sive omnes atomi declinabunt nullæ unquam cohærescent; sive aliæ sao nutu rettè ferentur, erit hoc quasi provincias atomis dare, quæ obliquè ferentur. Cic. lib. 1. de finibus.

or other follow from the infinite variety of their motions; yet these would be only material combinations still. As to thought, which neither does, nor can depend on any modifications of matter, we must notwithstanding derive the origin of it, and consequently of the noblest appearances and effects in nature, from some other principle.

CHAP. VIII.

The argument of the Epicureans answer'd, against the necessity of supposing an intending cause, from the several uses of things; with an animadversion or two upon des Cartes.

TT is pretended by Epicurus, and his followers, that we discover many things by accident, and occasionally, subservient to our use, which, it is evident, were not originally, or by any direct intention, delign'd for it. A man, to avoid the pursuit of his enemies, who thirst after his blood, climbs a shady oak, and, by favour of its covert, finds protection, and escapes undiscover'd. Another observing a lion ready to seize and devour him, lets himself gradually down a craggy and steep rock. But will any man say, that either the tree, or the rock, were designedly plac'd there for these ends? The tree with so many boughs to cover the one, and the rock with so many jagged points for the other to take hold of, and whereby he may preserve himself from falling. As little reafon, say they, is there to suppose, that the * hands or feet of either of these persons were form'd for the uses, they make of them, but they find them subservient to those uses, and accordingly employ them. Thus they argue there is no necessity of supposing, that any member of the body, how curious soever in the construction, was intentionally organiz'd, after a manner, proper for such and such uses; but the uses were by accident, or observation, found out afterwards. The eye, for instance, is in general the most useful organ of all the senses, and which takes in the greatest variety of objects; yet there was no intention, when the eye was form'd, that a man should see with it, but experience discovering it to be

Lucret.

the

^{* ——}Nil ideo natum est in corpore, ut uti
Possemus, sed quod natum est, id procreat usum.

the proper and delightful instrument of sight, he naturally makes use of it to that end.

I have endeavour'd to give this objection against what the theists argue from the consideration of final causes, all the force whereof it seems capable; let us now consider what proper and and satisfier

factory answer may be given to it.

1. It is no just consequence, that because a thing happens by accident, and in particular cases to be serviceable to some end, for which it does not appear to have been designedly form'd, that nothing therefore was made or design'd for any end. Let us apply this way of reasoning upon final causes to the works of human industry or art, and we shall easily discover the weakness and inconfequence of it. A man, to carry on some resemblance with the allusions in the preceding section, finding certain empty spaces, that were left when the scaffolding was remov'd in the walls of his house, climbs up the sides of it, and throws himself into one of the upper apartments at a window; there was no intention in the builder of leaving those empty spaces to be made use of for that purpose, neither were the windows fram'd with any such defign, as they now occasionally serve. Does it therefore follow, that the stair-case, and all the curious work, wherewith it may perhaps be embellish'd, was the effect of mere chance, and not designedly plac'd there for the greater convenience of passing into the rooms above; or that the window by the same casualty was put into the form and situation, which favours the man's passage into it, without any intention of its being subservient to other useful ends, and to the intromission of air and light. we think of a person, who could be so weak as to argue after this manner; and yet how imperfect and unjust is the resemblance, I do not fay of a window or a stair-case, but of all the most curious and elaborate productions of human art put together, to any organical part of the least insect. If perhaps the smallness of it do not render the structure of its organs still in proportion the greater object of admiration.

2. It must be acknowledg'd then, there is a wide difference between an occasional use to be made of any thing, and its having a constant, regular, and peculiar aptitude for such a use. But this argument holds still the stronger, when such a thing consists, as all the organs in the body of an animal do, of great variety of parts curiously united, and acting in so harmonious a concert, and mutual a dependance on one another, that the want or dislocation of one part, might occasion a general disorder, or perhaps disuse of the whole.

3. But

3. But the inference, we would draw from the proof of an intending cause, from organiz'd bodies, is still more evident, when we observe the like construction and use of any organ, of the eye, for instance, in a great variety of animals different in kind, and in every one of the same kind. And yet the wisdom of God in the formation of things is farther conspicuous, if we consider, that their several organs do not only perform the proper sunctions assign'd them taken separately; but are admirably subservient to one another, towards the preservation of the system in general, and the common uses resulting from it. For the body is not one member, but many; and the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the seet, I have no need of you *.

What the Epicureans urge, that things must of necessity be in order of time before their uses, does not in the least tend to invalidate what has been said. The eye, say they, for example, must be before seeing, and the ear before hearing; as in respect of artisficial things, there were swords and spears before men could sight with them, and beds before men could repose themselves upon them. But this very argument, which Lucretius brings against the proofs we would draw from final causes, directly concludes for them. For if instruments of war were made for preservation or offence, then the use of them was intended before they were made. As if beds were contrived, that men might with greater ease compose themselves to rest, the use of them must however be presumed the last in the execution, yet to have been antecedently in the intention.

A modern philosopher † therefore, who thought it below a genius applying himself to the consideration of physical causes, to have recourse to final causes for a solution of them; finding himself press'd with the arguments we have mention'd in proof of an intending agent, would divert us from employing it by a false shew of modesty. He apprehends that it would be the highest degree of temerity in him to enquire into those ends, upon which the supreme being may be induc'd to act; and that we ought not to be guilty of so great arrogance as to suppose our selves in the secret of his designs.

This pretence, tho' it carries an appearance of that high veneration man's intellect owes to God, yet, as the true reason is frequently of all others most opposite to the pretended, was at the bottom really sounded in the regard he entertain'd, and was ambitious the rest of the world should entertain, for his own system.

^{* 1} Cor. 12. 14, 21.

For conceiving, that all the phænomena in nature might be accounted for from the mechanical laws of motion, he thought that to admit final causes, would be altogether unnecessary, and at the same time derogate from the glory of his invention.

But in answer to this plea of modesty, I shall take an occasion

to offer the two following considerations.

- THAT a discovery of the wise ends of God in the works of creation, so far as we are able to discover them, tends to fill our minds with the greater awe and admiration of him. We ought not, indeed, to imagine our selves capable of finding out the almighty to perfection, or qualify'd after our most curious and elaborate researches, to delineate all the uses, for which his creatures, in the different formation of them, are design'd: Yet where the uses of them in general, or of any of them, is visible and evident; uses, that cannot be suppos'd to proceed from chance or accident, but from a regular and form'd intention, so far we may not only, with all humility, ascribe their original to the eternal power and godhead, but are oblig'd to do it, by all the rules of piety, in honour to them.
- 2. Besides the reason of the thing to justify us in our disquisitions upon the subject of final causes, we have the example of holy men to authorize them; who were far, in their divine converfations with God on this head, from designing any thing injurious to his infinite wisdom and sovereignty. The royal prophet, in several passages of the Psalms, takes occasion to celebrate the praises of God, and to raise in himself and others a just admiration of his works, both from the admirable ends, for which they were design'd in the most conspicuous parts of them, and that have the most general influence, as the sun, moon, and stars, the earth. and the seas, and, in particular, from the wonderful structure of a human body. And in the book of Job, to which I may add that of the wisdom of Solomon, tho' consider'd only as a human composition, there are some of the noblest strains of devotion, that could ever enter into the heart of man, occasion'd by the like reflections.

It will be to no purpose to say, that the case of mere philosophers in judging concerning the ends of God, in the things he has made, is very different from that of men, who write by divine inspiration; because those very uses in the works of God, which the inspired penmen have observed, are the same, which the light of reason and natural principles of philosophy, have most generally and evidently discovered.

CHAP.



CHAP. IX.

The proof of a God from the idea of a being, that has all possible perfection.

EARNED men *, who have not thought fit to infift on this proof, but wav'd the profecution of it, as being of too nice, and subtle a contexture, yet have allow'd it to be of great weight, and, for any thing they know, certainly conclusive. Dr. Cudworth †, in his intellectual system, has indeed consider'd more particularly what may be said against this proof and for it; and having impartially stated the arguments on both sides, determines in the sequel for its validity, and upon reasons which appear to be very well founded. Yet in the progress of his enquirie upon this article ‡, he expresses himself sometimes after a more dissident manner, and infinuates, that the proof of the existence of God, from the idea of a being, who has all possible perfection, cannot

* Man accustom'd to meditate on metaphysical truths, and to trace up things to their first principles, may know the Deity, by its idea. And I own, that's a sure way to arrive at the source of all truth. But the more direct and short that way is, the more difficult and unpassable it is for the generality of mankind, who depend on their senses and imagination. Archbishop of Cambray's demonstration of the existence of God, p. 2.

The arguments drawn from hence, (the idea of God) tho' in themselves perhaps certain, to several persons convincing, and not to be disproved by any, do not fit every understanding, nor have that regular, uniform face of truth, which takes at first sight, are

The arguments drawn from hence, (the idea of God) tho' in themselves perhaps certain, to several persons convincing, and not to be disprov'd by any, do not fit every understanding, nor have that regular, uniform face of truth, which takes at first sight, as well as pleases after farther examination. Only thus much I shall alledge in their defence, that the greatest and commonest objection made against this kind of proof, is very ill grounded.

It is not true, that whatever is possible, or whatever we have any idea of, for that reafon actually is; and therefore 'tis urg'd that the actual existence of a God, does by no
means follow from the possibility or conception of such a being. But then it is answer'd,
that the conclusion may and does hold in this case, and in no other case whatever, because conception supposes possibility, and possibility a correspondent power; and a power
of existing, when apply'd to God, must necessarily infer actual existence. But the unusual niceness of such a proof as this being likely to raise some prejudice against it, I
shall wave the prosecution of it. Bishop Gastrel's certainty and necessity of religion in general, p. 23, 24.

I do not mean to say positively, that the argument drawn from our including self-existence in the idea of God, or our comprehending it in the definition or notion we frame of him, is wholly inconclusive or ineffectual to prove his actual existence; possibly by a very nice and accurate deduction, it may be found to be a very satisfactory proof. But that it is not a clear and obvious demonstration, fitted to convince and put the atheist to silence, appears from the endless disputes maintain'd by learned men concerning it, without being able to satisfy each other, on either side of the question. Dr. Clark's demonstration of the being and attributes of God, p. 37, 38.

+ P. 721.

* However it is not very probable, that many atheists will be convinc'd thereby, but that they will rather be ready to say, this is no probation at all of a Deity, but only an affirmation of the thing in dispute, and a mere begging of the question, that therefore God is, because he is, or cannot but be. Ib. p. 724.

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be expected to have any great or general effect towards the conviction of unbelievers.

But why are we afraid of employing an argument in proof of a God, which we really believe to be good in itself? If some unbelievers will not examine or attend to the force of this argument, we may possibly find others in a better disposition; or if, after all, there are a great number of men atheistically inclin'd, who are not well capable of comprehending it, others may be more capable. Atheism does not always proceed, tho' generally it does, from want of a good capacity; reasons of vanity or discontent, a sceptical temper, a strong, lively, and copious imagination, which furnishes a man with specious appearances of probability for every thing, have often a great influence towards perverting his judgment; which yet do not render him altogether incorrigible, when the light of truth is clearly display'd before him. Were it a rule to us to make use of no arguments, but what every man has either liberty of mind to consider, or strength of mind distinctly to conceive, we must argue in a narrow compass indeed, and upon

very few principles.

But to speak to the argument itself; every man of common apprehension is capable of understanding what we mean, when we use the term persection, and of forming in his mind, the idea of a being that has all the perfection, any being can have. There is no manner of difficulty, or repugnancy to the natural order of our ideas, in conceiving, that what may possibly be, may be. There is no truth in the world, whereof the mind has a more clear, certain, and distinct perception. The question is, whether the bare idea of such a being, does really and necessarily infer his existence? That it does infer his existence, we argue after this manner: Since the mind has not a power of creating its own object, we can have no idea of any thing, but what has either an actual, or at least a possible existence; a being that has all the perfection, any being is capable of, cannot have any future possible existence, for that would evidently destroy two of the primary attributes included in the idea of it, independency and self-existence. Neither for the same reason could it ever have had in any time past a possible existence; and therefore must either actually exist, or else could never have had, nor ever can have any possibility of existing.

Now how come we by the idea of that which neither is, nor, if it be not, can ever possibly have a being? If we consider the powers of our mind; tho' we are capable of forming ideas, concerning a great many things, that do not really exist, and may never have any existence hereafter; yet we are not able to form an idea of any one thing, which in the nature of it implies a contra-

diction,

diction, or a direct repugnancy to existence. And yet if according to our idea of a being, that has all possible perfection, such a being does not actually exist, it implies a plain contradiction, to suppose that it ever should exist, or could ever have existed; and consequently in this particular case, the mind of man will have a greater power of creating its object, than the divine mind itself, whose ideas must be supposed to have some objective reality, or at least cannot possibly extend to represent such things, as are in the nature of them contradictory, and impossible.

LET us try and exert all the force of our intellectual powers; let us excite in our minds the most extravagant and chimerical images, and then let us discover, if we can, any one of them, that has not some exemplary cause, simple or compounded, or which implies in it a direct, and visible repugnancy to existence. I am fatisfy'd, that a mind impregnated with the most lively and fertile imagination, can never produce any such idea. What account then can be given concerning the origin of an idea, one of the most clear and distinct of all others, which yet has no real foundation, nor can possibly have any? Can it be suppos'd, if the supposition may be made with reverence, that what we call the most perfect being, should be the only chimera in the intellectual system; or that we should without any possible foundation, have a power of creating the idea of a being endow'd with all the perfection, any being can have, and yet are not able to form, at the same time, the most impersect or irregular idea, without some exemplary object or other? Is it not more reasonable to conclude, that an idea which exhibits the most perfect being possible to the mind, has the most solid, the most certain, and real foundation without the mind; and that the truth of the object, should be necessarily imply'd and contain'd in that of the subject.

The sum of what has been here said, is this, that whatever else we may conceive possible, tho' it does not for that reason actually exist, yet when the mind forms to itself the idea of a being, that has all possible perfection, the conception of such a being necessarily infers the actual existence of it; because the power of existing hereafter, or of having existed in time, when apply'd to such a being, destroys the nature, and is wholly inconsistent with the idea of it; or else it must be pretended, that the mind of man has a power of making its own object, a power superior to that of the creator himself, not only out of nothing, but out of that which

can have no possibility of being.

But can we then have no idea of any being, but what either actually exists, or will exist one time or other? We do not say so; the mind of man is a continual spring of invention, and by the help

help and power of his imagination forms to itself a thousand extravagant suppositions of things, that never were, or will be, and sometimes perhaps carries him even into new worlds, compos'd of realities and fictions. But still the imagination must have some materials to work with, and which furnish the subject of our ideas by way of allusion to things that really exist, or composition out of them, and which imply at least no necessary repugnance to existence; as the idea of a being, which has all possible perfection evidently does, if such a being do not actually exist. Besides, there is this wide difference between the idea of a most perfect being, and any chimerical idea, of a golden mountain, for instance, which the mind is capable of forming; that in the latter case, we can easily separate the idea from the actual existence of the thing; nay, we can scarce possibly suppose them in fact united; but when we try to separate the idea of a being, that has all the perfection, whereof any being is capable from the actual existence of it, we attempt an absolute impossibility, and what upon our own supposition, is altogether inconsistent.

And this consideration enables us to obviate what may be farther said to invalidate the present argument; that it extends only to the nominal idea * of a most perfect being, but does not with an evidence sufficiently clear, discover to us the necessary connection, between the idea of such a being, and the necessary of its actual existence. Now whatever soundation there may be for the distinction of a nominal idea on other accounts; yet there can be no pretence for it here, the idea being inseparably connected with the actual existence of its object, and not possibly capable of being remov'd from it. Tho' the actual existence therefore of other things does not follow from the possibility of their existing; yet to separate the idea of a most perfect being, from that of actual existence, is to suppose a being to be self-existent, and not self-existent, to have all possible perfection, and not to have all

possible perfection, at the same time.

THOSE very persons who do not allow, that this argument directly concludes for the existence of God, yet will grant, it evidently proves the possibility of his existing; or that it implies no repugnancy in the nature of things, but that the being we call God, and to whom we attribute all persections possible, might have existed: We argue, on the other hand, that if this idea have any exemplary cause, and without some exemplary cause, we can have no idea, the being which is here granted possible, must eternally have existed; otherways he never could have existed; for a possi-

^{*} Dr. Clark's Demonstr. p. 38.

ble or contingent existence destroys the very nature and foundation of such an idea.

YET I am sensible many learned men, and of great penetration, do not admit the validity of this proof; and even some of those, who have produc'd arguments for it, which they have been unable to give any clear, or obvious solutions to. But certainly, 'tis very reasonable to employ such arguments in proof of any thing, as can be propos'd with perspicuity, or are not capable of being disprov'd. Tho', after all, perhaps, it is not the obscurity, but the plainness and simplicity of this argument, from the idea of God, that renders some persons less dispos'd to yield their assent to it. The proof of a God having been for a long time commonly made out by a gradual and learned deduction of consequences, men were surpriz'd to find it at last deduc'd to a simple proposition or two, and less forward to believe it clearly included in them.

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СнАР. Х.

Whether the existence of God may be provid from general consent?

TT has been commonly urg'd, that fince there is no affignable period of time, no known community, or nation of men in the world, wherein the belief of a God has not been universally profess'd; but persons of the most different capacities, tempers, and interests, have indifferently agreed in such a belief, therefore his being may very justly be concluded from it. For tho' men may be deceiv'd, in the judgment they make, how general soever, concerning things, which are the objects of sense and imagination; yet if in their way of reasoning upon any subject, a universal error should spread itself over their minds, and they should all concur in drawing a false conclusion; or if there be no truth in the appearance of a thing, whereof there is the most evident, for otherways how could it be the most universal perception in the mind, then there is an end of all reasoning among men. For why should any one be oblig'd to submit to our way of arguing in any case, if our faculties are so contriv'd, as to deceive us in so very plain a case, that there is no man really capable of denying, or with-holding his assent to it? Or if there have been some persons, who pretended to dissent from the common belief, their pretence was merely fictitious,

fictitious, not proceeding from any reasonable or internal conviction in their own minds, concerning the falshood of this belief, but from some sinister motive of vanity, affectation, or perhaps an implacable rage occasion'd by disappointment, and stimulated by the desire of revenge: Neither, if it should be granted, that there are in fact speculative atheists, would the concession destroy the universality of this belief, because they may be consider'd either as under some great disorder of mind, or such violent prejudices, as may hinder them from attending to the proofs, upon which it is evidently sounded, whenever men are in a temper to examine them with attention.

It is question'd farther, what can be the cause, if it be erroneous, of so universal a consent? A consent, not arising from the reports of sense, like that, upon which the sun and moon are suppos'd not to be much greater in themselves, than in their appearance to the eye, but from the common principles of reason. Where there is a general agreement in the perception, one would think, there should be an uniformity in the appearance answerable to it. To which it is added, that the arguments, whereby we prove the existence of God, and which are to be look'd upon as the common foundation of this assent, have been, in a manner, among all people, and in all ages, the same; but so convincing withal, that they could never be disprov'd, as certain errors have been at length, which yet for some time spread themselves very wide, and generally obtain'd.

HERE is the substance of those arguments, upon which men would infer the existence of God from general consent. And 'tis certain, they clearly prove, that this principle, out of respect to the common sense and reason of mankind, must be admitted at least, in a very high degree probable; but whether they sufficiently demonstrate the truth of it, has been much doubted; because they feem only to conclude with respect to such persons, as have apply'd themselves to reason distinctly upon the existence of God, and not with respect to those, who have believ'd it implicitly, and without enquiring into the grounds or reasons of it. then, the consent of mankind in the belief of a God universal, yet it will not follow, as was urg'd in the first place, that if there be no God, men are therefore under one universal delusion or mistake in their way of reasoning, and that there is an end of all reasoning at once; because a great number of those, if not a far greater number, who concur in this principle, do not assent to it, from any explicit principles of reason, but from other accidental and foreign motives. It is probable there may be an infinite number of ignorant people, who never so much as once examin'd in

any distinct manner, the reasons of this persuasion; and our belief of any thing, without examination, how true or reasonable soever in itself, yet cannot be call'd a reasonable belief; and consequently we can draw no arguments in prejudice to the common use of reason among men from it.

As to the question, concerning the particular causes of this belief, and how it came to be so universal, if not founded in evident and incontestable reasons, it is farther said, that, besides the prejudice of education, and the authority of those, under whose direction the understandings of men are first open'd or cultivated, one general, and, of all others, the most powerful cause, and the most apt to bribe the judgment, may be affign'd, for the universality of this belief, and that is, interest. For what a miserable state of things should we be in, were there no God to preside in the government, or to rectify the disorders of this world. When we observe, to say nothing of the other calamities and vexations of human life, the unequal events in it to mankind; when we see, on one hand, the triumphs of folly and injustice, and the oppression of virtue and innocence, on the other; who, without the belief of a God, and the natural consequences of it, could have the patience one moment to breath the air of so corrupt a world? Yet the evils which can neither be prevented nor redress'd in this life, are not the only evils, which the atheist has to fear. tho' 'tis generally suppos'd upon the principles of atheism, that the soul dies with the body, or, upon the dissolution of it, vanishes as the fost air *; nevertheless if thought be nothing, but the result of matter and motion, how is it possible for the atheist to know, but that the subtle particles of matter, which now discharge the functions of thought in him, may, when the groffer parts of his body are dissolv'd, still subsist, and operate in some proper vehicle? What should hinder us, I say, from believing, that the corpuscles which now form our thoughts in the brain, may form them in some other system, and be capable of pain or suffering from the force of other agents acting upon it? And if this be admitted, none certainly have greater reason to fear the power of devils, than those who deny the being of God.

IF in a state, where the best rules of life are prescrib'd, and ordinarily good laws obtain for the administration of civil government, there is so much violence and disorder, what has the atheist to hope, when he passes into a state, where, for any thing he knows, there is neither moral nor civil law of any standing obligation, but a brutal and arbitrary force every where reigns; or, in the language of the book of wisdom, where strength is the only law of justice, and that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth *.

It is impossible that a man, who does not believe a God, can be secure from any natural principles, that his soul shall not survive his body, or that death is any more than a state of separation, which does not destroy the soul, but only puts an end to the communication betwixt it and the body. But it does not therefore sollow, that it may not have a communication with other bodies, or other beings, to the impressions whereof it may be more sensible, than to any thing capable of acting upon it in this world.

We have no certain arguments then upon the principles of atheism, against a suture state, or for the extinction of thought after death: And if we shall think in another state, what assurance can we have, that the same passions will not reign in it, and even fortify'd perhaps with greater power and malice, than in this world? Why should the earth be thought the only scene of violence and cruelty, and wherein they are exercis'd by intelligent beings? The atheist certainly, who hopes to find a secure retreat in death, has yet, upon this consideration, greater cause to be afraid of dying, than he, who believes a just, wise, and a good God, and commits bimself to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator.

HFRE then, say they, who oppose the argument for the existence of God, from universal consent, we are able to assign a cause for such consent of the most universal influence; but which does not so much prove, that God really exists, as that it is for the happiness of mankind in common, and of every man who duly consults his own happiness, in particular, that he should exist.

THE force of inclination and interest, towards corrupting the judgment of men in other cases, is very visible: Every man that consults himself upon this article, will discover that the reflection I here make, however reproachful to human nature, is not without grounds; we sometimes observe, even in publick societies, that the most absurd doctrines, are not only in general, and almost universally assented to, but very clear truths of morality, and maxims of civil justice openly exploded, and decry'd.

If it be faid, notwithstanding the great corruption among men in this respect, there are still some persons, who preserve themselves from the general contagion, and retain a due force and liberty of mind; and who, without any partial or sinister regards, judge of things by the pure light and principles of reason; I an-

* Wifd. 2. 2.

fwer,

fwer, that my design is to shew, not that interest is the only cause of inducing the general belief of a God; but that it may contribute very much towards it among other causes; whereby men may be differently affected, according to their different tempers, or a different method of education; and that consequently, it does not seem necessary, that the common consent of mankind in the belief of a God, should proceed from one common principle of reason, but from one or more of those causes.

Whereas it was urg'd in the last place, that the arguments to prove the existence of God, and from which the universal consent of mankind in the belief of it is supposed to arise, have been in a manner at all times the same, and never yet capable, like several errors, which have spread themselves very wide, of being disprov'd; those, who are not very much inclin'd to assent to this way of arguing, will reply, that it does not follow, but that a very probable opinion, which has never been disprov'd, may notwithstanding some time, or upon one occasion or other be disprov'd: So that, to conclude this enquiry, instead of urging the general consent of mankind in direct proof of a deity, it should rather perhaps be faid, that the most penetrating and wisest of men, who have employ'd their thoughts concerning the nature and origin of things, ever agreed in acknowledging the being of God, therefore 'tis reasonable to believe there is a God; tho, after all, this is only a remote and consequential proof of his existence, which previously supposes the other proofs of it well-founded; and seems indeed to owe all its force and evidence to them.



CHAP. XI.

Whether we have any innate idea of God?

of man, we should have nothing to do towards rendring him sensible of such an impression, but to make him attend to it. For tho' it does not necessarily follow, as we have observ'd before, that upon supposition of innate ideas, they should actually at all times appear in their full light and evidence; yet whenever the exemplary cause of them is presented to the mind, they will naturally, and of course, open themselves in it. The difficulty then lies in proving, that there are really, and in fact, any such ideas. For if, say they, who oppose all innate ideas, we consider the progress

gress which the understanding makes in the discovery and knowledge of things, we shall find that we have no ideas of any thing, but from the report of the senses, or by occasion of certain hints and images, which arise from them. The most abstract and universal terms have, with them, a sensible foundation, in one subject or other, out of which they are form'd. The very names of virtue and vice convey such notices to the mind, as they think, have a very great resemblance to the objects of sense, and are occasionally at least produc'd by them. For what is the idea of virtue *, but the idea of order, or of something made up, and connected after a uniform and beautiful manner, taken from the observations, we make on the regular structure of any natural or artificial work, and the pleasure, wherewith the regularity of it is apt to affect the mind. What does vice again import but confusion and disorder, attended with a certain deformity ungrateful to the perception; as when we see any thing out of its proper place or function, any member of the body, for instance, dislocated or mortify'd, the mind naturally feels a sensation disagreeable and uneasy to it. From the like resemblance, they suppose, that the origin of all our other ideas, how abstract soever, may be accounted for; and if we can have no idea, but from such an original, then they conclude, we cannot properly have any innate ideas.

This is not a place to examine the question distinctly, whether there be any innate ideas, of any kind whatever, in the mind of man; neither does it seem of any great importance in theology, to come to a determination about this question; because all the ends of religion, however we determine it, are equally preserv'd; it is the same thing, as to the duties of love and obedience to God, whether he discover himself to us, by an immediate impression, or by the mediation of the senses, and in consequence of those admirable laws of union, which he has established between the body and the soul; yet so far I may adventure to say, that tho' the senses should by virtue of those laws, be at present the occasional cause of all our ideas, this is not owing to any natural, or indeed possible connection in the reason of the thing, between our senses and our ideas, but merely to the positive will of God;

who

^{*} The idea of virtue, if it have any sensible foundation, seems rather to arise from the idea of order, than, according to Mr. Lock, of praise or dispraise. For neither of these can be the primary, but only the consequential rule of it. Nay, this rule is often in each respect false, virtue is many times decry'd, and vice applauded; tho', admitting it in both respects a true rule, it does not make, but antecedently suppose the difference between virtue and vice.

who may therefore, if he pleases, by one general law *, impress an idea of his existence, in the minds of all men. For if our ideas may arise by occasion of a cause, which has no proper efficiency to produce them, and wherewith they cannot possibly have any immediate communication, why may not God, without such occasional cause, immediately produce in the mind any idea?

THE possibility of the thing cannot be disputed; and if God in any case should employ a power to this end, there is the greatest probability that he should do it, in order to a more universal, more clear and certain establishment of that fundamental article of all religion, and the ground of all homage and obedience to him,

his own existence.

But because 'tis uncertain, whether God has in fact taken this method of making himself known to his creatures, and of setting such a signature of his divinity upon them, as might be clearly visible to every one of them, I have chosen to propose this argument concerning the innate idea of him, rather in a problematical, than in a decisive manner.

IF it be pretended, after all, that the question, whether there be any innate idea of God, is altogether groundless, because all persons are not conscious to themselves of such an idea; I answer, it does not follow from our granting any idea to be innate, that it can never therefore be obscur'd or defac'd, or that men must always be suppos'd to attend actually to it. For why may not an idea, which we receive by immediate impression, as well lie dormant in the memory, or be in time wholly extinct, as an idea, which we receive by occasion of the senses; since the mind cannot distinctly take in all its objects at once, or through some accidental desect, and perhaps in certain obdurate persons, a judicial blindness, may lose the remembrance of such ideas, which it has formerly been conscious of.

SHOULD it be ask'd farther, what is the precise time when this idea is impress'd on the mind, and begins to disclose itself; this, we say, is only a question as to a circumstance of the thing, which does not affect the truth or probability of the thing itself. We may as pertinently ask, what is the precise time of our age, when first we begin to distinguish between good and evil, or are accountable as moral agents, for our actions. Possibly there may be no determinate period in either case, but what depends on our

different

^{*} It is the more reasonable to believe such an impression, if what Mr. Lock says be true, "that we have the knowledge of all things without us, except only of God, by our senses.

different capacities, or certain laws and conditions of human nature, which it does not concern us to know; tho' what has been here observ'd, is not intended so much to prove, that we have any innate idea of God, as to shew, that the opinion of those, who contend for such an idea, cannot be easily resuted by the common arguments produc'd against it.



SPECU-



SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK I. Of the Existence and Attributes of GOD.

*ଅଭାବସା*ର୍ଜ୍ଞ <mark>ପ୍ରପ୍ରପତ୍ର ପ୍ରପତ୍ର ହେଉଅଟି ନ</mark>ମ୍ପର ପ୍ରପତ୍ର ପ୍ରପତ୍ର ପ୍ରପତ୍ର ପ୍ରପତ୍ର ପ୍ରପତ୍ର ହେଉଥିବା ପ୍ରପତ୍ର ପ୍ରପତ୍ର ପ୍ରପତ

PART II. Of the Attributes of G O D.

CHAP. I. Of the divine attributes in general.

Aving prov'd, that there is an all perfect being, the cause of all other beings, and of every perfection, wherewith they are endow'd, it remains to be consider'd, what those attributes are in particular, which are contain'd in the idea of such a being, or can be clearly conceiv'd to belong to him. But before we proceed to a distinct enumeration of those attributes, it may be proper to premise, that we are not

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to suppose our selves capable, after the strictest enquiry and application, of forming adequate ideas concerning them; this being, in the nature of it, impossible, from the infinite disproportion between the faculty and the object. But we may notwithstanding have clear and distinct ideas of many things, whereof our minds cannot fully take in the whole measure and extent. As a man may distinctly conceive what we mean by a triangle, without being able to discover all the relations and properties of it, or to solve all the difficulties, that consequently may arise from those properties of it, which he knows already, and perhaps can demonstrate to others.

When we have once established a truth upon certain and undeniable principles, it still remains a truth, how strong and specious soever the objections may appear, which are brought against it. There is not a more clear and incontestable truth in the world, than that something has been from all eternity; there is no reasoning with any person who will deny this; for it is plain, as the reason of man can make any thing, that if there had not been something eternally, there never could have been any thing: And yet there are difficulties in the idea of eternity, which the wit of man perhaps will never be able persectly to account for or remove. But these difficulties arising from the defect of our capacities, and the improper manner of our apprehending what is eternal by way of successive duration, are accidental to the nature of the thing itself, and by no means to be admitted against the acknowledged truth and certainty of it.

The like rule is to be observed with respect to all the divine attributes; we cannot find any of them out to perfection; nay, the nearer we endeavour to approach them, the more inaccessible they appear, and the farther we always apprehend our selves distant from them. But we ought not for that reason to give over our disquisitions after them; since the pleasure and advantage wherewith they are rewarded, do more than compensate for all the pains of our attention and researches. This made holy Job, under the greatest conslicts of mind and bodily sufferings, express so strong a desire still of pursuing his enquiries concerning the divine nature and perfections; surely I would speak to the almighty; and I desire to reason with God.

WHAT I would farther premise in general, concerning the divine attributes, is, that they are not to be consider'd as having really any separate or distinct subsistence in the divine nature, but only in our manner of conceiving them, according to their different, and external operations. Thus, when God punishes, we consider his act as an act of justice; when he pardons, as an act

of

of mercy; and when he promises, as an act of goodness. And yet we are not to consider his justice, mercy, or goodness, as showing from so many principles really distinct in him, but from one pure, simple, and undivided principle. To illustrate which by a sensible, tho, for that reason, a very inadequate allusion, it may be said, that the same heat of the sun has a power of softening or melting certain bodies, while it hardens others, or that the same light according to the different contexture or site of the object, represents different colours, and in great variety, to the eye. Allowing for the inequality of such comparisons, the several attributes of God are one individual essence, operating after a different manner, according to the different nature or circumstances of the subject, upon which they operate.

In our selves, because we are limited creatures, and compounded of parts, there are indeed certain powers and faculties really distinct from one another, and from our own essence; so that what we do, admits of a separate consideration from what we are. The motion of the hand is really distinct from the reasoning powers of the mind, and it is not essential to our being, but merely accidental to the better or more commodious state of it, that the hand should move upon such and such particular occasions. But in God there can be no inherent powers or faculties formally distinct from one another, or from himself; to suppose such a distinction, would be to destroy the perfect simplicity and unity of his nature, and infer a sort of composition in it, which, for reasons that need not be repeated, an all perfect being must be supposed absolutely incapable of.

But does not the mind then err, and impose upon us by conceiving distinct attributes in God, which yet are not really distinct? And consequently, when we see, or rather, when we believe, that we see these attributes, we, in truth, see nothing, but only sictions and creatures of our own imagination. To this it is answer'd, that things may be virtually distinguish'd, which have a power of producing distinct effects, or which contain in them a principle of distinct actions; tho' that principle, consider'd subjectively, be one, and numerically the same. The ideas therefore in our mind concerning several distinct attributes of God, tho' not formally contain'd in the subject, have at least an objective reality in that diversity of his operations, and are evidently founded in distinct and sensible effects.

Now since the mind cannot clearly or distinctly see any thing, but what has some real foundation, where there is matter for clear and distinct conceptions in it, there must be eminently and virtually, tho' 'tis not necessary there should be so in fact, some real distinction

distinction in the cause from which those conceptions arise. But that there is such a distinction in the divine attributes, appears not only from our having distinct ideas of them, but from our being capable of defining them separately, and in distinct terms.

HE indeed, who conceives what is entirely one and the same act in God, to be so many different acts, conceives a plain falsity. But he who conceives what is entirely one and the same act in God objectively, or, if I may so speak, eventually, and in relation to something external to God, conceives what is true, tho' after a very imperfect and unequal manner. In short, when we define the divine attributes, our definition of them, is not to be understood absolutely or simply concerning the divine esfence; for in that respect the justice, mercy, and goodness of God, are the same act; but relatively, as his action is diversify'd on several subjects, and receives a different denomination from them, or whereby we apprehend him discovering his nature to us, in some new, and different light. Thus, when we conceive the justice of God to be an attribute really distinct from his mercy or goodness, our faculties do not deceive us; because tho' these attributes are individually the same in their principle, yet in the diversity of operations slowing from that principle, they are truly understood and defin'd, as so many different attributes.

I have here consider'd such attributes of God as are essential to him, and which, for that reason, we may with greater facility conceive to be individually the same with his essence, and with one another. But it may be farther question'd, whether, without derogating from the divine perfections, God has not a power of producing in himself certain internal acts, which may be attributed to

him, tho' they are not essential to his nature.

THE Socinians, in order to account for the production and character of the Holy Ghost, as a virtue or power of the divine effence, but whom they will not allow to be essentially God, suppose there may be certain internal operations of the divine nature really distinct from the essence of it. And they found this notion upon the receiv'd doctrine of God's decrees, and the free determination of his will, in reference to the conduct he has prescrib'd to himself towards his creatures. For if, say they, God may decree or do any thing, which he might not have decreed or done, then his decree or action is not essential to him, but an accidental essect of his will. * For that is properly an accident,

which

^{*} Si enim liberà voluntate deus præditus est, potest aliquid apud se statuere, quod poterat etiam non statuere. Actus ergo ille decernendi, in ipso existens accidens erit. Siquidem accidens est id omne, quod ita alicui inest, ut possit etiam abesse citra subjecti corruptionem. Crellius de Dea & attrib. c. 32. p. 340.

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which may either adhere, or be wanting to its subject, without destroying the nature of it. But if God be not arbitrary in his decrees, especially in his decrees of mercy and goodness, for those of justice admit of a distinct consideration; then in creating the world and redeeming mankind, he did not act by choice, or according to the scriptures, from a principle of free grace, but by an absolute and inevitable necessity.

Now it must be granted, tho' this argument does not conclude according to the use which the Socinians would make of it, against the divinity of the Holy Ghost, consider'd as a person, personal actions in scripture being most expressly attributed to him; yet it does not feem easy, on other accounts, to give a clear and satisffactory answer to this way of reasoning. Those who have thought themselves concern'd to expose the error of it, in honour to the perfection and immutability of the divine nature, have rather perhaps undertaken an unnecessary work, than succeeded well in Accidents, which add to the perfection of their subject, are indeed incompatible with the idea of a being infinitely perfect; but then we say, the decrees of God are not perfective of his nature or happiness, but only the occasional means of communicating that happiness or those perfections in a certain measure to his creatures, which are incapable of any diminution or increase in himself; neither can the decrees of God, tho' we should not suppose them the same with his essence, argue the least change or mutability in him; because his nature does not hereby acquire any new perfection, but only exerts a perfection, that of liberty or free choice, which it was eternally the subject of. should be farther objected, that to suppose any action in God, which is not absolutely essential to him, is to destroy the perfect simplicity of his nature. To this again it is faid, that the action of a subject, and out of which it arises as its proper and fole cause, does by no means infer composition in such a subject, or add any new power, much less any power that is foreign to it; but is only an occasion of manifesting outwardly a power, which it was essentially invested with before.

YET I am sensible, in answer to what is advanc'd by those, who contend for the freedom of the divine decrees, and maintain that God is altogether arbitrary in them, they who follow the schoolmen distinguish between the * relation, which his decrees have to the external object of them, and the principle or subject from

which

^{*} Decretum, quatenus in Deo, est necessarium sive ipsa essentia Dei actuosa, (ut loquuntur;) sed quatenus varia objecta respicit, sive quatenus relationem habet ad creaturas, & ratione termini ad extra, est liberum. Fogg. theol. specul. p. 54.

which they flow. In the former respect, they allow them to be free, in the latter suppose them necessary. But this seems a distinction rather design'd to amuse, than to convey any real light to the mind. For since no decree of God can be conceiv'd, but in relation to some object, the nature of the decree must be agreeable to that relation. To suppose God free in determining such a thing shall be, and that, notwithstanding, this determination is necessary with respect to himself, or the essential operations of his own mind, is to suppose, that he may be at the same time, and in the same respect, both a free, and a necessary agent.

Having thought proper, by the way, to make these general reflections, concerning the divine attributes, I shall now proceed to consider them more particularly, according to the common distribution of them, under the heads of incommunicable and communicable attributes; observing under the latter head, that other distinction between the attributes, which are term'd vital, and those

which we call moral.

CHAP. II.

Of the incommunicable attributes of God: And, first, Of his simplicity.

BY this attribute I understand, that God is a most pure and spiritual being, free from all composition of parts, and in whom there can be no possible combination of any separate or distinct powers. What is here said concerning the simplicity of God, is agreeable to the doctrine of our church in her first article, which I shall therefore follow in my explication of this attribute, and whereby God is defin'd, a being without body, without parts, or passions.

1. WITHOUT BODT. I have already prov'd the necessity of distinguishing between thinking and corporeal beings, as importing in their own nature altogether separate and distinct ideas. God, consider'd as a body; cannot therefore be intelligent: And the design of the article, I humbly conceive, is not to shew that God is incapable in any sense of acting upon body; but that the essential perfections of his nature can neither result from any combination of material parts, nor any composition of body and mind acting in concert together: For this general reason, that all compound-

ing parts, whether of the same, or a different nature, must be supposed previous, both in order of nature and time, to the thing compounded; which supposition, I say, if body either constitute the divine nature, or enter into the constitution of it, would evidently destroy the primary ideas of God, those of independency and self-existence.

Besides, if God be corporeal, his body either is of a finite, or of an infinite extent; if only of a finite extent, he is a limited being, and particularly in one of the most glorious persections, which we attribute to the divine nature, that of power. For whatever disputes may arise concerning the action of spiritual beings, upon distant objects, yet it will be acknowledged, that bodies cannot of themselves operate upon one another, but by contact; which would exempt all beings, except those, wherewith the corporeal deity is surrounded and circumscribed, at least from his immediate action. But if, on the other hand, God be corporeal, and have a body of infinite extent, then, according to the doctrine of Spinosa, which we have already observed the inconsistency of, the substance not only of every particular human body, but of every other particular being in the material world, will be the pro-

per and individual substance of God.

NEITHER, for this farther reason, can the perfections of the divine nature be suppos'd to result from any possible antecedent combination of matter and mind; that such a combination must either have been form'd, by accident, or by design, or from some absolute necessity in the nature of the thing. To suppose a union of matter and mind in God, by accident, directly implies some cause of that accident, something previous to what constitutes the nature of God; and who is not therefore in respect of such a subsoftence, a necessary, but a contingent being. To suppose the union of matter and mind in God to have been the effect of defign, is, in the consequence equally irrational, and implies, that God acted before he was properly and perfectly God. To suppose, lastly, that there was an absolute necessity in the nature of the thing, for a union of matter and mind in God, is to suppose a necessity without any manner of proof, and whereof there is not the least appearance of reason or probability; but which still involves us in this clear contradiction, that God, consider'd properly as God, and in a state of perfection, would depend as to his existence on two distinct principles concurring towards it, and, in the natural order of our ideas, antecedent, by way of causality, to it.

2. WITHOUT PARTS. If God be incorporeal, it is a necessary confequence, that he is without parts; for the proper notion we have

of body, and which distinguishes it from immaterial substance, is, that it is extended so as to have one part bounding upon another, and yet separable from every other part; and therefore the same arguments, which prove the incorporeity of God, prove him, by direct implication, not to confift of parts. It is, notwithstanding, to be presum'd, that the church in this article had some particular reason for distinguishing between body and parts; probably, to expose the error of the Anthropomorphites wherewith ignorant people are still too apt to be impos'd upon, in a stronger If what consists of parts of the same kind, has something evidently imperfect in it, those parts being separately considerd less perfect, than the whole, and really * separable from one another, and not convertible either with the whole, or with one another, much more will the imperfection of fuch a being appear from the variety of organical parts, and the many subordinate modifications still pre-requir'd to compose them.

We must seek then for some other cause, why the ancient philosophers so generally held the deity corporeal, than from the principles of philosophy. I have observed before, that this error was favourable to Polytheism, and serves to give us the best account of its origin. The great wonder is, that no less an advocate for the christian faith, than Tertullian †, should have asserted the corporeity of God in so express terms. And tho' St. Augustin endeavours to excuse him, in saying, that by body he meant no more than substance in general; yet this apology does not seem to arise so much from any clear or solid soundation, as from the candour

and piety of that good father.

When bodily parts therefore are attributed to God, as they frequently are both in facred writ, and our common manner of speaking, we are to understand what is said, not in a strict and proper sense, but by way of allusion to the parts of a human body; the impersection of our faculties at present, being such, that we are forc'd to make use of sensible images and representations to shadow out to us spiritual objects, and that we may express our conceptions of them with greater clearness and facility to others. In condescension to this general desect of human nature, God is pleas'd to speak of his attributes and operations to us, after the

manner

^{*} T. Aquinas argues much to this effect in so clear a manner, that I shall transcribe his words. Omne compositum est aliquid quod non convenit alicui suarum partium, & quidem in totis dissimilium partium manifestum est. Nulla enim partium bominis est homo. Neque aliqua partium pedis est pes. In toto verò similium partium licèt aliquid quod dicitur de toto, dicatur de parte; sicut pars aëris est aër, & aqua aquæ; aliquid tamen dicitur de toto, quod non convenit alicui partium; non enim si tota aqua est bicubita, & pars ejus. Sic igitur in omni composito est aliquid, quod non est ipsum. Prima pars summ. quæst. 3. art. 7.

† Lib. adversus Praxeam.

manner of men. Thus to give us a more lively and strong idea of his knowledge, he is represented as having eyes; of his power, as having hands; and of his sovereignty, as sitting upon a throne, where thousands of thousands stand before him; and ten thousand times ten thousand minister unto him. Naked truth being too bright a form for us to contemplate, these metaphorical expressions have a natural aptitude in them to forward our conceptions of the things, which they stand for so many sensible images of.

3. WITHOUT PASSIONS. Divines are not so generally agreed in explaining this branch of the article, as in their explications of the That passion, as it denotes, according to two former branches. the proper import of the word, a state of suffering, and any painful or uneasy sensation, cannot be attributed to God, is indeed universally acknowledg'd; but those, who maintain that the passions, improperly therefore so call'd, may be consider'd in a more abstracted and metaphysical sense, as denoting purely certain regular motions of the will, without any real perturbation of mind; these men, I say, are of opinion, that passions, under such an acceptation, may be attributed to God, without derogating from the perfection of his nature. They distinguish therefore in every human passion, between the act of the soul and the commotion of the animal spirits, which in consequence of the union between the body and the foul, ordinarily attends it. But there being no fuch union in God, there cannnot be for that reason any such consequence of it; and therefore indeed even in man, that sensible disorder, which is observ'd so naturally to accompany his passion, is not to be consider'd as properly and simply a passion in itself, but rather as an accidental occasion of discovering the inward state and temper of his mind, whereby many excellent ends of society and religion are here ferv'd; but without which fensible disorder, the action of the mind may still be supposed to subsist, and probably in a future state, when those particular ends proper to our present state cease, will for ever separately subsist.

If it were derogatory to the honour of God to ascribe passions to him in this sense, why do we express the motions of his will by the same names whereby we are agreed to express human passions? If those names convey no idea of operation in him to the mind, then the passions, or rather the affections (for that is the softer term in our present sense) which are express'd or represented by that idea, must have the same foundation in the divine nature with the other attributes of it, and be in some eminent manner at least, if not formally, contain'd in it.

THE reason why the schoolmen deny'd passions in this sober acceptation to God, and which I therefore presume is not excluded

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in

in the article, proceeded from their adhering too tenaciously to the opinion of Aristotle, that all the passions are seated originally in the body, or the lower and sensitive part of the soul. But they might upon the least examination have observ'd, notwithstanding their profound regard in general for the philosopher, that his notion in this particular was very unphilosophical. Nothing but the foul, whatever motions may be excited in the body, or whatever impressions may be made upon it, can properly suffer; when we see any animal dismember'd or cut in pieces, it is not the violent agitation of the spirits or blood, that gives us the idea of pain, but our supposing it in some imperfect manner at least capable of thought. And if it be impossible that any being, but what thinks, should suffer, then 'tis absurd to attribute passions in a proper fense to the body, under any modification whatever; tho' by accident the body may be an occasion of exciting or fortifying certain sensations, to which we give the name of passions, in the foul.

THE Stoicks therefore, who seated the passions in the rational soul, argued in that respect more justly than Aristotle and his sollowers; yet in supposing them at the same time contrary to reason, and inconsistent with the character of a wise man, they argued no less weakly, tho after a manner more directly inconsistent with themselves.

BUT are there then, in opposition to both these errors, no reafonable affections? Is it below the character of a rational being to have any motion of love towards itself, to take complacency in its own happiness, or to exercise loving kindness, towards promoting the happiness of other beings. In man, indeed, there is a mixture of imperfection in all fuch passions, which renders him pasfive in a strict sense, and therefore we cannot form a just notion concerning passion in God, from what happens on occasion of any passion in our selves: Yet so far as passion is only attended with the idea of goodness or perfection, exclusive of every thing that denotes imperfection, why may we not with equal truth and piety, ascribe it to God in the same sense, that we do the primary attributes of his nature? For otherways indeed, when God expresses himself in scripture, as to certain operations of his will, and calls them by the name of so many distinct passions, if they have no real foundation, the words whereby they are express'd could not so justly be said to convey a false idea, as no idea at all to the mind.

But had not God express'd himself after such a manner, the reason of the thing would have justify'd us in using the like expressions. For what can be more congruous to the persections of the

the divine nature, than to say, that God loves the creatures he has made, that he delights in doing good, and in the actions of good men, and that he is a hater of iniquity. Is the will of God, do we suppose, perfectly indifferent in all these respects; or is he equally affected towards pious and wicked men? If he he, why does he reward the one, and punish the other? His action certainly, in these different distributions, according to our natural way of conceiving things, must follow some different corresponding motion in his will; why then, observing the distinction between what is perfect, and what is desective in the passions, should it be said, that a man in a proper sense loves or rejoices, but that God only loves and rejoices notionally, and as it were.

But if the passions of love and joy may be truly and distinctly attributed to God, does not this infer that distinct qualities may really subsist in him, and that he is therefore not strictly a simple, but in some respect a complex being? In answer to this, we observe the like distinction that was employ'd before, and consider those affections, to which we give the name of passions, in God; as we do his attributes of justice, goodness, or mercy, not as proceeding from principles really distinct in his nature; but from a different manner, whereby the one simple, and undivided principle of it externally operates. So that whatever affections or attributes we conceive as pertaining to God, the difference between them does not formally lie in the subject, but in the diversity of objects which it acts and terminates upon; and according to which we form to our selves distinct, tho' inadequate conceptions of it. Seeing we cannot in a simple and full view comprehend the divine essence, as one general act, we are forc'd to consider of it more particularly, as acting and displaying itself in variety of certain distinct effects: As in surveying a uniform building, which the eye cannot take in all at once, we observe one part after another, by carrying the fight this way and that way, backwards and forwards upon it. The great rule to us in contemplating or defining the divine attributes of any kind, is, that we should be strictly careful to ascribe nothing to God below the dignity of his nature, or which implies in it the least imperfection.

Thus with respect to those passions which seem to be attended with the greatest impersection; when God, for instance, is said to be angry, we are to understand, that his conduct towards those who have offended him, is like that whereby men are apt to discover their resentment or displeasure, on any moving provocation, towards one another. And tho the passion of anger is ever attended in men with some real perturbation of mind; yet when this passion is attributed to God, we are only to

consider it as an external appearance of some like commotion in him, but from which, so far as it imports the least inquietude, or disorder, the eternal perfection of his nature absolutely ex-

empts him.

And so again when God is said to have pity, and to be full of compassion, the meaning is, that he treats sinners, especially penitent sinners under the circumstances of misery and distress, after the same manner we do persons, in whose favour these passions sensible move and affect us.

By the like analogy to what passes on such occasions within our selves, tho' nothing, humanly speaking, is more inconsistent with the idea of a being infinitely perfect, than grief and repentance; yet God is even said to grieve and repent, when either what he commands is not executed, or what he has done is not attended with those effects, which might in all reason, and the natural tendency of the thing, have been expected from it. Thus he is said to have griev'd, that he made man, and to have repented of the judgment denounced by him against Nineveh; it being a natural indication of grief among men, when what they had with much wisdom design'd, does not succeed; and of repentance, when they find reason for altering those measures, which they had before determin'd or propos'd to pursue.

THERE will be less difficulty in accounting for those other affections attributed to God, that imply in the nature of them less imbecillity or defect; which I shall not therefore enter upon the particular enumeration of. A distinct application of what has been said in general to them, and for which reason I have enlarg'd the more on this article, will be in some measure, I hope, sufficient to forward and rectify our notions concerning them, after a manner more worthy of God, and more agreeable to the infinite perfecti-

ons of his nature.

I have hitherto consider'd the simplicity of God, chiesly as oppos'd to all composition of material parts, and to all powers, that may be suppos'd to result from a union of matter and mind. But this attribute is farther consider'd by divines, as oppos'd to any conceivable powers or faculties really distinct in a being purely immaterial. For principles really distinct argue a like composition in a thinking being, that distinct parts do in a corporeal being, or distinct thoughts and motions in a being, such as man, compos'd both of body and spirit; and the same arguments lie against any possible composition in a self-existent, independent, and all persect being, in all these respects. In our selves, it must be granted, we do not only conceive certain distinct powers and qualities, but which are in their own nature really distinct on account

of their being separable from one another, and their admitting the degrees of more or less both in different subjects, and at different times in the same subject. Thus one man has not only more knowledge and strength than another, which qualities are yet capable of being impair'd, as well as increas'd, but than he has himself, with respect to the several periods of his age, or by occasion of something merely accidental to him. From which consideration * St. Augustin argues very well, that a human soul, tho' in comparison of body a simple being, yet is not absolutely so in the same sense, according to which we attribute perfect simplicity to God.

To the end we may have a more just idea of this attribute, the schools express the divine essence by a pure and simple act; which does not only serve to give us a true, tho' imperfect conception of the divine nature, but is highly agreeable to that definition, God was pleas'd to make of himself to Moses, I am that I am; than which words, none that we know, or are able to contrive, can be more strong or significant to represent this absolute perfection of God; who was therefore in conformity to these words defin'd by Plato, whom Justin Martyr represents as highly affected with the sorce of them, to be ATTO ΩN , whereby this philosopher did not only intend, that God was a self-existent being, in contradiction to any cause of his existence, but a being identically the same, without composition of any distinct parts or powers whatever.

As to other distinctions of the schoolmen, whereby they oppose the simplicity of God to a kind of logical composition, in the scale of being; or to a metaphysical composition of existence and essence, of nature and person, of ast and potentiality; I shall wave the consideration of them as tending rather to discover the force and subtlety of mind in prosoundly learned and speculative persons, than to promote any real ends of piety, or to explicate this attribute in particular, after a more clear and intelligible manner to common apprehensions.

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^{*} Creatura quoque spiritalis, sicut est anima, est quidem in corporis comparatione simplicior, sine comparatione autem corporis multiplex est.

Humano autem animo, non est boc esse, quod est fortem esse, aut prudentem, aut justum, potest enim esse animus, & nullam istarum babere virtutum. Deo autem boc est esse, quod est, fortem esse, aut justum esse, aut sapientem esse. De Trinit. lib. 6. c. 4.

Again a little after in the same book and to the same effect, he adds; Cùm enim aliud sit, artificiosum esse, aliud inertem, aliud memorem, aliud timor, aliud lætitia; possuntque bæt & alia ejusmodi innumerabilia in animæ inveniri natura, & alia sine aliis; & alia magis, alia minus. Manifestum est animæ non simplicem sed multiplicem esse naturam. cap. 6.

CHAP. III. Of the immutability of God.

been afferted under the foregoing head, that God is a most simple uncompounded essence, and from several passages before concerning his being absolutely self-existent, and independent. For every change must arise from some disagreeing, or at least distinct principle in the ubject of it, or else from some cause external to its subject. The simplicity of God exempts him from any possible change in the former respect, and his self-existence and independency in the latter. If we farther consider God as the first cause; to which all other beings owe their origin, the impossibility of the least change incident to him from any external cause, will still be more evident. For what derives its existence, and consequently all its powers from any other being, can have no power of acting upon that being, but in consequence, if that can possibly be supposed, of its own will.

Now for God to will any change in himself by virtue of any means whatever, necessarily implies, that such a change must either be from better to worse, from worse to better, or from equal to equal. A change in either of the former respects infers something antecedently wanting to his perfection in general; a change for the better more particularly infers a defect of happiness; a change for the worse a defect of power or understanding; a change from equal to equal, supposes a change for which no good or reasonable cause can be assign'd, and is consequently inconsistent with another primary and essential attribute of God, that

of wildom.

But tho' the immutability of God may be clearly prov'd by these, or the like human reasons, yet no words can express the nature of this attribute so properly, or with that force and evidence, as those of the holy scriptures; some texts whereof I shall for that reason here recite, but without considering them, seeing I have not yet prov'd them divinely reveal'd, as having the sanction of divine authority; which caution, if there be any just occasion for it, I desire may be observed in reference to all the citations produced by me from the inspir'd writings, till I come to treat of them in the proper place. But to produce those I propos'd on the present article, to express the immutable nature of God, what forms of speech could have been employ'd more powerful

erful or proper to this end, I may add of a more sublime strain, than in the following passages. With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning *. His counsel standeth fast for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations †. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, that worketh all in all ‡. The earth and the heavens, O Lord, shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea all of them shall wax old, as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be chang'd; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end **. These words, I acknowledge, were spoken by the psalmist prophetically of Christ, and therefore properly apply'd in the apostolical writings to him ††; but certainly the reason of them, abstracting from this consideration, will be granted to hold at least equally strong and evident, with respect to the immutability of God the Father.

CHAP. IV. Of the eternity of God.

Y eternity I mean an infinite duration, which never had a beginning, and will never have an end. That God is eternal with respect to all past duration, is evident from what has been formerly prov'd to belong to him, necessary or self-existence. And that he is eternal with respect to all future duration, is no less evident, if not directly from his being self-existent, yet from what is directly and immediately consequential to it, his independency of any foreign power or cause, that may be conceiv'd capable of destroying his existence. Even those who allow matter, tho' a passive principle, to be of itself eternally co-existent with God, yet acknowledge for that reason, however God may be capable of acting upon it, the absolute impossibility of its being annihilated by him. Upon an impossible supposition then, that God should ever cease to be, the discontinuance of his being, can only proceed from his own volition, or certain powers, if there be no impiety in making such a farther supposition, which he may have in himself, after some peculiar manner unknown to us, over himself.

But

^{*} James 1. 17. + Psalm 33. 11. ‡ Rom. 1. 23. *** Psalm 102. 27, 28. ++ Heb. 1. 10, 11.

But, besides that the power of God can in no respect be really distinguish'd from his essence, and that in our way of apprehending things, his power is rather an effect flowing from his essence, than the cause of it; upon neither of which accounts we can possibly conceive it employ'd to the destruction of his essence; besides this consideration, I say, the arguments which prove God incapable of change, consider'd as a most simple, and in general the most perfect being, must be granted to hold still stronger against a possi-

bility of the total extinction of his being.

YET tho' no attribute of God is more clearly demonstrable, than that of his eternity; it must be confess'd, on the other hand, there are none of his attributes which we are less able to form any clear or distinct conceptions of our selves, or to explicate in a distinct manner to others. For we cannot have an idea of eternal duration, without supposing a succession of time; and succession of time in a natural order of thinking, it is said, must import fome first moment, from which all future moments of it are deriv'd: So that the common argument against the eternity of the world, from an impossibility of eternal successive revolutions perform'd by the heavenly orbs, seems equally to lie in this way of conceiving it, against the eternity of God. For there can have been no moment in an eternal succession, but what was once present; and if all the moments of it were once present, and one of them in order after another, which the nature of succession supposes, it will follow, that there was some one of them prior in this order, and to which therefore all the rest were once future: which consequence, if admitted, would wholly destroy the notion of eternity, as necessarily supposing a beginning of time in it.

IT must be own'd, there is some difficulty, in what is here objected concerning the nature of eternity; tho' we are certain, as we can be of any thing, that there is something eternal; and that this character of eternity does more peculiarly, if not folely, as the schools commonly maintain, belong to the self-existent being: Tho' indeed supposing space, or matter eternal, this way of arguing would equally hold against their being eternal; and since there must be something, for that reason, in it, contrary to an acknowledg'd truth, it ought not, according to a standing and receiv'd rule, to be admitted, tho' we should not be able to give a clear and distinct solution of any sophism or error contain'd in it. It would be fufficient to fay in general, that if we are not able to comprehend what is infinite, this does not arise from the incomprehensible nature of it, consider'd in itself, but from the imperfection of our faculties, which, comparatively, bear no manner of proportion to it. To suppose a finite being capable of comprehending

01 ſų prehending an infinite, in the full extent of it, or in all its relations and properties, implies, in the nature of the thing something more inconceivable, than that the eye of a man should take in all the objects which surround him, and which are dispers'd throughout the whole world, at once.

ALL our reasonings, upon the properties of infinite, being inadequate, the terms wherein we speak of them, must necessarily be desective. To talk of first or last in eternal duration, is like talking of more or sewer number of parts in quantity, when there is, properly speaking, no determinate or assignable number of them at all. Matter being infinitely divisible, or upon supposition that it is so, the least atom contains as many parts, as the whole material system; and for the same reason the revolutions of days and years, of the sun and Saturn, supposing the world infinite in duration, would yet in their respective revolutions infer no inequality of time.

But still perhaps it may be said, this is rather to evade, than to answer the argument, whereby it appear'd, that in order of succession there must be some moment of time prior to all the rest; and then all the arguments for an eternal successive duration, may with equal reason be pretended to lie against an acknowledg'd truth, on the other side: And so the reasons for and against an eternal being will hold equally good; from which nothing can be concluded, but that we ought entirely to suspend our judgment upon this article, and not determine any thing, one way or other,

concerning it.

To which it is answer'd, that this conclusion would not hold good, tho' the arguments we propos'd against an eternal successive duration, should really appear as strong as those, which we are able to produce for it; because the affirmative of the question being clearly and demonstratively prov'd on our part, what is urg'd for the negative, is only to be consider'd as a mere objection, that ought not to lie against an acknowledg'd truth; and consequently there is the strongest presumption, that the arguments alledg'd on that side, have something in them at the bottom sophistical or erroneous, tho' by reason of the infinite depth of the subject, and the scanty line, wherewith we measure it, 'tis impossible for us to go to the bottom of it.

YET we may perhaps be able in order to silence the sceptick on this head, to give a more particular answer to what was objected, by observing, that if the argument from eternal successive duration, really prove some first moment in eternity, then to suppose such a first moment, does not destroy, but is, after all, consistent with the nature of eternity. On the other hand, if that argument do not really prove a first moment in eternity, then, which is

much more probable, it is certainly fallacious, and proves nothing at all against us. In short, tho' we may not be able clearly to comprehend, how there could have been an eternal successive duration, without beginning of time; yet it is clear to the highest degree of demonstration, that there must have been such a duration, whether a beginning of time were necessary to the successive moments of it, or not.

What has been said seems to give us at once a more easy and a more reasonable account of the eternity of God, than the celebrated definition of *Boëtius*, which yet has so generally obtain'd among divines; who, after him, to avoid the dissiculties which are suppos'd to attend the idea of successive duration, when apply'd to God, have almost in an uninterrupted succession, till of late, espoused a notion, attended with much greater dissiculties.

THEY suppose then that the eternity of God consists in an indivisible point, which they otherways express by an eternal now; for indeed where the notions of men are perplex'd and confus'd, their expressions will be naturally indistinct or obscure. notion, we fay, so far as we are capable of understanding the terms, wherein it is express'd, implies a direct inconsistency, and utterly confounds the distinction between momentary and eternal: For it supposes God at the same instant of time co-existent with all past, and all future moments of time, without their being at the same time co-existent with him, or with one another; which we can form no possible conception of, notwithstanding the distinction of things existing in eternity, consider'd as a point, not together or confusedly, but in that order, according to which they A distinction *, which seems, the more we attend to it, rather to corroborate the contrary notion, than what it is advanc'd to explain; and from which we so naturally draw, upon supposition of its being true, these or the like consequences; that the world existed, before it was created; that the several revolutions of the planets, to ascend no higher, are all absolv'd in the same instant; that all mankind are contemporary, and the distinction of days, months, and years, not founded in any real difference or mensuration of time, but only in our way of conceiving the nature of motion.

To shew how incomprehensible this definition of eternity is, those, who oppose it, have farther argued from an impossibility of our conceiving, that the accomplishment of a prophecy once pro-

^{*} Cum æternitate simul existunt præteritum & suturum, non confuse, sed eo ordine, quo existunt. Fogg. theol. spec. p. 57.

mulg'd by God, and which is not to take place for several ages after, should yet with respect to its accomplishment actually coexist with him at the very instant of its promulgation: For to say, that he actually co-exists with the accomplishment of it, tho it is not itself yet actually accomplished, is to say, there may be in fact a relation, where there is one term of it only subsisting.

But were there no impropriety in asserting this, we add, that if a being, to which we attribute eternal duration, co-exist with successive beings not confusedly, but in order of their succession, as is granted in the foregoing distinction; still it is impossible for us to comprehend, how the duration of such a being should not be successive itself: For either there is some time before or after in the duration of it, or there is not; if there be, what we contend for is granted; if there be not, whatever things it co-exists with, it must necessarily co-exist with them, not separately, or in a successive order, but all at once: For if it co-exists now with one thing, now with another, as they come successively into being, it will have a relation to one thing after another, and the manner of its own existence, or continuance in being, can only be conceived according to the order of that relation.

We cannot have a more clear idea of God, under the notion of an eternal being, than by considering him, as a being that was, and is, and is to come; that liveth for ever and ever, and who, from everlasting to everlasting, is God: Which words, tho' far from importing any successive change or motion in the divine being, but rather expressing the fix'd, permanent, and immoveable state of his existence; yet plainly imply, that there is no necessity of conceiving him, at the same time co-existent with all past and suture moments of time; but only to have been present, and to continue for ever present, to all successive periods and changes

of time, without any change in himself.

The occasion, upon which pious and learned men have been led to define the eternity of God, by an indivisible point, seems to be this. To ascribe past and suture time to God, they thought, would at least imply, that his being is mutable, that in the former respect it would suffer some kind of diminution, in the latter receive some accession, if not import a continued renovation. But where is there any visible ground for these or the like apprehensions? The reason of change in beings, is not from their successive duration, which denotes only an external respect to the time, wherein they exist, but from their acquiring new qualities and modifications of their proper substance, which they had not before, or their losing those, which they had. In relation to our selves, indeed, we inseparably annex the idea of mutability to that

of our duration; yet whatever changes we suffer, they are not properly owing to the nature of our duration, consider'd abstractedly as such, but to the manner of it; to that continual flux in the particles of our body, and those more violent disorders, which the members of it are subject to, or to the unequal temper and different qualities of our mind, from which we have sew intervals entirely free. But were it not for the successive modifications of our own being in one or other of these respects, we should ever continue and co-exist with the several periods of time, without receiving any change, or any denomination from them, but what would be purely external, and therefore incapable in any proper sense of affecting us.

What is here observed must rather hold the stronger, with respect to the duration of God; if he be supposed to exist this moment, or in any determinate period of time, wherein he did not exist before, it arises from hence, that the moment which now exists, had not an existence sooner; there is no change therefore in him, but only in the gradual progression, if it may be called a

change, of time without him.

If a succession of time do of itself infer no change, with respect to a being, existing in time, much less does it infer a continued extinction or renovation of such a being. And tho' it has been commonly maintain'd, that the act of God, whereby he is conceiv'd to preserve all created beings in their proper state, is really a continued creation of them: Yet this notion did not arise from hence, that it is impossible, in the nature of the thing, for any being, except it should be every moment created anew, to have a successive duration; but because no creature can subsist one moment without the immediate continued action of God. A succession of time then, even in reference to the creatures, does not suppose a succession of being, consider'd abstractedly from the sluid parts, or alterative qualities of it, but only from the consideration, that they are impotent and dependent beings.

There is another reason, upon which divines may be supposed, to have more readily given into the notion I have been examining; they thought, perhaps, according to Aristotle's definition * of time, there could be no time without successive motion, whereby it is to be measur'd. It is certain the authority of this philosopher, had a great influence towards establishing many errors in those ages of the christian world, which paid, for the most part, an implicit deference to it; tho' it is probable his definition of time, in particular, was not intended by him in a sense strictly philosophical, but

only

^{*} Ὁ χρόνος ἐςὶν ἀκλθμὸς κινήσεως καθὰ τὸ πρότερον τὰ ΰςερον. Phys. 1. 4. c. 2.

only in a popular sense, with regard to the periodical revolutions of the heavenly bodies, especially of the sun, or the variety and

progressive change of the seasons.

But what account then, upon their own principles, could the followers of Aristotle, who believ'd the scriptures, give concerning the distribution of time into day and night before the formation of the heavens, which was the work of the second day, or of the celestial orbs, particularly the sun, which was the work of the fourth day? Will they say, that before the second or fourth day, or during the space, that the sun stood still in the days of Joshua, there was properly no time or successive duration, but that the first or the second following days were not really distinguishable from eternity, and that Joshua pursu'd and conquer'd his enemies in an indivisible point of duration? Or supposing there were really no material being, and consequently in a strict sense no motion in the world, could it be faid, that a thinking being, that regularly pursues a train of thoughts, would not really exist, by way of successive duration in time, as now that time, according to popular estimation, is calculated from motion? Again, if God should think fit to annihilate this world, and create another, is any man capable of afferting, that the space or interval between the one and the other world, would be eternal? I only propose these things by way of question; and 'tis impossible for those, who suppose time, as it denotes a successive continuance, to depend on motion, to give a fatisfactory answer to such enquiries, or to any one of them.

I have endeavour'd in the best manner I could, to state the true notion concerning this divine attribute of eternity: But still we must have recourse to the scriptures for those rich and noble expressions, which give us the most just and lively idea of it. For at the same time, they represent it to the mind in the clearest light, they have an irresistible force to excite the most pious and moving sensations in the heart.

THE royal psalmist, speaking of this divine attribute, expresses himself after a manner, agreeable to the light which shines throughout all his devotional composures, and the slame, which animates them. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst form'd the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, when it is pass'd, and as a watch in the night *.

THERE are several passages in the prophet Isaiah concerning this attribute, suitable to that sublimity of thought, and force of ex-

pression, which distinguish that prophet. Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? that the everlasting God the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not *. Thus saith the Lord, I am the sirst, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God †. Thus saith the bigh and losty one, who inhabiteth eternity ‡. To which I shall only add two texts out of the New Testament, the first from the Revelations, wherein God is also represented, as speaking himself of his eternal duration. I am alpha and omega, the beginning and ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come **. The latter from the second epistle of St. Peter. One day is with the Lord, as a thousand years, and a thousand years, as one day ††.

I the rather mention this text, because it has been urg'd on the other side, to prove that the eternity of God excludes the idea of successive duration. But this is advanc'd without grounds: For the apostle is not here speaking, as if there were no difference between a thousand years, and one day, with respect to the duration of God, consider'd in itself; but with respect to his duration compar'd to that of man: Tho' if the words were to be understood absolutely concerning the duration of God, they would by no means prove what they are alledg'd for, because succession of time is equally imported in the duration of one day, as in that of a thousand years.

CHAP. V.

Of the immensity of God.

Very attribute of God is attended with an idea of infinite perfection; but infinity is in a more peculiar manner consider'd by divines, with reference to his eternal existence, and his immensity. In the former respect there was no time, nor any duration, we can conceive, prior to time, when he was not; and in the latter respect, there is no place, and I will add, for the reasons I shall in the sequel produce, any imaginable space, wherein he is not.

1. If there be any place, where God is not, his being is of a limited extent; we are forc'd here to speak according to common

appre-

^{*} Isaiah 40. 28. + Chap. 44. 6, 7. + Chap. 57. 15. ** Rev. 1. 8. + 2 Pet. 3. 8.

apprehension, and consequently his operations will be so too. If there be, for instance, any part of the world from which God is excluded, as to his essence, by whatever cause he is so excluded, by the same cause he is restrain'd from acting without those bounds. For since neither the power, nor any other attribute of God, is really distinguish'd from his essence, but only in our manner of conceiving it; wherever he acts, his action must necessarily be immediate; or, in other words, he cannot any where act, but where he really and essentially is; and consequently, whatever being fills the place, from which he is excluded, it must be absolutely independent of his action; which, if admitted, would not only destroy the notion of a most perfect being in general, but of a first cause, from which all other beings are deriv'd.

WHAT I intend, in other words, is, that supposing every thing created by God, his essence of necessity must have always been, and must always continue to be, of the same extent with the whole creation; to suppose him excluded from any part of it, is to suppose such a part to be created, and yet not to be created

by his action.

If it be urg'd, that we cannot still conclude from this argument the immensity of God in an absolute sense, and that it only proves, of whatever extent we may suppose the creation, whether of things visible or invisible, there we must necessarily suppose the immediate presence and action of the creator; I answer, that what has been said, tho' it does not directly prove the immensity of God in an absolute sense, or beyond the scene of his operations, yet it leads to the proof of it by an easy and obvious deduction.

2. For the same power of God, which created the world, whatever assignable extent we give it, might, if he had thought sit, have given it a farther extent; there being no previous cause required to the production of things, but his sole and arbitrary will, there can be no reason, why his will might not have operated every where in infinite space, as well as any where; or why he might not to infinity, so far as we are able to conceive what is infinite, have

still added more and more worlds to the present system.

If God be not without the world, as well as in it, his essence, and consequently his power, which is inseparable from it, would be terminated by the world, and it would be impossible, upon this supposition, that there should be any more creatures produc'd in the extramundane space, if there really be any such; if there be not, and the creation, as some philosophers hold, consists of an infinite plenitude, then the immensity of God must necessarily be commensurate to it, and so established, as was before observed, by a more direct proof.

But

But when we argue with those, who do not believe a plenum, why should it be more impossible for God to produce a greater number of creatures in space, than it was originally impossible for him, to produce any? Such an impossibility must either arise from without or within himself: It cannot arise in the latter respect, because there is nothing more requir'd in him to operate than to will; and from without there is nothing more to oppose his will, or hinder the execution of it, than when the things which actually exist, were first created. From whence divines have piously concluded, that God is in a sense every where, and yet no where; every where in relation to place, but no where contain'd or circumscrib'd by place; that, what makes, being of a greater extent, than what is made, the world may more properly be faid to be in God, than God in the world; and that he is effentially in the extramundane spaces after the same manner he was in space, before this mandane system was in being: So that he can by virtue of the same power, which originally effected the creation, produce with the greatest facility, and in an instant, as many worlds as he pleases, and, if that be a possible conception, to infinity.

For after all, infinity, whether with respect to the eternal duration, or immensity of God, is not directly a positive idea, but only a negation of any defect or want of his power, in a course of continual progression, which the mind can never come to the end of: it being impossible that what is finite should have a conception commensurate to what is infinite, as that the thing contain'd should be of the same extent or dimension, with the thing containing. But this is no more an argument to overthrow the proofs of an immense, than those of an eternal being, as will appear from the same reasons urg'd by me in treating of that attribute, and which need not therefore be repeated. I shall only add this reflection in reference to both these attributes; that it is strange, and contrary to the establish'd rules of reasoning in other cases, that the atheist should urge our incapacity of conceiving what is infinite against the thing itself, when upon supposition there is something infinite. it really must be inconceiveable.

NEITHER is it necessary, so long as we believe the thing, to determine too curiously, or with too definitive an air, concerning the manner of the divine omnipresence: And yet to give us a more distinct conception of what we cannot conceive adequately, divines, in speaking of this attribute, have agreed to represent God as present with respect to his essence, his power, and his knowledge; tho in essent the two latter considerations resolve into the former, and do not denote any real difference in the manner of God's

God's omnipresence, but only in the external manifestation of it: His attributes, as we have prov'd, not being separable from his esfence, wherever he is present by his knowledge, or by his power,

he is also present by his essence.

When it is said therefore, the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good *; that he looketh unto the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven †; and that he beholdeth all the sons of men, from the place of his habitation \pm. We are from these expressions only to apprehend the divine nature, as exerting itself in acts of knowledge, and operating with respect to whatever exists, or may have a possible existence, consider'd more particularly as an object of the divine understanding.

AND so again, when we conceive God as more peculiarly prefent by the effects of his power or favour, whether in heaven, or in places more immediately appointed to his folemn worship and service, the meaning is, that notwithstanding he is essentially present in all places; yet, for reasons which we are not wholly incapable of accounting for our felves, he chooses to manifest these effects in some places, rather than in others: So that even when we conceive him seated in the throne of his glory, if we apprehend him present to the holy angels, the chief ministers of his kingdom, in any other sense, than by a more glorious and immediate appearance of his Majesty, at the same time we endeavour to exalt and magnify his greatness, we evidently detract from it.

THESE sentiments concerning the immensity of God, are highly agreeable to what is spoken of it in the following, and several

other passages of scripture.

1. He is every where present by his power. He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, and calleth those things that be not, as though they were **. He is a God of the valleys, and not only of the hills ++. When his word goeth forth out of his mouth, it Shall not return unto him void; but it shall accomplish that which he pleaseth, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto he sendeth it; as he hath thought, so shall it come to pass, and as he hath purpos'd, so shall it stand; and what his soul desireth, even that he doth ##.

2. He is every where present, by his knowledge. To the texts already cited, concerning this attribute, I shall only add these that follow. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world *. Neither is there any creature, that is not manifest

[†] Job 28. 24. †† 1 Kings 20. 28. ** Dan. 6. 27. * Prov. 15. 3. ‡ Psalm 33. 13. * Atts 15. 18. –Rom. 4. 17. # Isaiab 55. 11.

Lord +?

in his fight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*. He declareth the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things, that are not yet done †. Shall the thing fram'd, say of him that fram'd it, He hath no underflanding ‡? He that planted the ear, shall be not hear? He that form'd the eye, shall be not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall be not know **? In which latter texts the infinite knowledge of God is not only suppos'd, but prov'd upon these philosophical and unanswerable principles; that whatever power or perfection there is in the effect, it must be eminently contain'd in the cause; and if the cause be intelligent, such power and perfection must of necessity be intelligible to it, in all the operations of them.

3. God is every where, according to the scriptures, essentially present. He filleth all in all ††. He is a God at hand, and not a God afar off ‡‡. Whither shall I go, says holy David, from thy spirit, O Lord; or whither shall I slee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there *. Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the

4. It appears farther from the holy scriptures, that the real or essential presence of God, is not according to the opinion of Vorstius and Curcellaus, any ways circumscrib'd definitly or indefinitly within the confines of heaven, but is truly beyond the extent of all created beings, visible and invisible. The heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee, O God ‡. He is high, in this perfection, as heaven; deeper than hell; the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea **. His glory, with respect to the infinite plenitude of his being, in a strict and literal sense, is above the heavens. The argument therefore of St. Stephen, How-sover the most high dwelleth not in temples made with hands ††, equally holds against our supposing his essence terminated by this glorious and magnificent structure of things, created by him,

But, taking it for granted, that God is every where essentially present, and in that boundless extent of being, which has been asserted, how shall we be able still to conceive, or define the manner of his omnipresence, which I here consider only as a different term to express his immensity? For whether we consider God, as an immense being, under the notion of an indivisible

what extent soever our minds, by continual addition, may be ca-

point,

point, or, according to the common illustration, of a centre that is every where, but whose circumference is no where; or, on the other hand, by way of infinite extension; we are press'd on both sides with difficulties, that appear insuperable, and which persons of the greatest force and penetration of mind have own'd themselves incapable of accounting for, upon any clear and distinct grounds.

1. To represent the immense being under the notion of an indivisible point, or the centre of a circle, every where diffus'd, leaves the mind as much, or rather more, in the dark, than if no representation had been made, concerning the manner of his omnipresence, at all: Besides that this notion seems highly to detract from the majesty, the unity, the purity and holiness of the divine It supposes the greatest, the most capacious and comprehensive being, to be the least and most limitted of all beings, real or imaginary. It represents the divine essence whole and entire in every point, and yet but one individual essence, without multiplication, in all points: From which some have farther inferr'd, that it tends to confound all distinction between God and the creatures; for if there be no imaginable point where the divine essence is not whole and entire, every thing, as they conceive, which we see, or that exists any where in place, must be reputed the divine essence: Lastly, they think this notion altogether inconsistent with the character of a most pure and holy being, as it supposes God, in regard to his essence, equally present in clean and impure subjects, in wicked and good men, in angels and devils.

THESE are the objections *, which have been commonly urg'd, and they appear at least to have some reasonable foundation against this notion of God's being every where, and in every point of the

universe, essentially, and individually present.

LET us see whether, in answer to what is here advanc'd, we may be capable of giving any reasonable solution, tho' without determining any thing too positively on so very difficult a subject.

In general we may observe, that what has been said, proceeds from a natural incapacity we are under of having any simple or abstract idea of incorporeal substance: For which reason when we speak of it, we are forc'd to make use of improper and sigurative allusions, and to express our selves in terms deriv'd from sensible objects; this naturally leads us to apply such properties, as we observe in those objects, to things, which are really in themselves, and their abstract ideas, incapable of being represented by any sensible image, or appearance whatever: Upon which account are

^{*} V. Limborch theol. christ. p. 62. 4°.

these declarations of the holy penmen in scripture; that, God is great, and we know him not; touching the almighty, we cannot find him out to perfection *. When we speak of him, we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness: such knowledge is too wonderful for us, it is high, we cannot attain unto it †. Which words of the psalmist, we may remark, are not spoken concerning the divine perfections in general, but with a particular respect to this attribute of immensity.

It is for want then of pure, and perfectly simple ideas, that when we conceive the immense God, either under the notion of an indivisible point, or an infinitely extended being, we reason differently concerning the manner of his presence, as we would do concerning the least particle, or the widest and most extended bulk of matter; yet it will by no means follow, that where there is some impersect or conceivable resemblance of one thing to another, our conclusions in attributing the same real properties to them, are

just or allowable.

But to answer more particularly to what has been objected; it is said not to imply any express contradiction, that the divine essence should be whole and entire in every point, and yet be but one and the self-same being, without multiplication, in all points: This way of reasoning is allow'd to hold certainly and demonstratively good, with respect to corporeal substance, which consists of distant and separable parts, and therefore it is invincibly apply'd to overthrow the doctrine of Transubstantiation; but when it is form'd upon our ideas of incorporeal substance, which is indivisible, without parts, and, strictly speaking, without any intelligible points, it is altogether inconclusive; as proceeding from an impropriety of expression, which we are necessitated to employ, and not from the real nature of the thing.

For that it cannot proceed from the nature of the thing, is argued from the impossibility of conceiving how an immaterial substance should be otherways united to, or co-existent with corporeal substance, than by being all and entire in every part of it. Either immaterial substance must be whole and entire with every part of the corporeal substance it has an immediate communication with, or else it must only be united to it part by part; so that their several parts shall be equally co-extended. But this is to confound the notion of extended, and unextended substance, and to make that divisible, which is confessedly in its own nature in-

divisible.

^{*} Job 36. 26.

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And if this argumentation be just, in respect to the soul of man, as united to his body, or to the principal parts of his brain, for the reason holds equally good in both cases; it will still hold with greater force, in respect to that most pure and infinite being, whose nature implies the most perfect simplicity, and who may be said, in the strictest sense, and without a figure, to be all in all.

It is farther reply'd to the second article of what was objected, that to suppose the immensity of God to consist in a point, does not in the least tend to confound the distinction between God and his creatures. If there were any force in the argument on the This consequence might other side, it would prove too much. be drawn clearly from it, that wherever any created being is, there the divine being is excluded, and that God therefore is no where really present in the world, but only in space. As to a farther incidental charge brought against the notion of immensity, which we are examining, that it leads to idolatry, by making every visible creature a proper object of worship, there being no assignable point, wherever we turn our eyes, but where God is essentially present; it is said, this inference is false; idolatry consists in transferring that honour and worship we owe to God, upon such things as are by nature no Gods, and which, by supposing all visible beings to be creatures, we by that very act confess to be no Gods; they are not our eyes which terminate the object of our worship, but our thoughts; and while we separate in our thoughts, the idea of the invisible God from the things that are seen, as of necessity we must do by distinguishing between the creator and the creatures, where can there be any formal, or indeed imaginable grounds for the charge of idolatry. This notion, on the other hand, seems so far from leading to an idolatrous worship, that it is imposfible, consistently with it, either for men to worship any corporeal extended being, as God, or to suppose the divine nature capable of being represented by any corporeal image.

To the last part of the objection, which was thought to affect the purity and holiness of God, it may be answer'd, that those who urge it, proceed upon a supposition, as if God were present with his creatures by way of corporeal contact, and from which he might be capable of suffering some pollution: Inferences, wholly proceeding from the gross illusions of sense! For if we consult reason, and argue from the simplicity of the divine nature, how is it possible that the different modifications of other beings, after what manner soever God may be present with them, should effect the least change, or any new modification in himself? Tho as to sensible objects, notwithstanding, since the fall, they are here upon earth in a state of disorder; yet consider'd in them-

felves, and setting aside the reports of sense and imagination, they are equally pure. As to immaterial substances, simply consider'd as such, they too are naturally pure and good. Sin, which is nothing positive, but a mere negation of the rectitude which ought to be in them, is in reality nothing; and consequently God, however present with a sinner, can have no union with his sin, nor possibly receive any contamination from it. But then again,

2. If, on the other hand, we conceive the ubiquity of the divine essence, after the manner of something infinitely extended, it will be very hard for us to separate the idea of divisibility from that of extension. But this, it is said, is only a difficulty arising from an incapacity of expressing our selves, otherways than by sensible representations, or of conceiving that by a clear and abstract idea without separable parts, and I may add, without sigure, even which we know by clear and convincing proofs, to be nei-

ther figur'd nor divisible.

YET tho' this notion concerning the immensity of God, appears more agreeable, than the former, to the dignity of the divine nature, and attended with fewer and less difficulties, I dare not take upon me to charge the former either with absurdity, or with impiery. All I contend for, is, that the immensity of God being capable of a direct proof, and neither of these methods, in the opinion of several learned men, necessarily implying a contradiction, nor perhaps any real repugnancy at the bottom to one another, there being no such thing in a pure simple essence, as a whole separable from a part, and a part from the whole; or a possibility either of multiplication or division; men are at more liberty to determine themselves, without prescribing magisterially to others, as they are able to form in their minds in either respect more clear and distinct apprehensions; or according (for there is no article of religion, upon which a supernatural light is more necessary to direct all men) as God may deal severally to them the measure of his illuminating grace.

CHAP. VI.

Of the unity of God.

I Shall not here enlarge on what was incidentally offer'd before in proof of this attribute, from the idea of God, consider'd as a self-existent being, or a being that exists by an absolute necessity of nature. But referring the reader to what has been said already on this argument, shall here consider only the force of those other arguments for the unity of the divine nature, which have been

thought most solid and conclusive. And,

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1. To prove the unity of the divine nature, it has been commonly urg'd, that we cannot suppose more Gods than one, without supposing a possibility, not to say on the occasion we are proceeding to consider, a very high probability of discord between Now the perfection of the divine nature excludes every idea that may imply, or, on any possible supposition, import the least defect; which yet must necessarily be incident to it, if any one of the deities, for we now argue upon a concession of their number, should resolve to act externally; to create, for instance, a certain number of other beings, and to endow them with certain peculiar powers and faculties: For fince these are arbitrary effects of goodness, and depend on the sole will and pleasure of the creator, without any other antecedent cause determining him to act, for then they would not be arbitrary, he may absolutely determine, as he sees fit, concerning both the time, and manner of his effecting them; which yet he cannot be conceiv'd to do, if there are other beings equally powerful, and who have an equal liberty of determining whether they will operate externally; or if they do, when they will begin their operation, and how proceed in it. Admitting then a plurality of Gods, hence it is inferr'd they may very reasonably be conceiv'd to oppose the design, and obstruct the action of one another; from which no external effect at all, but only the greatest confusion and disturbance among themselves could be apprehended to follow. Consequences, which are neither reconcileable with the infinite power or perfect happiness of the divine nature, nor indeed with the perfections of it:in general.

To this it is said, that beings equally and infinitely perfect will always think and design the same thing, and execute it the same way: And that these consequences therefore are so far from being

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founded

founded in probable reasons, that there is not so much as a possible foundation for them.

But this argument, we say, holds only with respect to the resolutions of moral agents, not with respect to those of free agents, consider'd simply as such, those resolutions, I mean, which might or might not have been form'd, and executed, without any imputation injurious to those moral perfections of the divine being, wisdom and justice, goodness and holiness. In none of which respects, God was under any necessity of nature, either to create the world, and the several beings in it, or to create them at the time, or according to the order wherein they were originally form'd, and do at present subsist.

YET it must be acknowledg'd this distinction of a moral and a free agent, when referr'd to God, is of less force to those, who believe, that notwithstanding the perfect freedom of his choice, he is always under a necessity of doing what is best to be done, and in the best manner: And if he can only act, as infinite wisdom and goodness direct, then supposing more Gods than one, and all of them infinitely wise and good, they must still will the

fame thing, and design the same method of executing it.

But to this it is answer'd again, that the question is not, whether if an all perfect being once determin'd to act, should pursue the best and wifest measures in conducting his action; but whether there be any thing antecedently to his own free and immediate volition, that should induce him to act at all. If there be any fuch antecedent motive, then all the acts of his goodness are necessary, and the world could not have been created at any other time, nor the several species of beings in it have been more or less than they are. In short, no disposition or event of providence could have happen'd otherways, than it actually has happen'd. There could be no fuch thing, consequently, as an act of pure favour, or good pleasure, or free grace in God, but only of a grace flowing from an absolute necessity of fitness and congruity; which is to destroy the distinction of his wisdom and goodness, and to make him a necessary agent, in the emanations of that very attribute, which in the nature and our common notions of it, and I may add, in the terms it is spoken of in holy writ, implies the most perfect freedom imaginable, from any previous impelling Upon this supposition, neither the creation nor the redemption of the world could have been an act of grace, but consider'd in reference to God, strictly, and in a proper sense, of debt: Not indeed from any merit of man, but from the eternal and efsential rectitude of the divine nature. If there be, on the other hand, no antecedent motive, which determines God to act, but

only his free will and good pleasure, then the argument from a possibility of different wills and designs in different beings, tho

suppos'd infinitely perfect, will still hold good.

Another argument for the unity, is taken from the immensity of God; and the strength of it seems to lie in this, that we cannot suppose two or more beings every where present, or perfectly in the same place: We cannot indeed suppose two bodies in the very same place, without destroying the nature of them, and making them extended and unextended, penetrable and impenetrable at the same time. But when we reason concerning the existence of spirits and immaterial substances in place, we reason upon inadequate ideas, and are forc'd to employ improper terms. The manner of their existing is so wholly different from that of bodies, that we can have no imaginable grounds for drawing conclusions in one case, to the other. This, however, seems in itself a very clear and reasonable conclusion, that if two beings may be any where in the same place, it implies no repugnancy in the nature of the thing, but that two or more beings, supposing them infinite, may be every where, in the same place. Now granting the immateriality of thinking beings, and that there is no place from which God is excluded, we are under an absolute necessity of suppoling, that immaterial substances not only may, but do in fact fomewhere co-exist; and tho after a manner unknown to us, perfectly in the same place: From whence this argument to prove the unity from the immensity of God, as it denotes his omnipresence, has been thought by learned men, insufficient to the end, for which it is produc'd.

IT has been farther urg'd to prove the unity of the divine nature, that, as in all governments, order requires some superior and last resource of power; so the nature of an all perfect being requires, that this superiority should wholly terminate in him; they add farther, that supremacy is necessarily included in the idea of The fathers have illustrated the former branch of this argument, from the example of several species of beings in the world, respectively under the influence and direction of some one particular being at the head of them. But tho' their illustrations, supposing the truth of the thing, are very pertinent, yet they by no means appear to prove it, nor were perhaps directly intended by the fathers in proof of it. We grant no government can be preserv'd without order, yet it does not follow in the rea-Son of the thing, that order cannot be preserved in any government, but where one person solely presides; especially when there may be an entire conformity in the deligns and measures of the persons suppos'd to govern; which it is very reasonable to preſume

sume there will be, among beings infinitely wise: And upon this account, admitting more Gods than one, I argued the possibility of their interfering, rather from the free and independent acts of their goodness, than from the resolutions of their wisdom, wherein their perfect unanimity and concurrence seems with much

greater facility deducible.

As to that part of the argument, which makes supremacy a necessary character of an all persect being, it seems to carry still less weight and evidence in it *. Supremacy cannot be an absolute or essential character of the divine nature; because it is a relative term, and only supposes, that when God has made any thing, he has a right of dominion over it, but it does not follow, that if he had never proceeded to make any thing, or to operate externally, this attribute could in a proper sense have belong'd to him. To say, that he must have been supreme, without his creating any thing dependent on him, is plainly to beg the question, and proves nothing against the possibility of other independent beings, equal in power and every other persection to him.

I have propos'd these usual proofs of the unity of God, with that impartiality, which it becomes us always to observe in our search after truth. But to discover the weakness of any argument in particular, which may be brought to prove a fundamental article of religion, is not, what some pious men have too much suspected, to do religion disservice, but only shews it does not stand in need of any artifices, and has nothing to fear from a fair, ingenuous, and free examination.

CHAP.

^{*} Yet Bishop Burnet in his exposition of the thirty nine articles, p. 24. supposes this argument for the unity of God to carry with it the greatest force and evidence. He speaks of the other argument, concerning a possibility, that beings infinitely persect, may be supposed to interfere, as to acts, of arbitrary goodness, after a manner, which imports greater dissidence and uncertainty: So this argument seems still of great force to prove the unity of the deity. But when he comes to the argument for a superiority of some one being over all other beings, he speaks of it in terms, as if it admitted of a clear demonstration: A being therefore that has not all other beings inserior and subordinate to it, cannot be infinitely persect: Whence it is evident, that there is but one God.

CHAP. VII.

Of the vital attributes of God: And, first, . Of the life of God in general.

HE life of any being may be said in general to consist in its having a motion or action proper to it, and which tends to advance, whatever perfection, or power it is capable of.

In the lowest sense, life is attributed to things, which by a motion or action proper to them, are preserved in their natural state. We are to understand the scriptures, as, speaking in this sense, of

living waters.

OF the next order, in the scale of life, are beings, the several parts whereof are adapted to perform their respective sunctions, and contriv'd in such an admirable manner, as to render them capable of nutriment and increase. Under this distinction we place stones, to which life is also attributed in scripture, and minerals, but in a higher and more perfect degree, plants and trees: And it is to the mechanical, tho' inexplicable, motion, whereby the life of these families is preserv'd, that we more especially owe so many external beauties, pleasures, and advantages of this visible world.

But tho' plants and trees, which are of so admirable a construction and use, have their periodical seasons of sourishing and bearing fruit; yet it is no less surprizing to observe, that when they are most of all divested of the appearances and operations of life, they have still the principle of it abiding in them. Thus in the absence of the sun, or in proportion to the degrees of his recess, and the decrease of his influence, they gradually appear to languish, to sicken, and many of them, at length, to die; till in spring the latent powers of life being awaken'd by his nearer approach, and hearing the still voice, as it were, of returning nature, unfold themselves into a wonderful variety of beautiful and beneficial effects.

But in animals, the organs and offices of life are still more curious and astonishing. We observe in them such powers and motions as are much more difficultly accounted for, from any mechanical cause, or modification of their different parts; they move spontaneously from place to place, this way and that way, backwards and forwards; they feed, they grow, and severally propagate their

their kind; they are acted by the impression of distant and foreign objects; they discover not only all the capacities and operations of sense, but the visible effects of passion; of anger and love, of sear and revenge. Whether all these appearances may be accounted for from the infinite wisdom of the divine architect, without our having recourse to any plastick powers, or intelligent beings, in order to inform and direct them, this is not a proper place to enquire. Whatever hypothesis we go upon, the wisdom of God in forming and preserving the springs of life, which is attended with such variety of curious and regular movements in them, is

equally the object of our admiration.

BUT when we ascend yet a branch higher in the tree of life; when we consider that noble being, call'd man, as a living creature; a new and fresh scene of wonder opens itself to us, and in fuch a manner, as still raises our admiration, and, at the same time, puts all mechanical causes entirely out of the question. For here we are conscious of a principle within us, whereby we are freely determin'd in our own motions, without regard to any fensible impression from external objects, which some philosophers think, whatever appearances any animals may have of sensation or reflection, all their motions may be truly refolv'd into: Yet supposing even self-consciousness in men might possibly result from any determinate scheme or construction of the parts of matter, with all the other faculties of understanding and will, as, judging, deliberating, comparing things together, and making them the objects of our choice or dislike; taking it for granted, I say, that all these operations of life could really be resolv'd into certain, tho' to us unknown, laws of mechanism: It must however be acknowledg'd, that they discover the effects of a much more perfect life in man, than in any other visible created being, and consequently the wisdom of the creation still in a more eminent and conspicuous manner.

ESPECIALLY if we add, that by the faculties and action of the mind, from whatever cause or principle they proceed, man is distinguish'd from the rest of the creation by a capacity of examining the grounds of piety and religion, and actually discovering a sense of them to others. There is nothing of this observable in other creatures; whatever faint resemblances they may shew in some instances of reason, there is not the least appearance in them of any principle or sentiments of religion; and therefore Cicero justly made this one of the distinguishing characters of man, in opposition to all other beings that have life, that he is a religious animal. By virtue of this faculty of his mind, which I consider as a power slowing from the life of it, he is capa-

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ble of having his conversation in heaven; of maintaining an intercourse with God and the intelligible world; and carrying his views forward, upon material objects, distant beyond what imagination can fully reach, and greater than it can conceive: Nay, he has a power of forming to himself new ideal worlds, and then annihilating them again at pleasure: In a word, he can spread himself, if I may so speak, over the whole creation in a moment: He can climb up into heaven, and go down into hell, and sly to the uttermost parts of the earth at the instant he designs.

THESE are the admirable powers of life, as operating in man; and yet the angels, which excell in strength, are still superior in all these vital and surprizing functions to him; besides that they may probably have certain other modifications of life no less admirable, and concerning which we are not able to form any manner

of idea.

But when by these several steps we ascend to the original source and fountain of life, how infinitely more powerful and perfect must the operations of it still be? Whatever vital powers we observe in the effect, they must of necessity be more eminently contain'd or imply'd in the cause. God only may be said therefore in the strictest sense to live, as operating independently, and having life Those living creatures, which appear to be most free in their actions, and at the same time to act with the greatest force, are only agents in subordination to him, to whose mere favour they entirely owe both their powers, and the capacity of having them continued. He only bath immortality. The perfection of his life renders it equally incapable of any diminution, or accession. He is the living God, and stedsast for ever *. to his years, they Shall not fail t. He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things ‡. In him, we live, move, and have our being **. His work is always perfect ++. He is mighty in strength, and excellent in power ##.

Upon this transcendent excellency of his life, the scriptures peculiarly appropriate to him by way of distinction the name of the living God: And the most solemn act of religious worship, that of an oath, is particularly required in consideration and honour of this attribute: For hereby God does not only denote to us the perfection of his being and operations absolutely; but in opposition to idols, and the vanity of worshipping what has no life, nor any power of life or death. They have mouths, but they speak not;

eyes have they, but they fee not; they have ears, but hear not, neither is there any breath in their mouths: And therefore the prophet Jeremiah makes it an argument, and it is an unanswerable one, that God is the true God, because he is the living God, and an everlafting King. Accordingly the apostles exhorted the people of Lystra, to turn from those vanities, to which their worship was directed, to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the fea, and all that therein is.

We are not, however, to suppose, that the life of God is the result of any previous composition, or union of certain powers modify'd and dispos'd after a manner proper to produce it; but that it is entirely the same with his essence, without cause, or the

concurrence of any thing accidental, or prior to it.

CHAP. VIII. Of the happiness of God.

ROM what has been said concerning the life of God, the perfect and most consummate felicity of his nature is clearly deduc'd: For the happiness of every being consists in the free, vigorous, and uninterrupted exercise of its faculties upon their proper object. If we could suppose, that the contemplation or enjoyment of any thing without could contribute to the happiness of the divine nature, God as the cause of all other beings, and of all their powers and perfections, must necessarily take all that complacency in them, which they are capable of exciting.

But the goodness of his creatures extendeth not to him; he is infinitely, and absolutely happy in the perfections and internal operations of his own nature; he is his own light, and his own object; and as nothing without him is capable of acting upon him, or disturbing his action, he must be happy for ever without allay or intermission, without mixture or measure: Happy in the contemplation and enjoyment of himself, as infinite understanding, and unbounded will can make him: He is the bleffed God *; the king eternal, immortal; the bleffed and only po-

tentate.

FROM this perfection of God, I shall take occasion to infer the credibility and happiness of a future state. As to the life which

we now lead, considering the excellent powers and faculties of human nature, and that so great a part of our time passes away during the intervals of fleep and inaction, we cannot properly be faid to live: For belides these intermissions of life, the powers of our mind are far from operating in any of us, either with that force or facility, whereof they are in their own nature capable. for the true life of the foul, any where in this imperfect state, is to seek for the living among the dead. Those who have gain'd the greatest strength, liberty, and extent of mind, know nothing in comparison equal to the capacity of a reasonable soul. worthy then of the wisdom of God, all whose works are perfect, to conclude, that he has not created such a being, only to expose the defects of his work, and the incapacity of it to attain the ends, for which it is naturally qualify'd; but that he will cause it to live and act one time or other, in a manner more agreeable to the natural powers and qualities of it. This conclusion seems equally necessary in honour to the wisdom, and goodness of God: It appears reconcileable with neither, that he should create man capable, and continually impress on him desires, of attaining a state of happiness, which, if there be no future life, he can never possibly attain. It is much more reasonable, and consistent with our ideas of both these attributes, to believe, that he will, if we make a good use of our liberty, in his due time translate us to a state of happiness, where there is, in his presence, fullness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore.

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CHAP. IX. Of the knowledge of God.

HAT God is an intelligent being, we infer not only from the idea of his perfection in general, but from what has been faid particularly with respect to his life, and happiness; life without understanding, is only so in a lower and very imperfect sense; but happiness without understanding cannot be conceived in any sense.

We farther conclude, that God is an intelligent being, from those visible faculties and effects of knowledge or understanding, that we observe in other beings, and which, since we are not able to account for the origin of them, from any material or mechanical cause, must have originally proceeded from some intelligent cause, cause, and been contain'd in it, after a more perfect and eminent manner.

God has not only discover'd himself to be intelligent, by creating certain immaterial beings endow'd with intelligence; but also by forming the material beings he has created in such an admirable order, and appointing them according to their respective powers or stations to so many admirable uses: For 'tis impossible to account for any organical part of the world, much more for the construction of the whole, and the subserviency all things have towards the common good, upon any principles of mechanism, or scheme of fortuitous motion. But this consideration having occurr'd before, it will not be necessary, that in proving the intelligence of the first cause, I should insist any longer on it; and therefore I shall directly proceed to consider the object of divine knowledge; or what those things are, to which it may be supposed to extend, and after what manner to conceive them.

I. In general, whatever may be known, or can be conceiv'd as an object of knowledge, is the object of divine knowledge. Now the distinction of beings primarily resolving into that of the creator and the creatures, God must not only be suppos'd to have a perfect comprehensive knowledge of himself, or his own essence; but of all his operations, and of all the real, I will add for a reason to be afterwards produc'd, all the possible essects of them.

1. God intimately and in the most perfect manner knows himself. The spirit of God knoweth the deep things of God *. His knowledge being one of his essential attributes, is necessarily as infinite and unlimited as his essence: It is also necessary to that perfection of happiness, which we have attributed to him, that he should perfectly know his own essence; seeing the happiness of every intelligent being, as such, must consist in the free exercise of its understanding upon those objects, which are most proper to it, and worthy of it. If God then do not perfectly know himself, or his own essence, with respect to his several powers and properties, he cannot be perfectly happy, as not having within the scope of his knowledge, the greatest and most excellent object: Or if, in contemplating the perfections of his nature, he could be suppos'd to discover them only by a gradual progression, or in part: His happiness would still be incomplete, in proportion as his knowledge is partial, and not commensurate to its object.

BUT indeed that it is necessary God should have in one entire view, a full, perfect, and adequate knowledge of his own nature and attributes, is evident from his having form'd a design of acting

externally. To instance only in his attributes of wisdom and power; if he did not in the first place perfectly know the capacity and extent of his wisdom, in adapting causes to their effects, or the means to the end, he might have design'd a scheme of things without producing any wife effect, or attaining any end at And again, if he had not known the extent of his power, how wife soever he had been in projecting such a scheme, there might not have been so much as a possibility of perfecting it. conduct, which would argue greater imperfection, than is ordinarily observable in men, who have any reputation for wisdom or contrivance: It being the general character of weak and inconsiderate persons, to propose any end without designing the means proper to effect it, or to attempt any means, which it is not in their power to employ. A procedure, which the gospel, to denote the great imprudence and infignificancy of it, represents by that of a King going to war, without computing whether his force may be superior to the opposition he expects to meet with; or of a man beginning to build, without taking an estimate of his growing expences, or confidering whether he will be able to finish.

2. It is no less evident, that God has a perfect knowledge of all his works, and of all the real and possible effects, that can follow from their several operations. The necessity of his knowing their distinst powers and essential properties, appears from his being the author of them. For fince he did not create or form them by a blind incogitative power, but according to the respective ideas antecedently conceiv'd of them in his own mind; their nature and primary qualities must necessarily have been, and still continue to be in every respect conformable to those ideas. And, for the like reason, it appears, that their several motions and effects must be also perfectly known to him. For since he made them with faculties proper to move and operate, and that not fortuitously, but with design, and to wise ends: If he should not know in what manner, and how far they might be capable of pursuing those ends, he may be frustrated in his design of attaining them; and consequently would appear in the formation of his creatures to have acted without any end worthy of himself, confider'd either as the being that created and gave laws to them, or as having a right to govern and preside over them afterwards. These following conclusions therefore, had we no divine authority for them, feem plainly deducible from the principles of natural reason. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world *. Neither is there any creature, that is not manifest in his sight; but

* Atts 15. 18.

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all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do *.

3. THE knowledge of God does not only extend to things actually existing, but to such, as in the order of causes are to have a such that the existence, whether depending on the operation of natural or

moral agents.

As to things or events, which are to arise from a chain of natural causes, it is more easy to conceive how God should at once perfectly see the whole series or connexion from the beginning to the end of it: There is not much greater difficulty in apprehending this, than how a person moderately vers'd in astronomy, should be able to calculate, for any determinate period, all the suture Eclipses of the sun and moon. But the question, which has been so much controverted by divines, is, how God can be conceived to foresee such events, as depend upon the concourse of moral

agents, or the free determination of human will.

THIS difficulty will be consider'd in another place; all I shall observe at present on occasion of it, is, that tho' we should not be able perfectly to solve it; yet there is a necessity of supposing things of a contingent nature certainly foreknown to God, in order to the vindication of a wife and regular economy in his governing the world. For fince events, which are of the greatest importance in relation to government, depend upon the conduct of free and reasonable agents, should not God foreknow which way they would take, he could not antecedently dispose the order of things in such a manner, as to over-rule their designs or actions, to many wife, and good, and just ends, which the authors of them never so much as thought of, much less intended; nay, which they had rather taken measures directly to frustrate: So that to effect those ends, instead of pursuing a standing scheme or project of government, God would be necessitated at every turn to interpose by an immediate, and miraculous power. Upon which supposition we should be still less able to account for the wisdom or uniformity of his conduct; and one of the greatest beauties of providence, which consists in bringing good out of evil, and order out of consussion, by an over-ruling power, would cease to be the object of our admiration. The great art indeed of human government, consists in knowing the tempers and inclinations of the people, and upon what measures they will most probably, in consequence of them, proceed. This is as far, as the greatest capacity of mind in human governors improv'd by the longest experience, can ordinarily extend. But could we suppose, that their

probable conjectures of any dangerous attempts, could be timely improv'd to a certainty, how many wife dispositions, without waiting for the issue of such an attempt, might be provisionally made towards meeting it, and drawing advantages from it, directly contrary to what it was intended to effect?

If such a foresight would be highly necessary to human governors, to the end, they may better be enabled to judge, whether and to what lengths they should suffer the authors of any dangerous enterprize to proceed in their designs, and when it might be most proper to detect them; much more are we to attribute to God, in honour both to the wisdom, the goodness, and, I may add *, the justice of his conduct, such a prescience, which perfectly represents to him all suture events, how contingent soever

with respect to the cause, from which they may derive.

4. It appears from what has been said, that the knowledge of God extends to all things that have either an actual, or, in the gradual progress of causes, a future existence. Upon which distinction, some have thought, that this attribute may be perfectly established: But others have concluded it necessary to the perfection of it, and not without great appearance of reason, that not only things actual and suture, whether depending on natural or free agents, should be the objects of divine knowledge; but also whatever effects may possibly result from them, or from their several combinations; to which they add, that whatever is a possible object of the power of God, tho' it never had, or can have any existence in or by occasion of the present order of things; yet on that account must be necessarily supposed an object of his knowledge.

It is the more reasonable to assert the knowledge of God in the former respect, since we find our selves capable of concluding on many occasions, with so high a degree of probability, that we term it a moral assurance, what would have happen'd if either natural agents had been dispos'd, or moral agents had proceeded aster a different manner. Now if men may conclude from a supposition so well and strongly founded, as scarce to leave any room for doubt or uncertainty, what things might have happen'd, tho' in fact they never did happen, certainly we ought to attribute this kind of prescience in a much higher and more perfect, or rather

^{*} When I say, that we are to attribute the most perfect foreknowledge to God, in honour to the justice of his government, I by no means intend, as if he could not be suppos'd justly to distribute rewards and punishments, tho' the free actions of men were not really foreknown to him; but only, that by his predisposing the order of things, and at length unfolding it, which he frequently does, in so surprizing a manner, his justice, as in the case of Joseph, is more clearly manifested, and more apt to excite our admiration.

in the highest and most perfect degree to God, who is intimately acquainted with the natural powers of all causes; and consequently sees in the clearest light, which way they would act, and what effects produce upon any supposed change in the order or dis-

position of them.

I observ'd farther, that the knowledge of God has been asserted to extend to all such things, as are possible objects of power, without regard to the present state of things, or any suppos'd tendency of them. If God do not know all things, which his * power may be able to effect, he would not know, what we have before prov'd the knowledge of necessary to him, the utmost perfection of his own nature; more especially he would not know, what, of all other things he can be the least suppos'd ignorant of, the ideas in his own mind; seeing his power does not act by a blind or fortuitous impulse, but in a just and regular conformity to his ideas. This farther consequence will also follow, from our supposing God not to know, whatever his power may be capable of effecting, that it would be possible for him, when he might come in certain cases, to exert his power, to improve in knowledge, or to begin to know what he does not actually know already; as in creating, for instance, what the possibility of will not be deny'd, certain other beings, besides those he has already created, and with distinct powers and faculties from them.

Thus I have severally consider'd the principal objects of know-ledge about which the divine mind is conversant, or whereunto it may be conceiv'd to extend: Except perhaps that in speaking concerning the knowledge God has of his own nature, I omitted to mention his decrees, which without resuming the question, whether they be strictly and entirely one with his essence, or only more immediate immanent operations of it, we are certain must be perfectly known to him: For the decree of God, is a decree of some end or design; but if he do not know what he has decreed, who shall direct or employ the means, which are most proper in the natural tendency of things, towards the execution of

his delign.

THE only particulars, which remain to be consider'd under this head are, how, and according to what order, all things are objected to the divine mind in so sull and perfect a view.

^{*} Le Blanc has propos'd the argument for the necessity of God's knowing the extent of his power in a very clear manner. "Deus propriam potentiam ignorare non potest; nec potest propriam potentiam nosse, quin noverit ad que se extendat, Deus autem præter ea que facit aut facturus est, infinita facere & producere potest; adeòque necesse est, ut dissinità cognoscat infinita posse esse, & sieri, que tamen nunquam sutura sunt. Thes. theol. p. 120.

WE are assur'd in the first place, that the manner wherein the objects of divine knowledge are presented to it, is very different from that imperfect way, which we call discourse or ratiocination; whereby we learn the nature and properties of one thing from the relation which it bears to another; and so are commonly forc'd to pursue a long train of consequences, wherein too some latent fallacy often imposes upon us, before we can come to any conclusion: A way, which is not only apt to tire us with its length, but is of itself too so toilsom and unpleasant, that unless it be with respect to the knowledge of things tending to the preservation or happiness of the animal life, for in this fearch we are generally less sensible to difficulties, few persons have resolution sufficient to undergo the fatigue of it: Or if at first they proceed more resolutely in it, yet afterwards finding the pain much greater than the pleasure or light wherewith their labour is rewarded, they grow discourag'd in their

lucubrations, and are easily induc'd to give them over.

This being one cause of the general prevalence, both of ignorance, and error among men, I shall add a word or two more towards explaining the reasons of it. Every man would be knowing, and capable of making a right judgment in all things. Every man, at the same time, hath an invincible desire to be happy, and would always be actually happy. Now actual happiness, which is always attended with a sensation of pleasure, being inconsistent with that actual pain, which the mind feels in the pursuit of knowledge; especially in the first essays towards it, these two desires must of necessity very often interfere: And the motion of that defire, which carries a man towards knowledge, commonly proves too weak for that which carries him towards happiness; a happiness, that proposes to him present delight and satisfaction. are not then to wonder, if men have not always patience to undergo the labour of the mind, till they deserve the recompence they seek after, or to follow a distant and imperfect view of truth, till they come gradually at last to the place of her habitation; but, on the other hand, chuse rather to turn their thoughts from such dry and difficult speculations, upon the more substantial (for so the senses and imagination never fail to represent them) and present pleasures, or affairs of human life; while to others perhaps, who are of a lazy and indolent temper, it appears more eligible wholly to neglect the culture or improvement of their minds in any kind, and to pass away their time in a course of vain and idle amusements, or even as much as is possible, in thinking of nothing.

THESE reflections are not altogether foreign to my present subject or design, but tend to shew us, in a stronger light, the necesfity of removing all such defects from the divine mind, which render the means of acquiring knowledge so tedious and painful,

and the possession of it so very impersect to men.

From all which considerations, this manner of defining the knowledge of God with respect both to the exercise and capacity of it, appears most agreeable to the infinite perfection of his nature, that it does not only take in the several species of beings, but all their relations, modes, powers, and properties, at once; and not as human understanding goes to work, by formal inferences or deductions from things more known, to things that are less known, or from an alternate comparison of causes and effects,

but by direct and immediate intuition *.

If we would indeed still aspire towards having more distinct apprehensions concerning the manner how things are objected to the divine mind, or conceiv'd by it, we should rather consult that operation of our own minds, which we call simple apprehension, than that which is term'd discourse or argumentation. may descend yet, in order to illustrate in some measure the subject of our enquiry, to a lower faculty of sense, but the most noble and capacious of all the sensitive faculties, that of seeing. We experience, that the eye is capable of taking in a great variety of objects, and almost at an immense distance, severally, and at once; tho' the passage at which they enter is very small, and seems, in comparison both of their magnitude, number, and their respective distances, wholly disproportionate. We may from hence form fome imperfect apprehensions, how the immense God, who is every where present, and whose eyes are in every place, should in one full immediate view, see the whole order of things, with their several powers and operations.

It is from the distant resemblance which sight bears to the faculty of knowing in the mind, that by a common metaphor, it is so naturally us'd to express knowledge; and that particularly in the holy scriptures, tho' the like forms of expression are usual in prophane authors, it is said, that all things are naked and open to the eyes of God; that he looketh unto the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven: With a more especial regard to man, that he looketh on the heart, and seeth him in secret; and that there is no darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of

iniquity may bide themselves from him.

^{*} This definition is highly agreeable both to the doctrine of the schoolmen, and the fathers, particularly that of St. Augustin. " Deus non particulatim vel sigillatim omnia vi-" det velut alternante conceptu binc illuc, inde buc; sed omnia videt simul. De Trin. 1. 15. c. 14.

As to the order, or those distinct acts, which we attribute to the divine knowledge, to the end we may form more clear and distinct conceptions of it, divines have commonly supposed two, and many of them three several ways, whereby things are objected to the divine intellect, and apprehended by it.

of our conceiving it, to any act of the will; whereby in one clear, full, and naked view, God sees himself and every other being, with all their modifications, and whatever effects they really shall, or

may possibly produce in time.

2. The other way is that of vision, alluding to the objects of fight, which must of necessity have an actual * existence, for the eye cannot see what is not; this way is in order of our conception, posterior to that act of the divine will, whereby God decreed whatever he would do or permit to be done, and which conformably to his decree, perfectly represents to him the series and

manner of their being done.

3. But it is also thought necessary to the perfection of the divine knowledge, and the reasons for it have been sufficiently established before, that we should attribute to God, what divines call a middle science, as falling neither directly under the one or other of the foregoing distinctions, but partaking in certain respects of both. What is objected in this way to the divine intellect, is not any thing really existing, or that has now a possibility of existing, but what might have happened on supposition God had established another scheme of things; and more especially if moral agents had made another use of their liberty than they have now actually done. But this kind of knowledge concerning the possibility of what might have happened in time past, differs very little from that knowledge, and consequently, from the order of it, wherein God sees things that are possible in suture time.

^{*} Aquinas has explain'd the reason of this distinction very well. " Quedam verd sunt, que sunt in potentià Dei, vel creature, que tamen nec sunt, nec erunt, neque fuerunt; & respectu borum non dicitur babere scientiam visionis, sed simplicis intelligentie, quod ideo dicitur, quia ea que videntur apud nos, babent esse distintium extra videntem. Prima prie me. Quest. 14. artic. 9.

Chap. X. Of the wisdom of God.

THE wisdom of God may be defin'd his practical knowledge; and for this reason it may perhaps be thought, that we should rather consider it, under the head of his moral attributes, and as being conversant, for in that the idea of moral virtue consists, about such things, as are sit, or not sit to be done: Yet this attribute having so immediate a connexion with his knowledge, and sollowing it in so natural an order of our ideas, I chuse, according to the common method, to consider it in that order, as an intellectual virtue, which yet presides over all the other virtues, and directs the time when, and the manner how they ought to proceed and operate.

We may say then, in order to our forming more distinct ideas concerning the knowledge and wisdom of God, that his knowledge considers things by way of pure speculation, absolutely as they are, or as they may exist, with their respective powers, relations, and possibilities; his wisdom considers things in order to operation; and whether, or upon his determining to act, at what time, and after what manner, so as to conduce most to the advancement of his honour and glory, they ought to be effected.

Now the same methods of arguing, whereby we prov'd the knowledge of God, naturally leads us, and with equal evidence

and certainty, to prove this attribute of wisdom.

i. If we argue from the visible effects of wisdom, as communicated, after however imperfect a manner, to men, we must of necessity have recourse to some first cause or original, wherein wisdom more eminently resides. This argument, I grant, does not directly prove the absolute perfection of the divine wisdom, but only that, upon the comparison, God is wiser than man; which considering the many desects of human wisdom, that the thoughts of the wise are but vain, and that the affectation of being thought-wise*, discovers the highest vanity, man is capable of. Upon these, or the like considerations, we may be charg'd with doing no great honour to the divine wisdom, in deducing the proof of it, from those faint essays and appearances of wisdom, which we are able to discover in men. To which I need not return any other answer, but that wisdom, the perfection whereof

will appear from other considerations, is in general, what I am only at present to shew, an attribute belonging to God: And in this way of arguing from the effect to the cause, Cicero concludes very justly, man is wise, and therefore God is wise *. An inference form'd upon the same rational grounds with the following passages in holy writ. He that teacheth man knowledge, Shall not he know †? Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts, or, who hath given understanding to the heart ‡? God giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding **.

2. If we argue from the visible effects of wisdom, in the wonderful formation and order of things, we discover a farther necesfity of accounting for them from the operation of a most wise and intelligent being: We observe that things are not only made with respect to the whole system, according to the exactest scheme, and most conformable to geometrical proportion, which wisdom could have contriv'd, in number, weight, and measure; but that there is not the least organiz'd part of the creation, separately consider'd, wherein we do not discover a wise and curious contrivance altogether superior to the most elaborate or possible effects of hu-The method I pursue obliges me here to repeat, what I have had occasion to say in other words before: But there are, after all, no words or expressions, which represent the wisdom of God, as conspicuous in his works, in so strong, so lively, but withal so natural a manner, as those of the holy scripture in any of the respects I have mention'd.

IF we consider the excellency or superiority of divine wisdom, in a comparative sense, what words can be more proper to confirm this observation, than those of the prophet Isaiah? Who hath measur'd the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him in the path of †† judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding ##? The expostulations of holy Job on this occasion are no less moving and elegant. Who, fays he, hath dispos'd the whole world *? Behold God exalt-

^{*} Sapiens est homo, & proterea Deus.

^{**} Dan. 2. 21.

† Psal. 94. 9, 10.

† By judgment, is not here to be understood any moral or judicial act, but the practical knowledge of disposing things after the most regular and best manner. What Musculus observes upon the place is very just. "Intelligitur per semitam judicii, ratio" reste gerendæ rei. Von judicii non est bic posita, de scientia judiciaria, sed significat quod est restum, & cum discretione prudenter sastum.

^{*} Job. 34. 13. ‡‡ Isaiah 40. 12, 13, 14.

eth with his power, who teacheth like him? Who hath enjoin'd him his way *? But one of the most entire and compleat essays upon the wisdom of God, that is extant in the world, and compos'd with a spirit suitable to the greatness and sublimity of the subject, is the twenty eighth chapter of this admirable author. Where, says he, after having produc'd many surprizing instances of it, shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding? Then proceeding to observe, that it is neither to be found in the land of the living, nor to be purchas'd, as he proves by a most beautiful and just induction of particulars, with the most rich and valuable effects of merchandize, he at length directs us, where we may feek for the original source of it. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof: For he looketh unto the ends of the earth, and feeth under the whole heaven. make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the water by measure, when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the light-

ning of the thunder.

THE holy penmen are no less eloquent, when they speak of the wisdom of God, or design an illustration of it, consider'd in a more absolute sense; tho' the forecited author discovers every where a peculiar happiness in the beauty and boldness of his images; yet there is no part of his work, wherein he appears more desirous to shine, than when he sets himself to describe the furprizing effects of divine wildom in the creation and order of things: He tells us, that God alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the Sea: He maketh Arcturus, Orion, und Pleiades, and the chambers of the fouth: He doth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number †. Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening; he witholdeth the waters, and they dry up; also be sendeth them out, and they over-run the earth ‡. He firetcheth out the north over the empty place, and bangeth the earth upon nothing: He bindeth up the waters in the thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are aftonish'd at his reproof. He divideth the sea with his power; by his spirit he hath garnish'd the heavens. Lo these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him; but the thunder of his power, who can understand **?

^{*} Job 36. 22, 23. † Ch. 9. 8, 9, 10. ‡ Ch. 12. 14, 15. ** Ch. 26. 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

It it is not necessary for me to recite all the beautiful and noble passages in the book of Job to this purpose; yet there is one of them, which in regard both to the strong light, wherein it is represented to the mind, and the irrelistible force it has of penetrating the heart, I cannot here omit the recital of. The occasion of it indeed was the greatest and most weighty, which could possibly have happen'd, or can be conceiv'd. God is introduc'd, as out of the whirlwind, expostulating after this manner with Job, concerning the wildom of his works, in his own person. Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? Declare if thou hast understanding. Who hath land the measures thereof if thou knowest? Or who hath firetched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastned; or who hath laid the corner stone thereof? When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy: Or who hath shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth as if it had issued out of the womb *? The whole chapter, with that which follows, is full of the same moving sentiments and expressions, and seems to afford us a proper occasion of justifying one of the strongest images, which Job, or any other writer has made use of; and whereby he represents his heart, while he is contemplating the wonderful works of God, as being mov'd out of its place t.

The royal prophet is also very copious, edifying, and sublime upon this head, but I shall not make any citations from him; those who, in particular, will consult the hundred and fourth psalm, will observe, with admiration, a most just and beautiful train of thoughts, in his displaying the manifold wisdom of God, from the variety of his works, with their several properties, rela-

tions, and dependencies upon one another.

3. But how conspicuously soever the wisdom of God may shine in his works, yet all creatures being finite, and bearing no proportion to the cause from which they derive; we must seek for a direct proof of God's being infinitely wise, not in any thing, or all the things put together, without him, but in the infinite perfections of his own nature. If wisdom be a perfection, the consequence is clear to demonstration, that it must be infinite in a being infinitely perfect. But besides this general proof, that God is infinite in all his attributes, the infinity of his wisdom seems necessarily to follow from that of his knowledge in particular. The reason, why wise men, as we sometimes esteem them, often discover great weakness in their schemes or designs, does always proceed, where there is no moral defect, either from their want of

^{*} Job 38. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

knowledge or attention. They cannot perfectly discover the properties, or see the secret springs, relations, and consequences of things; and for that reason must inevitably on many occasions make wrong judgments, and in pursuance of them, take wrong measures. Neither where men are naturally more capable of judging right, can they be always in a disposition to attend to a long train of practical rules, or to examine and lay things together, with that care and application, which the nature of them may require. The mind, which by use and exercise has gain'd the greatest strength and liberty, yet cannot labour incessantly, or preserve itfelf continually free from the incursion of foreign thoughts and amusements; especially under any difficult or afflicting circumstances of life, which above all other distractions, are apt to confound the ideas of the mind, and to render it incapable either of seeing things in a true light, or pursuing them in a proper and regular method.

But the perfection of the divine knowledge is absolutely inconfistent with the like defects, whether we suppose them natural or incidental to men. As God perfectly knows his own essence, and all the powers and properties of things, with the whole series of causes and essects; so he knows them with the greatest facility, and without any possible interruption, at once. Nothing, therefore, can be supposed to hinder his wisdom from being of the same extent in

the operation of it, with his infinite knowledge.

These are such notices of the divine knowledge and wisdom, as by the natural light of our minds, we are in some measure capable of attaining to. Notices, which, tho' they do not perfectly enable us to comprehend these attributes, yet are sufficient to evince the truth, and excite our admiration of them. But the force whereof cannot be express'd in more proper or moving terms, than in those of the * apostle, wherewith I shall therefore conclude this head. O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord; or who hath been his counsellor?

^{*} Rom. 11. 33, 34.

CHAP. XI. Of the will of God.

In respect to the will of God, another of his vital attributes; two things are principally to be consider'd; first, a power imply'd; secondly, the egress or reduction of that power into act. The power imply'd in the will of God, is that attribute of life, whereby we conceive him antecedently endow'd with a capacity of determining himself to do or decree what he pleases; the act of willing, is his free and effectual determination, by virtue, or rather, perhaps, it should be said, in consequence of that capacity. There is indeed another acceptation of the will of God, whereby it is understood to denote the thing willed, or what he declares to be his will. But this distinction concerning the divine will, how frequent soever both in common use, and the holy scriptures, I shall but barely mention, as being foreign to the present purpose.

What I chiefly intend, is to affert the perfect and absolute freedom of the divine will, in all such cases, as would import no imperfection, upon our supposing it absolutely free. For that God should by an antecedent necessity in the reason of the thing, love himself, or will his own happiness, is what the perfection of his nature invincibly requires; and his not being free to determine his choice either way, is no more an argument against the freedom of his will, than his not being able to deny himself, or to work contradictions, is an argument against the infinite extent of his

power.

But tho' the operations of the divine life, are in certain refpects, and, for the reason I have mention'd, necessary, as being essential to the divine nature; yet we can by no means infer from hence, that God is not absolutely free in all his determinations or volitions concerning such things, as are not essential to his nature, whether relating to the internal or transient acts of it.

THOSE indeed who make the decrees of God entirely and identically one with his essence, quite destroy the former of these distinctions, but, at the same time, they also destroy the freedom of his grace in such decrees, and make them essents, not of a deliberate choice, but of the most absolute necessity, that can be conceived. If his essence be necessary, and his decrees the same with it, they must, by an unavoidable consequence, have absolutely one and the same necessary foundation.

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We must admit the transient acts, as they are call'd, of the divine will, to be more evidently consistent with the entire freedom of it, as they still appear to be more accidental to the divine nature, and could not proceed by way of necessary or essential emanation from it: For then such an emanation must not only have been eternal, but it had been absolutely impossible for God to have form'd his creatures at any other time, or in any other order or manner, than he has actually done; nay, it would, upon this supposition, be impossible for him to interpose in the government of his creatures, by any different, or other directions of his will, than those whereby he has been for ever necessarily determin'd.

But this is not the only reason, upon which we affert the freedom of the divine will, both as oppos'd to external coaction, or any necessary previous determination from within. We think that a power of chusing the time, place, and manner of action, implies independency, and is in general attended with an idea of per-Those who argue against liberty, from a suppos'd impossibility in the nature of the thing, will grant, I conceive, that were it really possible in the sense, we contend for, it would be more eligible than necessity in their sense. Now this very concession, the reasonableness whereof cannot be disputed, argues liberty to be a perfection; and if so, it must belong to a being, whom our adversaries, as to this point, some of them at least, will not deny to be infinitely perfect; whatever sophisms, for they can be no other, may be brought against the possibility of it: Except it should be faid, which would imply an impossibility indeed, that we may be capable of conceiving a perfection, which, in the nature of it, is incapable of subsisting.

FREEDOM of will is not only in itself possible, which I shall shew more particularly, when I come to treat of human will; but there seems to be one case, wherein we must either necessarily allow, that God is persectly free either to act or suspend action, or else conclude, that he is incapable of coming to any resolution. Suppose then that God, in his infinite wisdom, and amidst an infinite variety of designs, should propose some end to himself, towards which he sees two ways equally conducing; if he always act necessarily, and only in pursuance of some previous direction of his understanding, he cannot in this case proceed to any action at all: For the will having no motion of itself, and the understanding seeing no reason to take one way, rather than the other, it must remain for ever in a persect suspence, without inclining or determining itself either way.

Notwithstanding then God always chuses to do, what is wife, and just, and good, and agreeable to the light of his under-standing;

standing; yet that light is not the necessary cause of his choice or action, both which he can suspend, whatever ideas in his own mind may be proper to excite or occasion them; but they are primarily to be refolv'd, and herein the radical freedom of his will feems to confift, into the power he has of acting or not acting conformably to those ideas: Or if such a case should happen, where he might propose to effect any end by different means, the reasonableness and propriety whereof, appear equal on both sides, then his liberty consists in the power he has of determining himself, as he pleases, on either side, without any other reason.

From all which we may form this conclusion *, that the liberty of the divine will does not formally consist either in a spontaneous motion of it, or an immunity from an external coaction, or even in a power of chusing what reason in the last decision of it reprefents most eligible; for the freedom then would not lie so much in the will, as in the understanding, which the will would be necessitated to follow the determination of: But the freedom of the divine will imports so perfect and absolute a freedom of choice, that all requisite circumstances being rightly dispos'd for action, and the understanding having previously determin'd concerning the propriety or fitness of it, God may still proceed at pleasure to act, or may wholly suspend action.

I shall only observe, that the terms in scripture concerning the perfect freedom of God's will, are highly agreeable to those, wherein I have endeavour'd to represent the nature of it, in the foregoing conclusion. It is express'd, by the determinate counsel of Godt, the hand and counsel of Godt, and the good pleasure of God, which he hath purpos'd within himself **. Expressions strongly denoting his power and independency in all the determinations, upon which he proceeds to exercise the acts of his goodness towards his creatures, and which the apostle therefore very naturally represents

** 'Eudoxía të θεε. Ephef. 1. 9.

by

^{*} I had not the author, to whom I owe this conclusion, by me, when I drew it up, but think my self here oblig'd to cite his own words, which represent it in so much better a light. "Libertas hæc, quia voluntatis proprietas est, persettissima etiam in Deo, statuere, necesse est. Ita ut non sola spontaneitas,—secundum quam Deus libere dicatur velle, quon-do id vult, quod sibi libet aut lubet, spontaneitas enim summa esse potest necessitas; (summum enim bonum etiam sponte amatur) nec sola immunitas ab omni coactione, voluntas enim ut cogatur prorsus impossibile est; sieri enim non potest, ut voluntas nolit, quod vult, aut velit, quod non vult. Nec potestas eligendi aut sequendi id omne, quod ratio consultatione factà, conducibilius judicat; sive potestas, quam præcedit judicii differentia; sic enim libertas voluntatis non esset, nisi extrinseca quædam denominatio, que voluntati ab istà judicii differentia tribucretur. Proinde non proprietas voluntatis, in qua ista judicii indiffe-rentia est.— Quid ergo? Necesse est ut libertas bæc dicatur esse ejusmodi voluntatis perce fectio; qua fit, ut voluntas positis omnibus ad agendum requisitis, & posito quolibet judico cio in intellectu, nibilominus tamen aliter possit agere; & aut boc, aut illud agere. Episcop. instit. theol. p. 305, 306. + Atts 2. 23. † Ch. 4. 28.

by the power which the potter has over bis clay *; than which no illustration in nature could have been contriv'd more apt to express the power of a choice perfectly free from every thing, that might on any account be suppos'd previously to determine it.

CHAP. XII. Of the power of God.

NOTHER vital attribute of God, which has an immediate connexion with that of his will, is power: And indeed of all other affections of life, power seems more especially to constitute the idea of it, and is that, wherein we principally apprehend it to consist.

THE proof of this article, that power belongeth unto God †, depends upon his being the creator of all things, and his forming them respectively, in so great variety, according to the different magnitude, figure, and situation, from which so admirable an or-

der of the whole system results.

If in building this vast and magnificent temple to his honour, we could suppose him to have made use of any engines, or mechanical instruments, what notions must we have of the force necessary to raise even but one of the fix'd stars, and to place it at a distance, which is thought almost incredible, in its proper orb? What idea shall we be able to form of the hand, which fashion'd it behind and before, and gave it in all respects the figure and dimensions proper to it?

Thus if we argue, by way of allusion to the usual methods of erecting any structure built by the hands of men, to that glorious and amazing structure, whose maker and builder is God; we cannot avoid forming the strongest apprehensions of his power; especially when we consider, that he had no assistant, or subordinate agent in his work, but he stretched forth the heavens alone, and

spread abroad the earth by himself ‡.

But if God, instead of making any previous dispositions, or employing any instrumental means towards the construction of his work, only spoke, and it was done; or with respect to the existence of the several parts which compose it, only commanded, and they

^{*} Rom. 9. 21.

were created, this gives us still a more lively and strong idea of his power, than imagination can give, from any supposed use he might make of artificial tools, or, could a place have been found for fixing them, of the most prodigious machines.

YET some persons, I know, have made it a question, whether the world being finite, notwithstanding the vast extent of it, the greatness, the distance, and disposition of its several nobler parts, the insinite power of God can be directly concluded from the formation

of it.

To which it is answer'd, that if by the formation of the world be only understood the order wherein it subsists, tho' there are most stupendous effects of power conspicuous in it, yet we cannot from hence absolutely infer infinite power. But if by the formation of the world be imply'd the bringing things which were not into a state of existence, this seems a more direct proof of the infinity of such a power in the utmost extent of the word; there can be no reason given why the power of God, whereof all things are the effect, should be limited or restrain'd from doing any thing. A power of giving existence to that, which had none before, being evidently every where the same, what should hinder, according to any possible conception we can form, but that God may exert his power towards creating more worlds in any extramundane spaces, as well, and with equal facility, as he exerted it in that part of space, wherein the present world was created?

If it should be true then, that a power less than infinite might have form'd a finite world; yet it does not follow, that a power less than infinite could have created a finite world: A power of creating things, is such a power as neither stands in need of any instruments to work with, there being nothing antecedently to work upon, nor whose action can possibly be hinder'd, there being no-

thing to oppose it.

But might it not do disservice to religion, even to suppose any power less than infinite capable of forming the world? To this I answer, that an infinite power in the nature of the thing, cannot be directly concluded from a finite effect, tho' a finite effect may proceed from the action of a being infinitely powerful: The exercise of whose power, being under the direction of his free will, he is not always oblig'd to act according to the utmost force and extent of it: Yet so far natural reason may certainly conclude from this wonderful system of things, that if it be not the immediate effect of God's power, it must be immediately, at least, the effect of a power deriv'd from him, and acting in subordination to him, whereby all the ends and purposes of religion will be equally sav'd.

However,

However, the direct proof of omnipotence seems rather to arise from a power of creating things out of nothing, than from the most admirable construction of them: And there is this peculiar in the consideration of a creative power, that whereas we must have recourse to the infinite perfection of the divine nature in general, to prove the infinite perfection of certain particular attributes of God, of his knowledge and wisdom, for instance, which cannot be fully demonstrated from their effects; yet this attribute of infinite power seems clearly, and by direct consequence, demonstrable, from that effect of it, which I have mention'd.

THE object of divine power is every thing, which can be conceiv'd possible to any power, or that does not either in its own nature imply a contradiction, or some plain repugnancy to the

perfections of the divine nature.

r. Things which in themselves imply a contradiction, as that a fact, which has been, may not have been, or that a body may be extended and not extended, in a place and not in a place, at the same time: Such things, I say, do not import the least defect in the divine power, from the natural impossibility of their consistence. Nay, the very supposition, that any power might work contradictions, would destroy the very idea and proof of that power; for then such a power, by parity of reason, may be, and yet may not be. It is therefore so far from being a diminution to the divine power to assert the impossibility of its extending to things in their own nature contradictory, that we are oblig'd to assert such an impossibility, even in honour and vindication of the divine power.

2. NEITHER can any thing be suppos'd possible to the power of God, that is repugnant to his other perfections; as that he should deny himself, or create innocent beings, with an intention of maing them eternally miserable: To ascribe a power to God of doing any thing inconsistent with the eternal rectitude of his nature, is not to render his power the object of greater admiration, which is the design of those, who think no limitations whatever can be fet to it, but to give us more narrow and unworthy conceptions of For such a power, would in the exercise of it, were that posfible, plainly imply, not a perfection, but a most notorious defect. Besides, that a power, whose operation is contrary to the brightest ideas we have of the divine attributes, cannot be a power acting in subordination to the will of God, or under the regulation of his wisdom, but a power without reason, and without any imaginable cause, foreign or internal, of its action. In a word, seeing all the attributes of God are effentially the same, a power in him, which tends to destroy any other attribute of the divine nature, must be a power destructive of itself.

I shall

I shall only add in reference to both the foregoing considerations, that if God either can work contradictions, or do any thing inconsistent with his own essential perfections, all the motives of credibility or faith, supposing he has made a revelation of his will to mankind, would be quite overthrown. If what may be, may not be, we can have no assurance that he has made any such revelation; or if he has reveal'd his will, yet if he be capable of acting contrary to the essential perfections of his nature, in particular that of his veracity, what he has reveal'd may, after all, not

be his will, but directly contrary to it.

Others have been no less injurious to the power of God, in supposing it defective, those who deny that God cannot possibly do any thing, but what he does, or in any other manner, and maintain that all things come to pass by a series of causes, which it is not possible for him to alter or obstruct, narrow our conceptions of his power, as others would extend them too wide. Our prayers, upon this supposition, were it not absolutely inconfistent with that liberty of the divine will, which we have afferted, would be only a more folemn infignificant facrifice. If we pray; for instance, and the reason equally holds, as to any prayer of petition, for the removal of some impending evil, either it is in the power of God to remove it, or it is not; if it is not, our prayers are to no manner of purpose; if he can remove the evil we deprecate, and yet is necessarily determin'd in his actions, it would of necessity be remov'd, whether we should pray to him to that end, or not.

This attribute of power being proper to possess our minds with the greatest sentiments of the divine majesty, and to give us the most awful impressions of a religious fear and reverence, the holy penmen every where speak of it in magnificent and suitable terms. In the Lord Jehovah is everlafting strength, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth *. Declare his glory among the heathen, his marvellous works among all nations: For great is the Lord, and greatly to be prais'd; he is also to be fear'd above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Glory and bonour are in his presence, strength and gladness are in his place. Give unto the Lord ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength +. But no words can exhibit a more strong or lively image of the power of God, than those of the prophet Isaiah. Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold, he taketh up the isles, as a very little thing: All nations before him are as nothing,

and

^{*} Isaiab 26. 4. Rev. 19. 6. + 1 Chron. 16. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him *?

CHAP. XIII.

Of the moral attributes of God in general.

HE proper notion of a moral agent, is, that he acts, or ought to act, in conformity to some law; as the observance whereof would be attended with a certain dignity and easy state of mind, so shame and disorder would be the natural consequences of violating it.

Now tho' God, as the supreme Lord and creator of all things, cannot be prescrib'd to, or directed by any thing without himself; yet his own nature, in the essential perfection of it, is an eternal

and inviolable law to himfelf.

And in this respect indeed there is a considerable difference, between the moral obligations of men, and those actions of a moral nature, which we attribute to God. Man may have several commands impos'd upon him, under the character of a moral agent, concerning things, which are not antecedently founded in any moral reason, but depend wholly on the positive and arbitrary will of God. The right of creation and government gives the supreme being a power of enjoining such indifferent things, tho' he should not assign, or we be able to discover any explicit reasons for them. But there are other things depending on the eternal rules of reason, the universal and sovereign law, whereby all intelligent beings are, or should be govern'd, that have the force of a moral obligation in them, I would be understood in a becoming sense, both to God and man: For reason is the law of order, which determines what is right or wrong, good or evil, decent or disagreeable; the law, which God himself invincibly loves and follows, and without which we could have no notion worthy of him as God.

AND whereas God possesses reason in the highest and most perfect degree, and there can be no cause within or without him to obstruct its operations, he must in all his moral actions, pursuant to the light of it, be proportionably, and in the most perfect degree,

a moral

^{*} Isaiab 40. 15, 17, 18.

a moral agent. Except it should be faid, which indeed some men have been so unreasonable as to say, that the distinction of right and wrong, good and evil, decent and unbecoming, does not arise from any antecedent principles of reason, but merely from positive subsequent institution; which would be in effect to affirm, that there is really no such thing as reason: For not to anticipate, what I am to shew at large under one of my general heads, if we do not clearly see the natural reason of distinguishing between these things, there appears to be nothing which we can certainly conclude from any method of reasoning.

But how transcendent soever the moral perfections of the divine nature may be, when compar'd with those of men, or any other intelligent beings, there appears no evident reason, why we should conclude, as a great * prelate has done, that the moral attributes of God are of a different nature from those we observe in men. For we consider things as of a different nature, not which are different in degree, but which differ in kind. Now if the reasons of just, good, and fit, have the same foundation in the divine, that they have in a human mind; or, in other words, if it be reasonable, that God, when he determines himself to act, should do what is agreeable to the general rules of justice, goodness, and prudence, then those reasons or rules, with the proper acts arising from them, are the same in respect both to God and man in the relations, how much soever they may differ in the degrees of perfection.

Again, if the moral attributes of God be not founded in the same general reasons with those of men (and if they be so founded, the nature of them is still the same) then it would be imposfible for us to form any distinct notions of the divine attributes, or rather any notions at all, but what would be very irregular and For they being no farther of a moral consideration, than as we apprehend them reasonable in themselves, if we do not know what common reasons to resolve them into, we at once destroy the morality of them, and all possible methods of reasoning What grounds, I say, can we have upon any principles of natural religion to attribute certain perfections to God, whereof we are not able to discover any natural reason; which yet it is impossible for us to do, without knowing what they are, in some imperfect manner at least, in their own nature.

I shall only add, since I am arguing on occasion of what has been advanc'd by a learned person in one of the first stations of the church, that when God refers it, our selves being judges, whe-

^{*} The Archbishop of Dublin, in his sermon preach'd before the Lord Lieutenant. ther Kk

ther his ways are not equal, if we are not to judge concerning the equality of them, according to our common notions of what is just and right, the design of such an appeal would be altogether impracticable. Neither could we be capable, as both reason and his positive commands require we should, of imitating his perfections, did we not know, wherein his perfections consist; an unknown object of imitation evidently implying as great an inconsistency, as an unknown object of desire.

THESE reflections, I hope, will not render me obnoxious to any charge of being wanting in a just deference to the archiepiscopal character; my design in them is only to prevent such ill effects, as a great name recommended with much erudition may have, towards misleading us in our reasonings upon the moral perfections of God; in the clear and distinct conceptions whereof, the only solid foundation is laid, both of faith in him, and obedience to his laws: For want of which therefore, very great errors in doctrine, and corruptions in practice, have been too frequently occasion'd.

We grant indeed there are certain moral virtues in men, for instance, sobriety, temperance, and chastity, which, as they imply some defect in the reasons of them, are by no means to be attributed to the most perfect being. But yet even such qualities are founded in this general reason of a moral action, that they are agreeable to the present state of man, and necessary to his perfection. As the moral attributes of God are conformable to the eternal reason and perfection of his own nature; so these virtues, tho' only of a more accidental consideration, are term'd moral in men, as they are reasonable in regard to the present condition of human nature, and, in their direct tendency, perfective of it.

CHAP. XIV. Of the holiness of God.

HEN we descend to consider the moral attributes of God more distinctly, that which naturally occurs first to our thoughts, the presiding attribute, if I may so call it, which has the most general influence and direction over all the rest, is holiness; which we therefore indifferently express by purity; a term, denoting the whole being, to which it is apply'd, persectly free

free from all allay and pollution whatever, and not only in relation to certain parts, which may be consider'd as entring into the constitution of it.

But the the holiness of God denotes the purity and rectitude of his nature in general, in opposition to every thing that may not consist with the absolute perfection or simplicity of it; yet we more especially understand by his holiness, his hatred to sin, and an utter impossibility, that he should either be the author of it, or take the least complacency in it; and, by consequence, as was infinuated before, whatever discovery he may make of his will to mankind, whether by the common light of natural reason, or by a special revelation, they must be such as are at once most agreeable to our notions of holiness in him, and tend most effectually to promote it in our selves: For otherways his action, which his wisdom, as well as holiness, requires it should do, would not bear the character of his attributes.

I shall conclude this head, with citing some proper passages out of the scriptures, which attribute holiness to God, in the several

respects I have mention'd. And,

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the Lord is an holy God*. Holy; holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts †. The repetition from whence some learned men have endeavour'd to deduce the doctrine of the Trinity, implies at least to human apprehension, some peculiar eminency, or more general extent of this divine attribute, which is therefore mention'd in another place, as that wherein the divine glory especially consists. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness ‡?

2. As it denotes God's hatred to sin. He is a jealous God, vifiting iniquity **. He is, upon the provocation of sin, a consuming sire ††. He hateth all the workers of iniquity ‡‡. Far he it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the almighty, that

he should commit iniquity *.

3. As God cannot, by way of communication, be the author of sin. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works †. God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man ‡. Say not thou, 'tis through the Lord I fell away, for thou oughtest not to do the thing; that he hateth: Say not thou; he hath caused me to err, for he hath not need of the sinful man **. In which words it is not only imply'd, that God cannot be the author of sin, but two express and unanswerable reasons are assign'd,

why it is impossible for him to be so. The only occasion, upon which we can be suppos'd capable of seducing other persons to sin, is either from some innate love to it, or some accidental advantage we propose to our selves by their criminal compliance. These causes not being incident to God in either respect, as the wise son of Syrach argues very justly, neither can the effects of them be attributed to him.

4. As God cannot take complacency in sin. He is not a God, that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall any evil dwell nigh him *. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity †. The sacrifice, the way, the thoughts of the wicked, are an abomination to him ‡.

5. With respect to the holiness of his law, whether natural or reveal'd. Every word of God is pure **. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ††. The law of God is holy; and his commandment holy, and just, and good ‡‡. I am sensible these expressions primarily refer to the reveal'd law of God; but it being one great end of revelation to establish the principles of morality, upon an express divine authority, and to propose them in a clearer light, than that wherein natural reason was able to discover them in a state of general corruption; our Saviour having moreover declar'd, that he came not to destroy the law, the moral and immutable law of nature, but to sulfil it: Those expressions, which speak of the purity and holiness of God's word, can by no means exclude that natural law, which is written on our hearts, and according to the dictates whereof, those who have not the reveal'd law *, are to be judg'd by a holy and just God.

^{*} Pfal 5. 4. ** Prov. 30. 5. * Rom. 2. 15, 16.

[†] Heb. 1. 13. †† Psalm 19. 7.

[‡] Prov. 15. 8, 9, 26. ‡‡ Rom. 7. 12.

CHAP. XV. Of the justice of God.

His attribute of God differs from his holiness, only as a less general from a more extensive and common principle. The holiness of the divine nature denotes the eternal purity and rectitude of it, absolutely consider'd, whether God had design'd to act externally or not: His justice is principally consider'd in reference to his design of acting externally, and the manner wherein he will proceed with those beings produc'd by his action, that are proper objects of justice. And in this order we can only rank intelligent beings, or beings, if there really be any such, without intelligence, that are capable of happiness or misery, of pleasure or pain. As to all other creatures, the creator has an absolute power to dispose of them at pleasure.

But the case of intelligent beings, in respect to that capacity in them, I have mention'd, of being render'd happy or miserable, is very different: For it cannot, according to any ideas, we have, of what is just and right, consist with the eternal rectitude or justice of the divine nature, that God should create beings with an intention of making the miseries of a state, to which he consigns them, greater, than the enjoyment or complacency, they can

possibly take in it.

THE metaphysical notion concerning the goodness and excellency of entity, or being in general, from which some learned men have endeavour'd to prove, as well as they could, that it were better, upon the whole matter, to be miserable, than not to be at all, is of too nice and subtle a contexture, to be oppos'd to those arguments, which we may draw from experience, concerning any sad or grievous calamity, even in this life, supposing the continuance might be for ever perpetuated to us. The damn'd will reap very little consolation in the slames of hell from such dry maxims; when even here a sense of pain, at the moment it is felt in any violent degree, generally proves too strong for the most curious and refin'd speculations.

God indeed, as the creator of intelligent beings, has a right to treat them after what manner he thinks fit, provided what they suffer does not exceed the benefits of their creation. When their happiness or misery, their pain or pleasure, are but in a reciprocal proportion to each other, they have no reason to complain; the justice of God seems however, strictly speaking, to be safe, tho' it

may be more difficult, perhaps, to account for his wisdom, and especially for his goodness, in creating them. But where any creature is originally design'd to be miserable, and form'd for that very end and purpose, how does the right of such a procedure appear? Not from any consideration of justice; for it is plainly, all circumstances consider'd, injurious (and in that the notion of unjust formally consists) to the being created, and renders the desire, were that possible, of having never been, much more eligible to such a being.

NEITHER can the right of this arbitrary power proceed from the transcendent excellency of the divine nature; for that denoting an external respect to the creatures, presupposes their existence, and cannot therefore primarily found a right over them, but only in consequence of their existing, and the prior right of

creation.

MUCH less does a power seem to arise to God of rendring his creatures miserable, from any notions we are able to form of his goodness: For this requires, that all benefits whatsoever conferr'd by him, should at least be superior, either at the time of his conferring them, or in their natural consequences, to such evils; as he may see cause to inslict.

THE right therefore which God has over intelligent beings, consider'd as subjects of happiness or misery, must originally be founded upon the benefits, which as creatures, they derive from him, and the proper motives to gratitude and subjection arising from

those benefits.

In the natural and common sense of mankind, a benefit confers an obligation, and gives the benefactor still a greater interest in the party oblig'd, according to the greater degree or value of it. Upon this principle, the ties of our subjection, whether to our natural parents, or to our common parent, the civil magistrate, are render'd so much the more binding, and the several acts of disobedience to them, tho' in cases, wherein we are requir'd to be passive, bring upon us a heavier charge of impiety and injustice. But the benefits we have receiv'd from God, being so much greater, than those, we could be capable of receiving from men, and to which indeed we owe the very capacity of being oblig'd by them, the reasons of our subjection to him, are evidently so much the more strong and inviolable.

HERE then we have a natural and obvious reason for that right of God, which subjects mankind to his power and dominion; and, by virtue of which, he may, with the safety of his justice, inslict many temporary, and medicinal pains upon them; but not such, as would render their being or condition more unhappy, than

than if they had never been: For that would not only destroy all the ideas we have of his justice, but all the reasonable motives, from gratitude, of subjection to his will. When therefore the power of God over mankind is represented by that of a potter over bis clay, we are not to extend the comparison farther, than the foundation of it will allow. It argues indeed, that as the potter can form of his clay one vessel to honour, or a more considerable use, another to dishonour, or a meaner use; so God is perfectly free as to all the dispositions of his goodness, and can distribute either his temporal bleffings, or spiritual graces to men, after what manner, and in what different measure he pleases. In pursuance of which distribution, some persons shall in both respects be visibly superior to others. But the confideration of justice being, as we observ'd before, very different from that of goodness, and the clay in the hands of the potter, being in no sense an object of justice, or capable of suffering, no argument can be drawn from the power, which the potter has over it, in prejudice of the divine justice.

To support this notion of a power in God to effect the destruction * of his innocent creatures, for under that character I here consider them, men have been driven to espouse another most dangerous error; that things are not good or evil, antecedently to God's will, but only because he wills them to be so. As des Cartes therefore asserted, that if God had established another order of ideas in the understanding, what is now demonstrably true, might have been demonstrably false; these men contend, that whatever now is morally just, might, if the will of God had so order'd or determin'd it, have been in the nature of it unjust. In short, that he might not only have instituted another form of worship, but one directly contrary to the form he has instituted; that he might have render'd it lawful to lie, and even to blaspheme; and that it depended wholly on his will, and not on the reason of the things commanded, that he did not give us ten commandments, the ve-

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^{*} As I would carefully avoid all equivocal terms, it may not be improper to observe, that by destruction, I do not here mean an extinction of being; God may in strictness of justice, and if there be no other reason to restrain him, annihilate his creatures at pleasure: But I mean, according to the sense, wherein the word is sometimes us'd in scripture, a state of pain and misery; a state to which the consigning innocent creatures, would be to do them an injury, without an equivalent. A superior may, in certain cases, deprive a dependent of privileges, held by his savour; but should he make such a dependent, and without any provocation, more unhappy, than all the benefits he has done him, or ever designs him, can compensate for; how could we reconcile such a conduct with our common notions of justice? Would it not rather tend to give us an idea of cruelty; an idea, of all others, most shocking to the human, and repugnant to the divine nature.

ry reverse of those, which he has prescrib'd for the government

of our lives and actions †.

But I have already obviated the principle, from which these impious consequences are drawn, by what I have said concerning the moral perfections of God in general; I shall only add, that if nothing be morally good or just in its own nature, but only in consequence of the divine will, justice and goodness would be perfections, not essential, but purely accidental to the divine nature; because upon this hypothesis, it depended on the free and sole determination of God's will, whether he would be good and just, or otherways. And what if his will had not so determin'd?

But the power of God over his creatures, as such, is not the only rule of his justice, in dealing with them. He has authority to prescribe such laws to them, as are for their benefit and advantage, and to which he may give the fanction of proper rewards and punishments; all governors having a right of obliging their subjects to obey those laws, which are really for their own happiness; to punish the violation, and to reward, if they see fit, the observance of them. The law, which God has prescrib'd for the government of mankind in general, is that of natural reason and conscience, which, if they violate, they justly render themselves obnoxious to punishment; and the foundation, upon which justice proceeds in punishing them, is, that this law is not only reasonable in itself, and most conducive to their present and future happiness, but they are convinc'd by the natural reports of their own minds that it is so, or at least may be convinced by giving a due attention to them. Those words of the apostle, The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good, are the ordinary language of that master, if we will but hear him, who speaks continually within us's But if we will not hear him, the reasons of justice will still be visible in punishing the wilful contempt of The words again of Moses, if they do not primahis authority. rily refer to the moral law, the eternal law of all rational beings, yet are properly applicable to every person, tho' living in a mere state of nature. The commandment, which the Lord thy God commands thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off: It is not in heaven, that thou Shouldst say, who shall go up for us

[†] This is the doctrine, for which Curcelland, in his differtation against Amyrald, cites the very words of Szydlovius; and the' most of the Calvinistical writers have expresed themselves concerning the power of God over innocent creatures, with greater caution and modesty, than this author of hard name; yet it would not be difficult to prove, by a plain and clear deduction, that those, who believe, God has antecedently to his foresight of what men would do, condemn'd them to everlasting slames, must unavoidably see, and tacitly at least assent to the like consequences.

to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it *.

HERE then is a new scene of justice open'd to us, which represents mankind no longer as objects of the divine justice in a perfect state of innocence, but as moral agents, capable of being punish'd or rewarded, according to their good or evil actions.

YET even upon this view, tho' some men do by an ill use of their liberty render themselves miserable; miserable to such a degree, that it had been happy for them, if they had never been born; we are assur'd, for that reason, their destruction is of themselves, and they have, notwithstanding, these rational grounds to conclude, it is the will of God all men should be sav'd, and come to repentance, that he bears long and patiently with all men in their sins; and seldom or never punishes any sinner, so soon as he deserves punishment. This is a sensible argument, which natural reason affords, that God is not extreme to mark, what is done amis; and it gives us pious grounds to hope, that his justice, far from proceeding according to strict rigour, is temper'd with all the lenity, and savourable allowances, which infinite mercy, without destroying the very nature and our common notions of justice, can admit.

What has been said, is sufficient to give us a general idea of the divine justice, both as it respects innocent creatures, and creatures capable, by their good or evil actions, of reward or punishment. It will be unnecessary, after this, to descend to the more particular cases, wherein this attribute displays itself; those will be considered in relation to the justice of providence: Neither need we insist any farther upon the reasons, why justice must be an attribute belonging to God; the soundation of it in the natural aptitude, order, and relation of things is very evident: I shall only add, that, as for these considerations, we necessarily suppose God always inclined to do what is just, so there is nothing, we can conceive, capable of obstructing, or opposing his inclination.

THERE are men indeed that in general are very sensible of the moral obligations of justice, and desirous of acting conformably to them, who yet in private cases either cannot see the reasons of them, or if they do, yet are unwilling to be determin'd by those reasons.

^{*} Deut. 30. 11, 12, 13, 14.

MEN are not always able to discover with certainty the true relations of just and unjust; the want of evidence, the intricacy of the case, or the specious appearances of reason on both sides, may render the real merits of it impervious to them. At other times, tho' men plainly enough discover, and in a light which sully convinces them, what the rules of justice require them to do; yet there are other rules of their conduct, they have prescribed to themselves, that have a greater power, upon the competition, towards determining their choice, than those, which justice prescribes. But the motives, upon which men are tempted to commit any acts of injustice, may principally be reduced either to those of prejudice against other persons, or a partial regard to some designs or interests of their own, which they are otherways unable to accomplish.

WHAT I would observe from hence, is, that none of these motives to injustice being possibly incident to God, there cannot for this farther reason be supposed any unrighteousness in him. For,

and disagreement, their fitness and inequality, are perfectly known to him: And as his judgments are true and righteous altogether, so his procedure in the execution of them, is exactly correspondent to his knowledge. He is excellent in judgment, and in plenty of justice *.

2. He cannot be capable of any prejudice towards his creatures. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works †. He is one God, the father of us all ‡. He hath made us, and not we our selves, we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture **. He loveth all things, that are, and abhors nothing that he has made; for never would he have made any thing, if he had hated it ††.

3. He cannot be influenc'd in the exercise of his justice, by any considerations of interest, or incapacity of otherways effecting what he designs. Our goodness extendeth not to him ‡‡. His is the greatness, and the power, and the majesty, and the glory; all that is in the heaven, and in the earth, is his *. Doth God then pervert judgment; or doth the almighty pervert justice †? In which forcible interrogation is tacitly imply'd the reason, why God cannot do any thing that is unjust, and resolv'd into his absolute and independent power of effecting all things. It is from the same natural principle that he argues in another place: Far be it from

^{*} Job 37. 23. ** Psalm 100. 3. * 1 Gbron. 29. 11.

[†] Pfalm 145. 9. †† Wifd. 11. 24. † Job 8. 3.

[‡] Ephes. 4. 6. ‡‡ Psalm 16. 2.

the almighty, that he should commit iniquity *. For I cite these passages, not as spoken by the Spirit of God, but as speaking agreeably to the nature of things, and the common apprehensions and reason of mankind.

Chap. XVI. Of the veracity of God.

In what I have to say concerning this attribute, I shall consider it, not only in relation to such external discoveries as God may make of truth, or of his will to mankind, but in the greatest latitude, the word can be suppos'd capable of, as it implies truth in the internal acts or operations of the mind; and to the end we may have more clear and distinct notions concerning the veracity of God in this large sense, I shall observe, according to the following method,

I. That it imports a perfect conformity of ideas in the divine mind to such objects, about which it may be conceived to affirm or deny any thing, whether internally, or by some external sig-

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II. THAT it imports more especially a perfect conformity of such propositions, as God, if he pleases, may signify externally, not only to the ideas of his mind, but to the intention of his will.

III. THAT it imports fincerity in all such exhortations, and fidelity as to all such promises, which he may be supposed to make to his creatures. Thoe we have not examined the proofs of divine revelation, yet there being nothing implyed in it, repugnant to the perfections of God, or the nature of the thing, no just objection can lie, against our arguing, upon supposition of it.

I. There is a perfect conformity of ideas in the divine mind to such objects, about which it may be conceived to affirm or deny any thing, whether internally, or by some external signification. In the former respect, as truth consists in knowing precisely the nature of things, with all the relations of equality or perfection between them, God only is true; and it may be said strictly, and without a figure, every man is a lyar †. For there is no man,

who perfectly knows the nature of all things, or indeed of any one thing, with all its habitudes and respects; and who is not therefore liable to make wrong judgments, or who does not in the progress of his thoughts or meditations, on many occasions, actually make them. For it is not necessary that our judgments concerning things, should always be communicated or declar'd, it is fufficient to denominate them false, that we form in our minds any wrong propositions concerning the subjects, about which they are employ'd. But as this kind of falshood proceeds from a natural and invincible defect, it will not be charg'd as a moral evil upon us, even tho' we should communicate the erroneous conclusions, which are form'd in our minds, to other persons. This, however, it is in our power to do; towards avoiding the effects of error, which the love of truth lays a moral obligation upon us, as much as we can, to avoid, we may, in all cases of doubt or difficulty, suspend our assent, till evidence obliges us to give it.

I do not say, but that we may be sometimes oblig'd to act without evidence, tho' we can never be oblig'd to act contrary to it. A child, a servant, or a soldier, who should never obey the respective commanding authority, but where he perfectly discovers the explicit reasons of the command, or must stand previously to examine them after a curious and strict manner, will necessarily fail in the duty and obedience requir'd of him. It is sufficient under the like circumstances, that we see nothing sinful in the command impos'd by authority upon us, to justify our proceeding immediately to action. Were not this indeed a safe rule, no orders could be duly executed, no business well done, nor any society regularly govern'd. And for this reason favourable allowances are, or always ought to be made to dependents acting by command of their superiors; especially when it appears, that was the principal motive upon which they were induc'd to act; and a merciful God, we hope, will judge his creatures by the like rules of equity, when they happen in certain cases, where they are oblig'd to act, to be in the wrong, without having leisure, or perhaps capacity, strictly to examine the nature of the action.

But tho', on some occasions, men may be oblig'd to act, they ought never to believe, without evidence. It should be an inviolable rule to us, to preserve the liberty of our minds, as much as we can, and never to assent to any thing, till reason will no longer suffer us to withold our assent. By this means, we may in great measure secure our selves from error in the conclusions we make in our minds, and be, in respect to many truths, infallibly assur'd of them: Tho' on account of the difficulties, wherewith our search after truth is in general attended, and the pains we must take

before we can come at that evidence, which leaves no room for doubt, or any farther disquisition, our infallibility must lie in a

narrow compass.

But how careful soever we may be in preserving the liberty of our minds, as to the proper operations of them, we cannot always avoid being impos'd upon by others: We rarely fall into promiscuous conversation, wherein what we call moral evidence, does not in a manner oblige us, to draw false conclusions, and make wrong judgments, not only with respect to things, but persons. Every man may consult himself upon the latter head, how easy he is in believing any thing to the disadvantage of those he does not love, against whom he has taken up any prejudice, whose character he may apprehend, in one regard or other, a diminution to his own, or perhaps as an obstacle in his way; besides, that there are persons who make no conscience of saying a thousand false things of others, merely to shew their wit, or from a natural malignity of temper. Here is a large field open'd for satyr to expatiate in, but that is not my present business.

What I would farther take notice of, is, that would men really resolve upon all occasions to speak the sense of their minds, yet even their language is ordinarily of itself very deceitful, and apt to impose upon us: How many words are there, which use has made current, that give us no determinate idea of what the person means, who speaks them, till he be required to explain himfelf; but to settle whose true signification, a more distinct apprehension, and greater capacity, may sometimes too be required, than he is master of. Hence it is, that very warm disputes, from which nothing can be concluded, tho attended with much noise and clamour, frequently happen in conversation: As if men, who speak the same language, had mutually agreed, in using the terms of it, to deceive and to be deceived, to perplex and consound one

another.

I have here observ'd some of the common and unavoidable occasions of error among men, but am unwilling to think these reflections have carry'd me far out of my way, since they lead me so readily back again into it; and tend to discover to us the greater certainty and evidence of those truths, about which the divine mind may be conversant, by removing from it all such desects, as human errors owe their occasion or original to; which it may not be improper for me to illustrate, by a particular induction of what the scriptures speak concerning the truth of God, under our present acceptation of it. And,

1. God perfectly knows the nature of all things, with all their feveral and distinct relations, and therefore cannot possibly be de-N n ceiv'd ceiv'd in the judgments he makes of them. He is perfect in know-ledge *. His understanding is infinite †. The Lord is a God of judgment ‡. He is the God of truth **. He is light, and in him is no darkness at all ††.

2. God perfectly knows the thoughts, and secret intentions of men. He searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts ‡‡. He knoweth the things that come into our mind, every one of them *. He understandeth our thoughts afar off †. He has therefore,

3. No need of words to discover our secret or real sentiments. The darkness, or obscurity of language, hideth not from him; he can see through the thick cloud of it. He hath not eyes of slesh, neither seeth he as man seeth ‡. There is not a word in our tongue,

but he knoweth it all together **.

As God, for these reasons, cannot be deceived in relation to any truth considered as the object of his mind, neither can he err in the method, or in the choice of those terms, whereby he may think sit to signify any truth externally, or to make it the subject of a divine revelation. The several relations of things being perfectly known to him, he perfectly knows how to adapt the most proper and significant words to express those relations. It is therefore a doctrine slowing from the eternal perfections of the divine nature, that every word of God is pure ††; and every revelation of his will must necessarily contain a form of sound words ‡‡; not of words to no prosit, the contrivances of philosophy or vain deceit; after the tradition of men, or rudiments of the world *; but wholsome words †, whereby we may know the certainty of those things, wherein we are instructed.

And fince God cannot be deceived in his judgment concerning the relations of things, or the manner wherein those relations ought to be expressed or revealed, it is plain he cannot for that reason, as well as others, which I am going to observe, have the least design, in any revelation, he may make of his will, of deceiving

us. But this leads me to the next particular.

II. THAT the veracity of God more especially imports a perfect conformity of those truths or propositions, which he may, if he pleases, signify externally, not only to the ideas of his mind, but to the intention of his will.

AND

And herein indeed consists the proper notion of veracity, when apply'd to men, that what they say, is agreeable to their true sentiments, or really intended at least to express them. And tho' it frequently happens, that we affirm what is false, or deny what is true, yet this is not thought a sufficient ground for charging us with want of veracity, provided we really believe what we say, upon such rational means of persuasion, as we are capable of coming at. For nothing ought to be imputed to us as criminal, but what either proceeds from a voluntary ignorance, or an ignorance, which, by using the proper methods of information, we

might have prevented the consequences of.

But when we knowingly speak what is false, and with a direct intention to deceive, then it is, we violate the laws of truth, in the most shameful and culpable manner. That God can have no fuch intention in any thing, he may think fit to declare, either as a speculative truth, or rule of life to mankind, will appear from a consideration of the motives, upon which an intelligent being can only be suppos'd capable of falsification, or a lye; and they may in general be reduc'd to incogitancy, or weakness, hope of advantage, or a cowardice (that which renders the imputation of a lye so very provoking) arising from the fear of danger, or some impending evil. But these are qualities, which need only be mention'd, to shew they cannot, nor any other qualities of affinity with them, be incident to the all perfect being; and that the apostle therefore in asserting, it is impossible for God to lye, argues from the natural, necessary, and eternal reason of the thing.

HI. THE veracity of God imports fincerity in all such exhortations, and fidelity, as to all such promises, which he may be sup-

pos'd to make to his creatures.

But the reasons of our falsifying in what we advise others to, or in the expectations we give them, proceeding much from the same ignoble motives, upon which men are commonly induc'd to lye, or other motives, which equally argue some great imperfection, I shall not descend to shew by a particular enumeration of them, how inconsistent it is with the perfections of the divine nature, that God should either reveal truths to men, which he has no intention, they should effectually believe, or prescribe them a rule of life, which they are not enabled to live up to; or, on the other hand, raise in their minds reasonable expectations of rewards, while they are under a prior and unchangeable decree of being frustrated in those expectations.

How shall we reconcile such dangerous notions in reference to the conduct of God towards his creatures, with the following

pastages.

passages, wherewith I shall conclude this head, out of sacred writ. All his commandments are true, and his counsels faithfulness and truth *. The word, that he has spoken, the same shall judge all men at the last †. He is a faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy ‡. His covenant will he not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips **. If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful ††. He cannot deny himself ‡‡.

CHAP. XVII. Of the goodness of God.

HO' I have reserv'd the consideration of this attribute to the last place, yet except perhaps it be that of power, when we cast our eyes upon this vast and admirable structure of things, there is no attribute of God, which occurs sooner or more naturally to the mind.

Now goodness consists in a benevolence of temper, and upon proper occasions of exerting itself, in actually doing good; but still with such a freedom, that the action of it might either have been suspended for a longer time, or even wholly omitted. For if goodness should necessarily act, or necessarily at all times, it would cease, in a moral and proper sense, to be goodness. We cannot therefore certainly discover, by contemplating the innate goodness of God, whether he will produce any thing, without himself, or not. A being of infinite perfection, would be infinitely happy, if he should be conceiv'd to subsist alone. But tho' the creatures do not derive their being from God, by way of necessary emanation, but from the free and arbitrary determination of his will; yet, with respect to intelligent creatures, capable of happiness or misery, and which are, for that reason, the only proper objects of goodness, when once God has determin'd to create them, we may know in some measure by consulting the idea of his goodness, with what capacities, and to what ends, he will create them. We may conclude in the first place, that he will endow them with fuch faculties, as are rather perfective of their nature, than which tend to dishonour and debase it, unless by occasion of the ill use, they may make of their liberty, and then it is but reasonable they

should

^{*} Isaiab 25. 1. † John 12. 48. † Deut. 7. 9. ** Psalm 89. 34. † 2 Tim. 2. 13. † Heb. 6. 18.

should bear their own iniquity, with all the miserable effects and consequences of it. We may certainly conclude farther, that except, for the reasons before assign'd, such beings will be render'd capable of attaining all those external advantages, which may be necessary, if not to render them perfectly happy, yet at least to counterpoise all the evils, that can possibly be incident to them; So that could we form any notion of absolute power and dominion, upon which God might, with the safety of his justice, be suppos'd to make a decree of rendring his creatures, without any foreseen fault or demerit in them, eternally miserable, or even in any degree miserable, beyond the measure of the happiness they enjoy; yet it would be impossible, when we consider the divine goodness, to reconcile the most bright and natural ideas we have of it, with such a decree; the doctrine whereof, one would therefore think it had been impossible, that any good man should ever have endeavour'd to establish.

As God was not determin'd by any necessity of his nature, notwithstanding the innate benignity of it, to create any thing without him, he is equally free in distributing or diversifying the external acts of his goodness, after what manner, and in what meafure he pleases. It is sufficient to vindicate the honour of his sovereignty and dominion, that he divides to every man both the blessings of his providence, and the means of his grace, feverally as be will. Here is a foundation laid for that variety of characters and qualifications, which contribute so much to the beauty, order, and advantage of fociety, whether facred or civil; and the distinction, which is put upon some persons in both respects, does by no means give just occasion to others to complain, that God has dealt injuriously, however unequally, with them when they compare their condition with that of other men. As we all enjoy more, than we have a right to enjoy, so we all suffer less, than our iniquities deserve. God being a debtor to no man, may commit more talents to some persons, and sewer to others: He may with the same freedom exercise the power, which he has, to help, and to cast down, to humble, or bring men to honour. There is nothing in these unequal distributions, contrary to the idea of goodness, and the present state of things seems in great measure to require them. We are all, upon the whole matter, in one degree, and in one kind or other, subjects of the divine goodness; and no man can have cause to complain, where every man is oblig'd, and has reason to be thankful. If there are in the course of providence some events more difficultly reconcileable with these maxims, they will be consider'd in their proper place.

Nothing

Nothing is here advanc'd, but what is agreeable to the common sentiments of mankind, according to which the scriptures speak, and are very full and copious on this head. When God took a survey of every thing, that he had made, he observ'd it to be very good *. The Lord is good, and doth good †. The earth is full of his goodness ‡. The eyes of all wait upon him; he opens his hand, and satisfyeth the desire of every living thing **. But, his delights are with the sons of men ††. And tho' good men are the peculiar objects of his savour and protection, so that he witholds no good thing from them ‡‡; but gives them all things richly to enjoy *. His eyes running to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in their behalf †. Yet he giveth, without distinction, to all men liberally ‡. He maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust **. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works ††.

I have hitherto consider'd the goodness of God, chiesly as denoting his beneficence to such of his creatures in general, as are proper objects of it; but I am here led to consider that primary branch of it, styl'd mercy, as respecting mankind in a state of disobedience against God, and consequently as having justly incurr'd his wrath and displeasure. It is true, goodness in this respect, being a free and arbitrary act of the divine will, we cannot so certainly determine whether, or in what manner, God may think sit to exert it, till he has positively declar'd his will to this end. A good God, for any thing we know, may be effectually mov'd to compassionate the frailties, and pardon the sins of men; but seeing what may be, for that very reason, may not be, such conjectures still leave the mind of a sinner in the greatest suspence and perplexity, as to a point, which it is of infinite concernment to him, that he should be perfectly satisfy'd in.

However, from the visible effects of God's goodness in the forbearance of sinners, and his suspending their punishment from time to time, in this world, we are assur'd, that justice does not always immediately punish, and that mercy, in this respect at least, does, in fact, continually interpose. Some have argued for the natural proofs of the divine compassion and mercy towards sinners, from this farther consideration, that as a good man is reconcil'd to his child, his friend, or his servant, by making allowances to the common errors and escapes of human nature, and upon their humble submission or acknowledgment; so we may

however,

however, entertain some faint hopes, that God, who perfectly knows all our frailties and defects, will, upon the like testimonies of our repentance, find in himself a gracious disposition of being reconcil'd to us. The terms, wherein the scriptures speak of the mercy of God, seem indeed in some measure to savour this natural way of reasoning concerning it. The Lord, is a God full of compassion, and gracious; long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy *. He is slow to anger †. He defers his anger, and refrains for the sinner, that he cut him not off ‡. He is good, and ready to forgive **. For he knoweth our frame, he remembreth we are dust ††.

Is it be said, that these acts, which we have observed, of the divine mercy, both from sensible experience and the holy scriptures, are only in consequence of the grace of God, in granting a mediator, the soundation of all his mercies to men; and that there cannot be therefore any grounds to sinners, who know nothing of such a mediator, to hope for the pardon of their sins. I answer, all I intend to infer, from what has been observed in both respects, is, that we have in general some natural grounds to hope, and which some of the texts here cited are formed upon, that God will be merciful to penitent sinners; tho as to the method of his shewing mercy to them, in a way not derogatory to his majesty or justice, that indeed may principally, if not solely depend on his instituted, and our knowledge of it, on his reveal'd will.

But because goodness, is that perfection of God, which we are so naturally inclin'd to attribute to him, and concerning which, we are, at the same time, too apt to entertain wrong, and sometimes very dangerous notions; it may not be improper for me to consider a little more distinctly, both the reasons upon which this attribute is thought to belong, in so peculiar a manner, to the divine being, and also to remove the grounds of some common misstakes, which conduce in the event to render those persons, who would extend it too far, the most incapable objects of it. And,

I. THAT God is good, appears from the visible and universal effects of his goodness: Whatever power or perfection we see in the creatures, proceeded originally, and with a direct intention, from him. Inanimate beings, tho' in their own nature not proper objects of goodness, yet every where in their relative use, bear evident marks and signatures of it. But the powers of life and sense, still discover more surprizing effects of goodness, and are in a higher degree subservient both to the beauties and advantages of

human

^{*} Psal. 86. 15. † Lam. 3. 22. ‡ Isaiab 48. 9. ** Psal. 86. 5. †† Psal. 103. 14.

human life: So that even upon this narrower view of the creation, the psalmist had reason to express himself in that pious and passionate manner. O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom

hast thou made them all, the earth is full of thy riches *.

But the noblest effect of divine goodness, is reason or intelligence: For hereby intelligent beings are, in a remoter degree, partakers of the divine nature; they become capable of maintaining fome kind of entercourse and society with God, of imitating his perfections, and uniting themselves to him; for God sees all truths, and we are able by the use of reason to discover many truths. God always acts according to order, and this order not being altogether unknown to us, it is in our power, on many occasions, to act conformably to it. God is the supreme object of desire, and in whose enjoyment alone our true happiness consists: and we are capacitated by those admirable faculties he has given us, to draw nearer to him, to love him, and to employ the means he has prescrib'd in order to our enjoying him, and the things he has prepar'd for those that love him, in a future and far happier Were it not indeed for the goodness of God, it is hard, if not impossible to conceive, how we could have any reasonable mo-Power without goodness is attended with an tives to love him. idea of terror; justice, of rigour and cruelty; and wisdom, of artifice and dissimulation: If a person possess'd of these qualities, is sometimes the object of our love, it is not simply on their own account, but because we find them in conjunction with goodness. There is no other quality separate from it, capable of giving the heart any kindly or lasting impressions. Force, authority, and craft, may create an external respect, but a good man will find an advantagious and favourable post in the minds of those, he has been beneficial to, and even of those he has not had an opportunity of benefiting, when all the reasons of fear, interest, or dependence, shall cease.

GOODNESS seems also to be strongly founded in the natural reafon of the thing, from that sensible complacency, the greatest, perhaps, the mind is capable of, which arises in it upon the reflection of our having done some good, and truly generous action: And tho', strictly speaking, the perfection of the divine nature does not admit of our attributing any such sentiments to God; yet by way of accommodation to our understanding, he is said to

take pleasure, and to delight in acts of goodness.

THE reasons of our attributing this perfection of goodness to God, appear yet farther, if we consider those desects or passions,

which

^{*} Pfal. 104. 24.

which ordinarily occasion the want, or obstruct the exercise of goodness in men. The most avaritious person, where an act of charity does not oppose his principles or maxims of self-love, would be willing to offer some slight sacrifice to a principle of humanity and good nature: He would, for instance, upon his seeing an innocent person going to suffer death, not be averse to give something, which he could without any fensible inconvenience spare, to save his life. The most envious person, again, if the occasion of his envy were wholly remov'd, and all the latent feeds of revenge with it, would be inclin'd to do some good office, if it cost him no great pains or trouble, even in favour to one, under circumstances of distress, against whom he formerly felt the motions of this passion; which being one of the most common springs, that feed a malevolent temper, Plato, and * Hierocles from him, more particularly resolve the reasons of the divine goodness, into the impossibility of supposing envy incident to the divine nature.

But in how eminent a manner soever we attribute goodness to God, we must be careful to form no notions of it, but what are consistent with his other infinite perfections, and agreeable to our present state, a state of tryal and obedience; which leads me,

secondly,

2. To obviate some mistakes of dangerous consequence, whereby men are yet too apt to impose upon themselves concerning this attribute.

THERE are persons, in the first place, who flatter themselves with the hopes, that they shall live and die in the favour of God, tho' they do not live in obedience to his laws, but rather, perhaps, in open contempt and violation of them. The ground of this illusion is one mistaken principle or other, which they form to themselves concerning the divine goodness. God, say they, is beneficent and gracious; he delights in mercy, punishment is his strange work; he willeth not that any should perish, but would have all men to be fav'd. These are maxims which we hear every day; and from which the most profligate sinners hope for salvation. It must be acknowledg'd, however, that they are, in a proper sense, very true, both in regard to the habitual disposition, and actual will of God. He is beneficent; but the acts of beneficence being free, he is not oblig'd to extend them even to innocent creatures beyond their natural state and capacity; much less to sinners, who in consequence of their own choice, have render'd themselves at once more unworthy of his favours, and more incapable of receiving them. He is gracious; but his grace is suffi-

^{*} Hieroc. in aurea carm. Pythag.

ciently discover'd, in admitting us to terms of pardon, and that too after we have frequently relaps'd, and perhaps run on for many years in a continued circle of finning and repenting, of repenting and finning. Acts of grace to delinquents are highly consistent with such conditions as require of them a new and reasonable obedience, tho' under fresh penalties; and the greatest affront which offenders can be guilty of upon any gracious overtures of pardon made to them, is still to offend, in hopes, that grace may He delights in mercy; but must he therefore have no regard to the holiness and authority of his laws. We can scarce suppose any Prince so weak, as to encourage his subjects to commit what disorders they please, upon an expectation given them, that, out of his great facility of temper, they shall be suffer'd at last to escape with impunity: Much less can the mercy of God be suppos'd to destroy the ends of his government, or not to consist with the safety and honour of it.

WE grant too, punishment is his strange work; but this must be understood with respect to the habitual inclination of his nature, not in opposition to those wise and just reasons, which may determine him to act in particular cases by particular wills. knowledge farther, it is a conclusion, which seems naturally to arise from our common notions of the divine goodness, that God willeth not any should perish, but would have all men to be said: Yet we say again, these words are to be understood in relation to his general and antecedent will, not to the subsequent conditions of our escaping death, and obtaining salvation, which his wisdom and holiness have prescrib'd; and I may add too, wherein the characters of his goodness do most evidently appear. In a word, to suppose, that either the goodness of God in saving, or his mercy in pardoning men, will indifferently extend to all men, without any regard to their good, or their evil actions, (and an impenitent finner can only find refuge in such a supposition:) This, I say, is to destroy the main springs of religious obedience at once; and to ascribe a connivance to a holy, good, with a lenity to a just God, and jealous of his honour, equally unworthy of him. Behold then, to conclude this article with a pertinent and particular application, the goodness, and the severity of God; to them, which fall, severity; but to thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness.



SPECU-



SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK II. Of divine Revelation, and the holy Scriptures.

PART I.

Of divine Revelation.

CHAP. I.

HO' we are able, by the help of natural reason, to prove in a clear and distinct manner, the being and attributes of God, which are indeed the sundamental principles of all religion: Yet there are several things, which it highly concerns us, upon a religious account,

to know, towards the discovery whereof, the light of natural reason is too obscure to direct us with sufficient certainty; and there

arc

are some things of importance to the ends of religion, with respect to which it can afford us no affiltance at all. Having therefore in the former book establish'd those two foundamental principles against the atheists, and in order to confirm the faith of such, who already believe; I shall now proceed to attack the deists, who deny that God has made, or that it was ever necessary for him to make any revelation of his will to mankind. And here again I shall putsue such a method, as at the same time may tend to expose the folly of deism, and, by the blessing of God, contribute more effectually to convince believers, of the truth, reasonableness, and advantages of that revelation, which he has been pleas'd, out

of his great goodness, to dispense to them.

I shall only first premise, that I do not here propose formally to confute those deists, who, with Epicurus, acknowledge a God, but deny either that he made the world, or concerns himself in the administration of it: Neither do I mean those deists, who, with Aristotle, believe that the world is eternal, yet under the direction and government of God, but, at the same time, suppose, that his providence extends only to the more confiderable parts or general affairs of it, without descending to take any care or cognizance of particular beings: Neither do I here argue against such deists, who believe a particular providence, but deny the moral and immutable distinction of good and evil, making it wholly to depend on custom or civil institution: No, I here suppose the unbelievers, against whom I am arguing, both right in their notions concerning the being, attributes, and providence of God, and the common principles of natural religion; yet afferting, that the light of natural reason is of itself sufficient to discover by what methods men may acceptably serve God, attone for their offences against him, and render themselves eternally happy.

In the profecution of which delign, I shall gradually advance,

and endeavour to make good these four propositions.

- I. That divine revelation is, in the nature of the thing, possible.
- II. THAT it was highly expedient.
- III. THAT there are certain characters, both internal and external, whereby persons, to whom a divine revelation has not been immediately made, may yet be induc'd, upon reasonable and sufficient grounds, to believe it.
 - IV. THAT in fact a divine revelation has been already made.

PROP.

PROP. I.

First, that divine revelation is, in the nature of the thing, possible.

F divine revelation should imply any repugnancy to our natural ideas concerning it; this must arise, either because there would be something in it contrary to the perfections of God, or to the state and condition of men. Upon the former supposition, either God cannot, or there are very wife and good reasons, why he should not have any entercourse with mankind, after so special and extraordinary a manner. To fay, he cannot reveal himself to mankind, argues, what there is no imaginable foundation to suppose, a defect of his power; and in a case too, which is fo far from implying any natural impossibility or contradiction that we have very strong and reasonable grounds to believe it practicable. What should hinder him, who made a human foul, from making what impressions he pleases upon it. We find our selves capable of communicating our thoughts one to another, either by means of a found of words, which strikes the ear, or by writing, and other fignatures of what we intend, which affect the eye: Yet these are only occasional causes, that appear nevertheless to be a great way about, of our conversing together, and which the wit of man could never discover to have any natural or immediate connexion with the effect. Why then cannot God make use of the like means to impress what ideas he thinks fit on our minds. or to give such motions to the brain, as may occasionally excite whatever thoughts he would produce in us? Or rather indeed, why may he not, without any intermediate or occasional cause at all, enlighten the mind by a direct and naked view of such truths. which it did not know before, and which otherways it could never, by its own industry and application, have come to the knowledge of? This method indeed of God's revealing himself to men by immediate inspiration, was more extraordinary among the prophets, than that of divine dreams and visions, which were made by impressions on the phantaly, and other more sensible ways * of conveying divine truths to the mind, by means of some

external

^{*} Lightfoot reckons fix ways, whereby God reveal'd his will to men. 1. By dreams. 2. By apparitions, when they were awake. 3. By visions, when they were asseep. 4. By a voice from heaven. 5. By inspiration, which he calls revealing of the ear; and 6. By rapture or extasy, the excellentest of all, and which he understands concerning the dead sleep, which fell upon Adam. Vol. 1. p. 844.

external appearance. But whatever method God was pleas'd to employ to this end, the operation was so strong, lively, and penetrating, as plainly distinguish'd him to be the author of it: And indeed, if it be allow'd that God can reveal any thing to man, we must grant he can do it in such a manner, that the person to whom the revelation is made, may certainly know it to be a divine revelation; otherways the very end and design, upon which God was induc'd to make it, would be entirely frustrated; and no one could ever be able to distinguish between the divine action and the illusions of evil spirits. But how then could we reconcile it with the wisdom of God, that he should make use of certain means to no end; or with his power, that he should not be capable of effecting his end. Besides that it would reslect on his veracity, to reveal any thing to us in such a manner, that we could not be infallibly assur'd whether the revelation came from himself, or from some other being; or whether, perhaps, it might be nothing, aster all, but the effect of a very strong and lively imagination. Were we under an incapacity of making a distinction, where it is so necessary, into what errors and visions of enthusiasm, would it be the occasion of betraying us?

If God then do not make any revelation to men, and what they may distinctly know to be so, it is not from want of power to that end, but because there are very wise and good reasons why he should not make any. But how do those reasons appear, or upon what grounds can they be said to arise? The relative goodness of God, consists in his designing the good and happiness of his creatures; and his wisdom, in taking the best and most effectual measures towards executing his design. Now when we come to consider the expediency of divine revelation, we shall discover it to be so far from being inconsistent with these attributes, or in any respect derogatory to them, that nothing could have tended to give us more

bright or powerful ideas of them.

NEITHER does a divine revelation import any repugnancy in the nature of it, to the state and condition of men: If it do, there must either be no occasion for it, in order to supply the defects of human reason, or else men must be suppos'd under some natural incapacity of receiving it. How far such a revelation may be requisite towards instructing men more clearly both in the principles and duties of religion, will be consider'd in the sequel: And this latter supposition has been already obviated by what was said concerning the power of God to impress what ideas he thinks sit on intelligent minds, and to make the perception of those ideas so strong and evident, that there can be no doubt, whether the revelation really comes from him; but the person to whom it is made.

made, may, however tempted to distrust himself, and to question, how can these things be, yet as certainly know it to be a divine revelation, as he knows any proposition, or any fact whatever to be true, of whose truth he has the greatest assurance. But why, fince I am led to repeat this argument, as finite spirits can act. upon one another by a reciprocal communication of their thoughts, should he who gave the faculty of perception, the God of the spirits of all flesh, be incapable of making us perceive, in what man-

ner, and with what degree of evidence he thinks fit.

YET an * author of distinction in the world has advanc'd some. thing inconsistent, as I take it, with what is here said, as to the method of our judging concerning the truth of any divine revelation immediately made to us. He supposes, there are several truths. which may be presented to the minds of men in a very strong light, and which they believe, as enthusiasts ordinarily do, to be divinely reveal'd, when nevertheless they come to the knowledge of them, tho' unknown to them before, by some other way. proposition, he argues, may come into one's mind by way of connecting certain ideas, which he has meditated on before, or by occasion of what he has lately read, or heard others discourse of; or there may be other invisible beings, which may excite certain ideas in him towards forming such a proposition. This is no proof that it comes from God, except he knows that God reveals it, he does not see, but only believe, that it is divinely reveal'd. know with certainty, whether the revelation be really from God, it is not a strong persuasion of its being so, nor the evidence of the truths themselves reveal'd; but it is requisite that God should convince us by some undeniable tokens, which we cannot be mistaken in, that it is he who enlightens us. He alledges, that the several signs which were required by the prophets shew this; and observes, that the Moses saw the bush burn without being consum'd, and heard a voice out of it, and that this was something besides finding an impulse upon his mind to go to Pharaoh; yet he thought not this enough to authorize him to go, till God by another miracle of his rod turn'd into a serpent, had assur'd him of a power to testify his mission by the same miracle to be repeated before them, whom he was sent to. As Gideon also was sent by an angel to deliver Midian, yet desir'd a sign to convince him, that this commission was from God.

But how does it follow, that because the prophets sometimes requir'd a sign, that therefore a sign was always necessary to confirm to themselves the divine authority of the revelation, where-

^{*} Mr. Lock in his chapter of enthusiasm.

with they were charg'd. It is certain, the word of the Lord often came unto them, nay, that they ordinarily prophefy'd in his name, without any particular or extraordinary token to attest either their doctrine or their predictions. And indeed where a fign was requir'd, it does not appear so generally to have been intended for the satisfaction of the prophets, and in order to convince them that they were really inspir'd by God, as to satisfy those concerning the truth of their inspiration, to whom they were sent. some particular cases a sign was given at the instance of a prophet himself, this was not to convince him, that he had been divinely inspir'd; but that, where he apprehended himself altogether unequal to his commission, God would certainly be with him in the execution of it. As in the case of Moses, even after he had seen the flame of fire in the bush, he was so diffident of his own abilities to undertake, what God had commanded him, that he remonstrates, and says unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh; and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Ægypt *? And in another place he represents himself defective, as to a persuasive and ready manner of expression. O, my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant, but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. Gideon in like manner expresses his dissidence of what the angel said to him, on the account of his mean extraction, and his low circumstances of life. O, my Lord, replies he to the angel, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house *. Now there is a material difference between a prophet's believing that a revelation is made to him by God, and his believing that God will effectually support him by a supernatural power in the discharge of his commission. founded on that revelation. He may be assur'd, by an extraordinary impulse of the Spirit of God upon his mind, that he has a divine commission; and yet God, for the greater tryal of his faith, may not think fit at the same time, or after the same method, to assure him, that he shall be enabled to overcome with ease all the difficulties, to which he apprehends it may expose him. all, neither of these instances are proper on the occasion, upon which this author produces them. For what dispute soever there may be concerning the evidence of immediate inspiration, which is what the enthuliasts against whom he writes, only pretend to; yet there can be no dispute, whether God, when he manifests himself by the visible appearance and ministry of an angel, as he did both to Moses and Gideon, can without any other fign, cer-

* Gen. 3. 11.

† Judges 6. 15.

tainly

tainly, and beyond all possibility of doubt, evidence to those to whom he makes a revelation, that it is in truth a divine revelation.

I had not enlarg'd so much in confutation of an error, which I had only consider'd under the common notion of a speculative error: But where the divine inspiration of the far greater part of the holy scriptures is the point in question, we cannot be too copious in discussing it: And yet if the notion, against which I have been arguing, be true, it is but a small portion of the scriptures which the prophets in the Old Testament, or the apostles in the New, could be infallibly affur'd, was divinely reveal'd to them; it not appearing, that every time the word of the Lord came to them, or that they spake in his name, a miraculous testimony was produc'd: On the other hand, they ordinarily preach'd and prophefy'd, without having the divine authority of their doctrine or mission confirm'd by special miracles; neither was it necessary, during the course of their ministry, as I shall shew hereaster, that there should have been a continued succession of miracles towards the confirmation of it.

WE grant, there are other intelligent beings, besides God, that may be capable of acting on human minds, by means of whose suggestions, men, especially of a temper inclin'd to enthusiasm, have been often seduc'd to believe a lye, or imagin'd, that God had spoken to them, when he had not spoken; this only shews, that there are persons of a weak understanding, tho' of a strong imagination, and even perhaps of an honest intention, capable of being impos'd upon. But does it follow from hence, that God cannot enable us to distinguish his impressions on our minds, from. those of other spirits, and in as clear and evident a manner too, as we ordinarily distinguish between the thoughts communicated to us by different persons? And if God may do this, the possibility whereof has been already evinc'd, then tho' it is not necessary for us to know the method of his doing it, yet in case of his making any revelation, it is necessary to the end for which it is made, that he should do it: For unless a person can be certain, when any thing is reveal'd to him by God, that God reveals it; how can the revelation made to him be, what God intends it, either a certain ground of his own faith, or of the faith of those to whom he may be commission'd to divulge it?

THERE is yet one argument of the deifts against the possibility of divine revelation, that appears indeed the most specious of all the arguments which they have been able to produce against reveal'd religion in general; and which I shall therefore in the conclusion of this chapter, consider, as briefly as I can, the force

of. This argument then is taken from the idea, which the deifts pretend men naturally entertain concerning infinite wisdom. It is, fay they, below the character of a being infinitely wise, to act in the government of a world, which he has made, by immediate and particular wills. The more simple and general those laws are, by which any being forms and pursues his designs, the more admirable and conspicuous is the wisdom of his conduct. The allwife God therefore having delign'd to create the world, and perfectly knowing the power and progress of all natural causes, ought to have establish'd such a scheme of things, that he should never have occasion afterwards to alter it, or to interpose by any special direction, towards the better regulation of his work, as men are forc'd to do in order to rectify or repair the works of art. They suppose it much more agreeable to the character of an agent, who in one view perfectly comprehends all possible methods of effecting his design in a manner most worthy of him, that all things should for ever move and act in a stated and uniform manner, by virtue of certain general laws of motion or action originally impress'd on them.

Now as to the material world, supposing God had only design'd it as an essay of his wisdom or power, and without any regard to the state of free and moral agents, who were to be the inhabitants of it, this way of reasoning would have had a very probable foundation: Seeing the more comprehensive or less complicated the defign of any agent is, the greater idea we must necessarily have of his understanding. God then having once put matter in motion, and dispos'd the several parts of it, without relation to any other beings, in the order we now behold them, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that those parts would for ever have continued to perform their respective offices, without the interposition of God at every exigence, or on any, to accelerate or retard the motions, to fortify or suspend the influences of them.

But the case of moral agents is very different: For tho' God has prescrib'd a general law for their conduct, yet as they are capable of making an ill use of their liberty, and committing certain disorders, prejudicial both to themselves and the common good of society, it is very worthy of the wisdom of God to interpose, by special acts of his providence or grace, towards remedying those disorders. . And as sin does not only in general occasion ignorance and blindness of mind, but puts men under a natural incapacity of knowing some things of great importance to their happiness to be known, the goodness of God, which is always confistent with his wisdom, appears no less in making such discoveries of his will to mankind, towards promoting their happiness,

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ię ic which, as to some articles, they could never have come in an ordinary way, to any certain knowledge of, and in most respects could but have known very imperfectly at the best.

WE grant, uniformity is very desirable in the conduct of any work, where the nature and design of it will admit: yet certainly he would not much merit the reputation of wisdom, who for the sake of acting in a simple and uniform manner, should fail of the end most worthy of his action, and even for which he was prin-

cipally induc'd to act.

And for this reason, since the material world was design'd by God to be inhabited by free agents, it was impossible, in the nature of the thing, that any general and uniform laws of motion could have been so six'd, that there would not on many occasions have happen'd a necessity of departing from them: For man by a good or ill use of his liberty, is capable of reward or punishment, and it is requisite in many respects to the ends of providence in this life, that he should be here rewarded or punish'd, and that by occasion of sensible evils or enjoyments; but it is impossible to conceive how any fix'd and immutable scheme of motion can be so contriv'd or adapted to the state of free and mutable agents, as to become on every particular occasion, the proper instrument of rewards or punishments to them.

We may add, that man, by the freedom of his will, has a power, in many cases, even over the parts of this material system, To far as to stop or retard, or to vary the direction of their motion; with the exercise of which power, a simple and uniform scheme of motion is equally irreconcileable. It is certain, that the course of the first motion of things, is in several respects very much alter'd by means of human industry and art. The earth by the building of cities, and cutting of rivers; by agriculture, and the opening of mines and minerals, is very different, as to the state of its exterior parts, from what it would otherways have been. These alterations in the surface of the earth, cause in many places, to mention no other effects of them, a very different temperature of the air; on which a good or ill state of health, with regard to a vast number of people visibly depends. These considerations shew, that if a divine providence govern the world, which we here suppose, it is so far from being inconsistent with the wildom of God, to act in the government of it by immediate and particular wills, that his action, in this respect, is now become necessary to regulate the course of nature, to keep it in a right channel, and to prevent those ill, or direct those good effects of human choice and labour, which occasion such frequent and considerable changes in material beings: And if the all-wise God, notwithstanding the

simplicity of those laws of motion, which he has impress'd on corporeal beings, may yet by a special act of his will, direct or alter the course of their motion, why should it be thought derogatory to his wisdom to attribute to him, in particular cases, a power of informing, by some extraordinary method, the minds of spiritual beings; especially towards accomplishing so many wise and excellent ends of his government, as I am proceeding in the next place to consider.

CHAP. II. PROP. II.

That a divine revelation was highly expedient.

To those, who believe the power of God, I have said enough concerning the possibility of his revealing any truth or doctrine to mankind; but it does not therefore follow, that men could reasonably hope for a divine revelation, or that there were any good and sufficient motives, which might induce God to make it. That we may come to a resolution in this point, it may be proper to enquire, how far man, in his natural state, really wanted a divine revelation, with respect to the sollowing particulars.

I. A more perfect knowledge of his duty.

II. THE motives, which might most effectually engage him to discharge it: And,

III. THE means of reconciling himself to God, upon his failure in it.

If it appear, upon enquiry, that on all these accounts a divine revelation was really wanting to mankind, the goodness of God in making it, and the expediency of it with respect to those it was made to, will be equally evident, and from the same considerations: And,

I. Man in his natural state wanted a more perfect knowledge of his duty. I shall not here take upon me to enumerate all the particular cases, wherein the blindness of man, as to his duty, under the several relations of it, wanted to be cur'd. I shall only observe the defects of human and unassisted reason, with respect to some few instances, wherein it notoriously fail'd in deducing the precepts of natural religion.

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve, is one of those precepts, which the light of nature seems to

dictate with the clearest evidence. Yet how grossly have mankind in general err'd, and do still err, where no divine revelation has been made to them, both concerning the object, and manner of divine worship.

It has been pretended, indeed, that many of the heathens believ'd the unity of the divine nature, and that they worship'd those deities, which were by nature no Gods, only as beings subordinate to the supreme God; but still while they paid divine honours, the very same which they paid to the supreme God, to those subordinate beings, the charge of idolatry must necessarily lie, as much, for that reason, against them, as if they had really believ'd a plurality of co-ordinate and independent Gods: For they not only invocated those false deities, but they erected temples, wherein they paid their publick devotions; and altars, upon which they sacrific'd to them: What could they have done more, if sacrifice had been a duty of natural religion, in honour of the true God?

Their ignorance concerning the object of divine worship, appear'd farther from their representing their salse deities by sensible images, and those too of the most contemptible creatures, to which notwithstanding their worship was directly, and in the most solemn manner address'd. The apostle observ'd concerning their idolatry in this respect, that they changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted beasts, and creeping things*. Many of their images, we grant, were only symbolical; but that there were others, which were really conceiv'd to resemble the deities, in whose honour they were made, is too evident to be deny'd, had we not the authority of the same apostle to assure us of the fact, where he charges them with thinking, that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art, or man's device †.

If it be said, that the worship of the heathens did not terminate in those images, but in the deities represented by them; and could this be allow'd to excuse them from the charge of idolatry, as to the end of their worship, which evidently it does not, seeing they paid all the visible honour and adoration to the image, which they could have done to any deity, it was made to represent, if capable of a visible appearance; yet the charge of idolatry, with respect to the object of their worship, as it imported polytheism, must still lie unanswerably against them: Except what some learned men have conjectur'd, should prove true, that the heathens acknowledg'd but one supreme deity, and the other deities,

^{*} Rom. 1. 23. + Alls 17. 29.

as they call'd them, were only different powers or qualities, whereby he was worship'd under so many different names; as a man continues the same individual person, in what variety soever he may appear of his dress, or disposition. A passage of * Seneca seems to be very applicable on this occasion: You may, says he, appropriate what names you please to Jupiter, so long as they import any power or effect of celestial causes; and you may therefore distinguish him by so many appellations, as you attribute to him distinct powers. Lactantius, tho' he is sometimes very severe upon Aristotle, and represents him as a contemner of God and religion †, yet he acknowledges on another occasion, that this philosopher believ'd, there was but one God in nature, and many po-Those, who will consult pular gods, or gods only in name ‡. the celebrated author refer'd to in the margin **, will find a pretty large collection of passages to this purpose. But whatever notion the philosophers, who enquir'd more strictly into the nature of things, might have concerning the unity of God, the vulgar do not appear to have believ'd the several deities they worship'd, only as so many distinct qualities, but as beings having a personal and distinct subsistence: The personal actions attributed to them; their publick assemblies and debates; their compotations and quarrels, to say nothing of their conjugal relations, cannot be intelligibly accounted for upon any figurative schemes of speech; and tho' Plutarch, whose reason will hold with respect to the heathen deities in general, is forc'd to acknowledge in his treatise of Is and Osiris ††, that it is impious and absurd to suppose those things which are reported concerning them, to be literally true; yet it seems equally difficult, on the other hand, to explain them allegorically, in a sense agreeable to the dignity and perfections of the divine nature. If those learned men who have endeavour'd to allegorize Homer after a manner intended to shew, that his theology may be reconcil'd with the fundamental articles of natural religion, have been so much embarrass'd and foil'd in the attempt, how was it possible for the vulgar, who invocated and sacrific'd to so many distinct deities, and as personally distinguish'd, to make a right judgment concerning the spirit and mystical design, which can scarce be render'd intelligible to any one, against the plain, obvious, and literal meaning of their worship ##.

* De benef. lib. 4. cap. 7. † De irâ Dei. cap. 19. ‡ De falsa relig. lib. 5.

MANKIND,

^{**} Huet. demonstr. evang. p. 115. †† P. 358.

‡‡ It is well observ'd by the excellent author of, The reasonableness and certainty of the christian religion, from Dionysius Halicarnassus, that the mystical expositions concerning the pagan theology, were known to very sew; but that the people understood the sables of it in the grossest sense, and either despis'd all religion, or encourag'd themselves in wickedness by the example of their gods. Vol. 1. p. 336. Edit. 3.

MANKIND, where no revelation was made to them, farther wanted a more perfect knowledge, with respect to the manner of divine worship. I have occasionally mention'd the use of sacrifice before, which yet probably had its origin among the heathen, rather from a very ancient tradition, that God would be reconcil'd to sinners by a sacrifice of his own appointment, than from any natural propriety in the thing itself absolutely consider'd, to attone for the sins of men against him: Or since a great part of the jewish worship was aped by the nations round about that people, the custom of sacrificing might probably be deriv'd to them as other religious rites were, by their conversing with the fews, or their having an opportunity of consulting even the writings of Moses himself.

But whatever the origin was of facrifice among the heathen, as it was not founded on any divine or positive law, I speak here concerning propitiatory sacrifice, the practice of it was certainly unlawful, especially as they supposed the blood of bulls and goats might contribute to take away sin by some natural efficiency, without any respect to that sacrifice, or so much as their having any notion of it, in virtue of which, the very sacrifices, which were by a special divine authority appointed under the Mosaick dispensa-

tion, had all their force and efficacy.

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But the manner of the pagan worship was also impious, as it contributed to introduce a universal corruption of manners. It may be said indeed, that nothing tended so much to promote vice and immorality among the heathens, as the very practice of piety, according to the notions they had concerning it. Men will be very apt to think it reasonable, that they should imitate the deities they adore, and observe such rites of worshipping them, as are most agreeable to their attributes. Upon so natural a suppofition, it was impossible but that the heathen world must have been extremely corrupt: For there was scarce any vice, which they could not pretend the example of one deity or other to patronize: Impurity, not to mention other disorders in their worship, was made, on many occasions, a principal part of their devotion. It is a shame even to mention some of those religious acts, if we may speak according to their corrupt sense, which were done of them in secret. When covetousness is term'd * idolatry by the apostle, he does not mean the vice commonly so accounted; which consists in loving the world, and desiring the external advantages of it to an immoderate degree, tho' in that respect a covetous person may not improperly be term'd an idolater; but he

alludes.

^{*} Dr. Ham. in loc.

alludes to those vile and corrupt rites, wherewith the worship of certain heathen deities was perform'd, in a manner suitable to the

vicious qualities severally attributed to them.

Where their worship was not in the nature of it directly sinful or impure, yet it was of no use towards promoting the great ends of piety, as they chiefly made religion, with the great merit of it, to consist in external pomp and ceremony. We find indeed some occasional passages in the heathen writers, concerning inward purity of heart, as the most acceptable sacrifice men could offer to God; tho' it is observable to the advantage of the christian revelation, that sentiments of this kind occur much more frequently in the writings of those moralists, who wrote after cristianity was publickly profess'd, and taught in the world. For if these sentiments had been owing to the light of natural reason, and not of that revelation, which the authors of them disbeliev'd, and some of them violently oppos'd, what account can be given that they did not discover themselves with equal force and evidence before, as after the time the gospel of Christ was promulg'd?

But whatever the more knowing or learned among the heathen might think, yet in reference to the publick worship, to which, for several reasons of consequence, they outwardly conform'd, they kept their notions privately to themselves, as being too dangerous to be trusted to the vulgar; and especially to the civil magistrate, who was the guardian of their religion; or to the priests, who had a more immediate interest, in supporting the exterior of it, and the credit of their own profession. As the christian priest-hood is established by a divine authority, and upon so clear and incontestable grounds, we need not be afraid that the dignity of this order should suffer, by our exposing the corruptions of the heathen priesthood; tho' we are sensible how frequently they have been mention'd, to savour the oblique and insidious restections of

prophane men, against the ministers of Christ in general.

MAN, in his natural state, wanted a more perfect knowledge of his duty, as well in reference to morals, as piety. I have already observed under the head of impurity, one cause of corruption, which could not fail of contributing very much to the growth of it; and we may observe that sew of the philosophers have touch'd upon this article, except with a renderness, which shews, that it did not give them much distaste or offence. Cicero, who has said so many excellent things on the subject of morality, was not asham'd to plead openly before a court of judicature, in favour and defence of this vice. *He

^{*} Non semper superet vera illa & directa ratio, vincat aliquando cupiditas, voluptásque rationem. Pro. M. Cœlio.

PART I.

argues, that we cannot always expect to be govern'd by reason: the passions will sometimes, in their turn, get the ascendant over He proceeds to observe afterwards, that if there be any one, who thinks young persons ought to be prohibited the use of venereal pleasures, he is very rigid in his opinion, and not only condemns the common liberties of that age, but what was also commonly practis'd and indulg'd by the ages preceding *. If these are the words of the orator, and were spoken only by him as a colourable plea in behalf of his client, they prove too strongly the corrupt disposition of his heart; for they plainly shew, he had more concern for his own honour under that character, than the real advancement of virtue, or indeed for the publick honour of his country, whereof he always affected to appear so itrenuous an asfertor: But if they are the words of the philosopher, which it is more for the advantage of Cicero that we should suppose, then they may serve to discover to us, what falls more properly under our present consideration, the blindness of human understanding, with respect to certain moral duties, in persons of the greatest natural and acquir'd endowments.

I might descend to shew in particular, that humility, and self-denial, patience under provocations, and forgiveness of injuries, were in a manner unknown duties to the pagan world. It is sufficient to observe, that their notions concerning moral duties in general, were much less perfect, than they appear to be among the most ignorant of those, who enjoy the benefits of reveal'd religion. But it would be endless to cite testimonies upon the several heads of morality, in order to shew how much a supernatural light was necessary towards rectifying the mistakes, and improving the knowledge of men concerning it. The deists themselves must acknowledge, that natural religion, whether consider'd with respect to faith or manners, was never taught in that full extent, no not by those who addicted themselves to the study of philosophy, and most improv'd their knowledge thereby, wherein it is now or-

dinarily understood by illiterate christians.

But admitting, that any of the philosophers had been capable of publishing a just and complete system of natural religion, or that such a system could have been collected out of all their writings, there are still two things which would have render'd it less useful and instructive to the generality of mankind. For,

In the first place, all the principles they laid down, ought to have been established upon clear and undeniable grounds. Why

^{*} Abborret non modò ab bujus seculi licentia, verùm etiam à majorum consuetudine & concessis.

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should any one in what relates to the common and most considerable interests of mankind, be believ'd implicitly, and on his own authority. The deifts who deny there is any divine revelation. and think the light of nature, when carefully attended to, sufficient towards instructing men in all the duties of morality; yet will not do human reason so much dishonour as to oblige them blindly to acquiesce in what does not, upon examination, evidently appear to be reasonable: What authority, for instance, had Plato or Tully to prescribe a rule of life to the rest of mankind? They were fallible men, and might probably be deceiv'd themselves, as in fact they were; they were not exempt from the common infirmities of human nature, and so might possibly, upon some sinister views, even employ their eloquence with design to deceive others. There are too violent suspicions of their corruption in this respect, from the external compliance they shew'd, with the establish'd forms of religion; and, not to examine too nicely, whether, on certain occasions, as the Roman orator has in the forecited instance too visibly done, they have not openly made concessions that favour'd the common vices of those times wherein they liv'd; and it will always be suppos'd, that men, who have been known to prevaricate in one case, are capable at least, upon the same motives, whenever they recur, of prevaricating in another: So that whether we consider an author, who would publish an entire body, or collection of moral laws, for the conduct of human life, as subject either to error, or to corruption, it is necessary that he should make out every proposition, he advances, by a just chain of proofs, and those too deduc'd in so clear, full, and convincing a manner, that the mind may be irrefistibly compell'd to yield its assent to them. But if morality, in all the branches of it, were to be established by such a deduction of consequences, and so, as to be accommodated to the capacity of all men; yet how few men would be willing to undergo that labour of mind in consulting such a vast work, which might be necessary to their own satisfaction in particular? It might then be said almost without a figure, that the world itself could not contain the books, that should be written.

But if, in the next place, all persons had strength of mind, to examine and go through such a work, with that attention, which is requisite; yet considering the necessary affairs, the reasonable avocations, and, I may add, the shortness and uncertainty of the present life, how small, in comparison, would be the number of those, who could find leisure or time, for so very long and laborious an enquiry?

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PART I.

BOTH these considerations tend to shew, how expedient it was that God should commission some person to instruct mankind in the duties of religion, and the reason holds equally strong as to the doctrines of it, who should not be oblig'd to make formal and particular proof of every thing he might propose as a rule of practice, but who should teach, as one having authority. A reveal'd truth, when plainly declar'd, admits of no dispute. The revelation of God must, in honour of his veracity, be always thought conformable to the reason of God; and does therefore prevent all human reasoning upon the certainty of what it prescribes. Nothing can be more just than a passage cited by Tully from Plato on this occasion. "We cannot deny our assent to any thing, that has the sanction of a divine authority, tho' it be not confirm'd to us by the strict methods of human argumentation or discourse *.

Tho' we grant then, many of the precepts, which natural religion teaches, discover themselves with an evidence, that cannot easily be resisted; yet all moral duties do not appear to us in a light equally strong and convincing; and for this reason, tho' the grounds of every moral virtue are every where the same, yet morality, in certain instances, is often observ'd to vary, as to times and places. There are perhaps at present sew nations in the world, where custom, or some common interest, has not tended in one particular case or other, to confound the distinction of good and evil, at least in some measure to take off that shame and infamy, wherewith the commission of certain vices would have been otherways attended. If reflections of this kind afford us just matter of regret in a christian world, wherein a form of found do-Etrine has been deliver'd to men, that they might know the certainty of those things, wherein they are instructed; how much more may a corruption of moral principles be suppos'd to spread itself among men, in such cases, where the morality of any action is less obvious or demonstrable, and they have not any decisive law or testimony, from which there lies no appeal, to determine them?

An artist, in designing or forming any work, will make use of his eye; yet where he cannot by the sight of it judge or proceed with that exactness, which is requisite, he will certainly think it the safest way to apply his rule. What is here observed, may be proper to give us some notion of the difference between the light of natural reason, and that of reveal'd religion. In some cases, the great lines of our duty are so visible, that we need only con-

^{*} Difficilimum factu à diis ortis fidem non babère, quanquam nec argumentis, nec ratienibus certis eorum ratio confirmetur. Cic. in fragm.

sult the eye of our own understanding to direct us what we are to do: But there being many cases, wherein we cannot judge, concerning the moral obligations we may be under, with equal certainty; and very few, which do not admit of one specious objection or other to perplex them, God has been pleas'd, for our better information, to give us a standing measure of our duty, which if we truly regulate our judgments or practice by, we cannot possibly err, or But the difference in point of advantage between the rule of natural and reveal'd religion, cannot be better illustrated, than by the following words of St. Peter; if by prophecy we only understand what in the scripture sense it often imports, divine instruction in general. We have also, says he, a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that you take heed, as unto a light, that shineth in a dark place: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were mov'd by the Holy Chost *.

WILL the deists now pretend, that a divine revelation is not better adapted to the common instruction of mankind, than any human method of instructing them whatever? Or will they say, that it is indifferent to men, whether they have a clear and certain, or an obscure and fallible rule to walk by; a rule, which cannot fail them; or a rule, which has hitherto fail'd all mankind, the greatest, the best, and wisest of men in all ages; and the defects whereof are still visible in all the world, where reveal'd religion has not been taught or establish'd? And yet these are the things, how incongruous or unreasonable soever in the bare proposal of them, which the deist, that mighty pretender to reason, must say, if he would say any thing at all, in answer to what we have asserted, concerning the expediency of divine revelation, where

ther consider'd as a rule of faith, or of life.

II. Man in his natural state wanted a more perfect knowledge of the motives, upon which he might have been most effectually

induc'd to discharge his duty.

Knowledge is one of the main principles of human action; and indeed a man ought never to do any thing contrary to the light of it, tho' there are some particular cases, wherein he may be oblig'd to act, without his knowing the distinct reasons, upon which he is so oblig'd. But, generally speaking, it might be expected from rational agents, that they should do nothing but what they apprehend in the nature of it sit and reasonable to be done.

PART I.

WE find, notwithstanding, there are other springs of human action, besides knowledge, which often carry men against those maxims and principles, whereby themselves are sensible they ought to be govern'd. Inclination, interest, prejudice, or a natural perverseness of temper, often prove the occasion of a man's condemning himself, in that, which he alloweth. That authority, wherewith the reason of man originally spake to the senses, imagination, and passions, and could have silenc'd them in an instant, is now very much impair'd. The body, by which these dangerous enemies to reason are fed and encourag'd, now speaks in a higher tone, and expects to be heard in its turn, and even gratify'd in its insolent demands: Nay, it often bribes reason, if not to justify, at least to palliate and excuse its disorders. In short, the servants in their present rebellious state, are grown so refractory and imperious, that even where they suffer the master, who alone ought to govern, to be consulted; yet if he do not answer in their favour, they often assume a liberty both of disputing and disobeying his orders.

To the end therefore, that reason may be re-establish'd in her throne, and have her commands duly executed, it is not enough that she prescribe to us what we ought to do, or what we are convinc'd is fit and reasonable to be done, but we must also employ such considerations, which may more powerfully affect us, with regard to our real interests, than those concupiscence may furnish, towards carrying us another way, than the light of our own understanding directs: For how bright soever that light may be, in representing any practical truth to us; yet we shall be apt to consider such a truth, if we have no end to serve in following it, as little more than matter of mere speculation, without any sensible power to influence our practice.

MEN, therefore, without the benefit of divine revelation, having only an imperfect knowledge at the best of certain principles highly necessary to enforce the practice of a strict morality, and to render the law of their minds of superior force to that, which wars so strongly in their members, we are not to wonder that they are very corrupt in their manners; we ought perhaps rather to attribute it to a special preventing grace of God, that the heathens in several parts of the world, considering how little they knew, with any certainty, concerning those principles, have not really

been more corrupt. For,

1. THE doctrine of a future state was no general or fundamental article of their faith, at least they had not that settled belief of it, which was necessary to give one of the strongest motives to a virtuous life, its full power and force. Those who believe, that

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their fouls are to perish with their bodies, will naturally give themfelves up to all manner of sensual gratifications. For men invincibly desiring to be happy, and finding their happiness only in pleafure: where they have little or no assurance of any enjoyment in another life, they will think themselves the more concern'd to make sure of the enjoyments in this life, and to improve their taste of them, This is the common language of such peras much as they can. fons; Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die *. Our time is Short, and in the death of a man there is no remedy: For we are born at all adventures, and we shall be hereafter as though we had never been: For the breath of our nostrils is as smoak, and a little spark in the moving of the heart; which being extinguished, our bodies shall be turn'd into ashes, and our spirits vanish as the soft air. Our time is a very shadow, that passeth away; and after our end there is no returning. Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things, that are at present; and let us speedily use the creatures, like as in youth. Let no flower of the spring pass by us; let none of us go without his part of voluptuousness. For this is our portion, and our lot is this. Let us oppress the poor righteous man; let us not spare the widow; nor reverence the ancient grey hairs of the aged. Let our strength be the law of justice \(\pm\).

YET I would by no means infer from these general maxims, that all persons, who do not believe a future state, are equally corrupt. There is a great deal in natural temper, in education, in the different circumstances of life, and other accidental considerations. which may incline one man to the practice of certain vices, or virtues, more than another. It is possible too, there may be some unbelievers, who by a due exercise of their reason, may be brought to conclude, that setting aside the consideration of another life, the practice of temperance and justice, and other virtues, have really a more direct tendence to promote our present happiness, than a conduct wherein no regard is had to any virtuous principles. Others again may suppose, that there is something in the very idea of virtue so excellent, so amiable, and praise-worthy, that we shall be sufficiently compensated, without any other reward, for all the hardships and self-denials, to which we may be expos'd in her service. And there are some perhaps, who may go even so far, as to infer, that the law, which God has prescrib'd as the rule of our actions, the law which to that end is written in such legible characters on the table of man's heart, ought to be obey'd, tho' our obedience might not hereafter have any confequences, wherewith we could be affected.

* 1 Cor. 15. 32. Isaiah 22. 13.

[‡] Wi/d. 2. 1, 2, &c.

But these are only conclusions form'd by men of great minds and good understandings: And tho' it is, without doubt, generally true, that a life of strict morality, is, upon the whole matter, and every thing consider'd, most conducing to all the real interests of men in this world, were there nothing to follow; yet it will be very difficult to persuade men in particular cases, where they can gratify their criminal inclinations to pleasure, without shame or discovery, or do an act of injustice, in order to serve some worldly design, they have much at heart, with impunity, that they ought not to improve such occasions to the advantage, for which they so opportunely present themselves. We grant too, that virtue is in the bare idea and contemplation of it very amiable and engaging; that men at least ought to render themselves her votaries, out of pure respect to the dignity of their own minds, and a desire of giving them still greater perfection. These are fine truths in the theory, but which those ancient philosophers, who improv'd them most, seldom reduc'd to practice. If we may judge from the influence these speculations had on their conduct, they will still go but a little way towards reclaiming men from such vices, which they are tempted to by strong inclination, or whereof they have contracted any long or fettled habits. However men may express their admiration and esteem for virtue, on the account of her beauty; yet few have so great generosity of mind as to espouse her entirely without a dowry. How difficult a thing do we find it, even to persuade those, who believe the suture and spiritual rewards of religion, that there is any solid happiness in this world, but in sensual or other worldly enjoyments. But where men look upon death as a kind of annihilation, and are therefore professedly, and upon principle, men of pleasure, the mere name or idea of virtue will fignify little towards curbing any vicious inclination, which they feel the power of in their hearts. Nature, on such an occasion, will prove too obstinate for a bright thought, and a cold notion of what is fit, and decent, and honourable, will too easily give way to the strong and violent impressions of sensible objects: And tho, in the last place, it is certain, that without any respect to suturity, men ought to obey God in whatever he has prescrib'd as his will; yet if the sanction of rewards and punishments has generally so little effect upon men, who believe a future state of them, as reveal'd in the gospel; if we find it so hard to reclaim sinners, who know the terrors of the Lord, from their evil courses; or to convince those, who look for a better country, of their indispensable obligation to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world; what rational grounds can we have to hope, that even persons of the best natural dispositions,

sitions, would pay a constant and uniform obedience to God, upon a pure principle of duty, who have nothing hereaster to hope or fear from him, and when they can judge with so very little certainty, concerning his love or hatred to men, by all that goes before them here?

SHOULD it be said, I have here taken it for granted, that the heathens did not believe a suture state; I answer, it is highly reasonable to suppose, many of them did not believe it, and that several others had at the best but very impersect and unsettled notions concerning it. If the heathens had generally believ'd a suture state, it is strange, that no nation among them, ever publickly profess'd, or establish'd in any authentick manner, the doctrine of it; and that we are not able to discover in ancient history any certain monuments of such an establishment. However, whether it were general, or not, it will be a very just inference from what has been said, that in proportion as the belief of another life is less sirm, the influence of it upon the lives of men will be attended with less wholsome and sensible effects.

Now it will not, I think, be disputed, that the heathens were, generally speaking, under no clear or settled conviction of mind concerning a future life: They talk'd indeed of the shades below, of the Elyzian fields, and the ghosts of departed men; but there was something so irrational, and even ridiculous in the popular account of these things, that they were rather look'd upon as subjects, proper for a poet's imagination to display itself upon, than as having any real grounds sufficient to convince the judgment of grave and thinking men. It is evident indeed, whatever traditions might have been cited, or natural reasons assign'd, to prove the immortality of the foul, yet the wifest and most learned of the heathen made it no firm and standing article of their faith: Even those, who believ'd the immateriality of the foul, upon which one of the most convincing arguments to prove it immortal, is founded; yet were diffident as to this latter article, and express'd themselves with so much uncertainty upon it, as argued they were not convinc'd of it fully, at least not constantly, at all times; which might probably be one reason why they so seldom enforc'd the duties either of morality, or piety, from this confideration.

ADMITTING then, that the natural proofs of a future state could be sufficiently made out in the ordinary way of human reasoning, yet it would be an act of the greatest goodness in God, to establish so important an article, still upon a more clear and solid foundation, in bringing life and immortality to light, by means of a special revelation. The deists must allow this to be a method, whereby the common errors and defects of human understanding are much

better

better provided for, with a remedy. For if those men, who were most exact in their enquiries, and made the greatest discoveries, concerning the principles of natural religion, could not perfectly remove their private doubts, as to a point, wherein natural reason gave them some competent assistance, there was little to be expected from the reasonings of the vulgar upon it, towards their own satisfaction.

2. MAN had also very imperfect notions, wherein he wanted to be rectify'd, concerning a future judgment. I am sensible this article is commonly consider'd, as having a visible connexion with the former; and therefore it is not unusual with writers, in reprefenting the advantages of divine revelation, to treat of these two articles promiscuously. But I take it they admit of a very distinct consideration, with regard to the influence, which they severally have on the conduct of men; and that they do not necessarily imply or infer each other. For 'tis very possible, that a man may believe his foul immortal, and yet be under no apprehensions of his having a formal authoritative sentence to be pass'd upon him, after his death. There are men who believe a God, and yet deny that he takes any notice of their actions; they question, whether there be knowledge in the most high? and what the almighty is, that they should fear him, or what profit they should have in praying unto him? It is not unreasonable for such men to conclude, that tho' their souls will subsist in a separate state, when their bodies are dissolv'd, yet God will not judge, or call them to account for such actions, in that state, which escap'd his knowledge, or at least which he took no judicial cognizance of here. It is probable, many of the greatest libertines, who have no manner of awe upon their minds, from the consideration of a suture judgment; yet cannot fully persuade themselves, that the noble principle within them, whose operations and qualities are altogether distinct from those of the body, should nevertheless depend, as to its existence, upon the life of the body.

It is not easy for men, especially men of loose principles, to argue against such inclinations or desires, as are very natural to them. Now one of the strongest desires, which nature has implanted in us, is that of self-preservation, which is so strong, even with respect to the body, that frail and inferior part of us, that we see how easily it reconciles great numbers of people to the most sensible bodily pains and sufferings of this life; but which desire therefore, one would think, should hold much stronger in relation to the soul, the true and immediate cause of all our sensations, and by virtue of its union wherewith, the body can only be said, except in a very improper sense, to suffer or enjoy any thing. It

must indeed be a very shocking consideration to a man, who makes the least reflection on the dignity and excellency of his own nature, that he shall one day, notwithstanding so many superior advantages of reason, be put upon the same level with irrational beings, and die, like the beasts that periss.

This laudible ambition then, which men have to continue in being, may be suppos'd to exert itself even in those who are otherways very wicked, after so powerful a manner, as to incline them in consequence of their wishes, to believe, that there is a life after

this, tho' they believe nothing of a future judgment.

But taking it, as I here do, for granted, that there are deists, who not only affert the natural immortality of the foul, but a divine providence, which takes strict cognizance of all the thoughts, words, and actions of men in this life; I would ask notwithstanding, what natural proofs they can bring, that when a period is put to our present life, we shall without passing into any intermediate state, be directly consign'd over to a special, and, to all eter-. nity, irreversible judgment of God? Considering the many defects both of human understanding and will in this life, how short men are of all the perfection, and how unqualify'd for all the happiness whereof their nature seems capable; it might be thought perhaps more credible, had revelation determin'd nothing to the contrary, that before men were to appear at the bar of the heaven of heavens to be finally, and by an irrevocable sentence sav'd or condemn'd, they should previously be oblig'd to finish their course of probation, by a gradual ascent through the several subordinate heavens. This, I grant, is intended for no more than a conjecture, that may however be suppos'd to have some foundation in the possibility of the thing. But if we argue from natural principles; is the supposition of a judgment to commence immediately after this life, less precarious? For where does natural reason inform us with any certainty, that this is the only state of tryal, and that there do not remain an indefinite number of other probatory states to be pass'd through, before the great books of providence, and the divine decrees, out of which we are to be judg'd, shall be finally That there is a judgment to come, is a truth, which in general very strong and natural reasons may be produc'd for the proof of: But when God will call men before his tribunal to be judg'd, whether after this life ended, or when we may have pass'd through several other scenes of action, upon the expiration of it; this is what we are not capable of resolving by any arguments, which the natural light of our minds does appear to afford us. The difficulty of determining this question was probably one cause, why the Pythagoreans more easily embrac'd that notion concerning the transmiPART I.

transmigration of souls. And the they were not able to establish their doctrine upon such grounds as were sufficient to induce a rational belief of it; yet their adversaries, on the other hand, did not, find it easy from any natural principles, solidly to consute it; tho' the confutation of it would have been still more difficult, had this celebrated sect only suppos'd, that the souls of men were successively to pass out of one human body into another, or into some other vehicle, that might be a proper instrument of its operations. However, as they believ'd the foul of a vicious man, who had made a very ill use of his liberty, would also in course shift the scene of its residence into the body of some animal, of a nature and disposition most agreeable to the corrupt habits it had formerly contracted; even this doctrine must be allow'd, to have had some influence at least towards persuading men to a more strict and A man who thought at all, could not but regular way of living. think himself in some measure concern'd, to lead a more virtuous life, that he might not upon his next translation be condemn'd to lead the life of a brute: Tho' were this indeed all the punishment some wicked men have to expect, it would not perhaps be in their apprehensions so terrible, as good and pious men may be apt to, imagine, who are unwilling to believe into what gross stupidity of mind, and corruption of heart, human nature may degenerate in some persons.

But, not to insist on so shocking a consideration, the conclusion I would draw from what has been here said, is, that supposing the immortality of the soul may be made out by clear and convincing arguments, yet no proofs can be drawn from any natural topicks of reason to convince us, that judgment will immediately pass upon sinners after this life, at least before they enter upon any other state of probation. This still leaves them some resource towards feeding their corruptions, and to the end they may proceed in their evil courses, with less anxiety and terror of mind: Since they can still flatter themselves with the hopes, that they may one time, or in one state or other, improve the opportunities of their conversion, better than they have done here; and so recommend themselves to the favour of God, and remedy all at last, by a more

just, pious, and regular conduct.

But if God should by an express revelation declare, that he has appointed for all men once to die, and after this the judgment; that in consequence of their being judg'd, the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal: Here the two great springs of human action, the love of happiness, and the fear of misery, should operate, one would think, with all the force whereof they are capable. How can any temptations or ter-

rors of this world stand before that strong and penetrating light, which represents to our minds the glories of heaven, and the flames of hell shining to all eternity? Upon such a prospect, it might reasonably be expected, that all the ideas of sensible pleasure and all apprehensions of pain, would immediately vanish. For tho' we always in some degree find our selves happy in actual pleasure, and miserable in actual pain; yet who would not forego a present slight enjoyment, and even sacrifice his predominant passion, for the fake of the true and eternal joys, in certain reversion? Who again would not be willing to suffer some short and transient, however afflicting pains, in a life, whose thread is every moment running off apace, that he may, in a state immediately to succeed it, avoid those terrible and exquisite pains, which will never have an end? Do not we find, that the most vicious persons will chuse to deny themselves in many things, and even slight great difficulties, and, in certain cases, imminent dangers, for the sake of something more folid, and important to their interests, than what they give up to the expectation of it? Certainly the reasons of such a choice must hold much stronger with respect to the concerns of eternity; where men really believe upon the authority of divine revelation, that immediately after this life, and according to their good or ill conduct in it, they shall enter upon a fix'd and unchangeable state of happiness or misery. The very question concerning the prefent advantage of acting upon a virtuous principle, is now out of question; virtue is certainly subservient to our true interests, tho' The should not contribute, which yet she commonly does, to promote our temporary interests: She is not upon this view, whar dull and vulgar minds were before too apt to object, any longer an empty name, or mere form to entertain the speculations of curious men; but she proposes, what will make us folidly and truly Her reward is with her; and tho' it may appear sometimes more flow, yet it is sure at last; and such a reward, to which all we can do and suffer for her, bears no manner of proportion. In a word, the power she ought to have over us, does not now subsist on a metaphysical, which to most people is a very jejune way of persuasion; but upon motives, of all others, the most proper to affect and penetrate the heart.

NEITHER, upon this supposition of an unchangeable state of reward or punishment after this life, can a sinner slatter himself with the hopes of impunity or happiness at last, by designing to make a better use of his liberty, in any supposed course of a future probation. For when sentence is once past upon him, and the measures of his punishment awarded to him, he has no aftergame to play, no farther opportunities of running, as perhaps he

PART I.

has formerly done, with great numbers of men, who dy'd impenitent at last, in a continued circle of sinning and repenting; but all overtures of grace are now ceas'd, and his soul once lost, is lost irrecoverably, and for ever.

Upon this principle then, of an immediate judgment to come after this life, the proper arguments to a virtuous, and the most powerful restraints to a vicious life, appear equally strong in their respective and distinct operations. Here, and here alone, the true interests of religion can be effectually provided for and secur'd: And as this article could only be known with certainty sufficient to attain these great ends, till it had been reveal'd by God, we discover the expediency of a divine revelation, in respect to it, with a force so much the more sensible, and expressive of the divine goodness.

3. It the truth of these several principles, I have mention'd, had been clearly demonstrable from the light of natural reason; yet as men do not always act conformably to their sentiments, even when they are very strong and lively; but sometimes suffer themselves to be carry'd away by the weight of concupiscence, in direct opposition to them: We have still occasion, in order to ballance that weight, for all the adventitious helps and motives to religion; that we can possibly discover or employ.

How firmly soever we assent to any truth, yet it will be granted to affect us still more powerfully, if inculcated by some person for whom we have conceived a very high veneration; and especially if we could suppose him speaking to us by a special authority or commission from God.

In the former respect the heathens had indeed from time to time teachers of natural religion among them, venerable for their age, their learning, and profession, and some of them for a greater strictness and regularity of manners. A decent regard might have been more easily paid to what they said on these accounts but that brought the people under no such obligation to observe their instructions, as if they had received them from heaven, or taught in the name of God.

Should Socrates or Confucius be restor'd to life, tho' without any special character, or any commission given them to discover the state of the other world, there are sew persons, who would not take a great deal of pleasure in hearing them discourse, tho' only upon some known and uncontroverted subjects of morality or religion; and what they might say, would probably have some good and wholsome effects on many of their auditors. But should a prophet, or angel from heaven, or some being superior to the order of angels, be sent with authentick credentials to repeat or Y y

confirm to us the great truths of natural religion, his authority, tho' we should have learn'd and been assur'd of those truths already, yet could not fail at once of awakening our attention more powerfully to them, and leaving more lively and lasting impressi-

ons of them upon our minds.

Any fuch person, but especially one invested with the last character, is not to be consider'd as a mere preacher of religion or morality, but as having the authority of a lawgiver; by whom the measures of truth and error, of right and wrong, are not only infallibly determin'd, but whose determination carries in it an obliging, and it might reasonably be expected, an irresistible force. With respect to the dignity of such a prophet, what could be more just even in a human and natural way of reasoning, than the following conclusion. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed, to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we

Should let them slip *.

4. Another motive, and one of the most powerful to a religious life, which men wanted in a state of natural religion, was the promise of a supernatural grace and assistance towards rendring their duty in the several instances of it more practicable to them. Whatever bright or just notions men may have concerning religion, how much soever they may be inclin'd to practise it from the other motives, that have been mention'd, on supposition, that they might by any means come to the knowledge of them: Yet if, after all, through a consciousness of their own weakness or inability, they look upon their duty as really impracticable, as they could still propose to themselves no success in their most earnest and sincere endeavours to discharge it; to what end, would they naturally argue, should we apply our selves to the business of it; or engage in an attempt, which we know beforehand must certainly prove fruitless and ineffectual in the event?

Now men, in their natural state, were very sensible, that human nature was much corrupted; the disease was every where obferv'd to reign, and every where complain'd of: But no method of cure could be found out equal to the strength and malignity of it. I do not here dispute how far a common grace was dispens'd to mankind in general, in concurrence with which, they might have preserv'd themselves much better, than they appear to have done, from the common infection. But whether such a grace, was by any secret appointment of God dispens'd to them, they do not seem to have had the least apprehensions concerning it, and so could not be in the least influenc'd towards a more faithful and vigorous discharge of their duty by any consideration of it. They pray'd indeed to God for success in their designs, but they were not the internal motions of his grace, which they had regard to in their prayers, but only the over-ruling dispositions of his providence. If some of them had any notion of an illuminating grace, and so might pray to God in certain great and arduous undertakings, for his direction; yet as to a spirit of sanctification, which might operate upon their hearts, and produce any holy or spiritual effects in them, it seems to have been a principle altogether unknown to them.

A revelation then, which should assure men, that God will put bis spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his statutes; that be will pour out his spirit upon all flesh; which shall help their infirmities, so that they shall never be tempted above what they are able. A revelation to this end, one would think, could never fail of animating our religious endeavours to such a degree, that no difficulties whatever should be of any force to discourage them. Here is an effectual remedy provided against the power of natural If God, if the Holy Spirit of God, be for us, who, or what, can be against us? We may upon this principle easily answer all the arguments to sin, how strong or specious soever they may appear, whether from a confideration of our own weakness, or the strength of our enemy. For we shall have nothing now to do, but in a fincere and pious disposition of mind, to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

But let it, after all, be granted, that man without the benefit of divine revelation had been capable of discovering in a clear and convincing light all the grounds and relations of his duty, and all the motives which might have effectually engaged him to discharge it; yet a divine revelation was still wanting, in order to his

more perfectknowledge.

III. Concerning the means of reconciling himself to God upon his failure in it. For what powerful inducements soever we may have to love virtue, and to engage, on other accounts, heartily in her interests; yet if we apprehend all our endeavours to serve her, will at last prove fruitless and lost labour to our selves, this is such a discouragement, as sew persons, especially under circumstances of any violent temptation, will be able to surmount. This was the case of men in a state of natural religion; they were sensible, in the first place, that the law which was prescrib'd as the rule of their duty, was holy and just, and good; but they had offended against this law, and were thereby become obnoxious to the displeasure of a just and almighty God, the author of it; they concluded

concluded from the many visible acts of his goodness in the works of creation and providence, that God was also good; yet they were still under much stronger apprehensions, that his justice would punish the sinner, than that his goodness would pardon the peni-For they look'd upon acts of justice as strictly due to them, which they had not only incurr'd the penalties of by their first transgression, but continually provok'd by their repeated offences. Acts of goodness, on the other hand, are such, as no person, in a proper sense, can deserve, and to which they were conscious in their own minds they could not have done, much less had really done any thing to recommend themselves. Their expectations therefore of punishment, as they were much stronger, were much more reasonable too, than their pretensions to favour. Indeed acts of favour being free, and wholly depending on the good pleasure of the donor; till he has declar'd what he intends to do in reference to them, it cannot with any certainty be determin'd, what he will do.

Tho' it was a question therefore of the last importance to men, whether God, upon the repentance of sinners, would pardon their fins, and remit the punishment due to them; yet it was a question at the same time, concerning which, human reason could never come to any clear or determinate resolution. And in a case, on which the eternal happiness or misery of men depends, they are not uncertain conjectures, or doubtful disputations about what may possibly, or even probably happen, that can give the mind any true or perfect satisfaction, but only such assurances, upon which it may firmly and entirely repose itself. A sinner, whose guilt continually represents to him an incens'd and almighty God, with a rod of vengeance in his hand, will find but poor confolation, in putting questions, whether, after all, he will shew mercy and compassion; or in saying, it may be so, and, who can tell? When if it should happen to be otherways, he is lost, irrecoverably lost and This one supposition, that possibly, after all, undone for ever. God may not pardon finners; and that they shall find no place for repentance, tho' they feek it with tears, has something in it fo dreadful and terrifying, as might reasonably be expected to incline a deist to wish at least that God had by an express revelation declar'd his will upon an article, without the firm belief whereof, (which there is no certain foundation for in natural religion) no man, who believes he has a foul to be fav'd or damn'd, can during the intervals of serious reflection, be ever in an easy or compos'd temper of mind.

This was a case, which it did not only concern particular sinners, but the whole race of mankind to be resolved in: For all

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men had sinn'd, and fallen short of the glory of God. Yet however it was the subject of their common enquiry and consideration; all they were able to conclude from it was, that considering the goodness and benignity of the divine nature, God might possibly be merciful to sinners, and receive them to favour. So far the Nine-vites went in their way of reasoning, and reason improv'd by all the advantages of learning and philosophy could never go farther. Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his sierce anger, that we perish not? But if all they could be assured of was only, that a good God might perhaps, upon their humiliation, pardon their sins, had they not, on the other hand, at least equal reason to apprehend, that perhaps a just God might not pardon them.

Besides, acts of goodness being arbitrary, whatever we suppose a good God inclin'd to do, there may be very strong considerations with regard to the ends of government, why a wise God should not do it. So that except the deist can shew, which I think no deist has yet undertaken to do, nor any sober person will affert, that God is oblig'd in strict justice to pardon penitent sinners, no certain arguments, and certainty is what we are now to seek after, can be drawn from the goodness of God, that he will par-

don him. But,

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2. LET all that has been faid on this point go for nothing: Let us grant, finners may be infallibly affur'd from natural principles, that God, upon their repentance, will pardon their fins; yet except they know wherein the true notion, and proper acts of repentance consist, how, or upon what reasonable grounds, can we persuade them to the practice of it? Men will naturally excuse themselves from working in the dark, and setting upon an unknown duty. Now tho' the light of our own minds does indeed inform us with a much clearer evidence concerning the nature of repentance, than concerning the will of God to pardon the penitent; yet if in fact we consider the little use men have ordinarily made of the light of nature to this end, we may observe, that notwithstanding they had a general and confus'd notion of repentance, as a means of reconciling finners to God, yet they did not really and distinctly understand, what it was to repent; and therefore a divine revelation will appear, if not absolutely necessary, at least very highly expedient even towards a more perfect discovery of this important duty to us, in the several branches of it.

Let us observe the method, whereby the *Ninevites* testify'd their repentance when awaken'd by the voice of a special prophet from heaven. They proclaim'd a fast, and by express command of the royal authority, neither man nor beast, herd or slock, was to taste any

thing; nay, both man and beast were to be cover'd with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God*. This command, with respect to the people of Nineveh, had a reasonable foundation; but as irrational creatures were indifferently oblig'd to share in the ceremonial and external testimonies of their humiliation, this discovers the crude and consus'd notions which they had of repentance in general.

We grant indeed, they were farther exhorted to turn, every one, from his evil way, and from the violence that was in their hands †. This was a direct admonition towards a true and proper act of repentance, yet which is still short of that act, which gives repentance its perfection, and consists in a real change of mind from sinful to virtuous and holy dispositions. But whether it were from any instructions of the prophet, which are unrecorded, or from the natural reason of the thing, that the Ninevites apprehended it incumbent on them to exercise that lower, tho' essential act of repentance, they certainly had in this respect juster notions concerning the duty of true penitents, than the generality of those who liv'd in the most resn'd and polite ages of the heathen world.

If we consider the methods they us'd in order to appeale the offended deity, and towards averting any impending or future evil, there was nothing in them wherewith the heart was, or, in their apprehensions, ought to have been affected. For they had scarce any notion, except what discover'd itself in some few great men who recommend inward purity, of paying to God a worship properly They rather chose therefore to come before him with much ceremony, and many costly oblations, and sometimes with the blood of human sacrifices: A method of atonement more provoking to God, than the very crimes, for which it could well be suppos'd to atone. In short, whatever expectation they had, that the blood of bulls, of goats, or of men, might possibly be a means of taking away sin; yet they appear to have had little or no regard in their worship towards making themselves more perfect. as pertaining to the conscience. The priests, whose business it was to instruct them in the ritual of religion, and to see it perform'd, seldom, if ever, troubled themselves to inculcate the duties of a moral and reasonable service. And indeed as sacrifice, tho' more expensive, is naturally more agreeable to the corrupt inclinations of men, than obedience, the institution of it, was the most artful and effectual method to keep up a sense of religion, such as it was, in a corrupt world. It is also easier for us to go through a long course of penance or bodily exercise, than to offer violence to any one passion, which has got the dominion over our hearts: And pro-

* Jon. 3. 5, 7, 8.

+ v. 8.

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vided a man can but indulge to himself in reserve the sin of his soul, he will be willing to sacrifice in many respects the ease and appetites of the body to it. The truth of this general reslection must however be allow'd, that a strict and pure morality is far more difficult to be practis'd, than the external rules of a superstitious worship; especially such of them, as do in their own nature tend to savour and promote corruption.

But cannot the duties of repentance then be clearly and distinctly deduc'd from the common principles of natural religion? We do not deny that they may; but still there is a wide difference; betwixt our seeing the reasonableness of any truth, when once reveal'd to us, and our being able to discover the several grounds and reasons out of which it arises, antecedently to such a revelation. Man is naturally apt to grow vain, and to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. When any thing he had not taken notice of before is observ'd to him, it might, in his opinion, have been easy for him, had he apply'd his thoughts that way, to have made it the subject of his own observation: He wonders how so very plain and obvious a matter could hitherto escape This vanity of man is too visible, not only in his way of judging concerning natural causes and effects, or the works of human art, but in the judgment he makes, concerning moral or religious subjects; and his arrogance sometimes carries him in all these respects so far, as to make him triumph in a pretended discovery of what he has really borrow'd from others, tho' perhaps he has been so very negligent and ungrateful, that he has even forgot to whose help or affiltance he was originally oblig'd.

The question then, between us and the deists, is not strictly, what human reason could possibly have done towards ascertaining the truths of natural religion to men, but what in fact it has done; and how little therefore it would, in all probability, be capable of doing to this end hereafter, if left, without any guide, to its own conduct? We see how far it fail'd the generality of men in so very obvious an article, as that concerning repentance; why therefore should we suppose, it would have afforded men a more clear or true light, towards their information concerning such truths, which lie yet more deep and conceal'd from the eye of human un-

derstanding?

It is possible, in the nature of the thing, for a man, of an extraordinary force and penetration of mind, to make a considerable progress in the mathematicks, without the assistance of any book written in that science; will any one therefore say, that no books ought to be written in it, or that *Euclid* could have no reasonable or useful end in publishing his Elements? The deist may with equal reason reason pretend to argue against the use and expediency of divine revelation, supposing it possible for us to make the truths, it establishes, clearly out upon the principles of human reason; tho there are indeed some of them, which it highly concerns us to know, whereof, we cannot, after all, have any knowledge, but by such a revelation.

EXECUTE SERVICE SERVI

CHAP. III. PROP. III.

That there are certain characters, both internal and external, whereby persons, to whom a divine revelation has not been immediately made, may yet have reasonable and sufficient grounds to believe it: And first, of such characters of it as are internal.

IT is not sufficient to prove, that a divine revelation is possible, and that it is highly expedient such a revelation, in order to the common benefit and instruction of mankind, should be made; except we can also prove farther, that those, to whom it is immediately made, may communicate it after a manner to others, which may be proper to convince them that it is, in truth, a revelation from God: For otherways, what is reveal'd to one man could only oblige his own private assent; and so there would be a necessity, in order to attain the ends of revelation in general, that God should immediately reveal himself to every man in particular.

A particular revelation to every man, would indeed be sufficient for every man's conviction, as to the divine authority of it; but not so agreeable to our common notions of the divine wisdom, as a regular and uniform conveyance of reveal'd truths to the minds of men. For there is nothing more inconsistent with the character of a wise agent, than to employ any extraordinary or superstuous means, where he can effect his designs by sewer and more

simple means.

Besides, upon a supposition, that every man, to whom the benefit of a divine revelation is design'd to extend, should be immediately inspir'd, mankind would be continually expos'd to the danger of error, or the illusions of wicked and designing men; except we should suppose too at the same time, that the spirit of revelation

PART I.

velation were to rest upon every man throughout the whole course of his life; which would require a constant and uninterrupted series of miracles still more irreconcileable with our ideas of the divine wisdom.

But if the spirit of revelation were only to rest upon a man, at certain periods of his life, then, during the intervals of its recess, it is possible the impressions formerly made on his mind, how itrong loever, may yet wear off or be defac'd in such a manner, that he cannot perfectly recollect them. He must still then have recourse, for entire satisfaction in such points, to other persons, in whose minds the evidence of the truths reveal'd to them, is more fresh and powerful: But who, after all, if they have not a power of working miracles, in confirmation of what they report to him, or do not give him other proper proofs of their inspiration and probity, may still deceive him; as the old prophet in Bethel*, upon a false pretence of a later revelation, and by giving himself a strong and superior air of confidence, deceiv'd him who was sent to prophely against the altar there. We may observe, that persons of weaker minds, or such, who if they do not want strength of mind, have a greater diffidence of themselves, are often overborn by persons of a very bold and contagious imagination to asfent to what is said, against the former convictions of their own minds, and sometimes before they well or distinctly know, what it really is they assent to.

It is necessary therefore to the great end, for which a divine revelation is made, that there should be certain marks or characters, whereby it may be distinguish'd, as such, by those, to whom it is not immediately made. How could God almighty otherways require our belief of it? Since it can never be our duty to believe,

what we have no certain way of knowing to be credible.

Or these marks or characters I begin with those, that are commonly call'd and reputed internal; which are not, we allow, equally strong and convincing; especially such of them as are only propos'd by way of negation; yet even these, tho' they do not directly prove a divine revelation to be true, yet as the want of them would directly prove the pretence of it to be false, will fall very properly under our present consideration.

1. NOTHING can be the subject of a divine revelation, that implies in the nature of it a contradiction. Whatever arguments, for instance, may be brought to prove the truth of a revelation, which afferts that two bodies may be in one place, or one body in two places at once, we may be assured such a revelation can have no

real, but only a pretended authority; because God could have no end worthy of his wisdom or goodness in making it: Since we cannot have a greater assurance that a contradictory proposition is reveal'd from God, than we have already, that a contradiction cannot be true. And if we must in all disputable cases be determin'd by the stronger evidence; then where the evidence, as we now suppose it in this particular case, is equal on both sides, we can determine or believe nothing on either side; but must suspend our assent, till some higher degree of evidence, which yet it is impossible to conceive there should be any scope for one way or other, should oblige us to give it.

I speak here upon a supposition, that either of the foremention'd, or any like contradictory propositions could really be propos'd by a divine authority as articles of faith: But where they are only inferr'd from certain propositions, divinely reveal'd, and from which they do not directly or necessarily follow; there the presumption, that they are not really articles of divine revelation, grows much stronger, from the possibility of error or mistake in those, who draw such inferences: It being much more credible, that men may be deceiv'd in the judgments they make concerning the sense of a proposition, which is not self-evident, than that they should have any reasonable grounds to believe a plain and evi-

dent contradiction.

2. We can admit nothing as a subject of divine revelation, which contradicts the moral and unchangeable rules of natural reason. The law of nature being the law of God, and not depending even upon his own positive institution, but the essential rectitude and perfections of his nature, it is equally impossible for him to deny himself, and to cancel the obligations of that law. To suppose him capable of forming such a design, or of revealing his intention to that end, is to attribute to him two contradictory wills, or, what is equally irreconcileable to our ideas of a most perfect being, a reveal'd will directly inconsistent with his true and secret will.

Should any doctrine therefore or principle of reveal'd religion be pretended directly or indirectly to authorize fin or impiety; such a doctrine or principle cannot be founded either in the express letter or intention of the divine law, but only in the ignorance or corruption of the interpreter. As any judgment contrary to the standing and known laws of a nation, is not supposed to be the judgment of the prince, or the legislature, but to proceed from some indirect motives, in persons who pretend, and whose proper office it should be, to explain and declare the sense of them.

YET we are to distinguish between the general obligation of a law, and the exceptions, which may be made to it, by virtue of a dispensing power in the sovereign authority. It is matter of general obligation to men not to deprive other persons of their lives, or of any thing to which they have a natural or legal right. great many moral reasons may be assign'd for this, and in particular that excellent rule, of not doing to others, what, in a suppos'd change of circumstances, we should think injurious, or unreasonable to be done to our selves: Yet God being the absolute proprietor of the lives and fortunes of men, and having them entirely in his own disposition, may order one man to take away the life of another, or even a father to facrifice his son; or he may authorize private persons to dispossels their neighbours of what they justly possess, and even whole nations to drive out other nations from before them. These are prerogative acts of God, which flow from his right of absolute dominion over his creatures, and render certain actions, which would be otherways the greatest moral evils, not only lawful, but sometimes matter of strict and indispensable duty to us.

3. Nothing can reasonably be assented to as matter of divine revelation, which, tho' neither impossible in itself absolutely consider'd, nor repugnant to any moral law, or any essential perfection of the divine nature, yet contradicts any known, certain, and incontestable facts; because we cannot have a clearer evidence that any revelation is true, than that such facts have really and in truth happen'd otherways, than such a revelation pretends to report. Should one, for instance, affirm it has been reveal'd to him, that Alexander the Great liv'd in the second century of the christian church, and Julius Cæsar in the third, it is hard to conceive how any evidence could be brought to confirm this pretended revelation, stronger than the grounds, we should have for suspecting it. For the like reason, should any one affert, with Mahomet, he has had a special revelation from God, that the virgin Mary was Aaron's sister, or that Jesus Christ did not really suffer, or die upon the cross, but only in the appearance of another person very much resembling him, contrary to all the testimonies, whereof any matter of fact is capable, tho' such a man were able, which Mahomet was not, to do some things, besides the common course of natural causes, and, at first view, above the power of them; yet we should still have so strong reasons to suspect him for an impostor, as his pretended credentials would not be of force enough sufficient to remove.

THESE

THESE are all the negative proofs concerning a divine revelation, which I have thought necessary to mention; I shall now

proceed to consider,

4. Some of those, which are more direct and positive. It is, in the first place, a strong presumption, that a revelation is true, and from God, when it teaches such doctrines, or enjoins such precepts, as will naturally oppose its own reception or establishment. When any man takes upon him to introduce a new religion, he does it with a defign, supposing him capable of any regular or confistent design at all, to have it believ'd at least, if not to gain open and profess'd converts to it: But now the way, humanly speaking, to have it believ'd, is not to advance notions opposite to those, which have hitherto univerfally obtain'd, and have perhaps an express sanction of the civil power; any more than to require any duty contrary to the strongest passions, and most important interests of men in this life, is a probable way of recommending it effectually to their practice. An impostor, who should project fuch a scheme of propagating a new religion, would destroy his end by the very means which he employs in order to accomplish it.

MAHOMET was so sensible of this, that, consistently enough with his design, he accommodated his doctrine to the corrupt notions, and his maxims of life to the most irregular and vicious inclinations of men: He made the present happiness of his followers to consist in temporal prosperity and enjoyments, at least he propos'd them as the principal motives in this life, of a faithful adherence to his religion; and as a farther reward of it in another life, he propos'd a paradife, abounding with an affluence of still greater and more affecting sensual delights. We grant however, he taught fome doctrines very opposite to those, which were generally receiv'd in the heathen world, and particularly with respect to the perfect unity and simplicity of the divine nature; but it is to be consider'd, that some new doctrines are necessary towards the introduction of a new religion; and that the doctrines of this false prophet, which had any reasonable foundation, were much less oppos'd, on account of the growth of christianity, which at that time extended itself so wide, and the principles whereof, were well known, even to great numbers of those, who were not in a disposition to receive them. To which we may add, that the secular powers, which had so universally conspir'd to support paganism, were then too very much broken, and men began every where to be more and more sensible of the gross errors and idolatry of the pagan worship.

But

But should one appear in the character of a prophet, at a time when there are none of these circumstances to facilitate the reception of his doctrine; at a time when it is every where evil spoken of, persecuted, and decry'd, not only as an innovation, contrary to the rites and religion establish'd by the laws, but as highly impious and prophane in itself; here we have one of the strongest moral assurances, such a person can give of his own sincerity, and consequently of the truth of that revelation, which is reported by him. For what but the clear and certain evidence of its truth should induce him to engage in a design, to all human appearance, absolutely impracticable, and upon which, were he an impostor, he could much less expect the divine benediction; besides that, it might expose him and his followers to suffer the greatest miseries and calamities of this life, which human nature is capable of suffering, without any prospect of reward hereaster.

SUCH a method of proceeding is so contrary to all the standing rules and maxims of self-preservation and interest, whereby men govern themselves in this world, that considering the common vanity and ambition of men, tho' it may not be an infallible sign of sincerity in the person who engages in it, yet where neither of these motives are visible, it affords us very strong and rational grounds.

to believe him fincere.

But the minds of men, since I have on this occasion mention'd the religion of *Mahomet*, were less prejudic'd against it, as it was so visibly calculated in the two following respects, to favour their corrupt passions and interests. To gratify their love of power and wealth, he authoriz'd them to commit all manner of violence and injustice upon those who oppos'd the principles or progress of his religion; and to gratify their sensuality, he allow'd them to have a plurality of wives, and even to take away the wives of their slaves at pleasure from them.

THESE were indulgences so agreeable to the common and corrupt inclinations of men, that they render'd a scheme of religion in many respects irrational, and in some very ridiculous, yet capable in a short time of drawing vast numbers of men over to it; and as it originally ow'd its increase to these loose and unjust maxims, it has ever since been principally supported and propa-

gated by them.

SHOULD an author, on the other hand, of any new doctrine or religion, who declares himself a preacher sent from God, instead of adapting his rules of life to the vicious inclinations of men, enjoin them, in its sull extent, a strict and pure morality; should he restrain them from taking the sword, or employing the secular arm towards compelling others to come into his design, or giving B b b

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it a larger compass to spread in; and only leave them to recommend and support it by the gentle methods of reason and persuasion: Should the precepts he lays down be so far from encouraging a fierce or cruel disposition, or permitting his disciples to do violence to any man, that they might have a visible and direct tendence to promote peace upon earth; good-will towards all men: Or should he be so far from proposing to his immediate sollowers the temporal advantages of this life, that he tells them beforehand, they must expect to part with their nearest and most valuable interests in it, and has perhaps made this the very condition of their following him: Should he again, instead of prescribing any rules, which may appear in the least to favour impurity, or the more irregular appetites of sense, strictly charge them, that denying all worldly lusts, they should live soberly in this present world *; and be temperate in all things, that they may receive the prize +: The contrariety, I argue, of fuch a religion to the natural tempers, and corrupt habits of men, must be allow'd to carry the greater evidence of an unbyass'd integrity in those, who assert it to be divinely reveal'd to them, in proportion as the precepts of it have really less force to persuade: Since nothing but a full conviction of its truth could be suppos'd to engage any person to attest the divine authority of it; and to inculcate those precepts against all the motions of self-love from within, and all the opposition and prejudices he must expect to meet with, in the discharge of his office, from other men.

5. It is a strong presumption that a revelation is true, and from God, when there is a just consistency in the several parts of it, tho' not made all at once, or to one person, but to several persons, and

at several times.

Tho' 'tis very possible to a man, who thinks regularly, to form a consistent system of what has neither in truth, or fact, any real foundation; yet when different persons, of different tempers, capacities, and circumstances of life, all concur, and at very distant periods of time, in pursuing the same design, and in speaking the same thing; when the scheme of providence, by their ministry, gradually opens through a succession of many ages, till at last it unfolds itself in a clear, sull, and most surprizing discovery at once, of the great goodness, and manifold wisdom of God! This carries in it a strong moral evidence, whereof no person can dispute the certainty, much less the credibility, that such men did not really act by combination, or in dependence on one another; but that the whole work was the work of God, and they only the

* Tit. 2. 12.

^{† 1} Cor. g. 24, 25.

instruments, perhaps the blind instruments, of executing it. For what could induce men, especially if they were in the least influenc'd by the common motives and maxims of self-love, unanimously to pursue a scheme for so long a time, contrary, in many respects, to their interest, and which sometimes expos'd their lives to imminent and certain danger: Tho', after all, it was impossible for them to know, but only by that Spirit, whereby they were conducted, how this scheme would in the progress operate, or what in the event would be the end thereof.

YET if a successive order of pretended prophets, could possibly be thought to have engag'd in such a design, so opposite, on other accounts, to the general maxims and designs of this life, upon a motive of vanity or ambition, which are indeed passions of a strange force, and often put men upon doing things very extravagant and unaccountable; yet it cannot be imagin'd that ignorant men, of the greatest simplicity of manners, and of the lowest callings and condition of life, would have been thought, either in their own, or the opinion of others, fit accomplices towards the execution of so great and very difficult an undertaking.

Any imposture, projected with an intention of imposing a new and false religion on the world, requires much art and management, and is fit only to be conducted by men of parts and subtle heads, who know the world, and have perhaps in some degree render'd themselves popular or considerable in it: And the sewer those persons are, who act in concert upon such a project, to which I may add, the sooner it is brought to bear, the less danger there will be to them either of a discovery, or a disapoint-

ment.

But where a continued course, if I may so speak, of imposture is to be enter'd into, for the space of a thousand or sisteen hundred years, and to be carry'd on by a promiscuous succession of plain, illiterate, and poor men, with persons of superior distinction, whether for their learning or quality, their popularity or power: This is such a scheme, as no wise man would ever have originally projected, or afterwards attempted to execute; and which it is impossible, that weak men could have executed for any time, without being every where detected and expos'd.

Tho' we grant then, it does not clearly prove the truth of a divine revelation, that the several parts of it are reported in a confistent and uniform manner; because it is not necessary that men who are carrying on an imposture, should for that reason contradict themselves; yet we cannot but think a just series and connection of truths deliver'd from time to time, by men, who profess'd themselves to be divinely inspir'd, and who cannot be suppos'd success.

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fuccessively to have combin'd or engag'd in a design of deceiving the world; we cannot, I say, but look upon such a series and connexion of truths to be a strong evidence, that those persons really spake, as they profess'd, by divine inspiration; and especially when the several parts of the revelation, reported by them, mutually give light and confirmation to each other, and to the whole.

6. WHEN what is said to be a divine revelation contains such doctrines, as it was most worthy of God to reveal, and which could

not be certainly known without his revealing them.

It must be acknowledg'd, that there are several doctrines, which it is highly necessary, as we have already observ'd, for men to know, which yet, in their natural state, they could not possibly come to the knowledge of. I have instanc'd in several of those doctrines, and there are a great many more, that divine revelation can only discover and clearly ascertain to us; which tho' not so directly influential on our lives, as those before-mention'd, yet may be improv'd to give us more just notions of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, and in their natural tendency to make us more thankful and obedient to him.

OF this nature are such truths, as may discover to us the original and formation of all things; the state of innocence, wherein man was at first created; the occasion and manner of his falling from that happy state; and the methods of restoring him to the favour of God, and even to a capacity of a much greater happiness, than that from which he fell.

If it be said, these are doctrines which a man may form in his own mind, whether they have or have not any real foundation in sact; and that it is not therefore necessary, we should believe them to be matter of divine revelation; I answer, that I do not here so much intend, as if such doctrines were separately in themselves considered, an argument of their being divinely revealed, as that supposing a divine revelation should be made, these doctrines are, what we may conclude, if really true, God would reveal; and therefore are no inconsiderable proof of the truth and divine authority of such a revelation, in concurrence with other internal proofs, which we are able to produce for it.

YET this may be said for a direct proof to be drawn from such doctrines, as to the point in question; that except in that book, which we believe to be written by divine inspiration, or in other writings, which have borrow'd from it, what light the authors of them had in these matters, the doctrines here specify'd, are no where consistently treated of, or even separately in any clear and distinct manner.

THIS

This confideration appears then to be something more than barely a circumstantial proof that such doctrines are in truth divinely reveal'd; for what good reason can be assign'd, why no other author in the world, necessary as they are to be known, should have given any reasonable account of them, but only the authors of that very book, which, we say, was written by divine inspiration.

7. When those, who report a divine revelation, discover their probity and love for truth, by impartially recording their own

faults, and those of their friends.

A man is naturally favourable to himself, in the judgment he makes, whether of his internal qualifications, or his conduct. But one who would impose a false religion on the world, is concern'd to distinguish himself in both respects, particularly in the latter, as much as he can. For which reason impostors have generally pretended to a great austerity of life, and sanctity of manners; that their names might not only give the more credit and authority to the several doctrines they taught when living, but be transmitted with their doctrines to future ages, with advantage and honour.

WHEN a person therefore, who would establish a new religion upon the authority, as he declares, of a divine revelation, omits no proper opportunity of recording his own * failings and miscarriages, in publishing that revelation; when he passes over in silence his own personal † qualities or ‡ atchievements, which are most signal and praise-worthy, and opens the account of his ministry with the relation of a ** fact, not to be justify'd or excus'd, but upon a presumption of his having acted by a divine authority; which yet he takes not care to inform the world, that he really did act by in that particular instance: When, again, throughout the whole current of his history, he never speaks any thing to his own advantage, but upon some just and necessary occasion, where the honour of God is concern'd; while he sometimes mentions things, without the least visible necessity, to his disadvantage, or when there appears no motive, upon which he should be induc'd to do it, but the pure love and regard which he has for truth: All these confiderations must be allowed as so many reasonable and moral evidences of his veracity.

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^{*} Exod. 4. 10, 13. Numb. 11. 10, 11, &c. Ch. 20. 12. † Heb. 11. 25.

Alts 7. 22.

‡ Josephus relates, that Moses obtain'd a signal victory over the Æthiopians, and in a war, if we may believe an authority cited by Eusebius, wherein he was General for ten years. Prap. Evang. 1.9. c. 27. ** Exod. 2. 12.

We are too much inclin'd to be partial in judging and speaking of our selves, especially on occasions, where we apprehend our reputation to be nearly affected: But a concern for the honour of our country in general, or that particular tribe, or family, from which we are descended, is also very apt to biass our judgment, both concerning persons and facts, severally relating to them.

It may therefore be justly consider'd, as a farther argument of the integrity of any writer, when instead of extolling the greatness or virtues of those people, for whose sake he principally writes, and whose interests he has most at heart, they are told, that it is not either * for their number or goodness, that God has eminently distinguish'd himself in their favour; but because from a free determination of his own goodness, he was pleas'd to set his love

upon them.

WHEN, again, upon all occasions, even of recording their most important and illustrious actions, he makes it his endeavour to lessen the share they had in the conduct or execution of them, by ascribing them wholly in both respects to the over-ruling power and wisdom of a beneficent or merciful God. When their continual murmurings and ingratitude, their incredulity and frequent relapses into idolatry are not forgotten, but mention'd with all the heightning circumstances, that could in truth or justice have been mention'd by an open declar'd enemy. In a word, when with respect to the very + head of that tribe from which he descends, and from whom it is denominated, he does not forbear to mention, or seek to palliate one of the most black and dishonourable actions recorded in all his writings.

THE whole force of what has been here observ'd, lies in this following proposition; that we have a very strong and reasonable presumption concerning the fidelity of any person, in whatever he relates, when he spares neither himself, his country, nor his family, in relating things, which if it had not been for a conscious endeavour in him to preserve the character of a faithful historian, he might without any obstruction to his great and principal defign, have easily conceal'd from the knowledge of the world.

8. THE last internal proof I shall mention of a true and divine revelation, is from the prophecies contain'd in it, as to certain things very speedily to receive their accomplishment. here speak of any prophecy as it is to receive its accomplishment, but purely as a prediction, without considering, as yet, whether it

will be accomplish'd or not.

Supposing,

^{*} Deut. 7. 7, 8. † Exod. 6. 16, 25, 26. Gen. 34. 30. Ch. 49. 6.

Supposing, for instance, a teacher who comes, as he professes, in the name of God, to reveal any doctrine to the world, should foretell, that three days after his death and burial, he shall be restor'd to life again; allowing such a teacher to have the common use of reason and understanding, the only motive he can have for afferring that such a fact is to happen, must be the assurance he has from some divine authority, that it certainly will happen: For otherways all the pains he has been at, and all the methods he has before taken to gain credit to his mission, must in a very little time not only be render'd ineffectual to the end he design'd, but expose his name, even among those, with whom he immediately convers'd, to unavoidable infamy and contempt.

THE case is different, where a teacher, who pretends a divine commission, tells his disciples, that he shall certainly rise again from the dead, but not till a thousand years after his death: For tho' it is a sufficient argument of his being an impostor, that when those thousand years are expir'd, he does not really return, as he promis'd, to life again; yet his religion having, by that time, taken deep root, and being establish'd far and wide in the world, under the sanction and authority of the civil powers; means may be much easier found out (as in fact we know, they have been by the Mahametans) to salve the credit of such a prophet, by putting some other sense, how forc'd or unreasonable so ever, on his prophecy, than that, which the natural construction of it imports; and wherein it was originally, and to that time, all along un-

derstood.

PART I.

YET I do not fay, that the prediction of any supernatural event, which we are rold will immediately happen, is in itself abstractedly an argument, that the person by whom it is divulg'd, has a divine authority for it, or for his exercising the office of a prophet in general; but only where there is no exception to his character, with respect to his understanding or prudence: And when upon all occasions, in the discharge of his ministry, he acts suitably to the tenor of it, and speaks forth the words of soberness and truth. Where any person indeed, who pretends to prophesy in the name of God, appears to be disturb'd in the operations of his mind, or to be strongly acted by a spirit of enthusiasm, I readily allow this consideration to be of no force at all. But then to prevent our being impos'd upon by any fuch enthuliast, there are certain fymptoms, whereby we may with a little attention eafily know and

ENTHUSIASM, tho' it frequently proceeds from the illusions of the devil, yet has many times, perhaps, no other origin or cause, than a certain course of the spirits in the brain, too rapid and

violent for the understanding to moderate the force of; and whereby the imagination is sometimes heated to a degree, that is attended with very extraordinary and surprizing effects. This disorder in the brain may naturally be accounted for, as other bodily or feaverish distempers are, from a certain disposition in the air proper to produce them, and to spread the malignity or contagion of them: And therefore we are not to wonder if on certain occasions men of character, both for their learning and piety, are sometimes infected with a spirit of enthusiasm, according to this mechanical account of it, in such a manner, that they are easily capable of communicating the infection, which they have imbib'd, to others. This may be one method of accounting for the origin of Montanism, and why Tertullian in particular, who had one of the most warm and strong imaginations in the world, was more readily dispos'd to embrace that herefy. The caprice and distortions of the Quakers, at their first appearance, with their prophecies, and those of the Camisars, or other modern visionaries, if resolv'd into these principles, leave the greatest room for our making a more charitable judgment severally of them: And since the strength of their common distemper, like that, proceeding from any other malignant or contagious cause, is observ'd gradually to wear off, we may piously hope, that they will all of them grow daily more and more capable of a cure, till, by the blessing of God, their recovery at last be fully perfected.

THESE are the internal proofs of a divine revelation, which I have thought proper to mention; and they have every one of them, separately consider'd, some force towards the end, for which they have been produc'd: But all of them together afford us such a strong moral evidence, that the revelation wherein they are found, and to which they are peculiar, is really from God, as may be justly thought sufficient to persuade our belief of it; even tho' we were not able to produce, what I am in the next place to consider, the external, and still more incontestable proofs

of it.

CHAP. IV.

Of the external proofs of a divine revelation.

HE internal proofs of a divine revelation carry in them a very high degree of probability; but to remove all possible obstacles to the conviction of unbelievers, God has still afforded us other authentick means of proving it, which cannot be de-

ny'd, or reasonably disputed: Among these, we usually,

for the divine power to give any truth.

I. In the first place, consider miracles; by which I mean certain extraordinary and surprizing facts, above any known or conceivable power of natural causes to produce, or perhaps even contrary to the stated course and operations of them. As such facts can only be done by the power of God, or by subordinate agents acting in virtue of it, which is the same thing to our purpose, so it cannot be supposed, that God ever has, or ever will employ them towards confirming a false testimony or doctrine. For this would be, if I may so speak, to set the broad seal of heaven to a lye, and to give it the most incontestable sanction, which it seems possible

Upon this supposition, that God may confirm a false testimony or doctrine by a power truly miraculous, we can never be affur'd. on any occasion, that the doctrine attested by such a power, if not in the nature of it felf-evident, is really true; and consequently God could have no wife or reasonable end in revealing any truths, or confirming them by miracles to mankind, except such muths only as are evidently deducible from the principles of natural reason: So that miracles, were this notion once admitted, could never be a means of persuasion; seeing no account can be given, why a power which has at any time been employ'd to credir an imposture, may not be repeated, in variety of instances, to the same end. The arguments why this cannot be done, must be taken from the goodness, the holiness, or veracity of God; but the force of these arguments being destroy'd in one case, wherein God is supposed to act contrary to the eternal perfections of his nature, there can be no arguing with any certainty from them in other cases.

To this it may perhaps be reply'd, that the miracles work'd by the magicians of Ægypt, had all the appearance of true miracles; if by a miracle we understand a production of some effect or other, above the power of natural causes to produce. For by what mechanical or stated laws of motion can we discover how a rod cast D d d

upon the ground should be turn'd into a serpent; or how rivers of water through a country of large extent should be chang'd into rivers of blood; or, lastly, how frogs should be brought up in every part of such a country to cover it at once? By what methods soever these things were effected, natural causes, so far as we know any thing of their powers, could not effect them. And yet they were done directly in opposition to a divine testimony. Which seems quite to overthrow, what has been said, that no subordinate being or agent can be empower'd to do any thing above the known or conceivable power of natural causes, in confirmation of a falshood.

To this we answer, that tho' the scriptures do attribute what was done by the magicians to magical arts and enchantments, and the author of the book of wisdom expressly calls them, the illusions of art magick; it must, however, be acknowledged, they had at the first view the same visible signatures of true miracles, with those, that were done by Moses himself. The great difference between them appears to have consisted in this; that the miracles of Moses were done immediately, and with greater facility; theirs, by the intervention of certain charms or incantations; which yet had no direct or perceivable tendency to produce them. This fuperior power in Moses, when there was a plain and open contest before Pharaoh and all his people, whether he were really commission'd by the true God, was an evident proof that the testimony of that prophet carry'd in it a force and authority superior to any testimony, which the magicians were capable of bringing against But the evidence whereof there was still less reason to suspect; when the power of Moses to do, what the Ægyptians could not do, either in the same or the like manner, oblig'd them openly to confess, this is the finger of God, or the effect of God's more special interpolition, and of his acting with a higher hand.

But still had not Moses been present to over-rule the magicians by an ascendant of power, both with respect to the manner, and subject matter of his miracles, 'tis highly credible that whatever they could have done by virtue of any magical or diabolical arts, yet God would not have suffer'd them in opposition to the truth, to have done such things, which had at least so much the appearance of true miracles, that there scarce seems to have been otherways any certain method, whereby it was possible for those, before whom they were done, to avoid the illusion of

them.

A miracle then, except perhaps in this particular case, where the providence of God is concern'd to prevent the reception of a salse doctrine, by exerting, at the same time, some greater power in opposition to it, is ever to be consider'd as giving a certain and undeniable sanction to the truth of any doctrine attested by it.

But here it is farther objected, that all true miracles being the immediate effects of a supernatural power, they are all produc'd by a power equally superior to that of natural causes; and therefore the evidence of one of them, towards confirming any doctrine,

cannot be greater or less, than that of another.

This is a notion which has been commonly advanc'd; but without any folid or sufficient grounds to support it: For tho' all natural causes are equally incapable of effecting any thing wholly supernatural, it does not therefore follow but there may be degrees of more or less force in a supernatural power, both with respect to the more ready and easy manner of operating any miracle, and to the number of miraculous effects produc'd by such a power.

Another argument against our inferring with certainty the truth of any doctrine from the miracles said to be done in confirmation of it, is sounded upon a concession, which believers themselves are oblig'd to make, namely, that we do not know all the powers or possible combinations of matter and motion. From whence unbelievers would infer, that such miracles, as they are call'd, were in truth nothing else, but the result of a necessary, tho' secret concourse of natural causes, known only by some method or other to the person, who improv'd that opportunity with the unthinking multitude, of declaring himself a prophet sent from God, and empower'd by him to do those things, which no man could have done, if God had not been with him.

I have urg'd this argument of the deists against the evidence of miracles, with all the force and advantage I could give it. But the very foundation of it being false, nothing that is certain or

solid can be superstructed upon it.

It is irrational to say, we do not know all things, to which the powers of matter and motion extend; therefore we cannot know any thing to which they do not extend. To discover how absurd and inconclusive this way of arguing is, let us apply it in another instance. Every man, who is in the least acquainted with the mathematicks, discovers certain distinct powers and relations of a circle; but because no man knows all the powers or relations of a circle, can it therefore be inferred, that for any thing we know a circle may have all the properties of a square, or a triangle? The argument will hold as well in this case, as against the evidence of miracles: For tho we do not know in every respect how far the power of matter may reach, as to things which fall within the proper compass of it; yet we certainly know there are things

things without the compass of it, which a change in the course of nature, that supposes a power superior to all natural causes, can

only effect.

This way of arguing has been made use of to prove, that matter, under certain modifications, may be capable of thought; but if matter, however modify'd, may for this reason think, that we do not know all the powers of it, then the minutest particle of matter, in what position soever, suppose in the heart of a stone or an ingot, may also think, because we no more know all the powers of the least atom, than of any other system of material beings whatever. There is evidently in all cases a wide difference between our not knowing all the powers, which any being may really have, and our knowing what powers it cannot, in the na-

ture of the thing, possibly have.

But should we grant, that certain unknown combinations of matter or motion may possibly produce such events as we term miraculous; yet by what means shall any person know, when those combinations will really and punctually happen. Suppole, for in-Itance, that at the time when Jesus Christ appear'd in the world, there was such a secret order and disposition of natural causes, that exactly at such a moment, such a particular person in such a part or city of Judea, should be cur'd of his lameness, have his eyes open'd, tho' born blind, or be restor'd to life after he had lien for a considerable time in the grave; yet the knowledge of all these circumstances, and of so many causes concurring to produce, in the space of three years, a greater number of extraordinary events, than had ever before happen'd in the world, appears to have been of itself no less miraculous and divine, than we believe the power, by which those cures were really effected: At least if any evil spirit could possibly have known the critical time when these things would of course happen, or have communicated the knowledge of it to any person, dispos'd to take so peculiar an advantage of carrying on an imposture, we may piously believe, that God would have interpos'd by some special providence to prevent the effects of so very dangerous an illusion, as it must in all human probability have been attended with.

But I argue here upon a wrong concession; what I would directly infer from the premises, is, that wherever we see the effects of a supernatural power in order to consirm the truth of any testimony or doctrine, we are to believe them true: Provided God, in opposition to such a power, do not at the same time visibly exert a superior power, either as to the manner of the thing done, or in a greater variety of instances.

YET

YET there have been some pious and learned men of opinion, that a false prophet may be permitted to work a true miracle, even where it is not immediately oppos'd by a superior power, in case the contrary doctrine to what it is brought to establish, has been already establish'd by any former miracle. This opinion is principally grounded on two texts of scripture: I shall first cite that out of the Old Testament. 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 (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your foul *. "Whereby it is plain, says a learned " author †, that after a true doctrine is confirm'd by divine mira-" cles, God may give the devil or false prophets power to work, " if not real miracles, yet such as men cannot judge by the things " themselves whether they be real or no; and this God may do " for the trial of men's faith, whether they will forsake the true " doctrine confirm'd by greater miracles, for the sake of such do-" Arines as are contrary thereto, and are confirm'd by false pro-" phets, by figns and wonders.

From which explication of the words, it appears to have been the judgment of this great man, that falle prophets may for certain wife and good ends of providence, be permitted to work true miracles, or at least such wonders as cannot be distinguished from the effects of a power truly miraculous; which, as to all the grounds of persuasion, is the same thing; it being of equal force to induce the belief of any person, whether a power whereby some extraordinary sact is done to that end, be really supernatural, or such, as 'tis impossible for him to know, upon the best enquiry he

can make, not to be supernatural.

But this is a concession, which, with all deference to the author, I humbly presume to be of ill consequence; and to suppose such a dangerous trial of men's faith, especially at any great distance from the time a doctrine has been once established by a miraculous power, as may be too apt to make them question the motives upon which they formerly believed. Whatever men, who have accustomed themselves to a just and strict way of arguing, may judge, yet it will be hard to convince the generality of men, that the original proofs of those miracles, which are said to have been done by Moses, or by Jesus Christ, are of greater force or

evidence

^{*} Deut. 13. 1, 2, 3. + Stillingf. orig. sacr. p. 236.

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evidence towards confirming the doctrines severally taught by them, than a true miracle, now work'd before their eyes, would be towards confirming any new doctrine; especially if it should import no repugnancy to the natural and eternal reason of

things.

Besides, there is no necessity from the words of Moses to make this concession: For they do not, in the literal sense of them, imply, that a false prophet may be empower'd to work, if not real miracles, yet such as men cannot judge by the things themselves, whether they be real or no; but only that he may have a power of giving such a sign or a wonder, as will come to pass: Whereby tho' ignorant or unthinking people, who do not enquire into the true nature or reason of things, may be more easily impos'd upon; yet there could be no such danger of illusion to those, who are capable of examining how, and by what proper character, a fign or a wonder may be really distinguish'd from any fact truly miraculous. The answer to that other text cited out of the New Testament is very obvious; Christ tells his disciples, that a time will come, when there Shall arise false Christs, and salse prophets, and Shall Shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they Shall deceive the very elect *. Now there is still less appearance of reason for our understanding these signs and wonders as true miracles, than those mention'd in the former text. When it is said, they would be of such a nature, as to deceive, if possible, the very elect, the words even explain'd in the most natural and proper sense, seem to imply, that such signs and wonders would not be in truth miracles, but only so in outward shew and appearance: tho' so artfully manag'd, that it might be sometimes difficult, but never impossible to truly pious and good men to detect the impo-This explication of the words appears still more just and natural, when we consider, such like diabolical arts, to seduce mankind, are expressly call'd by the apostle, lying wonders +; and when we are assur'd by the same authority, that God, to punish the sins and impieties of men, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be sav'd, shall send them strong delusion, that they Should believe a lye ±.

THERE is but one material objection more, that occurs to my thoughts against the evidence of miracles to prove the truth of a divine revelation, and that is taken from the miracles said to have been done at several times by mere heathens and infidels. But admitting any of those miracles, or all of them, to have been really

^{*} Mat. 24. 24.

done by a power wholly supernatural, how will it follow from hence, that true miracles cannot be evidential of any divine testimony or doctrine? Seeing the miracles attributed to heathens, were not done in confirmation of the heathen idolatry or superstition, nor, strictly speaking, on any religious, but only on a providential account; except perhaps that they were permitted by God to awaken a corrupt world into a more lively sense both of his providence, and his existence, and of the several duties result-

ing from a firm belief of them.

SHOULD every thing then, which Philostratus or Hierocles report of Apollonius Thyanaus be really true; should the surprizing effects of his Talesmans mention'd by other authors have really happen'd, and could they not be accounted for upon any natural or mechanical principles; should we grant farther, that Vespasian really effected the cures ascrib'd to him by Tacitus; and that a woman, as Spartianus tells us, was cur'd of her blindness by kissing the knees of the Emperor Adrian; yet as no doctrine of religion was design'd to be confirm'd by any of these miracles, supposing them really so, no conclusion can be drawn from them in prejudice of miracles done, and expressly at the time declar'd to be done, in confirmation of some reveal'd doctrine. It is not therefore a question of any great importance towards our proving the truth of a divine revelation, whether those several facts were true or false; or if true, whether they were effected by a power truly miracu-And yet as to the cures reported to be done by Vespasian, upon which the greatest force of the objection, I am considering, has been put by unbelievers, there appears some cause to suspect the truth of them, from the very reason, which Tacitus affigns why they were done. For he tells us many miracles happen'd at that time *, to the end Vespasian might be more eminently distinguish'd by particular marks of the divine favour. complement so much the more specious and well-tim'd, as it contributed to render a prophecy concerning a King's coming out of Judea, which was then commonly talk'd of, more applicable to that prince; he being the first who was proclaim'd Emperor in Judæa; and accordingly that prophecy was actually apply'd to him by Josephus, who with so many fine and excellent talents of an historian, was not ignorant, on a proper occasion, how to make his court.

^{*} Per eos menses multa miracula evenere, queis calestis favor, & quadam in Vespasianum inclinatio numinum ostenderetur.

But what, after all, were the mighty cures done by Vespasian? A † mean and obscure person was cur'd by him of his blindness, and a woman of a lame hand: And tho' Tacitus says, the former, and more considerable of these cures *, was attested by those, who had no interest in telling a lye; yet it will be hard to prove, that so great a prince, in order to serve the ends of his glory or ambition, could not find means of causing a fact to be represented otherways than it really happen'd; or that there might not have been persons about him ready enough to make such a representation of their own accord. Those, who know the arts, which are sometimes thought necessary to be practised in the courts of princes, will not suppose they were altogether impracticable in the court of a prince at the head of the Roman Empire. Nothing can be more just, than what is observ'd by Duplessis Mornay on this occasion. "How easy was it for so many legions, so many artful parasites, " so many persons, attach'd to the interests and fortune of the Empire, to support the credit of a story, how small a founda-" tion soever it had in fact.

But there is no necessity, after all, as was intimated before, that we should question the truth of a fact, however miraculous, which was not intended to establish a doctrine of religion, in order to shew, that true miracles, when done to that end, are proper and undeniable proofs of any doctrine or revelation attested by them.

II. Another external proof of a divine revelation, is the accomplishment of what has been foretold concerning events, which had no perceivable connexion with the state or situation of affairs, at the time of their being foretold. A faculty of discovering things, which do not depend on any certain, or so much as any probable cause in the natural order of things, to produce them, must be no less miraculous and divine, than a power of altering or suspending the course of nature: Nay, prophecy seems in this respect to have the advantage above miracles themselves, towards persuading our assent; that whereas there may be some difficulty in distinguishing between true and pretended miracles, or on which side, granting them to be true miracles, a superiority of power may lie; yet every man is capable of judging concerning a plain and obvious fact; or whether it really happen at the time and after the manner expressly foretold. Let us suppose, for instance, that many hundred years before a person was born, the several circumstances, which were most extraordinary, not only of his birth, but of his life and death, were punctually describ'd; every one may

⁺ Ex Plebe.

^{*} Quod testantur, quibus nullum mendacio pretium.

PART I.

easily know, by comparing the event, on all these accounts, or on any of them, with the description, whether they really agree, and in what respects; and if the agreement between them be clear and perfect, there is all the evidence, which can be desir'd, that such a prediction was in truth from God; it being in the natural reason of the thing his distinguishing and peculiar prerogative, had we no revelation to assure us of it, to declare things for to come; and to show the things that are to come hereafter *.

This impossibility to all created beings of knowing things to come, respects such things, as either depend on the motions of material beings, or the free determination of intelligent beings.

1. It is impossible, in the first place, that any creature should know all future motions of material beings, or the several events refulting from them. For tho' God has establish'd certain general and uniform laws of motion, according to which the greater organical parts of the world regularly perform their proper functions; and tho' we are certain in many cases, that causes acting in such a manner will produce such effects; yet as God has reserv'd to himself a power of varying, of directing, or suspending the action of second causes, and it is not for his creatures to know the times and the seasons of his special interposition to these ends, which he has put in his own power; they are for that reafon incapable of knowing with certainty, especially at any considerable distance, even what events will happen, from the ordinary course of material agents in this world. Were it otherways, we could never be able to prove the truth of a divine revelation from the accomplishment of any prophecy concerning events, which purely depend on the action of material beings: And an objection against the validity of such a proof, would be unanswerable to those, who believe God has so fix'd the order of natural causes, that except upon occasion of his working a miracle, he never interposes by any immediate and particular will in the government of them. Upon this hypothesis, a prophecy concerning a famine or a flood, of fruitful or temperate seasons, could never be, what they are reprefented to be in the holy scriptures, arguments of a divine prophetick spirit. For as they are suppos'd to depend on a chain of causes, how fecret foever, yet purely mechanical, and absolutely necessary, how shall we be assur'd that evil spirits may not discover the connexion of them; and if they may, that they cannot find means of communicating their discovery to men? Who might take that occasion of imposing upon others, under a pretence of being acted and commission'd by a prophetick spirit. It may therefore be incidentally consider'd as an argument, why God acts in the government of the world by particular wills; that had this principle no true foundation, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to prevent the illusions of evil spirits, on occasion of a power, which might, for any thing we know, naturally belong to them, of prophecy, or divination; even concerning events, very remote; and the causes whereof, at the time of their being foretold, could not, to human appearance, have any certain or probable connexion with them.

2. We have still a stronger evidence of a divine revelation from prophecy, when the thing foretold is accomplished, by the operation indeed of material beings, but after a manner whereof they are in themselves incapable, and which necessarily supposes them acted upon by a superior power. To give us a better idea of the force of this argument upon a comparison with the former, let it be granted, that some invisible being had reveal'd to a prophet several ages since, that in the eighteenth century from the birth of Christ, in the month of March, on such a day of the month, and in the evening of that day, one of the most surprizing luminous appearances should happen in the heavens, that the world had ever feen; tho' it may be question'd whether the prediction of such an appearance, ought not to have had the evidence allow'd to it of a divine prophetick spirit; seeing the most learned astronomers have not been able, in any satisfactory manner, to account for it, even after it has happen'd, and they have made the nicest observations, human ingeny or art could make upon it; yet still unbelievers, in their way of arguing from the bare possibility of things, may object, it does not follow from hence, that there are not other beings capable of seeing much farther upon the chain of natural causes, than the most knowing of mankind can fee; and who might with as much certainty have discover'd in that view, the time when this phænomenon would happen, as any man can foretell a future eclipse of the sun or moon. But should it, on the other hand, be foretold, that such a person, in such an age, shall after his being put to death, and lying three days in the grave, be restor'd to life again; here is the prediction of a fact, whereof the prophet was so far from discovering any visible cause in the natural order of things, that no possible cause, but that only of a divine supernatural power, could be affign'd for it. this consideration, the saying of Tertullian, I believe, because the object of my belief is impossible, for which he has been so often insulted by atheistical men, is capable of being explain'd in a very good and reasonable sense: Seeing the greater impossibility there appears to human apprehension of effecting what has been foretold,

203

told, the stronger and more convincing must the evidence necesfarily be, that such a prediction, when accomplished, was really from God.

3. We have yet a farther evidence of any divine revelation from prophecy, when the things foretold depend, as to the event, on the free determination of intelligent beings. Whatever men may pretend concerning the necessary connexion of all natural causes and effects, or from the secret powers of matter and motion, to solve the arguments we bring from prophecy, either in reference to miraculous or more common events; yet supposing the freedom of human will, without which there is an end of all religion and morality at once, no possible account can be given how such actions as flow entirely from the free exercise of it, can be certainly foretold, unless by that all perfect being, who understandeth our thoughts afar off, and knoweth the things, that come into our mind, every one of them. By means of which perfect knowledge, and which is peculiar to him, he can, without destroying human liberty, infallibly foretell what use men will make of it, or which way, when left to themselves, and so far he may justly leave them, they will certainly take.

SHOULD it then be foretold, that an extraordinary person, not only with respect to the circumstances of his birth, the manner of his life, and the miracles to be done by him, should appear in such an age, but that at last he should be betray'd and put to death by the hands of wicked men, betray'd in particular by one who had eat of his bread, and drank of his cup; here is all the evidence from prophecy, and such is the evidence we have for the truth of christianity, that any revelation can have, or be suppos'd

capable of.

PART I.

But it is objected against the arguments we bring from the accomplishment of prophecies, in proof of any divine revelation, that they are often express'd in obscure terms, and are often too for that reason differently interpreted and apply'd. To this, I

answer,

1. THAT the obscurity of some prophecies is no argument against the evidence of those, which are full and clear. We have reason, on the other hand, to conclude from the accomplishment of such, as have been clearly and fully express'd, that the obscurity of others does not arise so much from the manner of expressing them, consider'd originally, or simply in itself, as from the distance of time, which renders it many times so difficult for us, to know the proper signification wherein certain terms have been formerly us'd, or the customs, to which they allude. Where prophecies are really in their own nature obscure, and design'd, for reasons

I shall afterwards mention, to be so; yet when the time of their being accomplish'd is at hand, we shall then, in all probability, see and discover the accomplishment of them in as clear a light, as that wherein the accomplishment of other prophecies, in the same inspir'd writings, has already appear'd to us. For as some prophecies may be obscure on the account of idioms or ancient customs, the meaning whereof is now less certain; so other prophecies may refer to idioms or customs, which those future ages, wherein they are to be fulfill'd, will give origin to. The prophecies, for instance, in the Revelations, which relate to the seven churches, were both sufficiently clear in themselves, and have been fince remarkably accomplish'd. We may from hence conclude, that other prophecies in this book, tho' fo obscure, that learned men are sometimes at a loss to form even specious conjectures about the sense of them, yet have not only the same divine authority with the rest; but that when the state of things, at the time they are to receive their completion, and to which they allude, comes to be known, the evidence of their being fulfill'd will be equally strong and convincing. But,

2. There is sometimes a moral necessity, why prophecies should be obscure, to the end, that they may be more safely convey'd down to posterity; lay less restraint on the liberty of human will; and be more free, as to the methods of accomplishing them, from all suspicion of artifice or design. First, the conveyance of a prophecy would be in some cases extremely difficult, if not wholly impracticable, if the persons, affected by it, could not possibly mistake the sense or meaning of it. Suppose, for example, it were expressly foretold by some prophet, that a nation, to which alone this oracle is committed, shall, after a certain term of years, for their perverseness and impiety, their ingratitude and rebellion, be utterly destroy'd, and become a name of reproach to all the nations about them; it is reasonable to believe, that instead of preserving such a prophecy, and transmitting it down to suture times in any certain or authentick manner, such a nation would use means to stifle the tradition of it, at least would not admit it among. their most publick and sacred records; by which the credit and authority of it would by degrees be sensibly impair'd, if not at length wholly destroy'd.

Ir some prophecies were not obscure, they would, in the next place, bear too hard upon the liberty of human will, especially as to the persons design'd to be the immediate instruments of executing them. Good men would be more backward to engage in any measures, that must necessarily terminate in their own death or ruin; and wicked men animated with a spirit of pride, ambition,

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tion, or enthusiasm, might be apt to think they had less to answer for, in rendring themselves, by any means, necessary towards effecting the great ends of providence, and without which the determinate counsel, and foreknowledge of God, would of necessity be frustrated.

Again, the obscurity of certain prophecies tends to render the methods of accomplishing them more free from all suspicion of artifice or design. For had they been so clear that no question could arise concerning the sense of them, it would have been supposed, that those who were concerned in executing them, designedly formed the rules of their conduct, according to that sense; and that they were not therefore foretold, because it was certainly fore-seen they would be accomplished; but men, on the other hand, made it their endeavour, or conspired to accomplish them, because they were foretold.

But when a prophecy is fulfill'd, without any knowledge of the person, or contrivance of the persons, by whom it was to be fulfill'd; this affords us a proper occasion at once of admiring the certainty of God's foreknowledge in declaring it; and the wisdom

of his conduct in bringing it to pass.

As to that part of the objection, which relates to the different senses, according to which prophecies are sometimes interpreted or apply'd, it may be accounted for upon the reasons, we have already assign'd, why certain prophecies are, and ought to be, originally more obscure. But if it be said farther, there are few prophecies, the sense whereof is so clear, that no interpreters have divided upon it; this remark if true, yet does not affect the truth or evidence of such prophecies; because it may be justly resolv'd, to say nothing concerning the ignorance of some interpreters, into motives of vanity or prejudice, of envy or interest. men, who are generally agree'd in condemning these motives, and fometimes prescribe very good rules against them, do notwithe standing in their writings too plainly appear to be sometimes influenc'd by them. Above all, an ambition of making new discoveries, and of being thought capable of faying fomething upon any thing, is one fruitful cause why the plainest texts, by the artifices of ingenious men, especially of new theorists, are on occafion made to speak, what of all things is most foreign to their proper and genuine fignification. But I do not think it necessary to say any thing more in answer to an argument, which concludes nothing, but that man is too apt to be biass'd in his search after truth, by such considerations, as either obstruct the discovery of it, or will incline him, when discover'd, to dissemble it.

III. WE

III. We have a farther evidence of a divine revelation, when the conduct of the persons, to whom God originally made it, was such, that no motive, but a full and clear conviction of its truth, could be supposed to have carry'd them through all the difficulties

of their ministry.

It has been consider'd before, as an internal proof of a divine revelation, when the doctrines propos'd, or the duties requir'd by it, are contrary to the general maxims or interests of this world. But when, notwithstanding the greatest discouragements imaginable in both these respects, men not only assent to the truth of such a revelation themselves, but industriously report it, and declare the necessity of believing it to others; here is all the security that can be desir'd of their acting at once upon a sincere disinterested principle, and from the most convincing motives. For what else should induce reasonable beings, either to believe or propagate any doctrine, at the hazard of every thing that is dear and valuable to them in this life.

This argument for the truth of a divine revelation, from the visible dangers it exposes men to, and their suffering in their nearest interests actually for it, supposing them persons of common understanding, does not only respect those, to whom such a revelation is immediately made, and who are authoriz'd by God to report or declare it to others, but the persons also who are induc'd to believe it, and to comply with the feverest conditions of it, upon their authority: Especially at a time when the original proofs and testimonies, upon which the credibility of it depends, may be easily come at, and For men are so naturally averse to embrace any examin'd into. overtures to their disadvantage, but above all such overtures as they know beforehand must necessarily terminate in the greatest miseries here incident to them; that nothing but the clearest evidence of those proofs and testimonies could, upon any reasonable presum-ption, have been effectually convincing to them.

We find in other cases, worldly considerations have so great a power towards blinding the minds and corrupting the hearts of men, that seeing they often see, and will not perceive, and hearing they often hear, and will not understand. When they are therefore plainly told, as the condition of their embracing such a religion, that they must prepare to take up the cross, and deny themselves even as to things lawful and innocent; that they must be willing to part with houses and lands, and wifes and children, and life itself; that they shall be persecuted, revil'd, and hated; and that if in this life only they have hope, they are of all men most miserable: In a word, when the greatest encouragement here given them, is, that tho' their enemies are able to kill the body, yet they

they cannot kill the foul; when it is thus previously condition'd, what men are to expect and do if they will believe a divine revelation, nothing but the strongest assurance of its truth and divinity, can be imagin'd capable of persuading their belief. Interest, which, according to a common observation, never lyes, is always cautious, especially on occasions, which very nearly concern it, of being impos'd upon by a lye.

It is of no force to invalidate this argument, that there have been certain enthusiasts, the Quakers in particular, very forward to suffer in defence of errors, for which they pretended a divine inspiration. For, not to resume what has been said concerning the proper marks, whereby an enthusiast may be distinguish'd from a person truly inspir'd, I am here principally considering the motives, upon which men may be induc'd to believe a divine revelation, not from the internal light of it, for which even pious and well meaning persons may sometimes perhaps mistake the illusions of a distemper'd or over-heated imagination; but I have respect to such motives of belief as depend upon sacts, that all persons may appeal to, or have recourse to the sensible proofs of; and from which they may draw certain and undeniable conclusions.

THE sum of the present argument lies herein, that men naturally avoid so much as they can, the occasions of certain pain or fuffering, and will therefore in all cases think themselves concern'd to enquire what it is they suffer for, and upon what grounds. A man especially, who prefers an immediate, tho' cruel and ignominious death, when conditions of life are propos'd to him, so he will but renounce the principle for which he is condemn'd to die; if such a principle be not deduc'd in a speculative way of reasoning, wherein very good men may be mistaken, but from the evidence of certain and obvious facts; such a man must in all reason be suppos'd thoroughly convinc'd, and upon the most clear and incontestable proofs, that those facts were truly done. To which I shall only add, that the argument under consideration, holds still stronger, when great numbers of people, of both sexes, of all capacities, and of every age and condition, indifferently agree in bearing testimony for the same truths, at the same hazard of every thing, which they can be supposed to have most at heart in this present world.

IV. The last external evidence I shall bring in proof of a divine revelation, shall be taken from the success of the doctrine or doctrines affirm'd to be reveal'd. Not that I think success does necessarily infer the truth of every profession, or the justice of every cause; it is often, on the other hand, made use of by occasion

of the sensible pomp and lustre, wherewith it is attended, rather to dazle and amuse, than convince the minds of men: By which means, the countenance, it gives to error and corruption at once, is too notorious.

When the success then of any religion is either owing to such causes, as were proper in the natural tendency of the thing to produce it; or is supported by such methods, as are most apt to pervert the judgment, and corrupt the hearts of men: When, for example, the doctrines of such a religion are not only most agreeable to the motions of concupiscence, and the maxims upon which men ordinarily act in this world, but force is also us'd to compel them to come into the scheme and external profession of such a religion: When the same considerations, upon which they were originally induc'd to embrace it, are still continued to preserve and support it: Success is so far from being an argument, that a religion, introduc'd and settled after such a manner, is really true, or divinely reveal'd, that we have strong grounds to suspect, it is wholly owing to human contrivance, if not to diabolical illusion.

But when, on the other side, a religion is establish'd, contrary to the settled laws and powers of the world, to the strongest prejudices and passions of men, and all the standing maxims of worldly prudence; when, in order to this establishment, no force is employ'd but that of simple and naked truth, by the ministry of perfons of no reputation for their birth, or condition of life; for any acquir'd learning or abilities; and who do not appear to be naturally of an enterprizing genius, nor fit, by reason of their mean and servile occupations, to cultivate or improve it: There being no way, in this case, of accounting either for any reasonable expectations such men could have of succeeding in the discharge of their ministry, or for the success of it afterwards; to what can we impute their undertaking it, but to a special divine commission: or their surmounting all the difficulties, which occurr'd to them by the way, but to his special assistance and benediction, who giveth power to the faint, and to them who have no might encreaseth strength *; or, in other words no less expressive of the immediate power and direction of God, who makes things that are not, or which do not appear to have any natural efficiency towards that end, to bring to nought things that are \(\frac{1}{2}\).

To conclude this argument, one would as soon have thought, that twelve weak and unarm'd men of Judea, might have entirely subdu'd the Roman legions in the time of our Saviour, and restor'd their country, then reduc'd under the form of a Roman province,

^{*} Isaiah 40. 29.

PART I.

to its pristine freedom; as that twelve poor and illiterate persons, if God had not been with them, could have been able, by preaching a religion every where evil spoken of and oppos'd, to convert so great a number of insidels to the faith of it, in almost all parts of the known world, and even in such of them as were most barbarous, and incapable of instruction. This was visibly the Lord's doing! and might perhaps, tho' it appear'd to be done in some measure by human means, yet have been more properly number'd among the evidences of a divine revelation taken from facts truly miraculous; if perhaps this method of establishing a religion were not to be consider'd, as being in the extensive, and powerful effects of it, the greatest miracle of all.

CHAP. V. PROP. IV.

That God has in fact made a revelation of his will.

Shall not here speak concerning any revelation previous to the time of Moses, which the revelation made to that prophet confirms the truth of: I shall only shew, that supposing we had no particular standing record to assure us that Moses was a true prophet; yet we have such strong moral assurances from other authentick monuments of antiquity, and from general tradition, of his being a person who acted by a divine authority, as are sufficient, in the reason of the thing, to induce our belief of this article.

That there was such a person as Moses, is attested by many of the heathen writers, who speak of him as an extraordinary man, and the sounder of the jewish laws and religion. It is no less evident, that several converts from among the heathens openly embrac'd this religion, and submitted wholly, or in part, to the laws of it. Some of them became proselytes of righteousness, and oblig'd themselves to observe all the precepts of the law. Others were only proselytes of the gate, obliging themselves to observe the precepts given to Noah, and the ten commandments, the substance whereof those precepts contain'd; and they were so call'd, because it was allow'd them to sojourn, and live among the Jews, or within their gates. These proselytes must be suppos'd to have had an opportunity of examining the proofs of that religion, they

became converts to, and for which they were willing to forfake the religion of their fathers. And 'tis not reasonable to believe they could all of them so easily have overcome the prejudices of education in order to embrace a religion so directly opposite to them, if they had not been, upon examination, fully convinc'd of its divine authority; for upon that foundation the whole jewish economy was originally form'd, and all along subsisted.

WHEN the law of Moses was deliver'd, he plainly shew'd the credentials of his mission, by working several miracles to confirm it. The affairs of the Jews were in such a situation at the time of this prophet's appearance, that they and all the nations about them might see, the hand of God was in every thing he undertook and Now we ought not to believe, in regard to the wildom, goodness, and veracity of God, that Moses would have been permitted to give such strong and visible proofs of his acting by a divine power, had he really been an impostor. For by this means, not only the Jews, but the nations, had been under the most powerful moral inducements to believe a lye; and to chuse not their own delusions, but such as it was impossible for them, in any human way of judging, to detect: Seeing there can be no greater motive of credibility, that a revelation comes from God, than when a person who declares himself commission'd by a divine authority to report it, does confessedly do those things, which no man could do, if God were not with him.

The method, in particular, of conducting the people of Israel out of Egypt, was in the whole progress of it, no less than in the execution at last, miraculous. For nothing but a continued series of miracles at once in the nature of them, most surprizing, and in their essects most dreadful, could have prevail'd with Pharaob, to let the people of Israel go; and when, after his frequent collusions, he consented at length to dismiss them, yet in order to cut them off, he immediately forms a design of pursuing them, but in the pursuit, is miraculously overthrown and destroy'd in the red sea, with all his host.

THE victories afterwards gain'd by the Israelites over the nations, in their way to the promis'd land, (and from which it visibly appear'd that their God was the Lord, and fought their battels) at once confirm'd the truth of the Mosaick revelation, and gave those people an opportunity of knowing him to be the true God; seeing no other God could deliver, or give success, after that sort. This method of ratifying Moses his mission, and the laws promule'd by him, was very agreeable to the wisdom of God, and his design in revealing them. For 'tis impious to suppose, that providence would, in the sight of the heathen, have favour'd Israel with such miraculous

culous successes, under the conduct of a leader, who only pretended to act, and make laws by an authority, which he was not really invested with.

THESE and other testimonies which we alledge from matters of fact, concerning the jewish religion, are not only recorded in scripture, but occasionally mention'd by disinterested, and sometimes by prejudiced writers; whose fidelity, as to this point, we have therefore less reason to suspect. And tho' it very much tends, as I shall shew afterwards, to facilitate the proofs of a divine revelation, that it should be committed to a standing, and divinely inspir'd writing; yet that such a method is not, in the nature of the thing, absolutely necessary to prove a revelation divine, appears from hence, that God may afford us such other moral evidences concerning the truth of a reveal'd religion, as may be sufficient to induce and oblige our affent to it: Otherways there would be an end of all historical evidence, and the common faith of mankind at once. And it had been impossible for the Jews before the time of Moses, to have produc'd any solid proof of the revelation made to Abraham, or the antediluvian patriarchs; and even after the time of Moses, concerning the Mosaick dipensation, till the book of the law was found in the reign of Josiah, among the ruins of the temple; supposing, as some have done, that all the copies of it were then lost, but which possibly at least might have been lost. ther, upon this supposition, could the first christians have been convinc'd of those several facts, upon which the reasonableness of their believing the christian revelation depended, in the ordinary way of preaching, till the scriptures were actually committed to writing.

But to confine my self at present to the facts related in the history of the Jews, and the evidence of the Mosaick revelation founded upon them; they are not only mention'd by their own authors, who have a right at least to the common faith of historians; but they are also mention'd by heathen authors, who yet out of envy or hatred to that nation, sometimes give a wrong and malicious construction of them. If some writers among the heathens have omitted to mention the affairs of the Jews, even when they appear to have come properly in their way, it is because they were acted by the same ungenerous motives, and industriously design'd that omission. Their silence, in particular, concerning this people in the history of Alexander the Great, which afforded so fair and considerable an occasion of mentioning them, is justly observed by *Josephus to have proceeded, not from ignorance, but design.

WHAT I would here observe, is, that those ancient writers, who mention the Jews, whether in their favour, or to their disadvantage, had opportunities of enquiring into the truth of such facts, as they alledg'd, or to which they appeal'd in proof of their religion: And if these facts had not been true, their enemies would, and might easily have found means of disproving them, which yet none of them was ever able to do. In short, if there had been any just cause of suspicion, that the Jews falsify'd in what they reported for the honour of their religion, and their lawgiver was in reality an impostor, can we think that the nations who hated that people, and sometimes had them in subjection, would not by one means or other have detected their false and groundless pretences to a divine sanction of their laws; or that themselves, in their frequent apostasses and revolts, would not have thought it for their interest, and in order to the greater peace and satisfaction of their minds to enquire, whether those laws were really given by Moses, as a prophet commission'd by God to that end? And yet tho? an evil heart of unbelief towards God so strangely discover'd itself in them, while they were fed by him with continual miracles, they never entertain'd or express'd any doubt concerning the divine authority of their religion in general; which it is not credible they would have so inviolably maintain'd, particularly under any grievous servitude or calamity, if the divine mission and authority of Moses had not been confirmed to them in the best attested, and most authentick manner possible.

WE may add in confirmation of the divine authority of the jewish law, that a common-wealth was establish'd upon it. If it was establish'd immediately by Moses when the facts, which declar'd his divine mission, were really done, or while they were fresh in the memory of men, the truth of the Mosaick revelation is hereby granted. But if this establishment were made afterwards, and only pretended to to be made in the time of Moses, and by authority of certain miraculous works attributed to him, but which were not really done by him, all the Jews, to a man, in the age when such a pretence was advanc'd, would have been able to detect the falfhood and vanity of it. And the fome of them, in honour of their nation, might perhaps have suffer'd themselves to be impos'd upon by it, yet it was impossible that so gross an imposition could have obtain'd universally among them; or, if it could, that the nations themselves in their neighbourhood would not have discover'd and expos'd the vanity of it.

THE proofs concerning the divine mission of Jesus Christ, in order to reveal the will of God to mankind, are still, if possible, more clear and evident. He appear'd at a time, as a prophet sent from

from God, when there was a general expectation, that fome extraordinary person was to come with that character; and the credentials he produc'd of it were so fully and openly attested, that there could not be any just or reasonable grounds for suspecting them. His doctrine was not preach'd, nor the miracles he work'd to confirm it, done clandestinely, or in a corner, but publickly before much people, several of whom were his profess'd enemies, who industriously sought all occasions against him, and had he been a deceiver of the people, would without question have eafily found means of detecting him. But the mighty works which he did, and whereby the truth of his mission was evidenc'd, were so well and generally known, that both Jews and Gentiles, tho' for reasons which affected their passions and interests they did not embrace his religion, yet could not but acknowledge them as effects of a supernatural power; the Jews attributing them, inconfiftently with the very nature and design of his doctrine, to diabolical arts; and the heathens considering them as extraordinary, and truly miraculous facts, without drawing the natural consequences from them. Tho' there were some indeed of both distinctions, on whom they had their proper and intended effect.

THAT the heathens in particular, for the Jews are out of the question as to this point, could not be ignorant of the miracles done by our Lord, we need produce no other arguments to evince, than from the apologies of the first christians, who appeal'd to them as facts so well known, that the evidence of them could not be contested; if it had been contestable, the adversaries of the christian religion neither wanted learning or wit, malice or power,

to invalidate and overthrow it.



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SPECU-



SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

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BOOK II. Of divine Revelation, and the holy Scriptures.

PART II. Of the holy Scriptures.

С н а р. І.

That the revelation which God has made of his will to mankind, is contain'd in the writings of the Old and New Testament.



T appears from the last proposition, which I charg'd my self with the proof of in the former part, that if neither the jewish nor the christian religion had been committed to a standing writing, yet we should not

have wanted a sufficient moral evidence, that in fact a divine revelation has been made to mankind.

God

God, notwithstanding, out of his great goodness to prevent those doubts and uncertainties, which are apt to attend the conveyance of an oral tradition, how well soever attested, has been pleas'd to record the revelation which he made to mankind in the writings of the Old and New Testament. The benefit of that revelation being design'd to extend to mankind in general, it was expedient that it should be transmitted successively down to posterity, in such a manner, as might be of most general use, and subserviency to this end. In order to which, considering the common weakness and ignorance, the passions and prejudices of men, an unwritten traditionary account could not have been so proper, as a known and publick record, which, if any mistakes concerning the doctrines reveal'd should happen, they might by appealing to it, be better discover'd, and more easily rectify'd.

WHAT I have therefore incumbent on me at present, is to enquire concerning the truth of those writings, which compose the books of the Old and New Testament; and upon what grounds

we believe they were really written by divine inspiration?

Now the proof of this depends principally upon the same external testimonies, whereby we prove the truth of divine revelation in general. For if those, who were commission'd by God to promulge that revelation to the world, were not, for the same reason, to be suppos'd faithful in repeating it, whether by word or writing, the end, which God propos'd in making it, would not be necessarily obtain'd: Nay, such prophets, under the pretence of a prophetick spirit, when they should not be really acted by it, might be the occasion of misleading men into very gross

and dangerous errors.

But does it then follow, that a prophet sent from God, and whose mission is fully attested, must in every thing he says or writes be directed by a divine and infallible spirit? We say he must, with respect to every thing he says or writes, whilst he sustains the character of a prophet; the wisdom and goodness of God requiring, that a person commission'd by him to declare his will, should, in order to effect the end for which he is so commission'd, be restrain'd at least from advancing what is false, by any method whatever: Except in such cases, where, if he prophesy false, God affords proper means of detecting him. As in the case of those prophets*, whereby Ahab was, notwithstanding, seduc'd; or where the same prophet immediately undeceives those, he had before spoken to in a manner liable to a wrong construction; as in the case of Michaiab †: Or, lastly, where a prophet only speaks his private



^{* 1} Kings 22. 6, 7.

fentiments, at the same time, declaring them to be so; as in the case * of St. Paul. For it can be no manner of prejudice to the truth of those doctrines, which are deliver'd by divine inspiration, when the person who was inspir'd is particularly careful to inform us, where he speaks not in his extraordinary or prophetical, but in

a private capacity.

IT will be allow'd, except in these particular cases, that what a prophet, duly authoriz'd, speaks, is to be consider'd not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God. The reason of this divine assistance which accompanies a prophet in whatever he preaches, holds equally good to prove him divinely assisted in whatever he writes. Upon one consideration indeed, the reason holds stronger in the latter respect, as what is committed to writing naturally carries more weight and authority, and ordinarily spreads wider, than what is only reported as having been spoken; and so may be the occasion in every age, if the writing be not authentick, of misleading a greater number of persons.

NEITHER is it any objection to what is here said, that the inspir'd writers often argue from the common principles, and according to the common methods of human reasoning. For tho' we need no other argument to oblige our assent to any doctrine, but that it comes from God, yet men are more easily persuaded to believe such truths, which we have first demonstrated to them the reasonableness of believing; especially if we have done it after a manner best accommodated to their prejudices, or most agreeable to their capacities; which was the method used by our Saviour in all his parables, and by St. Paul in his epistles; who therefore told the Romans, he spake after the manner of men, because of the instrinity of their sless.

YET admitting there have been several persons, who from time to time wrote by divine inspiration; this concession may still be thought of no great force towards proving the several books of the Old and New Testament divinely inspired; except we can shew, that those books were severally written by the persons, whose

names they bear.

Now we have the same moral evidence, and moral evidence is all that the nature of the thing in question will admit, towards ascertaining the books of the Old and New Testament to their respective authors, as we have towards proving, that other books compos'd in any former age, were written by such particular authors. Nay, as to the writings of Moses, the most ancient in the world, we have stronger evidence of his being the author of them,

^{* 1} Cor. 7. 12. 2 Cor. 11. 17.

[†] Rom. 6. 19.

from the testimony of heathen writers, and the foundation of a common-wealth, the remains whereof still visibly subsist, the' dispers'd thro' the several parts of the world, than we have that any other writing of antiquity, was really the author's to whom it is now attributed.

Besides, the Jews for so many ages, under all the revolutions and calamities that befel them, ever continued unanimous in this point: And even after the division of the ten tribes, tho' they differ'd, as to the divine authority of the prophetical writings, whereby the apostasy of those tribes was so expressly condemn'd; yet they all along agreed in acknowledging the divine authority of the Pentateuch.

And indeed it was provided by many special acts of the divine wisdom, that authentick copies of the books of Moses should be inviolably preserved: Such of them, I mean, as related more particularly to the jewish state and dispensation. The people were not only commanded in general, to teach them their children, speaking of them, when they sat in their houses, and when they walk'd by the way; when they lay down, and when they rose up; and to write them upon the door-posts of their houses, and upon their gates *; but it was also given expressly in charge, that the King, who was to sit upon the throne of Israel, should write him a copy of the law in a book †, and make it, as ever he might hope for the blessing of God upon his government, the standing rule and instrument of it.

THE Jews have a tradition, that the law, by the appointment of Moses, was to be read thrice every week in their publick assemblies; which tradition, considering how strictly both prince and people were commanded to read and study the law, seems to have some reasonable foundation at least in the probability of the thing. Grotius is of the same opinion, and whether it were true or salse, the scripture however plainly informs us, that Moses of old time bad, in every city, them that preach'd him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

That which tended to preserve the copies of the law more authentick, and the original of it still more inviolable, (if, as some learned men have thought, it was preserv'd under the hand-writing of Moses till the return of the Jews from Babylon) was another express command, that, ‡ at the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel was to come to appear before the Lord their God, in the place he should choose, then should this law be read before all Israel, in

^{*} Deut. 11. 18, 19, 20. † Deut. 17. 18, 19, 20. † Deut. 31. 10, 11, 12. Kkk

their hearing. Here is an enumeration of such strong and weighty circumstances, in order to prevent any falsifications of the law, by obliging the attention of the Jews when it was read in so publick and solemn a manner, that it is not easy to conceive, either how it could have been falsify'd, or, what I have principally under consideration at present, attributed to any other author, than to him, by whom it was originally written, and all along suppos'd to be written, but the fraud must of necessity have been in as publick a manner detected.

THE rules laid down in the law of Moses for the trial of prophecy, discover also the great care, which the providence of God was pleas'd to take, lest the Jews should be impos'd upon by any false pretenders to a divine prophetick spirit, or mistake in attributing such writings, as were dictated by a true spirit of prophecy,

to any other name, than that of the true author.

For tho' it was not necessary that they, who compos'd under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the historical books of the scripture, should have their names severally affix'd to those books; the use and credit of history not depending so much on our personal knowledge of the historian, as on the truth of those facts, which he relates, and wherein, if he falsify, he may be disprov'd by other authoritick memorials, or concurrent testimonies; yet the authority of any prophecy depending entirely on the divine mission of that prophet, by whom it is deliver'd: It is of greater necessity, his name should be particularly recorded; to the end that what he foretold might, as to the event, be more certainly rely'd on: Especially if he had already prov'd his mission, by the accomplishment of any former prophecy.

If the Samaritans did not acknowledge the prophetical writings, as having the same sanction, in respect to their divine authority, with the books of Moses; their error, or rather their obstinacy, herein, proceeded too visibly from considerations merely political; which, on other occasions, have had power enough, not only to corrupt the judgment of particular persons, but of whole communities. It is evident, that so long as the authority of the prophetical writings was admitted, the apostasy and corrupt worship of the ten tribes were so plainly condemn'd, that nothing could be pretended, with the least shew of reason, in savour or excuse of

them.

If some difficulties concerning the authority of other inspir'd writings have risen, because the names of their respective authors are not ascertain'd to them; yet this can be no prejudice to the authority of such books, the names of whose authors are severally specify'd before or in them. Neither indeed is it of absolute necessity

cessity towards our discovering any person to be the author of a book compos'd by him, that he should either prefix his name to it, or be mention'd in the body of it; provided it be known and reported by persons of undoubted veracity, that he was the author of it. For certain human and prudential considerations may even oblige a person divinely inspir'd, for some time at least, to conceal his name. As on occasion of the epistle written by St. Paul to the Hebrews, it was expedient they should not have known him to be the author of it, because of the prejudices they had conceiv'd against him, as being, in their opinion, an apostate, and an enemy to their nation. For I need not observe how much a personal prejudice is apt to biass our judgment against the clearest, and strongest reasoning of any author, and to frustrate the good effects,

which might otherways be expected from it.

I need not descend particularly to examine the divine authority of those books, which compose the canon of the Old Testament, whether anonymous, or transmitted to us under any certain name. 'Tis sufficient to shew in general, that our Saviour approv'd the canon of the Old Testament, as it was receiv'd by the Jews in his time. As to the writings of Moses and the prophets, this admits of no dispute; with respect to other writings acknowledged as canonical by them, the express command of our Saviour, that they should fearch the scriptures, supposes that what they then receiv'd and believ'd as such, had all the authority, which the scriptures, properly so call'd, ought to have. For if they had at that time receiv'd any book, as having the sanction of divine authority, which really had no fuch fanction, instead of exposing a most dangerous error, which, with reverence we may fay, it became a prophet sent from God (should we consider our Saviour only as an ordinary prophet) to have done, he had, on the other hand, taken too visible and direct a method towards confirming them in it. And tho' what we call an argument ad hominem may sometimes be used on occasion of a speculative error, and without applying our felves directly to confute it; yet to direct the practice of men, as our Saviour here does, in consequence of any error, is what no rules, either of reason or piety, will admit on any occasion.

So again, when the apostle tells us, that unto the Jews were committed the oracles of God *: Here was a proper, and, in appearance, unavoidable opportunity to a person animated with his zeal (had the Jews really fallify'd so high and sacred a trust; or impos'd any human composition, as of equal authority with those

oracles) to have expos'd a corruption most abominable in its own

nature, and of the most dangerous consequence to religion.

But that the canon of the Jews was approv'd by the Spirit of God in the New Testament, appears more expressly from the same apostle, when he tells Timothy, that from a child he had known the holy scriptures *. By which he could mean no other writings, but those, which were then publickly receiv'd and acknowledg'd by the Jews, under that title. For he adds in the next words, all scripture is given by inspiration from God †: Which, according to a strict and just method of reasoning, particularly observable in the writings of St. Paul, plainly implies, that the scriptures, which Timothy had learn'd, were in truth given by divine inspiration, whether they bore the names of their several authors or not.

But it had been sufficient to my present purpose to observe, that the revelation God has made of his will is in part contain'd in the writings of the Old Testament, from the confirmation given to the divine authority of Moses, and several of the prophets, who are cited out of those writings, and sometimes by name, in the New Testament.

As to the authors of those books, which compose the christian canon, the proofs of their being written by the persons, under whose names they have been transmitted to us, are as evident as the nature of the thing will admit. Julian the apostate himself acknowledges, that the authors of the several gospels, were the persons to whom they are severally attributed. The evidence indeed, that both the gospels and epistles were written by those, whose names they bore, was so full and incontestable, that the adversaries of christianity, in their writings against the christians, and in their disputes with them, make no dispute upon this head. But take the thing for granted. Celsus ‡, in particular, objects to the christians, that alterations had been made in the gospels. But this rather supposes, that, in his opinion, they were written by the evangelilts, to whom they are ascrib'd. For had he believ'd them ascrib'd to wrong names, he would not have objected, that they had been alter'd, but that they were suppositious: This being a consideration of greater force to destroy the credit and authority of them.

The caution, which was us'd by the first christians, in admitting any books into the canon of the holy scriptures, whose authors were not certainly known to them, appears from the scruples they

^{* 2} Tim. 3. 15.

had for some time concerning the epistle to the Hebrews, the second epistle of St. Peter, and the general epistle of St. Jude. But their receiving these books into the canon afterwards, is the greater argument of the care they took in distinguishing genuine from apocryphal and spurious writings; seeing they did not admit even books, which were truly canonical as such, till upon strict examination and enquiry, they evidently appear'd to be so.

The hereticks themselves did not deny the books of the New Testament to have been written by those, under whose names the church severally received them; but pretend oral tradition, in opposition to the doctrines contained in them: The vanity of which pretence Ireneus * exposes, by shewing, that there were not only clear testimonies concerning the truth of the catholick saith from undoubted tradition, which might be traced up to the times of the apostles, but that the very same gospel, which they first preached, they afterwards committed to writing, to be the foundation and

pillar of faith.

THE conclusion I would draw from what has been here said, is, that we have all the evidence towards ascertaining the books of the New Testament to their proper authors, that we can have towards proving any book written at or about the same distance of time by any particular author. And yet we no more doubt, whether certain writings, that go under the name of Cicero, or Seneca, were really compos'd by them, than whether there have ever been two such persons in the world. Nay, we have, on some accounts, a stronger evidence on the part of the sacred penmen, than we are able to produce for the genuine works of these, or any other human authors whatever in former times. I have obferv'd, that the adversaries of christianity have found themselves oblig'd to ascribe the evangelical writings to those persons, to whom they have been severally ascrib'd by the church; who, if those books had been impos'd upon the world under false names, yet could easily have discover'd and expos'd such an imposition. in truth, it no less concern'd the primitive christians themselves to prevent their being impos'd upon in an affair, which so visibly affected them in their nearest interests. As they were best able to judge of the books attributed to the evangelical writers, especially if what Tertullian + reports be true, and there is no reason to suspect the truth of it, that in his time there were original manuscripts of the apostles still preserv'd; so they could not but apprehead it as a matter of the last consequence to the credit of the christian religion, to make a right judgment concerning them.

[#] Iren. 1. 3. c. 3. 1. 3. c. 1.

⁺ Advers. Hæret.

It cannot be imagin'd, that persons, who were willing to suffer every thing for the truth of christianity, would not be careful to preserve, in every respect, those monuments uncorrupt, whereby the sacts, upon which the proofs of it depended, and the doctrines it contain'd, might be best attested, and transmitted to suture ages. And since the reasons, in particular, of ascertaining any other books to their respective authors, could not, to appearance, be so strong in point of interest, as those, which influenc'd the first christians, the evidence, upon which they ascrib'd the writings of the New Testament to the evangelists and apostles, must therefore be allow'd so much the stronger and more convincing.

In order to prove the truth and authority of the holy scriptures, I might have descended to an induction of the several proofs, both internal and external, before mention'd, to this end. But as in mentioning those proofs, I had plainly an eye to the purity, harmony, and other perfections of the holy scriptures, and to the sacts and doctrines contain'd in them, 'tis easy for every one to discover the force of what was said, by a particular application under this article. To avoid prolixity, I have satisfy'd my self in general with such considerations and external proofs, as may sufficiently evidence to all reasonable and well disposed persons, the divine authority of the sacred penmen, both in reference to the Old and New Testament, and the truth of those writings, which have been successively convey'd down to us, under their respective names.

I shall only take notice, before I conclude this head, of an objection propos'd by Mr. Hobbes (but which, as to the main design of it, is since his time become more popular) that may be thought to lie against what I have here particularly said concerning the genuine writings of the apostles. It has been pretended by this author *, that the writings of the apostles were not receiv'd or acknowledg'd by the church, as such, till the council of Laodicea, which was held in the year three hundred sixty four. Now if what is here so considently afferted should prove true, the natural consequence would be, that we cannot have at such a distance of time so clear and full assurance that the apostles were really the authors of those epistles, as from the undoubted testimony of writers, who liv'd in the apostolical age, or in the times nearest to it.

But it is so far from being true, that the writings of the apostles were not sooner receiv'd and acknowledg'd as such by the church, that several fathers of the church, who best knew her

sentiments,

^{*} Leviath. part 3. ch. 33.

fentiments, and spoke conformably to them, cite both gospels and epistles, as of divine authority, and under the very names which they now bear. From whence 'tis reasonable to conclude, the principal design of that council, was not so much to declare what books were canonical, or to be receiv'd, as having the sanction of divine authority (for that was sufficiently known already) as what books so receiv'd, had been thought proper to be read in churches. Which may serve to discover to us the reason, why the book of the revelations, which, on account of several abstruse and mysterious passages in it, was not thought so edifying when read in churches, as other parts of scripture, is omitted in the catalogue of canonical books drawn up by that council.

CHAP. II. PROP. II.

That no very material alterations, or such as may tend to destroy their authority, have happen'd in the writings either of the Old or New Testament.

SHOULD it now be universally granted, that God has formerly made a revelation; that this revelation was originally committed to a standing and authentick writing, under the names of men divinely inspir'd, and which names they at present bear; yet we shall still be unable to bring unbelievers to the acknowledgment of the truth, except we can also prove to them farther, that these writings have been preserv'd from all impure mixtures, and dangerous innovations. For how shall we otherways, say they, be able to distinguish in them, what was really dictated by the Spirit of God, from what has been inserted, or altered in them; not so much perhaps by mere fallible men, as by wicked men, who had a form'd and direct intention to deceive others.

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In answer to this question, so far as it relates, in the first place,

1. To the Jews. What has been occasionally infinuated, concerning the special provision God was pleas'd to make towards preferving authentick copies of the Mosaick law, by obliging the Jews to read it both privately, and in the most publick and solemn manner, is sufficient to shew how extremely difficult it was, or rather, indeed, morally impossible, to have introduc'd any doctrine opposite,

opposite, or foreign to the design of that law, into the body of it; or to have corrupted it in any respect whatever, but in a way open to every one's discovery; especially since there was a particular and strict prohibition in the law itself, that no one should

presume to add unto, or diminish ought from it *.

But as we are not always determin'd to do our duty, by the most express commands, however reasonable in themselves, when they have no relation to our interests, God was pleas'd to add this farther motive towards obliging the Jews to preserve the Mosaick law free from all corruption, that the several tenures and properties, in the distribution of the twelve tribes, were ascertain'd and fettled by that law. Now men are generally very careful to preferve those records, upon which their civil rights depend; especially such as they claim by inheritance. But where several persons are concern'd, or specify'd in a deed of settlement; their mutual emulations, and their separate, as well as common interests, will more effectually oblige them to guard, in the former case, against any falsification of it from one another, and in the latter, from all foreign imposition; and that too, even in reference to things, which do not affect such a deed, as to its principal uses or design. For a record that may be fallify'd in part, will in some measure, at least, lose its credit and authority, even with respect to those parts of it, which are not falfify'd.

I shall instance in another wise provision towards preventing any corruption in the law of Moses, from the special promises made by God to the Jews of temporal blessings and enjoyments; the condition whereof was their obedience to the law, and their not turning aside from it, to the right hand, or to the left. This render'd it necessary to the Jews, as ever they hop'd for peace or plenty; for victory over their enemies, or prosperity in any kind, that the laws, upon the observation whereof, these blessings were promis'd, (and some have thought, the generality of the Jews carry'd their views no higher) should have been entirely preserv'd, so much as was possible, from all falsisication; for where there is a failure in the condition upon which any promise is made, as there must be, where the rules to be observ'd are either alter'd, or not distinctly known; there the party promising is absolv'd from all obligation

of executing his promise.

It will be said, perhaps, that these arguments only prove the moral impossibility of falsifying the law of Moses, consider'd strictly and properly as such, but they do not prove, that the same care was taken to preserve the other parts of the Pentateuch in general

from all corruption; or, by name, the book of Genesis; which had no such necessary relation to the law; but the credit and authority of it might have subsisted, tho' the Jews had not believ'd that

book written by Moses, as a person divinely inspir'd.

To which I answer, it is sufficient to my chief purpose, to shew, that God has made a revelation of his will, contain'd in the writings of the Old and New Testament, so far as a divine revelation imports, what is certainly the principal end of it, a rule of faith, worship, and life. And the it was of more special and immediate concernment to the Jews to preserve this rule in its original purity and perfection; yet as all the obligation of it to them arose from the character of Moses as a prophet, it was incumbent on them, in honour to him, faithfully to preserve whatever book, he had written in that capacity: Lest any falsification in it should be thought to imply a possibility, at least, that the books of the law written by him, might by one means or other, in process of time, have been falsify'd too. For where several books are publish'd under the name of the same author; especially where they have an immediate connexion with one another, and all centre in the same design, any notorious falsification in one or more of them, will naturally be interpreted, in some degree, to impair the credit of the rest.

As to other inspir'd writings of the Old Testament, a continued succession of prophets, whose special office it was to reprove and correct any error relating to faith, as well as corruption in practice, render'd it impossible that any dangerous variations could have been made in those writings, without their being openly censur'd and condemn'd at the very time of making them. Neither is it probable, indeed, that any person would ever have attempted to adulterate them in any respect, where there was not only a distinct order of men, animated with a becoming zeal to prevent the corruption of them; but they were likewise in so many hands, and so openly read and consulted, that there was scarce a private person among the Jews, but who might have known, if any such thing could have happen'd, both when and wherein they had

been corrupted.

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We may add, that the very reasons upon which the Jews admitted any books into their canon, render'd it necessary that those books should be preserv'd in their original purity. For if any material mutilations or additions should have afterwards happen'd in them, their being receiv'd as canonical, had been so far from doing service to religion, or answering the great end for which they were receiv'd into the canon, that they had afforded a dangerous M m m

occasion of introducing one error or other, under the stronger um-

brage and pretence of authority.

WE have an equal assurance, at least, if not on some accounts much stronger, that the writings of the New Testament, when once receiv'd as canonical, could not be, in any dangerous instances, corrupted. For besides that the reason last mention'd in relation to the Jews, holds indifferently with respect to the christian canon; the number of copies, which were early extant of the evangelical writings, and generally dispers'd, render'd any alterations in them, but such as might have been easily discover'd, altogether impracticable. Accordingly upon every attempt to poyfon these sacred fountains, a discovery of it was in due time actually made. The very controversies which arose in the infancy of the church, were not without their use towards preserving the purity of those holy scriptures, which compose the canon of the New Testament. What was added, or mutilated in them by hereticks, as it gave occasion of exposing their impious arts and designs, so it contributed not a little towards the better settlement of the true and original text. And the hereticks, on the other hand, were themselves in some degree instrumental to this end; as having a watchful eye on the orthodox, lest they should make use of any pious fraud towards interpolating the scriptures, which it might possibly have been suspected by them, that some persons out of a mistaken zeal, might on occasion make no great scruple of.

If we consider the state of this matter in the time of Ensebius, there were so great a number of copies of the New Testament then in being, that sew families were without one or more of them. These copies were distributed into several parts of the world, and in the several languages proper to them. Both the number and variety of the versions was so great, that we may as probably suppose any corrupt alteration could now be made in The whole duty of man, as that in those days any one publick copy could have been so artsully corrupted, but it had been easy for every body, who had opportunity of making enquiry, to know when it was so, and in what respects. And as christians might then have recourse to the originals, preserved in several great cities, where the episcopal seat was six'd, there is as little reason to doubt, whether the copies themselves were soithfully done from them.

themselves were faithfully done from them.

IF some alterations of less moment, or various readings, have happen'd in transcribing the originals; this is no more, than what it had been natural to expect from the negligence, and, in some cases, from the ignorance, or other common infirmities of the transcribers. But it does not in the least destroy the credit or

authority of the holy scriptures, as to such points or doctrines, which are fundamental, and the truth whereof may perhaps be also discover'd and prov'd by several intrinsick marks. Who knows, if it was not wisely permitted by the providence of God, that mistakes of no dangerous consequence to the faith, should sometimes have happen'd, in transcribing the holy scriptures, to divert the thoughts of learned and inquisitive men from more useless enquiries, or which might have less reference to the business of religion. must be own'd, that critical learning, in the view I am now considering it, tho' it has put men on many occasions of trisling after a very elaborate manner; yet is in the natural tendency of it, very commendable; and has really done the cause of religion good service, and contributed very much to persuade men of the truth and authority of the holy scriptures, by referring to many ancient records, and the unanimous testimony of so many ancient fathers concerning the divine inspiration of them: Tho' they happen'd in some points less material, and more difficult, to differ in their opinions from one another.

It may perhaps, in opposition to what has been here said, be particularly objected, that the Syriach, and most ancient version of the New Testament, did not contain some books, which are now recorded in the canon of it. For which reason there seems cause to doubt, whether we can be so well assured, that those books are really genuine. I would observe, in the first place, that what is here pretended, does not in the least destroy, nor can it be design'd to do so, the authority of those books, which are mention'd in the Syriack version, so that unbelievers can, upon no account, make any advantage of it. For the authority of that version, which is here taken for granted, is sufficient to evince what I am principally contending for, the truth of the christian revelation, as faithfully contain'd in the holy scriptures of the New Testament in general.

But, in the next place, if a particular reason may be assign'd, why some books of the New Testament now receiv'd as canonical, might not be found in the Syriack version, then it can be no argument one way or other, that the present copies we have of them are not authentick, because they were not found in it. One reason whereof may be, that tho' several churches receiv'd those books as canonical, upon clear and sufficient evidence of their being so; yet as some of them were written on particular occasions, or upon subjects of less general * use, and three of them to particular persons, the divine authority of them might not have been on a

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^{*} The epistle to Philemon, the second and third epistles of St. John.

fudden universally acknowledg'd, because it was not necessary that they should have been at first universally ascertain'd.



CHAP. III. PROP. III.

That the revelation, contained in the writings of the Old and New Testament, is sufficiently plain and intelligible, with respect to all the great ends, for which it was originally made.

wards confirming the faith of those who already believe, that a divine revelation has been actually made, and recorded in the holy scriptures, by persons divinely inspir'd; in several parts of it under their proper names, and without being dangerously corrupted in any part; except we can also prove to them, that God has afforded us competent means of discovering what the true sense of the holy scriptures really is: Which, in honour to his wisdom, we ought indeed to conclude, that he would take care to afford us. As he never proposes any end for the benefit of his creatures, towards which their concurrence is requir'd, without rendring the attainment of it, at the same time, practicable to them.

YET when I speak of the plainness and perspicuity of the holy scriptures, I do not intend that they are so plain, as to every thing deliver'd in them, whether in regard to the language or subject matter of them, as to exclude the use of human industry and application, in order to a more persect knowledge of them. For what can be more reasonable than in this, and all other cases, that an all-wise God should make it the duty of moral agents to employ such means in pursuit of any advantage, which, consider'd as moral agents, are most proper to be employ'd by them.

I. It is not necessary, that the language of the holy scriptures should be, in every part of them, equally clear and intelligible; because God may be supposed, on particular occasions, to make a revelation of his will to particular persons, or perhaps to whole communities, in a way accommodated to their state and condition of life, their manners or customs; which not being known, or, at the best, very imperfectly known to other people, especially to

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fuch as may be very remote, whether with respect to time or place, or perhaps both, the language wherein things, so little understood in themselves, are express'd or alluded to, must of necessity, for that reason, appear more dark and intricate, if not to a great number of persons altogether unintelligible. There are in the Mosaick writings several things, for instance, which have a peculiar relation to the state of the Jews at that time, express'd after a manner, at present not persectly clear to very learned men, nor even to such perhaps, as have made the greatest advances in rabbinical learning. But such particular difficulties being only concerning things, whereof we may now be ignorant without endangering our salvation, they cannot be objected against the perspicuity of the scriptures in general; which are sufficiently clear with respect to the main design of them, that is, in all points necessary to our common edification.

As to the prophetical writings, reasons have already been asfign'd, which I shall not here repeat, why the language of them should be sometimes more obscure: And where those reasons do not hold good, it is sufficient towards justifying the wisdom of God, to say, that the obscurity of certain passages in the prophets, relates to things less necessary to be known; or if to things, the knowledge whereof is really necessary to salvation, then the obscurity complain'd of in such passages, does not really arise so much from them, as on occasion of the voluntary, or possibly affected ignorance of those, who have neglected the means of better information. I might observe, as to the Psalms of David, that tho' the great design of them is to promote piety in the worship of God, and they are now particularly to that end translated into our own language; yet there are some expressions in the verfion so obscure, that notwithstanding men commonly repeat them with all the appearance of zeal and devotion, which becomes those who pray with the spirit, and the understanding also; yet it may be question'd, whether, as to certain passages, they are in truth so commonly understood. The ignorance of men, in relation to those passages is nevertheless culpable, and not wholly to be charg'd on the obscurity of them; as by consulting the books, which have been written to explain them, or persons of better understanding, or those, in particular, whose more peculiar office it is to preserve knowledge, they might have been capable of discovering the sense of them after a more persect and distinct The reasons of what I here observe concerning certain obscure passages in the Psalms, as they now appear, will hold indifferently with respect to any other like passages that occur either in the Old Testament, or the New: For the evangelical writers, tho' Nnn

they wrote in a language which is now more generally understood, if I ought not perhaps to except St. Matthew, whose gospel was originally publish'd in Hebrew, yet might also on occasion allude to certain cultoms, or express themselves according to certain idioms, peculiar to the time of their writing, which may now render many passages in them more obscure to illiterate or unattentive persons, and some few perhaps to the most learned and inquisitive. But this concession ought not to be admitted as affording the grounds of any prejudice, against the perspicuity of the scriptures, concerning fuch points as are generally necessary to be known. As to these, we say the scriptures are every where sufficiently clear, or if there should be any part of them in this regard less clear, upon comparing it with other parts, the difficulties which appear to attend it, will be eafily folv'd. And indeed the very end of making any divine revelation, requires, that in those articles of it, which it concerns all men principally to know, it should be plain and intelligible to all men.

In this character of plainness, if we consider along with it, the form and dignity of expression, several writings of the Old Testament, and in a manner all the writings of the New, exceed whatever has been at any time publish'd by prophane authors. How insipid are all the flowing elegancies of *Plato*, the smooth, tho' elaborate periods of *Cicero*, and the pointed aphorisms of *Seneca*, in comparison only of those beauties, which strike us in the simple narration of the enterview *Joseph* had with his brethren at the time of his discovering himself to them, and in that of the para-

ble of the prodigal fon.

INDEED all the discourses of our Saviour excel in the three characters before mention'd, and there were reasons in particular for his expressing himself, on all occasions, with so much plainness and simplicity. In proportion to the authority wherewith any person is invested, a more natural, free, and easy language becomes him. Acts of Parliament do not usually run upon tropes, or other rhetorical schemes of speech, whatever eloquence or arts of this kind have been fometimes employ'd to procure them. But when perfons speak in the proper capacity of law-givers, 'tis below them to make use of such infinuations, as rather tend to lessen their authority, or render it precarious, than to enforce the commands of There was still less reason why the Son of God, the greatest of all law-givers, should have descended to set off the several rules, whether of faith or life, which he deliver'd to the Jews with such pompous and artificial ornaments, as are only common to men, who have no other way to supply the want of power towards effecting their designs, but by such methods. And therefore 'tis particularly

ticularly observed concerning our blessed Saviour, that he spake as one having authority, and not as the Scribes; that is, he delivered his doctrine and discourses to the Jews, after the manner of those who have a right to command, and not of such precarious orators, who have no higher pretensions than to persuade, and who, to that end, make use of all the common topicks and human arts of persuasion, as much as they can.

It is so far then from being an objection, tho' some men have made it so, against the doctrine of Christ, that it is deliver'd in plain, simple, and common terms, that they might with much greater reason have objected against his discourses, had he made use of the pompous and magnificent style in them, which they think would have been more agreeable to the divinity of them, and

the dignity of his character.

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It must be granted indeed, that our Lord sometimes made use of metaphorical expressions; but metaphors when plain, apt, and unforc'd, are so far from contributing to the obscurity of speech, that nothing tends more to illustrate what is spoken, or to give it a more lively and powerful impression on the minds of men.

AT other times our Lord, according to a method of teaching, which had much obtain'd among the eastern nations, deliver'd his discourses in parables; or sensible images and representations of fuch things, which if they really did not at any time happen in fact, yet might naturally be suppos'd to have happen'd. By this means, men became more desirous of hearing his heavenly doctrine, and were instructed by it, at once, after a more easy and a more edifying manner. And, indeed, the bare proposal of simple and abstract truths, ordinarily makes but little impression on the minds of men; few persons are capable of that denudation and silence, that perfect tranquillity and inaction of the soul, which the mysticks speak of, and whereby they suppose, that not only all sensible expressions, but all sensible ideas too are become wholly useless and improper to the sublime state she is in. Even persons, who think regularly, or have accustom'd themselves to a strict and metaphysical way of reasoning, find, that figurative or metaphorical expressions, provided they represent the things they stand for in a clear and full light, are generally the most significant and affecting. Now a parable is little more than that figure of speech, which we call a metaphor drawn out into greater length, and embellished with variety of proper incidents. But when we are to instruct people concerning things that are indifferently of use towards promoting the falvation of all men, there the reasons of discoursing to them in the most popular and agreeable manner,

which is by addressing our selves to their imagination and senses,

become still more evident and strong.

THERE are, notwithstanding, in the holy scriptures some books, and several passages throughout, written in a more noble and sublime strain. The prophetical writings in general abound with bold and magnificent figures, but such as, with respect to the ages wherein the prophets liv'd, were very natural too; as being most agreeable to the genius, the warm conceptions, and, I may add, the common style of the orientalists. Tho' it is not indeed necessary to suppose, that any of the inspir'd penmen in holy writ, had all the words they made use of expressly dictated to them, at all times, by the Holy Ghost. For it not being the design of divine revelation to teach men words, but things; the Holy Ghost might confistently with his design, leave those he inspir'd to their own manner of expression, provided there was nothing in it repugnant to the doctrine they taught, or to the end, for which they were commission'd to teach it. For otherways their words might have been entirely destructive of the things, they were mov'd and commission'd to reveal.

In other cases it was sufficient to answer all the ends of divine revelation, that the Spirit of God should leave those, he inspir'd, to express themselves in a language most natural, or proper to And for this reason we observe so great a variety of style throughout the holy scriptures; it being usual for the sacred penmen, to deliver their thoughts in words or phrases most agreeable to their different capacities, tempers, or circumstances of life. I might confirm what is here said, by several instances, and particularly out of the book of Psalms, wherein holy David, after he was advanc'd to the throne, yet has frequent allusions, respecting the office, from which he was call'd to it, when he follow'd the ewes great with young; as, on the other hand, we may attribute it to the dignity of his royal office, that he speaks of the kingdom of Christ in terms, than which none could have been employ'd more suitable to the magnificence or glory of it. The difference between the noble and lofty style of Isaiah, who was much conversant at court, and the low rural strain wherein Amos writes, and which he had learn'd from the herdsmen of Tekoah, have been frequently observed on the same occasion. But,

II. THE holy scriptures are also sufficiently plain, with respect to the subject matter of them; and so far as is useful towards attaining the great ends of divine revelation in general. For it is not necessary, that all things, which God may think sit to reveal, should be of equal importance to be known to all men. If

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PART II.

there are some doctrines, as some there are, in their own nature, more difficult to be fully comprehended; yet it does not follow, but that we may be capable of knowing them, so far as they are reveal'd in part, and it was the will of God that they should be known. And therefore it is unreasonable to urge the difficulty of our accounting, in every respect, for such doctrines, against the perspiculty of the gospel. If the gospel be really clear and perspiculates as to such things, which were intended to be reveal'd in it, the obscurity complain'd of as to such things which were not intended to be reveal'd in it, must be an argument against the revelation it contains, consider'd as such, altogether foreign and unreasonable.

If there are some evangelical doctrines, which are, in their own nature, more plain and obvious to human apprehension, and which were originally understood according to the proper design and acceptation of them; but are now render'd more perplex'd and obscure, on occasion of certain difficulties, that have been since discover'd in them by learned men, whether from any motive of vanity or interest, of discontent or personal resentment, or possibly from all of them; yet this objection is of no force to invalidate what we say concerning the perspicuity of the christian revelation, as it arises purely from an accidental cause, and ought not to be charg'd as having any good soundation in the natural reason and propriety of it.

It is, however, incumbent on us to make use of all human and proper means, as well in order to discover more perfectly the doctrines contain'd in the holy scriptures, as towards understanding the terms, that are made use of to express them. And if we search the scriptures to this end, with a perfect heart, and a willing mind; that is, if we be sincerely desirous to be instructed in the principles of reveal'd religion, and in consequence thereof to do the will of God, we may piously hope, that we shall know of the doctrine, so far as the knowledge of it is necessary or expedient to

us, both what it is, and whether it be of God.

As to the rules of moral life, or the few positive commands of God in the gospel, tho' wicked men have from time to time endeavour'd to pervert the sense, or frustrate the design of them; yet they are sufficiently clear at once in the meaning and the reason of them to all pious and unprejudic'd persons, And since God has not propos'd them to us as necessary, but moral agents, if through a voluntary ignorance, or any acquir'd indisposition, they become less intelligible, or misapply'd by us, this effect is not to be charg'd to the want of perspicuity in them, but to the account of some culpable neglect, or perverseness in our selves; which the clearest O o o

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revelation God may be suppos'd to have made concerning any doctrine, would not perhaps have prevented, so long as he was pleas'd to leave us to the natural use and freedom of our faculties. For what indeed can be so clear, that thoughtless and indolent persons shall be oblig'd to see it, or which ingenious designing men cannot wrest to a false construction, at least disguise in such a manner, as to render it more dissicult to others to come at the true sense and meaning of it.

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CHAP. IV. PROP. IV.

That the revelation contain'd in the Old and New Testament, is perfect with respect to all the ends, for which it can be thought expedient, that any divine revelation should have been made.

T is possible to conceive, that God may make supernatural discoveries to men about such things, which, consider'd in themselves, are of no immediate or necessary consequence to religion, and only relate to the affairs of human or civil life. But as to a divine revelation, whose direct end is to instruct men in religious truths and duties, and to satisfy every one in that grand enquiry, what shall I do to be sav'd? If such a revelation be on all accounts really adapted to attain this end, then we must allow it to have all the perfection, which it is necessary that any divine revelation, consider'd in regard to religion, should have.

Now it were easy to shew by a particular induction, that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament have conjunctly this perfection, and the latter of them in a more special manner, separately. And it was not necessary, that God should have reveal'd his whole and entire will to his creatures at once. As it was a pure act of grace in him to make any revelation at all, what should restrain him from making it at sundry times, and in divers manners, as himself thought sit. And had he at last render'd it less perfect or excellent, than we now have it, his creatures, notwithstanding, had been lest without any pretence of replying against the justice or goodness of his procedure, whatever specious objections might have been form'd against the wisdom of it. And indeed, as it is the peculiar character of God, that bis way is always perfect,

fet, it seems more agreeable to our notions of this attribute, that after he had determin'd to make a revelation of his will to mankind, he would, in his due time, give it all the perfection which they could conceive it ought to have. And this perfection, we say, the revelation made in the Old and New Testament actually has. But without enumerating the several excellencies of it, whether consider'd as a rule of faith, of worship, or life; which would be unnecessary, when we speak to christians, who are supposed to be conversant in the holy scriptures; it is sufficient in general to observe against unbelievers, that themselves must consess, no rule in any of the foremention'd respects could have been contrived more proper for God to prescribe, or for man to be regulated by; none, that could have so easily reconciled the holiness and dignity of the divine, with the frail state and condition of human nature.

But because the most excellent rules, and the best projected measures do not always affect us as they ought, especially where it is not evident, that we shall reap some considerable advantage by complying with them; God has been pleas'd to enforce, whatever he has prescrib'd, in the revelation made by him, as our duty, whether relating to faith or practice, by the proposal of the greatest and most glorious rewards. And, as a farther instance of his wisdom, the means, which he has directed, of attaining them, are the proper qualifications to render us most capable of enjoying them. Whatever objections unbelievers may raife, for which, nevertheless, they can have no real grounds, against the christian revelation, as containing some things, which they apprehend to be superfluous or redundant; yet none of them can so much as pretend, that there is any thing wanting or defective in it. may challenge the most virulent adversaries of christianity, to instance in any one doctrine, that is not reveal'd to us, that would more effectually contribute, than those which are reveal'd already, either to discover the nature, or enforce the duties of that holiness, which the gospel requires, in order at once to entitle us to eternal life, and to prepare us the better for it.

So that the deists themselves, tho' they deny the truth of the christian revelation, are less enemies to the perfection of it, as a rule of our faith or conduct, than even some who profess themselves christians.

Among these, I shall, in the first place, exhibit my charge against certain enthusiasts, who come under the general, but, as it is now commonly us'd, most equivocal and indefinite name of protestants.

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I would ask then, whether the truths, whereby they pretend their minds are inwardly enlighten'd, can be render'd intelligible to others, or not? If they may be express'd in words, so as to convey clear and distinct ideas of them to other men, why could not the sacred penmen, whom the Holy Ghost originally inspir'd, have found out words equally at least proper and significant to express the doctrines reveal'd to them. And if they could have done it, which must be granted, there is all the reason in the world to believe they have done it: For otherways, why did they commit such doctrines to any writing at all?

But if what they call the light within be no more than a confus'd discovery of such things to their minds, whereof they cannot, after any intelligible manner, express their conceptions; this is an argument, that such things are really unintelligible in their own nature, at least cannot be, what these enthusialts will not admit,

of any use but to themselves alone.

OTHERS therefore pretend, that tho' the scriptures contain a great many excellent truths, which are fully express'd in them; yet they are principally calculated for novices, or young beginners in religion, in order to teach them the first essays and rudiments of it; but are very defective, when we speak of those, who have attain'd to higher dispensations of grace, or have made greater progress in the divine life towards a more intimate union with God.

THESE are the sentiments wherewith those of the mystical way abound, tho' they often affect to express them in terms, that are very singular and extravagant *. But besides that they directly charge the scriptures with the want of that perfection we contend for, their notions open a way to all manner of error and illusion. For as they have no certain or stated rule of judging, they are in much greater danger of mistaking the visions of a heated and disorder'd imagination, for the dictates of the Holy Spirit. And if we may judge from what has too frequently happen'd, they who, in opposition to the holy scriptures, set up any

^{*} I shall here take leave to cite a passage concerning the mysticks, and their manner of expressing themselves, out of that excellent book, The causes of the present corruption of christians, and in the words of the english translator. "According to them, the way to persection and solid virtue, is for a man to be in a state of inaction, to go out of himself, to annihilate himself; to have neither thoughts, nor desires, nor will; but to be, as it were, dead in the sight of God. For thus they express themselves, in significant and mysterious words. Under pretence of ascribing all to God, they affert that man is a mere nothing, and an abyse of misery; that in order to be happy, it is enough for us to be sensible of our nothingness, and to wait in silence and tranquillity, till God is pleas'd to work his will in us; and that when the soul is thus in a state of inaction, and entirely abandons itself to God, then it is that God speaks to and operates in it. Part 1. cause 2. art. 8.

other light, wherein they hope more clearly to discover, what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, have greater reason to fear, that this, by the just judgment of God, may really

prove their own case.

THE Papists are so sensible of the dangers and inconveniences to which men are expos'd, in pretending the necessity either of an immediate inspiration to ascertain the sense, or to supply the defects of the holy scriptures, that they have, instead of a private spirit, substituted to these ends a publick infallible judge, and the doctrine of oral tradition; for as to written tradition of any antiquity, they find themselves more oblig'd, or rather necessitated to give up the point. As to the former of these notions, I need fay nothing at present, but that themselves are far from being agreed in acquainting us, who this infallible judge is, or where, upon occasion, we may apply to him. Whereas if there had been a necessity for such a judge, or God had thought sit to appoint him, there is the highest reason in the world to believe, he would have been so distinguish'd, that every one might have known him, with the place from which he was to deliver his oracles. Where we are to submit, without appeal, to any authority in affairs of the last concernment to us, and to the honour and truth of religion; the wisdom and goodness of God require, that the notification of such an authority should be, what they who argue for it will not pretend it to be, very particular and express.

But let us enquire, whether the pretence of oral tradition, to fupply the defects of the holy scriptures in point of certain doctrines, be more just or reasonable? We deny that it is so upon the following accounts, which I shall previously mention, and then

proceed to consider the arguments for it.

1. This way of conveying any doctrine through successive ages, and the many revolutions of human affairs which happen in them, is very uncertain. If we are at so great a loss to know the certain truth of things, which are said and done openly every day, how easy is it for a report, which is to be communicated from almost an infinite number of persons of different tempers, designs, and interests, for centuries of years, to be so falsify'd or disguis'd, that there can be no certain rules of distinguishing what it really was in the original sense and intention of it.

2. This way of conveying the doctrines of christianity had something still more particularly liable to exception in it. For as the christian religion was early to be spread among different and very distant nations, which neither understood the language of one another, nor had any settled communication, if any christian doctrine had principally depended on the evidence of oral tradition, P p p

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should it not have been what was very likely, in one respect or other, dangerously corrupted; yet the proofs of it could not possibly have been made out in so clear and satisfactory a manner, as was requisite to establish an article of faith, and to persuade men

to embrace it, without any doubt or scruple, as such.

3. Our Saviour and his apostles, in the controversies they had with the Jews, did not appeal to their oral or written traditions, but to the authority of the books receiv'd into their canon, to the law and to the testimony, which themselves were exhorted to confult, and to be concluded by. Our Lord particularly directs them to fearch the scriptures: He condemns them for transgressing the commandments of God by their traditions*. And charges them with worshipping God in vain, because they taught for doctrines the commandments of men †.

4. The most learned of the Papists themselves are forc'd to acknowledge, that the ‡ scriptures contain all the doctrines simply necessary to be believ'd. And as to doctrines, which are useful to the ends of piety, and do not oppugn any doctrines of scripture, but rather tend to illustrate or consirm them, there can be no inconvenience in allowing the same authority, or paying an equal deference to the tradition of them well attested, that we do to any

human discourse or historical writing.

I have endeavour'd here to speak the sense of our church, in her sixth article, concerning the sufficiency of holy scriptures for salvation; and which she expresses in these words: Holy scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be requir'd of any man, that it should be believ'd as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

But because there are, after all, some objections pretended in favour of tradition, as if it were necessary to supply certain defects in the holy scriptures, I shall descend to consider two or three of

them, but with all the conciseness possible. And,

our did many things, which if they were all written, the whole world could not contain them. But it is evident from the very words of the apostle in this passage, that they relate to the sacts, which were done by our Saviour, and not to the doctrines, which are the subject of our present enquiry, taught by him; if they should be allow'd to relate to the doctrines, they do not import the multiplicity of them, or any distinct articles of faith, from those contain'd in the scriptures, but only, according to

^{*} Mat. 15. 3, 6. †——15. 9. ‡ V. Bellarm. de V. T. lib. 4. c. 11.

St. Augustin's interpretation, the incapacity of carnal or worldly minded men to receive them.

2. They object to us, that the apostle commends the Corinthians for keeping the ordinances, which he had deliver'd to them *: And that he expressly charges the Thessalonians, to stand fast and hold the traditions, which they had been taught, whether by word, or by his epistle †. But it does not follow, that either these ordinances or traditions, were concerning such doctrines, which properly fall under our present consideration, as generally necessary to be known or believ'd by all christians; but might only contain certain rules of order proper at that time to the state of these two particular churches. Neither can it be made appear, that if they related to any fundamental doctrines of christianity, that they were not afterwards inserted in the canon of scripture.

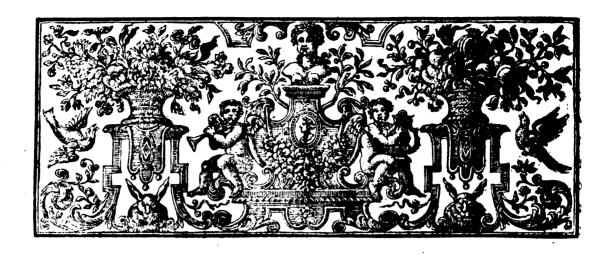
3. We are told, that many learned men have been of opinion, that certain books of the holy scriptures have been lost. Should this really be true, which other very learned men have disputed, it could not from hence be inferred, that the books which have perished contained any doctrines different from those, which are

taught and establish'd in the present canon.

But to those who believe the scriptures, one would think all arguments, either in proof of their sufficiency and perfection, or in answer to the objections against them, wholly unnecessary; seeing they are confessedly, as the canon of them is now established, in general able to make us wise unto salvation; and prositable, in particular, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly established unto every good work **.

* 1 Cor. 11. 2. † 2 Theff. 2. 15. ‡ 2 Tim. 3. 15. **——16, 17





SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

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BOOK III. Of Creation and Providence.

PART I. Of Creation.

CHAP. I.

In what sense creation is to be understood.



T has been the opinion of feveral learned men, that we cannot conclude from the natural force of the word, which in scripture is render'd to create, or creation, that God made all things out of nothing. From whence they would argue, that the creation of

the universe, as comprehending things visible and invisible, cannot, according to the sense wherein it is sometimes understood, be an article

article of faith to those, who believe the divine authority of the scripture. But this way of arguing is inconclusive, even upon supposition, that creation does not, in the natural construction of the word. import, what other learned men have thought it does in the inspir'd writings, the production of things into a state of existence, which did not exist before. For if it appear from the principles of natural reason, that God alone is eternal, and self-existent, then it will unavoidably follow, that whatever being did exist in time, must have deriv'd its existence either immediately from him, or from some cause acting by a power communicated (if any such power be really communicable) from him. And if there were no word in the Hebrew language more proper to denote, that all things were really produc'd out of nothing by God, than that word *, which Moses made use of to this end, supposing it to have been his real intention to affert this doctrine, then the authority of the scriptures must be allow'd sufficiently clear and full to our present purpose, tho' the same word in a lower or less strict sense, may sometimes be apply'd to signify the formation † of things out of pre-existent matter. It is a method of reasoning, which will not be admitted in any other case, that because a word sometimes bears an improper fignification, therefore we cannot certainly know, where, or upon what occasion it is to be understood strictly; especially when the natural reason and evidence of the thing shews, that it must be so understood.

I shall not, however, repeat here the several arguments before produc'd to shew, that all other beings owe their origin to the will and power of God; I shall only take this opportunity of considering the great and popular objection, that has been so often alledg'd against this article, sounded upon a maxim, in certain respects, incontestable, that out of nothing, nothing can be effected. For,

In it be hereby intended, that whatever is brought into being, which did not exist before, must have some cause of its existence, nothing can be more true or demonstrable. For what is not, cannot act; and what is in no sense capable of action, can have no effect.

2. The truth of this maxim is no less evident, if we understand by it, that whatever is produc'd, must have had a cause of sufficient power and perfection to produce it. For to suppose any thing

effected

^{*} All that can rationally be inferr'd, is, that from the mere force and importance of that word, the contrary cannot be collected: But if other places of scripture compar'd, and the evidence of reason do make it clear, that there could be no pre-existent matter, which was uncreated, then it will necessarily follow, that creation must be taken in its proper sense. Still. orig. sacr. p. 296.

† Gen. 1. 21, 27.

effected by an unequal or incompetent cause, is really, so far as it exceeded the power of such a cause, to suppose it effected without any cause. The idea of power, and that of a cause, are naturally and inseparably united in the mind; and it is equally impossible, that a power, which is not in a being that already exists, should be communicated, as that which does not already exist, should be capable of acting, or giving existence to itself.

3. But if men would infer from this maxim, that 'tis impossible for almighty power to give being to things which had none before, it is so far from implying a contradiction in the nature of the thing, that nothing can be more repugnant, or indeed con-

tradictory to the supposition of such a power.

Almighty power implies, that he who is invested with it, is capable of doing every thing that is possible to be done, and every thing is possible to be done, the effecting whereof implies no contradiction. But how does it contradict any principle of natural reason, that something should be produc'd out of nothing, or which had no existence, before it was produc'd. To fay a thing may, and yet may not be at the same time, is indeed a contradiction to the most clear and distinct notions, which the mind can form; and it would be impossible, were this admitted, to prove any thing either true or false. But to say, that omnipotence may cause that to be, which before was not, bears no repugnancy in general to the natural order of our ideas, tho' we are not able to comprehend the particular manner, neither is it necessary that we should, how the divine power operates so extraordinary an effect, and which is peculiar to it. Yet I intimated farther, that the contradiction does not lie on our part, who affert that God may produce something out of nothing, but on theirs, who acknowledge him omnipotent, and nevertheless deny that he can produce fomething out of nothing. For to fay, the power of God is infinite, and yet that he cannot exert it, without a previous and passive principle to work upon, is to confound the ideas of finite and infinite, and really to divest him of that power, which we would appear, at the same time, to attribute to him. For if any substance, actually in being, is of necessity pre-required to his operation, then his power is not infinite, but limited, and depends, as to the exercise of it, upon that substance.

But tho' we cannot perfectly conceive how any thing can be produc'd out of nothing, tho' by a power confessedly infinite; yet even what finite power itself is able to effect, may serve to give us some faint notion concerning the possibility of the thing. For we not only experience in our selves a capacity of producing a sensible motion in bodies, where there was none before, but of producing in our minds new modifications of them, and even cer-

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tain ideas of things, which never had, nor ever will have any real existence. And tho' we grant, that these ideas, separately consider'd, have some foundation, in the nature of things, really existing, as the idea of gold, for instance, and that of a mountain; yet the uniting them, in respect to the same subject, is perfectly an act of our own mind; and as the mind, which perceives this union, cannot see what in no sense is not, it may in some sense not improperly be term'd a creature of the mind.

not improperly be term'd a creature of the mind. It may be question'd indeed, whether all our ideas of corporeal beings are not form'd in our minds, not from any power they have in themselves to excite in us such ideas from our sight of them, or any other sensible way of conveyance; but only occasionally, in consequence of the laws of union between our souls and bodies, whereby God has determin'd, that such notices shall be produc'd in the mind, according to certain impressions made on our bodily organs. For there cannot, in the natural reason of the thing, be any account given of the likeness or resemblance, which the modes of a spiritual substance bear to those of a corporeal substance: Or how certain material images should be communicated to the mind, so as to excite ideas in it of a nature corresponding to them; but either upon the hypothesis of our seeing all things in God, or else from a power in our felves, on occasion of external objects, to modify the foul after such a manner, as may serve to convey to it proper and distinct resemblances of them. former of these notions has not generally obtain'd: And yet the more strictly it is examin'd, it will perhaps be found a more intelligible way of accounting how the mind comes to the notice of corporeal objects, than any other method, which those who decry it will ever be able to assign; except that which I have mention'd, which yet is not without its difficulties; namely, that God has implanted a power in the mind of forming ideas in itself, by occasion of certain sensible objects, which yet are not the matter out of which they are properly or directly form'd.

I do not say, this power in the mind of producing its own ideas, bears any just proportion to the power of God in creating substances, material or immaterial, which had no being before; I only design, by this instance, to shew, that the bringing something out of nothing does not in general imply a contradiction; and if finite beings be able to move bodies, or give a new determination to them, when already in motion, and even to modify anew the operations of their own minds, what reason is there to believe, that infinite power cannot produce the very substances themselves, which thus think, and move? To confine my self to beings of the latter kind, were I not convinced by experience of

my ability to move certain bodies; it would, for any thing I can see to the contrary, have been as impossible for me to have known, by consulting the natural light of my mind, that I could move the pen wherewith I write, as that I could have originally produc'd it out of nothing. It may not, by parity of reason, arise from the natural impossibility of the thing, that men so difficultly believe the universe to have been produc'd by the power of God out of nothing, as from our having no experimental knowledge that it was so produc'd, and after what manner; or from our not observing that, in the natural order of causes, any such effect is produc'd at present. It was more especially upon this last ground, that the ancient philosophers in general believ'd the eternity of matter; tho' nothing can be more unphilosophical, than to argue from the establish'd course of things, concerning a power, which we say, and are able to prove, was necessarily previous to it; and even to the existence of those things themselves. What therefore is afferted by Ocellus Lucanus, from whom Aristotle is suppos'd to have borrow'd the * maxim I am considering †, " that it is impos-" sible a thing should be produc'd by that which is not, or when " once in being, be afterwards annihilated. This way of arguing, I say, does not in the least affect us, who believe the creation in a strict sense; because, so far as we are concern'd in it, it proceeds upon a supposition, without proof, that the only rule we have of judging concerning the origin of things, is from the present establishment and visible powers of them; which supposition we not only deny, but are able to demonstrate the falshood of. The course of natural causes and effects, and the manner of producing works of art in this life, which always suppose previous matter for men to work upon, were what few of the ancients had force of mind, when they reason'd upon the works of God, to free their imaginations from. Tho' there is a passage # in Aristotle himself, which seems to imply, that some of them did believe the creation of things in the sense I am contending for, as having not originally existed of themselves, but owing their origin to some efficient cause.

^{* &#}x27;Αμήχανον ηδ πὸ ον ἀποθέλεως ἐκ τ μη ονίων, η εἰς το μη ον ἀπολυθηναι.
† Plutarch, tho' he own'd the formation of things by the power of God, yet as to T Plutares, the ne own a the formings by the power of God, yet as to their original has adopted the same notion. Τον μων κόσμον ἀπο τε θεε γείονεναι, τ ή εσίαν τη υλην. εξ. ης γείονεν, ε γενομένην. For which he assigns this reason; ε η οκι τε μη ενίων γένεσις, Ε. There can be no production of any thing out of nothing, but only out of something pre-existing, not duly or regularly dispos'd, as in the forming of a house, garment, or statue.

† Έισι γάς τινες οι φασιν έδεν ἀγεννητον είναι τως πραμμάτων, ἀπὰ πάνια γίγνεως. lib. 3. c. 1. de calo. I know these words are interpreted as if Aristotle did not design by them, that there is nothing which is not generated as to the matter of it. but only as to the form:

there is nothing, which is not generated as to the matter of it, but only as to the form; yet in their natural construction, they seem more capable of the sense, according to which I have cited them.

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It must, however, be granted, that what Cicero introduces Balbus speaking in reference to the disquisitions of men concerning the divine nature and works, is very applicable to the sentiments and discourses of the ancient philosophers in general, upon these heads. * Nothing, says he, is more difficult, when God is the subject of our enquiries, than to disengage the mind from those observations, which it has continually drawn from the visible appearance of things.

As to that part of the objection, which relates to our incapacity of conceiving, how matter, or any other substance, could be brought into a state of existence, which had none before. answer, that this difficulty only respecting the manner of the divine operation in creating the world, and not implying any natural impossibility in the reason of the thing, is of no more force to overthrow what has been faid concerning creation in a strict and proper sense, than the former difficulty from the present establish'd order of natural causes. Besides, in all questions, where we are press'd with difficulties on both sides, we ought to consider well on what fide the proofs are most strong and evident, and from which of them, upon our admitting it, the greatest absurdities will Now it is more difficult to conceive, how matter, which is a principle purely passive, could eternally exist of itself, than how it could be created in time by the action of an omnipotent being. We may argue farther, that whatever is self-existent, must for that reason, and in the natural course of our meditations upon it, be independent. From whence we shall be forc'd to conclude, what even those, who deny creation in a strict sense, will not admit, that matter was so far from being originally produc'd by God, that it was not so much as form'd by him, according to the present order and system of things. Neither is it, nor can possibly be, upon this supposition, in any respect under his influence or di-The objections, I say, in this, as in all other cases of difficulty, ought to be laid together; and then the arguments for the production of the world out of nothing, will, I do not question, appear much stronger, and attended with fewer difficulties and inconveniences, than any which can be brought against this principle, or for the felf-existence and eternity of matter. It must be confess'd, there are a great many difficulties, which lie against the supposition, that matter is infinitely divisible, and whereof it is extremely difficult to give a clear and particular folution. it is sufficient that we are able in general to demonstrate the infi-

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^{*} In quo, nihil est difficilius, quam à consuetudine oculorum, aciem mentis abducere. De nat. deor.

nite divisibility of it; having once done this, all the difficulties on the other side are to be considered, purely as such, without affect-

ing the truth already confirm'd and acknowledg'd.

But are we then only to seek for the proofs of creation, in a strict sense, from the principles of natural reason? I answer, that some learned men have thought that it might be prov'd directly from the authority of scripture, that God produc'd all things out of nothing. But as it is of no real service to any truth to bring precarious or inconclusive arguments in proof of it, after my having cited a text or two from the holy scriptures commonly alledg'd to prove the point in question, I shall observe, why, in my humble

opinion, it cannot be sufficiently establish'd upon them.

THE two principal texts to this purpose, are cited from the writings of St. Paul: He tells us in the former, that God calleth the things, which be not, as though they were *. And in his epistle to the Hebrews, these words are interpreted to the same effect: Through faith we understand, that the worlds were fram'd by the word of God; so that things, which are seen, were not made of things, which do appear †. The former of these passages, as appears from the context, particularly relates to the power of God, in calling men to life again from the state of the dead; which rather supposes the pre-existence of matter to be animated and inform'd afterwards, than the creation of it out of nothing. most we can infer from the words, is, that God can by a supernatural energy, produce those effects, which, in the ordinary course of nature, as things now exist, could not possibly be produc'd. The other text in the beginning of it, and as the words are most naturally to be explain'd, only imports the formation of things, or the disposing them after a certain order or system, into the composition whereof they did not enter before. The clause of the text, where it is said, that things which are seen, were not made of things, which do appear, is not necessarily to be interpreted, from the mere force of the words, concerning things which had antecedently no existence, but may only be understood of the confus'd state of things, in which they originally lay without any form or order, and wherein there was no appearance of that beautiful scheme, according to which they were afterwards dispos'd and establish'd. If it could be directly made evident from the holy scriptures, that we are to understand creation, as express'd in them. according to the strict sense; this, we acknowledge, would most effectually silence all objections against the possibility of the thing. A divine authority admits of no dispute. But then the pretence of

^{*} Rom. 4. 17.

authority to support any doctrine, when such authority is not sufficiently clear and express, only tends to prejudice men against the reasons and evidence of that doctrine in other respects. And therefore I chuse rather to argue, all we can infer from what the scriptures speak concerning the creation of things, is, that they ought to be explain'd, not as strictly importing creation, from the natural force of the word; but because the natural reason of the thing obliges us to put the strictest sense upon it; which yet in itself too, it will properly bear.



CHAP. II.

When, and in what space of time, the world was created.

Whether material, or immaterial. And tho', according to the history of Moses, it could be evidently inferr'd, that matter was created only about six thousand years since; yet it may be question'd, whether immaterial substances were not created before. And the time of their creation being indefinite, it might, for any thing we know, have preceded that of matter many millions of ages. According to the opinion of Gregory Nazianzen*, and afterwards of St. Jerom, † wherein, as the great schoolman tells us, he speaks agreeably to the sentiments of all the Greek fathers.

But this being a question upon which the scriptures are silent, men are more at liberty to determine on which side of it they please, according to that light and evidence which arises to them in their own way of reasoning, or the deference which they bear to any human authority. Tho' indeed, by consulting our own reason, except we could possibly suppose the creation of immaterial beings to have been from all eternity, we can form no argument from the goodness of God, which is the only soundation of our arguing in this case, that they were created any time before the creation of matter. Because, how far soever we may run back the time, when we suppose them to have been created, it will bear

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^{*} In serm. de natal.

⁺ Qui omnes in boc concorditer sentiunt, quòd angeli sunt ante corporeum mundum creati. Aquin. prima primæ. Quæst. 61. art. 3.

no more proportion to eternity, than if they had only been created fix thousand years ago. And therefore whatever force may lie in what is now objected against the goodness of God, that he did not create intelligent beings sooner, it would have been equally strong, from what former period of time soever their creation might be calculated. And the same consideration may indifferently serve in answer to those who object to us, upon our own principles, the novelty and short duration of the visible world.

THE acts of divine goodness being perfectly free in both respects, it depended on the sole pleasure of God, whether he would proceed to operate externally in either respect; there could be nothing, according to any ideas we have of his moral perfections, to fix the creation of any thing sooner or later than his own arbitrary will determin'd. We must therefore seek for some other reasons, than those taken from our consulting the attributes of God, to shew, why the creation of intelligent beings preceded that of

material beings; if, after all, it really did precede it.

Now it seems credible, at least, from the fall of the angels, and their seducing man, so soon after he was created, to sin, that they did exist some time before the creation of the material world. It does not seem reasonable, for here we cannot pretend to demonstrate, that those glorious beings, as they are confess'd to have been, in their original state, should immediately have form'd or executed a design of rebelling against their maker: Especially when we consider, in all other respects, the nature of such a rebellious attempt, the numbers that were to be engag'd in it, and the previous arts necessary to be practis'd by the heads of it, to that end, upon them.

Others have differ'd, as to the time of creating the matter, whereof this visible frame and system of things is compos'd; especially as to the matter of the empyreal heaven, which St. Basil somewhere describes by that light which is beyond the world; in opposition to the Manichees, more perhaps than from any natural evidence that he was able to discover of the thing. St. Augustin embrac'd the same opinion. Those hereticks objected against the history of the creation, as ascrib'd to the most perfect being, that such a being would not have begun his work in the dark, and from thence have concluded, that the God of the Old Testament, was not the true and good principle, but the evil one.

But there was no necessity for those pious fathers, of having recourse to the supposition of a luminous heaven, prior to the other works of God, towards answering so very weak and trisling an objection. For what was more irrational, or rather indeed unworthy

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thy of God, than to suppose, that he could have occasion for any external light, either to shew him after what manner he was to operate, or the subject matter of his operation. He is his own light; and the words whereby the Psalmist celebrates his perfection in this respect, are true in the most strict and philosophical sense. The darkness hideth not from him; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to him *.

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CHAP. III.

Whether the formation of things was perfected at once?

SHOULD we grant, that the creation of all material substances commenc'd at the same time; still another question arises, which I am in the next place to speak to, whether the disposition of things, according to that order, wherein we now behold them, was really made at once, or successively in the space of six days? St. Augustin is of opinion, that we are not to understand by the days and nights mention'd in the first chapter of Genesis, the order wherein things were created, but wherein they were gradually communicated to the knowledge of the angels. Others have thought, that the formation of things was not successive, according to the Mosaick account, but instantaneous, as being most agreeable to our ideas of the divine wisdom; for we ought never, say they, to suppose that God employs more time in his action, than is necessary to produce the thing design'd by it.

As to the opinion of this father, it seems to put a force upon the words of Moses, which they will not easily bear. For tho light is ordinarily us'd in a metaphorical sense to signify knowledge, and the day, by a like form of speech, may signify light; yet it is too harsh and unusual a way of expression to represent the knowledge of things successively communicated to intelligent beings, by a succession of days and nights. Neither is the construction of the several parts of the world at once, reconcileable to the plain and literal sense of Moses throughout the whole first chapter of

^{*} Psal. 139. 12.

[†] Which laid the grounds of that known distinction in the schools, cognitio vespertina anatutina.

Genesis. For tho' it is pretended, that we are not to consider Moses, as having a design to teach the Jews philosophy, but religion, and to instruct them in those principles, which were most proper to enforce the duties of it; yet to grant that any part of the scripture gives a false representation of facts, or is not strictly true in a philosophical sense, except perhaps where they speak * according to appearance, or notions commonly received, is a concession that affords too great advantage to the enemies of revealed religion. But as to things reported in the scriptures to have happen'd, without any regard to popular opinion, and in as plain and strong terms, as had been most proper, supposing they really did happen; here certainly it concerns us, in order to preserve the credit and authority of the scriptures, to assert, that the report of those things is, strictly and philosophically speaking, true.

As to what is objected against the wisdom of God, supposing the truth of that account, which Moses gives concerning the gradual progress of his work in the formation of things; it is answer'd, by saying, that God indeed does always employ the most simple and ready means towards effecting his design, where there are not reasons superior to those which are urg'd for the simplicity or immediate production of his work, why it should not be effected immediately. For all wise agents will principally consider the end, for which they act, and be careful not to lose the benefit of it, for the sake of acting in a manner, which otherways, abstractedly consider'd, might perhaps have appear'd most worthy of them.

Now tho' we are not able to assign all the particular reasons, why God gradually form'd the world, I only speak here of the material world, in the space of six days, when he might with the same facility have form'd, that he created it in an instant; yet we are able to offer some reasons for the divine conduct in this respect, sufficient to justify the wisdom of it. And,

This excellent author observes afterwards, that excepting the instances wherein the scriptures speak of the rising and setting of the sun, and of the earth's being at rest; which manner of expression is and ever will be in use according to the vulgar conception in all countries and languages, notwithstanding any philosophical discoveries, he knows nothing in the scriptures which is not consistent with the present notions of philosophy. p. 211,

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^{* &}quot;The scriptures might make use of popular expressions and forms of speech; neither affirming nor denying the philosophical truth of them, but intending them only
in that sense and meaning, which was their sole design in using them. All proverbial
sayings, and metaphorical expressions, by way of illustration or ornament, must be taken from receiv'd notions; but they are not therefore afferted in the philosophical sense
by him who useth them, any more than the historical truth of parables and similitudes is suppos'd to be afferted. Jenkins of the reasonableness and certainty of the christantageon.

1. It being the great end of God in all his actions to instruct intelligent beings in the knowledge of him, and the morives of obedience to him; we think the method of his forming things in a successive order, was more subservient to this end, than if he had perfected his work all at once. As to intelligent beings of a superior order, tho' for that reason their knowledge is more comprehensive, and their apprehensions of things more easy and quick; yet as their capacities are limited, and it is evident from their having a defire to look into fame things *, that the works of God are made known to them in a certain order, it is reasonable to believe, that they might have had a more clear, distinct, and perfect idea of the divine wisdom, when the progress of it in the disposition of things was laid gradually before them, than if the several parts of this regular and beautiful structure had been put together at once, or at the very instant when the matter of it was created. As he who fees the several threads, and the order according to which they are dispos'd and mov'd in a loom, will have a better idea of the art employ'd in working any curious piece, than he who only takes a general view of it when finish'd. And the more distinct grounds the angels had towards comprehending the wildom of God in the order of his works, the motives to love, to honour, and obey him, must still have appear'd to them more powerful and engaging.

Ir there be any force in this reason with respect to the angels, who excel in knowledge, it must necessarily hold stronger for the successive formation of things, when we consider man, as another order of beings, for whose sake the visible world was designedly, if not principally form'd. But indeed there are some considerations peculiar to the state of man, and which particularly affect the Jews, which may induce us to conclude, that God had very wise

ends in the order of the creation, as related by Moses.

Men have been in all ages too prone to idolatry; and observing that the benefits, which so much contribute to the comfort and happiness of human life, are sensibly owing to the influence of the heavenly bodies, they too naturally made them the objects of their religious worship. As a caution, sounded upon more express and distinct grounds, against this kind of idolatry, it was wifely contrivid, and for that reason recorded, that the sun and moon, with all the host of heaven, were made in such a stated order, and at such a particular time. This servid as an express and standing memorial to remind them, that the heavenly orbs, whatever benefits they received by their influence, were no

gods, but only the creatures of that true and eternal God, who made the heavens. Nay to shew, however beneficial the influence of those heavenly bodies is at present to mankind; yet that it was not originally necessary to produce the fruits of the earth, and that God can still by his power, if he pleases, fructify the earth without them, it is observable, that he caus'd the earth to bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit, after his kind, on the third day, before he had form'd either fun, moon, or stars, which were the work of the fourth day. The reason of these precautions against idolatry is visible, with respect to mankind in general, who might by any means come to know the history of the creation, either by some traditionary account of it, or from the books of Moses; but the wisdom of God in them is more especially conspicuous in relation to the Jews; among whom, by his peculiar favour, the true religion was to be preserv'd, and who were, notwithstanding, so apt to throw off their dependence on him, and follow after strange gods. This very consideration might probably give ground to that pious maxim of the holy penman. As for the gods of the heathen, they are but idols; but the Lord made the heavens. Conformable to which sentiment are the words of the apostle. We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other gods but one. For though. there be many that are call'd gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many;) yet to us there is but one God, the father of whom are all things.

2. God might think fit to erect this scheme of things, in the space of time mention'd by Moses, with regard to the institution of the sabbath. It being so often assign'd in scripture as the formal cause of his sanctifying the sabbath, that he rested in it from all his works, which he had created and made. Now if it was reafonable, in the nature of the thing, that one day in seven should be appropriated as holy to God, in memory of the creation; it was equally reasonable, that the world should have been created and form'd in fix days: Otherways God had affign'd a proper reafon for the institution of the sabbath, which yet in itself did not really subsist. Human reason could not perhaps have determin'd precisely, and after an incontestable manner, why one day in seven, rather than in fix or eight, should have been appointed as facred to religious uses; but it being fit that there should be a particular designation of some day to this end, whose returns should neither be too frequent, nor at too great a distance. Even in a human way of judging, it must be granted, that there are equal grounds at least for appropriating one day in seven, as for the appropriation of any other day, in a given number, to the more folemn

folemn worship and service of God. But the wisdom of God, in particularly appointing that day, answers all arguments to the contrary; he might have good reasons for such an institution, which do not appear, or not in a clear and sufficient light to us: Or if it were perfect matter of indifference, what day in any given number should have been sanctify'd, his sole authority might have

determin'd the day, without any other reason. 3. It has been farther urg'd as a probable argument why God, when he made the world, did not bring all things to perfection in it at once, that the creation of man being his finishing work, and design'd more peculiarly to promote his * honour and glory, the previous disposition of things before man was created, tended to make way for his reception, and introduce him upon the stage of the world, whereof he was to be the visible Lord, with greater magnificence and solemnity. I need not observe how this method of the divine wisdom had likewise a direct tendence to serve the ends of piery and religion, by giving man a more just idea of the dignity of his nature; by awakening in him a greater horror of mind, upon the thoughts of his doing any thing to vilify or debase it; or whereby he might offend that God, who had done so great things for him, and in so very solemn and distinguishing a manner.

WHAT I am to enquire, in the last place, is, how, or after what manner, God proceeded in forming this admirable system of things? For, in respect to creation strictly understood, as it imports, that the matter whereof things are severally compos'd, was originally produc'd out of nothing, there can, I think, be no question of its having been instantaneous. For when God commanded that the subject matter of all things should exist, there being nothing either to oppose his command, or to retard the execution of it, whatever it extended to, must, for that reason, immediately have existed. Besides, there being no medium between non-existence and a state of existence, it cannot possibly be conceiv'd, how any thing, which did not exist before, should be brought gradually into being; or, what is much to the same purpose, how matter, to which extension is essential, could partly be, and partly not be extended, at the same time.

IF it be said, that tho' every particle of matter, which was created, must, for these reasons, have been immediately created; yet it does not follow, but that God might create the several parts of it in a successive order. 'Tis sufficient to answer, that God always

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^{*} He hath created us for his glory, he hath form'd us for himself, that we should shew forth his praise. Isaiah 43. 7, 21.

effects his designs by the most simple and comprehensive means, where there are not good reasons, with respect to the ends he proposes, why he should employ more means, or more time in effecting them, than would have been otherways absolutely ne-

cessary.

Now tho' we have given some very probable reasons, why the world was gradually form'd, and in a successive order; yet there appears no reason, from the ends which God can be suppos'd to have had in creating matter, why the parts of it, before they were to receive any regular form or order, should have been created after the same manner. What I here observe, seems highly agreeable to the sentiment of the wise son of Syrach. He that liveth for ever created all things in general *; or rather, as the original might have been properly render'd, promiscuously, or in common. Upon which principle, the pretence of their being created in a diffinct and successive order, is evidently destroy'd.

YET the question which I am principally to speak to, is, whether, when once the matter of the world was prepar'd, God gave the several parts of it their proper form, by an immediate effect of his power; or according to certain mechanical laws of motion, which by a necessary causality would one time or other produce it? The answer to this will appear under the next chapter,

to which I now proceed.

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CHAP. IV.

Against the mechanical hypothesis of Cartesius.

Do not here suppose that the celebrated author of this hypothesis had the least intention to say any thing, which might favour the cause of atheism. Yet his principles, were it not for his supposing it necessary that God should have put matter originally in motion, seem to refine so ingeniously upon the Epicurean system, that persons atheistically disposed, or inclined to embrace that system, may too easily make an ill use of them.

I am not here in a proper place for a strict examination of that fine essay, which *Cartesius* has left us of his wit upon this subject; rather than of his prudence as a christian, or of his penetration

and judgment as a philosopher. I shall therefore satisfy my self with making some general reflections, that may serve to obviate any arguments injurious to religion or sound philosophy, that may be drawn from his hypothesis. And,

- 1. I would observe, that the power of God is more visible, and apt to make much stronger impressions upon the mind, when we conceive him forming any considerable part of the world by an immediate command, than when the formation of it is only the refult of a long and necessary chain of causes, even tho' we cast our eyes forward till we discover the first link of it in his hand. mark of Longinus, that Moses spake after a manner becoming the majesty of God, when he represented him as producing all things by the fole power of his word, was founded on the same considerati-But we need not appeal to the authority of learned and judicious men in the case. Every man of an ordinary capacity may be sensible how much more awakening our apprehensions of the divine power must needs be, when we are told, God only said, Let it be, and it was so; spake, and things were done; be commanded, and they were created; than when a philosopher, how ingenious foever, coldly tells us, that God having once put certain particles of matter in motion, all things, in process of time, necessarily rang'd themselves according to the present order and situation, wherein we now behold them.
- 2. The fpecious conjectures might possibly be made concerning the formation of the heavenly orbs upon the Cartesian principles; yet no account can be given from his laws of mechanism, or from any other that can be assign'd, of the construction of plants or animals, much less of the origin and operations of life in them. But,
- 3. It is false even to say, that the formation of the inanimate parts of the world can be accounted for upon the mechanical hypothesis of Cartesius; tho' we should suppose it true with respect to the number, size, and sigure of his respective elements. Because it has been demonstrated by the best modern philosophers, that not only gravitation, but the impulse of one body upon another (both which principles are necessary towards forming the inanimate parts of the world) cannot arise from any inherent affections of matter, but must necessarily be ascrib'd to the immediate power and action of God.
- 4. Upon the mechanical hypothesis, God cannot properly be said to have created the world, but only to have created the matter or elements, out of which the world, by a natural causality, afterwards form'd itself into the order it retains at present.

5. It is reasonable to believe, that whatever laws of motion are now establish'd by God; yet the world, according to that system of it, which at present subsists, must have been form'd before those laws could take place, or have any effect. For in that confusion and disorder, wherein it is suppos'd, the first elements of things promiscuously lay, there was such a combination of moving particles obstructing the course of one another, or altering the direction of it, that we cannot possibly conceive how they could ever disengage themselves so, as to move in a manner, or in a line, and with a determinate degree of velocity requisite to produce the several and wonderful effects attributed to them: Effects. which could not have appear'd more regular or useful, had the motions necessary to produce them really been, upon our principles, directed by infinite wisdom. At present indeed we know, in some cases, how bodies act upon one another, and what effects. when they are in such a situation, or of such a magnitude, they will produce. But were they out of the state they are now in, all the grounds of our judging concerning their reciprocal influences and operations from sensible experience, would cease. And we should be as much at a loss to know, how one body could affect, or communicate motion to another, as how motion could be originally communicated to any body. When the feveral parts of a watch are put together, we know, they will move in a certain order. But it will not follow from any laws of mechanism, which can be conceiv'd or admitted, that those parts could either have been separately form'd, or have afterwards produc'd such a regular machine, without the direction of some artist. It is more unconceivable how this glorious frame of things could have been compos'd upon any principles purely mechanical; tho' it should be granted, what appears also false from the phænomena of gravitation, and the reciprocal action of bodies, that it is now preserv'd by the laws of mechanism.

6. But the greatest danger from the mechanical hypothesis concerning the formation of things, is upon a religious account. The structure of those several parts which compose the world, being represented in scripture, as the immediate effect of God's will, and in order to impress on our minds a more lively and awful sense of his power; what wise or pious end could men have in attempting to account for the origin of it by any other method; tho' it were granted they might possibly to that end, hit upon such a philosophical scheme, as would bear a strict examination: Seeing there are sew subjects of natural philosophy, which, if men will pursue their enquiries after them, do not afford sufficient scope for the finest wit to employ, and the most comprehensive understand-

ing to exhaust itself upon; without advancing such things, as either tend to invalidate the truth, or lessen the force of any reli-

gious principle.

But when attempts of this kind appear, even upon a reasonable and philosophical enquiry, to be form'd upon a salse soundation; when we are farther convinc'd by authority of the scriptures themselves, that there is no other way of accounting for the production of things, but by attributing it to the immediate power and wisdom of God; it is not easy to determine, whether the vanity or the impiety of men be really greater, in pretending to draw up a particular process of the manner, wherein the several parts of the world were form'd without the divine interposition. We may therefore piously believe it to have been providentially design'd, (towards discountenancing any such vain and impious essay of human wit or curiosity) that there are certain problems, relating to the formation of the world in the holy scriptures, most proper to obviate all pretences of accounting for it, from any known laws of mechanism.

To this end, particularly, there are many expostulations in the book of Job. In the thirty eighth chapter, God is represented as demanding of man *, what answer he is able to give to the duestions, there propos'd, concerning the origin and formation Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the of things. earth? Declare if thou hast understanding, who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastned? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof †? Who hath given him a charge over the earth? Or who hath disposed the whole world ‡? Who hath enjoin'd him his way? Remember thou magnify his work, which men behold; every man may see it; man may behold it afar off **. Whence then, says he, upon his contemplating the works of God in another place, cometh wisdom? or the knowledge of natural causes and effects, for that is the principal subject of his enquiry, and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven. To make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder. Then did he see it, and declare it: He prepared it; yea, and There occur frequent passages in scripture to searched it out #.

^{* \$\}vdots \cdot 3. \quad \tau \cdot 4, \sigma, \delta, \quad \text{th. 34. 13.} \quad \text{** Ch. 36. 23, 24, 25.} \quad \text{the} \quad \text{the} \quad \text{the}

the same effect; but I shall satisfy my self by concluding this head with the words of an inspir'd writer, whose knowledge of natural causes, was the most consummate, and of the greatest extent of any man's, consider'd as such, that ever appear'd in the world. I beheld, says he, all the work of God, that a man cannot find the work that is even done under the sun: Because tho' a man labour to seek it out; yet he shall not find it; yea, farther, tho' a wise man seek to know it; yet he shall not be able to find it.

CHAP. V.

Of intelligent and immaterial beings: And, first, Of angels.

N angel, in the proper fignification of the word, does not distinctly import the nature of any being, but only the office to which it is appointed, especially in the way of mesfage, or entercourse between God and his creatures. In the holy scriptures therefore angels are call'd the ministers of God, which do his pleasure +; and ministring spirits sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation ‡. Under the name of angels, are here comprehended all those glorious spirits, which stand before the throne of God, expecting to receive and execute his orders, of what degree soever in the scale of intelligent beings, whether they be Thrones, Principalities, Powers, or Dominions **. According to the large and popular acceptation of the word, one man employ'd to execute any good or pious design in favour of another, is faid to be as an angel of God to him. Nay, persons by order, or in pursuance of some special commission from their superiors, even in this life, are expressly styl'd angels ++. the word is, in a more peculiar manner, apply'd in the scriptures to fignify those, who are deputed to transact with mankind in the name, and by a special designation of God. The ## bishops of the Asian churches are call'd angels in this more eminent sense. large and improper sense, even things inanimate may be so term'd, when God interposes by a more visible or immediate power, in

^{*} Ecclef. 8. 17. † Pfal. 103. 21. ‡ Heb. 1. 14. ** Col. 1. 16. †† Ifaiab 33. 7. Luke 7. 24. ‡‡ Rev. 2. 1, 8, 12, 18.—3. 1, 7, 14. the

the direction of them. Tho' I think the instance produc'd from the hundred and fourth ‡ psalm to favour this sense, will not hold good. For tho' the words may literally, and perhaps, as they stand in relation to the context, bear it; yet as they are apply'd in the epistle to the Hebrews to intelligent beings of an order superior to man, and in a way of strict argumentation, they cannot be reasonably interpreted to signify the winds, but properly these intelligent beings, in the immediate and direct intention of them.

As to the existence of angels, there can be no grounds of disputing it to those, who do not dispute the divine authority of the scriptures. For tho' 'tis commonly suppos'd, that the Sadducees, who believ'd the Pentateuch (wherein express mention is made of the appearance of angels) to be divinely reveal'd, nevertheless deny'd their existence: Yet this censure, so far at least as it is grounded upon scripture, concerning the opinion of that sect, may perhaps, upon examination, seem too harsh and rigid. It is not necessary we should infer from their saying, there is neither angel nor spirit*, that they deny'd their existence, but only their appearance at that time, or perhaps for some ages before. In opposition to which error, the Pharisees, who believ'd that angels or other spirits still continu'd to appear, argued in defence of St. Paul, we find no evil in this man; but if an angel or spirit bath spoken to bim, let us not fight against God †.

OTHERS have thought, that tho' the Sadducees believ'd the hi-Rory of Moses; yet they might consider the appearance of angels recorded in it, not as an argument of their having a proper and distinct subsistence, but only of their subsisting for the time in the nature of certain qualities and affections by the sole power of God, resum'd again into his essence, when the ends for which they appear'd, were effected. This notion is not only inconceivable, but directly repugnant to the perfections of the divine nature. To attribute personal actions to mere modes or qualities; to say, for instance, that a being that has no distinct subsistence, should go and return upon any message, should ascend and descend, should speak, should refresh itself and be comforted, is to say, what we can form no possible conception of. But could we possibly conceive, that any qualities attributed to spirits might really exist, without a subject, as some have supposed those accidents may, which are proper to bodies; yet when any evil spirit, under what form soever, is said in scripture to have appear'd; to ascribe the operations of such a spirit, how-

‡ ý. 4.

* Ats 23. 8.

† 23. 9.

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ever they subsisted, to the sole and immediate power of God, is entirely to destroy the perfect holiness of his nature, and to make him directly the author of sin, in a sense, which it would be impossible for the wit of man to contest or evade. If the Sadducees therefore really believ'd the divine inspiration of the Pentateuch, they must, whatever they pretended, have believ'd angels, from the appearances and operations of them mention'd in it, as beings, that had a distinct and personal subsistence. But if they deny'd the Mosaick writings to be of divine authority, then no arguments can be drawn from their opinion, in prejudice to what

we affert from the authority of those writings.

We can only form probable conjectures, at best, from any light, which natural reason affords concerning the number of angels; yet considering the vast extent of the universe, the innumerable worlds which compose it, (and, for any thing we know to the contrary, habitable worlds) there are probable grounds to suppose, that the number of angels is in some measure proportion'd to the variety of the special affairs or orders, which are given them in charge. The schoolmen have assign'd another reason, why the angelical orders are very numerous, which I shall barely propose, and leave to the judgment of the reader. They argue then, that as in the material system, things which are more perfect are of the greater magnitude, as the heavens, which are of a pure and unmixt nature, vastly exceed in magnitude the inferior and more gross parts of the universe; so it is but reasonable, that the more perfect intelligent beings are, they should exceed those. which are less perfect in multitude.

But the best and only certain argument, we can make in the case, is from the authority of the holy scriptures, which assure us, that thousand thousands of intelligences minister unto God, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him *. That the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels †. And that, not to multiply texts to this purpose, the number of them is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ‡. Which words, tho' they import a definite number; yet, according to the phraseology of scripture, and ordinarily of other writings, may be apply'd, and were, without doubt, intended to signify, a number indefinite; or perhaps, to human conception in particular, really innumerable.

But what falls chiefly under our consideration in reference to these intelligent beings, are their intellectual powers; their superiority to man, who was made a little lower than the angels, sup-

^{*} Dan. 7. 10.

[†] Psalm 68. 17.

[‡] Rev. 2. 11.

poses them of a more comprehensive knowledge, and unerring This is what we may also argue from that just and beautiful gradation of the apostle. Tho' I could speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and understood all mysteries, and all knowledge *. There are some things, notwithstanding, which the angels desire to look into, and must therefore be supposed ignorant of them, at least in part: Tho' as to the determinate time of the day of judgment especially, they are wholly ignorant. do they certainly know, in what disposition the hearts of those, even to whom they minister, really are. From the knowledge of our good or evil principles, of our natural temper, or the power of those habits which we have contracted, they may judge with great probability from the circumstances we are under in these respects, how we are inclin'd, and which way we shall take; but still the secret motions of the heart, in working a true conversion, or in separating us to a greater distance from God, are known only to himself; and for this reason, in particular, because he only knows in what measure or degree, that grace has been dispens'd to us, which is necessary to our conversion, or to prevent our farther apostasy. When it is therefore said, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner, that repenteth t, the meaning is not, that the angels report the fincerity of a finner's conversion to God, on which occasion that joy arises; but God, in whose presence they are, is pleas'd to communicate the knowledge of a finner's conversion to them.

WITH respect to the ordinary method, whereby angels come to the perception and knowledge of things, whether by certain species, or images of them, according to which they are represented to their minds, or by immediate intuition, or by seeing the exemplary reasons of them in the divine nature? Whether, again, angels know the relations of things, and make a judgment of them, by way of discourse, or of inferring one thing from another, or by a clear and distinct view of the relations of all things discoverable to them, at once? Whether their manner of conceiving things be purely intellectual, and even when sensible beings are the objects of their thoughts, without sensation? These being questions of more subtilty than use, and requiring a nice and particular examination, I shall not insist upon them. It is equally indifferent to the ends of religion on which side we determine the questions relating to the motions of these spiritual beings, or the manner of their existing in place. As if, for instance, they may be properly said to move locally; or if they do, whether their

* 1 Cor. 13. 1.

+ Luke 15. 10.

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motion

motion be always perform'd in a continued succession, or there may not be certain and very long intervals, through which they do not really pass, in shifting the scene of their residence or action? Whether, again, their motion, if continually successive, yet is not gradual, but instantaneous? The questions after what manthey are present in place, are no less curious and abstruse. As when it is ask'd, if two, or any other number of angels, for the same reason, may not be in one individual place at the same time? If they are circumscrib'd with respect to their substance, or only with respect to the extent of their power and instuence? Those who would amuse themselves with such nice enquiries, may find scope enough for their entertainment, in the lucubrations of the schoolmen.

It is a question of a speculative nature, which yet deserves, on a religious account, to be more distinctly consider'd, whether angels can really assume and inform bodies, or only in appearance? Because the scriptures having represented them, as appearing in a vifible and human form, should it be suppos'd, that their appearance was purely visionary, like those things which occur to the imagination in a dream or a phrenzy, this would tend not only to impair the credit and authority of the scriptures, but also the testimony of our senses in other cases. Especially if we consider, that the appearances of angels mention'd in the inspir'd writings, were sometimes made to several persons at the same time. For tho' 'tis possible, that a single person, by means of a disturb'd imagination, may be so far impos'd upon, as to think, that he sees or hears, what he really does not see or hear; yet if we could suppose several persons, without any natural desect, to be so imposed upon at the same time, there could be no certain grounds for crediting the report of the most evident and best attested facts. Should it be said, for instance, * that two angels appear'd to a a man of character and distinction, sitting in the gate of a city; that he rose up to meet them, and bowed himself before them: that upon his importuning them to tarry with him all night, they went into his house, and eat of the feast, which he had prepared for them. The incredulous might perhaps object, that even wise and good men are subject at some times to illusions of fancy, and strange disorders of the brain. But should a number of men in that city afterwards come together in a tumultuous manner to demand, that the two persons which had appear'd in the form of angels, should be brought out to them. Should those angels, in defence of the person, who had entertain'd them, visibly put forth their hands, and pull him into the house to them, and shut to the door; these are circumstances, to recite no other, wherein if the senses of men may be deceived, there can be no

arguing from the testimony of sense, in any case.

Angels are not only intellectual, but voluntary agents; and indeed without a power of willing the object of their understanding, and of uniting themselves to it, so far as they apprehend it to be good, we cannot well conceive, either to what wise or good ends their understanding was given them. For where could be the happiness of intelligent minds in a naked and careless contemplation of things, without any capacity of choice or desire towards them?

But what still contributes more to the perfection of these spiritual beings, is, that the acts of their choice are free with regard to the objects propos'd to them. So that they can postpone or prefer, fly from, or embrace them at pleasure. A great number of them, by making an ill use of this liberty in their first and probationary state, apostatiz'd from God, and thereby gave rise to the distinction of good and bad angels. But as I am to enquire wherein the freedom of will properly consists, and what principles it is to be resolv'd into, when I come to consider the nature of man, I shall say nothing more of it in this place: Except on occasion of my observing, that one argument has been advanced against the freedom of will in angels, which peculiarly affects them, and not in common with men. It is said then, that freedom of choice pre-supposes consultation about the reasonableness or propriety of the thing to be chosen; and where in consulting, the judgment is not subject to error, the will must be unavoidably determin'd to follow the direction of it: For it is plain, that the errors of our choice generally, at least, proceed from our judging amiss, and our being impos'd upon by appearances and fictions instead of the true nature of things.

Now angels being supposed to know the properties and several relations of things by an act of simple intelligence, without formally laying down certain premises, or drawing conclusions from them, they cannot, for that reason, judge, nor therefore, according to the tenour of this argument, possibly chuse amis; or indeed chuse any thing, but what they are invincibly directed and

determin'd in the choice of.

This argument proceeds upon a supposition without proof, and which is probably false; namely, that they know all things perfectly, which are presented to their minds, by simple and immediate intuition. But should this be granted true with respect to the knowledge of particular objects; yet there are no good grounds

to believe, that they perfectly comprehend, in one view, the several relations, wherein things reciprocally stand; but come gradually to the knowledge of them in the ordinary method of ratiocination and discourse; and may therefore, especially where those relations are much complicated, or very abstruse, possibly err in their judgments concerning them, for the same reasons of negligence or inadvertency that men do; and one error admitted, if argued from by a just deduction of consequences, will prepare the way for the introducing any error.

This argument supposes farther, that the will necessarily follows the light and last decision of the understanding; which supposition, if true, will not, as I shall afterwards shew, when I come to consider the faculties of human mind, destroy the freedom of the

will in the proper sense of liberty.

I may add, that what has been objected, lies against a known and acknowledg'd fact. Whatever the question may be concerning the freedom of will in angels, now that they are in a confirm'd state of reward or punishment; yet in their native and original state, they were certainly capable either of making a wrong judgment, or of acting contrary to a true judgment. If the good angels therefore are not at present free to acts of malice, nor the evil angels to those of charity, this proceeds from a just retribution of God, in consequence of the good or ill use they formerly made of their liberty; which is still, notwithstanding, radically in them, tho', for the reason here mention'd, they do not actually exert it.

THE question, in the next place, arises concerning the respective offices of the good or evil angels; especially as they stand in relation to God and man, and are either employ'd in the execution

of any good, or permitted to act any ill designs.

THE proper business of those angels, who preserv'd the rectitude and dignity of their nature, and continued faithful in their obedience to God, is to stand before his throne; to do glory to him in solemn acts of praise and adoration; and, at his command, readily to execute the orders of it, whether in heaven, or upon earth.

As their charge extends to men, they may be said to act either by virtue of an extraordinary commission, or of a more common and standing office. Sometimes by a special appointment, they have appear'd in a visible form, and spoken with an audible and articulate voice. In order either to reveal * some promise, com-

mand,

^{*} Gen. 18. 17, 18, 19. Judg. 13. 3, 4, 5. Mat. 1. 20, 21.

mand, or doctrine; or to caution good men against * some imminent danger; or to reprove † the sins of wicked men, and even the failure of good men; or to ‡ attest and confirm certain facts; or, lastly, to ** comfort and support the faithful in a state of tryal and adversity; in which latter instance, they had a more peculiar charge with respect to the †† person of our blessed Saviour.

But tho' the appearance of angels in executing these or the like commissions, is now generally, if not universally ceas'd; there are certain ‡‡ ordinary and standing offices which they still continue to perform insensibly for us, either in their being the occasion of representing things in a clearer light to our understanding, or of insuencing in one degree or other our affections. After what manner these superior intelligences can operate upon our minds, or excite our passions, at least occasion them to be excited without our being sensible of any impulse from them, is a question, which will equally lie against the operations of the Spirit of God; who has perhaps designedly conceal'd the manner, how other spirits affect us, from our notice; because he would govern us by the motives of a reasonable faith, and not by the irresistible testimonies of sense, and inward consciousness.

THE office of evil angels, and which they execute with the greatest sedulity imaginable is, on the other hand, to corrupt and feduce us. The method they take to this end, is either by reprefenting the nature and relations of things in a false light to the understanding, or by proposing such objects to the mind, as may be most proper to entertain and defile the imagination; for that is the main source both of all our errors and disorders: Especially when we are under circumstances of temptation, which these evil spirits know too well to improve the force of, either from our natural temper, or any corrupt habit we have contracted. As to our being insensible of their influence or action upon our minds, there is this peculiar consideration, why, by a wise appointment of God, we should be so. Because when we are tempted, at the instigation of the devil, to commit any fin, were we actually to feel him prompting us to it, this would create so great horror of mind, that none but those who are already corrupted to the last degree, or might be willing to enter into a formal contract with him, could be capable of complying with his suggestions. And in this case indeed our flying from them would not be what God would

have

^{*} Gen. 19. 12, 13, 14. Mat. 2. 13. † Numb. 22. 22. Gen. 19. 11. Luke
1. 20. † Mat. 28. 5, 6, 7. Acts 1. 10, 11. Luke 1. 13. ** Gen.
16. 7. Judg. 6. 13, 14. Dan. 3. 25. Acts 27. 23, 24. †† Mat. 4. 11.
Luke 22. 43. Psalm 91. 11, 12. †† Psalm 104. 4. Heb. 1. 7. Mat. 18. 10.
1 Cor. 11. 10. Heb. 1. 14.

have it, a proper act of choice or virtue, but the effect of a natural and invincible reluctance.

I do not think it necessary to enter upon a confutation of those, who would interpret what is faid of the devil, and his arts of tempting men in the scriptures, as if they were to be understood only in a figurative sense, and imported no more, than the natural motions of concupiscence, or the power of some evil habits. If such a forc'd construction may be put on those passages of holy writ, which speak of the old serpent, call'd the devil and satan *, the prince and chief of the devils +, and of his working with all power, and signs, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableness in them that perish ‡; then there is no reveal'd truth which we can be oblig'd to explain or believe in a literal sense. Besides, there are some sins so shocking in themselves to human nature, and yet fometimes committed with fo many aggravating circumstances, that, out of respect to the common sentiments and ingenuity of mankind, we ought not to suppose any person capable of them, but through the instigation of that evil spirit, who still works in the children of disobedience **.

THERE arises but one question more, which I think proper to fay fomething to, upon this head: And that is, whether every person has a particular angel continually to guard and attend him? The arguments brought from scripture to support the affirmative, feem very inconclusive. One of them cited to this purpose, is from the gospel of St. Matthew, where our Saviour, speaking of young children, says, their angels do always behold the face of their father, which is in heaven ††. But this is a false way of arguing, seeing those, who are here call'd little ones, are not to be so understood with respect to their infancy, but their late conversion. By a like metaphor, as when we are exhorted to be children in malice, but in understanding to be men. For as to the point of scandal, which is the thing our Lord is speaking to, children are not properly the objects of it. Or if by offence, in this place, we are to understand any ill usage or treatment of children, all that can be inferr'd from the words, is, that in cases of fuch violence offer'd to them, they are under the protection of certain holy angels, charg'd by God with special orders to that But this neither proves, that those angels continually attend upon them, and from the time, as is suppos'd, of their birth; or that every one of them has always for his protector the same particular angel. If we may judge from other passages of scri-

pture,

^{*} Rev. 12. 9, 10. + Luke 11. 15. † 2 Theff. 2. 9. ** Ephef. 2. 2. ++ Mat. 18. 10.

pture, it is reasonable to conclude, that the good offices of angels, as their very name imports; are not unintermitted, but occafional, and on particular exigences. It is farther urg'd, that when Peter was deliver'd by an angel out of prison, the faithful, upon the report of a maid, that she had seen him, said, It is his angel. But the most we can infer from the words, is, that they were spoken according to a common and receiv'd notion at that time among the Jews; as the fathers afterwards express'd themselves; agreeably to the opinion of *Plato*, and other heathen writers, concerning certain points, the truth or falshood whereof, was of no

great importance to the christian faith.

As to the natural reason for the appointment of a particular angel to every particular person; those who contend for this appointment, have not been able to produce any satisfactory proofs to induce our belief of it. It feems rather reasonable, considering the dignity of angels, and the extent of their knowledge and capacities, that fince God never employs more means than are proper to effect his designs, that one angel should have the charge over several persons. But if any man think he has sufficient grounds to believe himself under the constant protection of some particular angel, his error, if it really proves so, seems to be of no very dangerous consequence to religion, provided he found no superstitious practice upon it, of invocating his protector, or of doing him any other proper act of religious homage.

CHAP. VI.

Of intelligent and immaterial beings: And, secondly,

Of men.

S I here consider man, with respect to the noble and superior powers of his mind, I shall say very little concerning the formation of his body, the most admirable and perfect of all the other visible works of God, and for the scene of whose life, senses, and action, we have authority to conclude from * scripture, that the rest of this habitable world was more peculiarly form'd. And I may add of the planetary and fix'd orbs, that appear to the

⁺ Jer. 31. 35. Psalm 8. 4, 5. * Gen. 1. 28. Isaiab 45. 18. Psalm 8. 6.

For which reason, the creation of man, with respect to his body, as well as his foul, is mention'd after a manner highly proper to awaken our attention; and represented as a more especial effect of counsel and deliberation. And God said, Let us make man *. From which words, some have thought, that a plurality of persons in the unity of the Godhead, might be justly inferr'd. But the words upon which any doctrine is establish'd, which has no foundation in our natural way of reasoning, but feems rather to bear some repugnancy to it, ought to have a very clear and distinct signification. Much less can such a doctrine be deduc'd from any forms of expression, which, according to a usual way of speaking in like cases, may naturally bear another sense. Now nothing is more ordinary, than for persons invested with sovereign authority, to speak in the plural number; especially when they are about to deliver any very important order or command.

There is a difficulty relating to the formation of woman, which may be thought to deserve a more distinct consideration, in order to obviate the cavils of unbelievers against the truth of the Mosaick history of the creation; or to satisfy the scruples of those, who already believe, concerning it. It has been objected, that the rib, taken from the side of Adam, out of which the body of Eve is said to have been form'd, could bear no proportion to it; and if other adventitious parts of matter, and in greater quantity were requir'd to the composition of it, her body might most properly be said to have been form'd of those parts, which contributed most to its structure. 'Tis argued farther, that God in the works of creation could do nothing superstuous or redundant, which yet we cannot say, if the rib, whereof the woman was made, had been supernumerary in the body of Adam, or the make of his body more regular and perfect without it.

But these pretended reasons against a fact divinely attested, are easily answer'd. We grant, that the rib, whereof Eve was form'd, to have been augmented by additional parts of matter, and in much greater proportion to that end. But yet, as it was the principal and fundamental part to which the augmentation was afterwards made and apply'd, the formation of Eve might, with great propriety, be denominated from it. As the † five loaves, which our Saviour distributed among the multitude, and the fragments whereof that remain'd fill'd twelve baskets, might, in a proper sense, be call'd the loaves, wherewith they were fed. We grant again, that the rib taken from the side of Adam, was in his per-

^{*} Gen. 1. 26.

fonal capacity supernumerary: Yet as he was the head of human race, and there might be wise reasons, tho' symbolically design'd, for composing the woman from some part of his body; and from that part in particular, to denote the obligations of a stricter union and society between them; it was highly agreeable to the divine wisdom, that in these respects his body should have been form'd with that part: Which yet was not necessary to the perfection of of it, when we consider him as a solitary and individual person. This objection, if there be any force in it, will equally lie against the wisdom of God, on account of the seminal virtues of plants and animals, which do not separately, or in themselves consider'd, add to their persection, but only in relation of the power of propagating their several kinds.

But what I propos'd, as the main subject of my present enquiry, is the creation of human souls, with the proper powers and operations of them. Whether they were all created at once, in order to be united to certain bodies, which should be prepar'd afterwards, in convenient time, for their reception? Or whether they are created at the instant when the bodies they are to inform are fit to receive them? are questions which have been much controverted. As to the notion of propagating human souls by way of traduction, it is so inconsistent with the simplicity of immaterial beings; with our being insensible of any such power; and with the

absolute impossibility of conceiving it; that this method of ac-

counting for the origin of them, is now, I think, given up by all modern philosophers.

But the arguments which have been produc'd for the pre-existence of souls, appear to be more specious, and, in the opinion of some of the greatest men of antiquity, heathen and christian, whom certain moderns of distinction in the learned world have follow'd, really conclusive. This doctrine has been the more strenuoully afferted, as it was thought to furnish the best answer to the objection of sceptical or incredulous men, against the goodness and justice of divine providence. I shall on this occasion cite the words of Dr. More in his divine dialogues. "Supposing human souls " were created in the morning of the world, and in such infinite " myriads, there has been time enough fince that, for as many, " and more, than have hitherto peopled the earth, to have trans-" gress'd so heinously before their entrance on this stage, that by " a just Nemesis, measur'd and modify'd by the divine goodness " itself, they may be contrived into the worst, and most horrid " circumstances, into the most squalid and disadvantagious con-" dition, and state of living.

It may be urg'd farther in favour of this doctrine, that the works of creation, supposing it false, were so far from being finish'd, as the scriptures record, on the sixth day, that, with respect to some of the noblest productions of them, and in the most numerous instances, they were but then just begun: That it is not easily reconcileable with the wisdom of God, and his acting in the most simple and comprehensive manner, perpetually, or in a successive order, to exert a power, which might, consistently with the ends of his action, have been exerted, so as to produce all the effects of it, antecedently at once. It has been thought no less repugnant to the holiness and purity of the divine nature, that God should, by an immediate act of his will, create souls, in order to inform bodies, produc'd by the most sinful and impure actions.

But the principal argument for the pre-existence of souls, is founded on the question propos'd to our Saviour, whether the man that was born blind had sinn'd, or his parents? It is agreed, that the Jews spake here according to a notion, which had at that time commonly obtain'd among them: And which, if it were false, or of any dangerous consequence, our Lord had an occasion of undeceiving them, that in regard to his prophetical character, we cannot easily suppose he would have neglected to

improve.

THE arguments, on the other hand, for the production of the foul, at the instant the body is in a proper disposition to be inform'd by it, are now more generally affented to. It is said, the wisdom of God requir'd, that all beings, when created, should be created in a state of the greatest perfection proper to them; that the body is a constituent part of human nature: And therefore if the soul pre-existed, man must have been originally created in a state of imperfection, and after a manner derogatory to the action of an all-wife God. But this way of arguing is of no force to those, who assert, that the body is not necessary to the perfection of a human foul, or, strictly speaking, a constituent part of man: but only an occasional cause of certain sensations in the soul, which it has no natural efficiency to produce: And which therefore God. if he had so pleas'd, might have communicated to the soul, without uniting it to any body at all. Yet admitting the union of the body necessary to produce certain sensations in the soul, it will not therefore follow, that all intelligent beings, such of them especially, as were to give proof of their obedience in a state of probation, should have all the perfection at the time they were created, whereof they were in every respect capable.

IT is argued farther against the pre-existence of souls, that they can only be suppos'd to have been united to bodies, (especially upon the present stage of life) by way of punishment. Now punishment, it is said, implies, in the reason and design of it, a consciousness of the crime, for which we are punish'd; whereas there does not at any time appear the least notice or apprehension in the foul of any thing done by it in a former state. Yet without some sensibility of the crime for which we suffer, the justice of God in our sufferings, will appear purely vindictive, and without those salutary reasons, which he always intends by them in this life. To which it may be answer'd, that a distinct consciousness of the crime, for which we suffer, does indeed best answer all the ends of punishment; yet some of them may be very well answer'd, by our knowing in general, that our sufferings are the effect of our having sinn'd, tho' we cannot distinctly recollect the nature of our sin; or with what circumstances it was committed. Otherways God could have no wife end in punishing men at present for such fins, as they inadvertently contracted the guilt of, or cannot now particularly call to remembrance.

But our Saviour having left this question undetermin'd, when he had so fair an opportunity of resolving it, we are more at liberty to judge of it, as a point of speculation, about which we may, without danger, determine on either side, as the reasons of human probability appear stronger.

CHAP. VII.

Of human understanding and will.

It is of the greatest concernment to us, that we should form right notions concerning those two powers of a human soul, understanding and will; which, tho' in order to a more clear conception of them, we may consider distinctly; yet their operations are so complicated, or rather united, that we cannot suppose them faculties really distinct. It being the same individual mind that sees, that chuses or rejects the several objects presented to it; and which exerting itself in the former respect, we call understanding, and in the latter, will. These two powers therefore, tho' different in our manner of apprehending and meditating upon them, yet are radically and inseparably the same. The most clear and distinct

distinct apprehension we are able to form of them, when separately consider'd, is this, that the understanding is necessarily determin'd, in the judgment it makes; but the will, except where the nature of the object requires it should be determin'd, is free in the acts of its choice or refusal.

When any simple object is propos'd to the mind, it necessarily sees it, according to the light wherein it appears, and no otherways. In comparing things together, it necessarily perceives their mutual relations, so far as they are evident; it doubts, where they appear doubtful; and assents to them in the same measure, as probable, wherein it discovers the grounds of their probability. The same reason of necessity holds with respect to all other acts of the understanding, whether concerning the truth or eligibility of things. Upon which different accounts, a rise has been given to the distinction of its being speculative, and practical. So that whatever question may arise concerning the freedom of will, in the acts of its choice, the understanding, as such, is necessarily determin'd by its objects, in the judgment which it makes of them.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the liberty of human will.

HE main difficulty, when we consider the nature of the soul, lies in our accounting for that power of it, which we call will; especially, and as in the strictest sense, it imports freedom of choice. For that has been the great subject of controversy; concerning which, that I may proceed more distinctly in my enquiries, I shall observe the following method.

I. I shall examine, wherein freedom of will, in the strict sense

of it, properly confifts.

II. I shall shew, that there can be no such thing as moral good or evil, reward or punishment; nothing blameable or truly praiseworthy, without free will, in that sense.

III. I shall answer some of the most material objections, that

have been made by the fatalists on the other side. And,

I. Free will, according to the notion I have of it, implies a liberty of choice or refusal, as to such objects, which are represented to the mind, under the appearances of good or evil. Yet I own

own there are two cases, wherein reasonable beings neither are, nor can possibly be, in this sense, free. The first arises from a · natural, constant, and invincible desire, which they have of being happy. And, in consequence of this desire, it is also imposfible for them to chuse evil, formally consider'd as evil. the fatalists have no reason to object against the freedom of the will in general, from the necessity of its being determin'd in such particular cases, where both the goodness of God has appointed, and the nature of the thing absolutely requires, that it should be However, as the motion of the will whereby we allow it to be irrefistibly carry'd towards good, and in order to avoid evil, as such, is not arbitrary, but necessary; man, with respect to such a choice or refusal, is not, strictly speaking, either morally good or evil; or, as will appear in the fequel, the proper subject of punishment or reward, of blame or applause.

Wherein then does that freedom of will, which is the subject of our present enquiry, and which denominates man a moral agent, properly consist? I answer, not in his choice of natural or necessary good, in the cases before mention'd, but in his determining himself indifferently in his choice of things morally good or evil; in his doing what he knows fit and reasonable to be done, or in his neglecting to do it, and committing what he knows, or might, by a due use of his faculties, have known, at the same time, to be finful. For tho' moral good is really in itself, and in all the proper consequences of it, more desirable than any natural good we can propose to our selves in contradistinction to it; our inclinations, nevertheless, have so great a power towards blinding the understanding, or stopping the progress of its enquiries, that it will not always see or consider as it ought, the reasons of so just a preference. The truth of which assertion, with the possibility of the fact, I shall presently endeavour to evince. I shall only observe, by the way, that it is as evident from experience and self-consciousness, that our wills are free in the sense I am contending for, as it could have been upon a certain and true supposition of the thing. And what stronger proof would we defire of any thing, than that, supposing it true, we could not have been more sensible of the force and evidence of it?

But how is it possible, if the will necessarily follow the last dictate of the understanding, that it should be indifferent in its choice; since, upon this supposition, it would be, at the same time, free to act, or not to act, and yet act by virtue of a necesfary and invincible cause. Here lies the main difficulty of the question, which I now proceed directly to consider. And I would

observe that,

1. IT

1. It is here taken absolutely for granted, that the will does follow the last dictate of the understanding. This, indeed, has been the opinion of some schoolmen; Thomas of Aquin, and his followers, who afferted the liberty of human will to all the ends and purposes of morality, have earnestly contended for it. others, and in particular the fubtle doctor, and those of his way, have no less strenuously opposed it; as being attended with ill consequences towards destroying that freedom, which the patrons of it appear'd to admit; and who argued, that except the judgment of the understanding precede, there can be properly no choice, or For the object of the will being some intelligible will at all. good, real or apparent, if the understanding should not previously propose it, the will would operate without an object. This only proves that we cannot, by any motion of the will, be carry'd towards an object unknown to us. But because the judgment of the understanding is previously required towards our making a proper choice, it does not necessarily follow, that we must be oblig'd to make such a choice; since we may, notwithstanding, even tho all things are rightly dispos'd for the action of the will, have a power to act, or not to act accordingly. And herein, I take it. principally lies the immorality of the will, that it does not always follow the light, that candle of the Lord, as Solomon expresses it, which is set up in the understanding, even when it appears most bright and irradiating. For there is a wide difference between the incapacity a man is under of chusing any object, which he has no clear apprehension of, and his being oblig'd to chuse it, in consequence of fuch an apprehension.

But the will has still a farther influence upon the understanding. Instead of following the light, as we ought, we may very often be said to go before it. And that is, when we proceed to action without waiting for the full and distinct orders of reason; when we divert the mind from such enquiries, or suspend any farther pursuit of them, as might, upon a more strict examination, represent things in a view, proper to determine our choice of the better part. At other times, when the understanding takes a larger scope in consulting and deliberating; yet there is frequently such a strong by as cast upon it towards one side, that it cannot carry on its pursuits in that equal manner, which is ne-

cessary to attain the proper ends of them.

BOTH these powers of the will over the understanding, are, I think, evident, from the following instance. How ordinary is it for men, when they take any book in their hands, written in defence of principles, contrary to those they have imbib'd, or openly espous'd with much zeal, to lay it aside for no other reason?

And

And tho' it be, in every respect, well compos'd and design'd. if the entertaining manner of an author, or some end we have to ferve in learning what he has to say, obliges us to proceed in reading such a book; yet we may be sensible, how often the prejudice we have against his way of reasoning, on the account I have mention'd, hinders us from examining the force, or discovering the evidence of it, as we ought. Nay, I am afraid, our prejudice against certain arguments, whereby we are unwilling to be convinc'd, may fometimes grow the stronger, even in proportion to the strength and evidence of them; which could not possibly be, if the will were always determin'd by light, and never blindly or perversely follow'd the motions of concupisence. truth, the understanding and will act with such a reciprocal influence upon one another, that it is many times hard distinctly to know their proper effects, or to which of them they should be attributed. As in some cases we judge contrary to our inclinations, on the other hand, our inclinations do in their turn carry us against our judgment, and even oblige it to pronounce sentence in favour of them, at the same time we know them to be criminal. In short, as I can meditate upon what object I please, so I can take off my thoughts from it when I please, and I am equally conscious of a power, or else I know nothing by consciousness, of carrying my enquiries forward upon it so long as I please, where no foreign or external accident intervenes. Tho, after all, perhaps the shortest method with the fatalists, as to this point, is to fay, that the understanding and will are not, as we observ'd before, two faculties really distinct, but a simple, individual power of the foul, distinguish'd only by the different manner, wherein the object of it appears to us; which power, when exerting itself upon any intelligible object, we call understanding; and when apply'd to an eligible object, we express by election or will.

I have hitherto only consider'd some of the natural reasons for the liberty of human will. But the testimony of the holy scriptures, to which I have now a right to appeal, puts the matter in question out of all doubt. It is impossible to account for the expossual possible to account for the expossible to account for the exposition of the expossible to account for the exposition of the ex

flanding inevitably oblig'd them to commit?

BUT

BUT I shall not insist upon this consideration, since all those, who acknowledge the truth of the scriptures, and the wisdom of God, in whatever he has reveal'd, must of necessity acknowledge the freedom of human will, in the largest sense, wherein it is understood. I shall only take notice, that as such a freedom is evidently inferr'd from the argument foregoing, so there are other texts of scripture, which directly acquaint us with the nature and reasons of it. Such are the express declarations of our Saviour, that seeing men see, and will not perceive; that light is come into the world; but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. The apostle in the seventh chapter to the Romans is copious upon this head; but the sum of what he says lies in the following words. I delight in the law of God, whether natural or reveal'd; after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members *. From all which, it sufficiently appears, that human will is not only influenc'd by light, but by sense, and that in a reciprocal proportion to the force of these two principles, men commonly make a good or ill use of their liberty. I say, commonly, because, notwithstanding the force of them, the will has still a power to act, or to suspend action.

But whatever has been urg'd in point of reason, or from the authority of divine revelation, the fatalists will say, it must go for nothing, as being necessarily founded in some mistake, if, after all, fuch a freedom as we suppose, be, in the nature of the thing, abfolutely impossible. But whence arises the impossibility of it? Not from the necessity of the will's following the last judgment of the understanding; that point has been spoken to already: It must therefore arise, because it is impossible, that any being should have a power of self-motion, or of beginning motion. But to say this, is to deny the possibility of a power, which in fact subsists; and which we must necessarily attribute to the first cause. And if God have, as he confessedly has, such a power, why should it be thought impossible for him to communicate it to other intelligent beings? Except the enemies of liberty could shew, what they will never be able to do, that to suppose the communication of such a power, implies an express contradiction.

As to the opinion of those, who contend man may be said to act freely, tho' he is necessarily determin'd to act in such a particular manner, because he is not sensible of any accessory force or impulse from without upon his mind; this is only to make him a

^{*} Rom. 7. 22, 23.

voluntary, not properly a free agent; and to grant him fuch a liberty, as imports little more than a mere spontaneous motion. Nay, if they mean nothing by liberty in man, but a freedom from all external or sensible violence, even certain mechanical productions of art, may, in a like improper sense, be said to move freely; because their motion depends on certain springs within, which the other parts of them necessarily follow, without any foreign impulse or direction. According to this notion of freedom, the desire of good in general, the most natural, necessary, and invincible desire of all, would be the most free; because nothing from without can either possibly force, obstruct, or suppress it. In which way of arguing therefore, freedom will not only consist with absolute necessity; but the more necessary any act of the will is, we shall in proportion exert it with the greater freedom. We may add, that to fay the will is free, in opposition to all external violence, or to place the formal notion of its freedom in this, that it cannot be forc'd, is only to fay, that what is free, is not subject to force; to found the reason of a thing in that which no body ever deny'd, and the denyal whereof would render the point in question absurd and ridiculous. For if the will could be externally forc'd, the freedom of it would, by that very concession, be absolutely and entirely destroy'd.

Bur I proceed to shew in the next place,

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CHAP. IX.

II. That there can be no such thing as moral good or evil, reward or punishment; nothing blameable or praise-worthy, without freedom of will, as it imports a liberty of choice or refusal indifferently.

as it proceeds from freedom of choice. Neither is there any other ground of distinguishing the actions of moral, from those of natural agents. A man may as properly be call'd a good man in the moral sense of the word, because he is healthy and strong, or has a fine regular shape, as from any action he does, provided he was under a natural and absolute necessity of doing it, B b b b

or was determin'd to do it by any thing, but his own free will. For otherways it would not be the act of his will, but of the cause whatever that might be, which determin'd his will; to which therefore all the moral goodness of the action ought to be ascrib'd, as the agent; and not to him, as being only a passive instrument. By parity of reason, he cannot justly be charg'd with any crime, but upon this ground, that he freely chuses to commit it; or commits it with a reluctance, which might, by a due use of his liberty, have been the occasion of preserving his innocence.

By a necessary consequence, to deny the freedom of will in men, is to destroy all the grounds and reasons of rewarding or punishing them. There being nothing but moral virtue, which is the proper subject of reward; or some immoral action, which can render men obnoxious to punishment. And therefore, according to the ordinary course of proceeding in all civil governments, where any action is considered as the subject of a law (prohibited or required, upon certain considerations, by it) there the executive power, in passing judgment upon such an action, has, or always should have

regard to the intention of the party concern'd; and ought to ju-

stify or condemn him accordingly.

The highest violation of the law, and of the rights of human society, is the taking away the life of an innocent person. But even that is never judg'd murder, or punish'd as such, where the sact appears to have been purely casual, or without any malicious intention of the party who committed it. If in some countries there have been men put to death, without being charg'd with any crime in a moral sense, on account of their age, of madness, or any infectious distemper; such executions are not properly to be consider'd as punishments, but as arbitrary acts of the civil magistrate, for reasons of state; which yet all wise and civiliz'd nations, that have had any true sentiments of morality, have ever thought it impious and unjust to exercise.

THE argument against what I am asserting, from our punishing dogs, and other animals, is equally weak and inconclusive. All the force of it lies in using the word punishing in an improper and equivocal sense; because it bears some kind of resemblance to the punishment we inslict on persons who have offended us, or over

whom we have some power and authority.

We may also, in a metaphorical and abusive way of speaking, be said to reward brute animals for certain actions or services done by them; but, strictly speaking, free and reasonable agents, that have a power of acting, or of suspending action, are only the proper subjects of reward. This point is confirm'd by the authority of a person divinely inspir'd. When the apostle argues, if I do this

this thing willingly, I have a reward; he evidently supposes, that the formal reason of rewarding any action, proceeds from its being an effect of free will, determining a man to do it, at the same time it might, if he had pleas'd, been left undone. according to the fatalists, if a man would express himself clearly, or without equivocation, he ought not to fay, if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if I do this thing necessarily, or in consequence of certain preceding causes of action, determining me to do it, and which I could not possibly resist the force of. This, indeed, is a distinct and intelligible way of speaking; but in the way of argument, nothing can tend more to confound all our ideas of what it is pretended to affert, or would more effectually destroy the proper and formal reasons of reward, which yet,

at the same time, it is design'd to account for.

BLAME and praise have the same proper and original foundation in free will, with reward and punishment. And what was said under that distinction, in reference to the equivocal use of terms, will indifferently answer all the arguments against free will, which can be brought from a popular way of speaking, when we praise or blame things, without either understanding or will, and even sometimes without life. But the reasons of that internal praise or blame which we are conscious of in our own minds, when we reflect upon our having done, or omitted to do our duty, or our having acted in some open and notorious violation of it, is what it principally imports us to consider. Now, setting aside all arguments from the nature of the thing, every man, I believe, may be convinc'd from sensible experience, that the joy, which springs up in his mind, upon his having done any very good or pious action, proceeds from hence, that it was the effect of his own free choice, when he might have done, or was perhaps under some strong temptation to do otherways. Nay, this joy will naturally arise and diffuse itself, in proportion to that freedom and facility, wherewith he chose to act so good a part. which reason probably it may be, that persons who, on other occasions, have given the most noble proofs of their generosity; yet when sollicited even in favour of deserving persons, are sometimes observ'd to be of a more cold and narrow temper; this may possibly proceed from vanity, or a secret opinion (which great men are not the less apt to entertain on account of their character) that they are best able to judge, how their favours ought to be distributed; or that it will lessen the credit of any generous action to have the opportunity or method of it prescribed to them. we ought to attribute the actions of men to the best motives, it seems more reasonable and just to account for such a conduct, upon a supposition, that the doing a good or great action from our own free and proper choice, will contribute more sensibly to the

pleasure of our reflection upon it.

WITHOUT freedom of choice, all the reasons of blame, or remorse of mind, and, in consequence, of repentance, are also entirely destroy'd. For how can a man condemn himself for having done, what he was under an absolute necessity of doing; and it would be equally absurd to wish any action undone; for that would be to found a wish upon an impossibility, an antecedent impossibility in the nature of the thing, upon his own consession. He may, indeed, lament his unhappiness, in having been brought under such circumstances, wherein he was oblig'd to act contrary to his rule; but this can no more be call'd an act of conscience or remorse, than his lamenting, that he was born to no better fortune, or under circumstances that have expos'd him to any uncommon hardships, or inconveniences of life.

CHAP. X.

III. An objection or two answer'd against freedom of will, as before stated.

1. TT is pretended, that for a man to be determin'd in what he does, is a greater argument of perfection, than if he should have a power indifferently of doing what he will. Now should it be granted, that there is no necessity why finite beings should be without all manner of imperfection, this argument would evidently lose all. its force. But to speak directly to it, how is it an imperfection to have a principle of our own actions within us? If this way of arguing be just, the more dependent man is, the more perfect will human nature be. How, again, is it an imperfection, when any good or evil is propos'd, to be able to chuse the good and refuse the evil; or of two goods, to chuse the greater; and of two evils, the less? If our inclinations sometimes impose so far upon us, as to divert the understanding from enquiring after truth, with that application or impartiality, which are requisite perfectly to discover it; and, in consequence of a wrong judgment, cause it to make a wrong choice: This we own to be an imperfection; yet such an imperfection, as does not necessarily arise from the freedom of the will, but only from the ill use which we accidentally make of it. However.

However, if it be a just argument against the being of a thing, that it implies, in the nature of it, some imperfection, man can neither be a free, nor, indeed, a necessary agent. Because, let us take which side of the question we please, there is visibly an imperfection; tho' much greater, indeed, upon a supposition, that he is over-rul'd in his choice, by some antecedent, tho' unknown cause, than of his being by accident capable of making a wrong choice; which yet he had it in his power not to make.

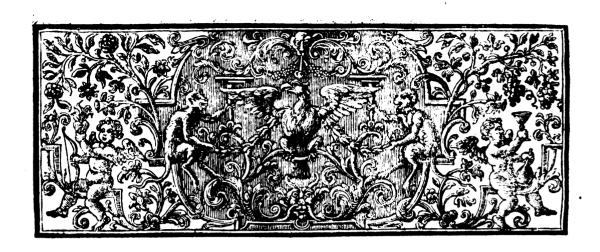
2. It has been objected against the possibility of liberty, in the true sense of it, that every thing must have an antecedent cause; and every cause operates necessarily as to the effect it produces. But this, as it relates to the modification of things, and not to their existence, is taking the very point in question for granted; and supposes, what we deny, that no created being can have a power communicated to it, by almighty God, of self-motion. Yet admitting more, than it is necessary for us to do, that the will must always be excited, or put in motion by some extrinsick cause: It will not therefore follow; but that, when once it is in motion, on what occasion, or by what means so ever, it may move this or that way; unite itself to, or sly from any particular object, at pleasure.

THE argument against liberty from the divine prescience, is so weak and trisling, and is now, if I mistake not, so universally exploded, by the learned and more inquisitive part of mankind, that I only mention it in the conclusion of this head, without thinking

my self oblig'd to take any farther notice of it.



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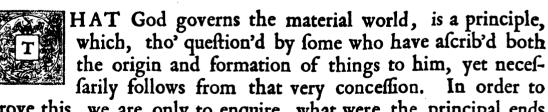
SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK III. Of Creation and Providence.

PART II. Of Providence.

CHAP. I.

That there is a divine providence; and, first, over the material world.



prove this, we are only to enquire, what were the principal ends of Gods making the world, with this admirable variety of beings

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in it; and to shew, that without both a preserving and overruling providence, those ends could not be attain'd; and which therefore it had been unworthy of the divine wisdom to propose.

God never acts without design, and his design always bears the character of his attributes. To suppose that he made the world, only to give a glorious essay of his power, of his wisdom and goodness in making it, without any other view, or the least intention of taking farther care of it, will not sufficiently account for the reasons, upon which we ought to believe, in honour to his attributes, that he was induc'd to make it. For whatever essects of his power, his wisdom, or goodness, originally appear'd in the first production of things, it was impossible for them to continue in that order, wherein they were dispos'd by God, without his presiding over them, and regulating their motions; the subsequent irregularities, which must necessarily have happen'd in his work, if not a total inaction of the whole, through every part of it, would have tended in as high a measure to derogate from his wisdom, as the work itself had antecedently done to discover the excellent contrivance,

and advance the glory of it.

IT may, perhaps, be thought, that God, having once perfected his design of creating the world, and put the several parts of it into the most regular and useful order, it was rather agreeable to his wisdom, that he should then withdraw his hand, and leave all things to act of themselves, by virtue of the primary and general laws of motion impress'd on them. As there is no necessity, when a man has compos'd any artificial work, that so long as it will preferve itself in the state or situation proper to it, he should be continually employ'd towards rectifying either the springs, or other parts of it. 'Tis granted, human art can only produce a machine, whose motion is of a temporary continuance, and even whose parts must in time, tho' by insensible degrees of necessity decay, and want to be repair'd. But what should hinder an infinitely wise and powerful being, to contrive such an exact ballance of power in the things he has made, that their motions and respective influences might be perpetual, without his interpolition? Or if some insenfible parts were still to fly off from the several materials, which compose his work, how easy is it for him to supply the deficiency, with an accession of new and similar parts? But to this we may oppose the principles of the best modern philosophers, that the parts of matter, in what order soever dispos'd by the power of God, after he had once put them in motion; yet can now neither gravitate, nor communicate motion, nor, in any respect, act upon one another, but by virtue, and in consequence of God's immediate action.

THIS

This notion of a fix'd and efficacious law of mechanism, whereby the several parts of the world preserve their proper order, or perform their respective functions, is also contrary to the opinion of those, who maintain, that the conservation of things implies a repeated and positive act of creation. For they do not think it sufficient to support things in being, that God leaves them to the internal force of their own nature, or that he does not actually exert his power to destroy them. But they suppose them sustain'd by one repeated and immediate action of his power; as light is continued in the air by a successive flow of rays from the sun.

But other learned men have not thought the reasons, upon which this opinion is founded, altogether conclusive. When a creature is once brought into being, they suppose as positive an act of power necessary to annihilate it, as was originally requir'd to give it existence. They cannot conceive, how annihilation should be perform'd, without the action of some power upon the being to be annihilated, and which is confess'd in itself to have no manner of action, or possibility of it, to that end. Lastly, they think it derogatory to the power of God to say, that the effect of it cannot for some time subsist, when he ceases to exert it: Since the effects of human art themselves are observed to remain, after the artist has put his finishing hand to them. Tho' this illustration, indeed, is far from clearing the point. For the reason, why such works continue for a considerable time in the state wherein they were left, is because the materials, out of which they were made, pre-existed, and the artist had nothing to do, but to modify, and put them in a proper order together. But there is a wide difference between our reasoning concerning the existence of things, and the modes of their existing; these often depend on the power or action of second causes; but how they come to exist, or are supported in being, is a question that can only relate to the power of God.

It is less necessary strictly to examine which of these opinions is the true one, since the authors, on both sides, agree in the same design, of doing honour to God. Those who contend, that a positive act of power is requir'd to support things in being, think their opinion tends more to the advancement of his glory, as it supposes the creatures to have a more absolute and entire dependence on him, Others conceive, that it gives us still a greater idea of the power of God, that it should even extend to the creation of things capable of subsisting, by virtue of their original constitution, so long as he does not think sit by any positive act of his will to destroy them.

But

But in case neither of these arguments for the providence of God, from the necessity of his acting upon the material world, or of his upholding all things continually by the word of his power, should be of any force; but that we were oblig'd to grant he might have created the world in such a manner, that there had been no occasion for his supporting it every moment successively in being; or his interposing in the regulation of its several parts; (the springs of it having been made so strong, and so perfectly adjusted in number, weight, and measure, that they might preserve their proper powers and order for many thousand years) yet God had another end in creating the material world, and which appears indeed to have been his principal end, that could not have been answer'd upon this hypothesis.

CHAP. II.

A farther argument for a divine providence over the material world, from the ends for which God created it respecting mankind, and other animals.

HE world, this habitable part of it in particular, was made to be the scene of human life and a to be the scene of human life and action; in order to supply all the wants, and gratify all the reasonable appetites and defires of man: In short, to make him as happy, as his present state and condition in it would admit. But if we look no higher than to the power and progress of visible or second causes, man, instead of attaining the happiness, for which he was created in this world, might have been, with respect to his present subsistence, of all other creatures, most miserable; as being most expos'd to misery, and most sensible of it. For should all things operate by a fix'd and immutable law of mechanism, it is highly reasonable to believe, mankind, in a few ages, might become so populous, that the produce of the earth would not be sufficient to answer all their exigences; much less to contribute to those common pleafures and enjoyments, whereof, in their original state, they were at once made so capable and desirous. Nay, had man continued, as he might have done, in a state of innocence; or, had he been less irregular or corrupt, than at present; as this reason of a di-Dddd

vine providence, from the multiplication of human race, had been more strong; so the objections against the wisdom and goodness of God, from his creating man with capacities and desires, which, in the natural course of things, could not be gratify'd, would have been more unanswerable.

Now, that mankind are not fo numerous, as we may eafily suppose they might have been, since the time of the creation, there is a visible providence (notwithstanding all the methods of human industry) in relieving their several wants; and supplying them with all things necessary to life; especially in very large and populous cities, where of necessity there must be a great number of poor people, and who cannot ordinarily provide for themselves or their dependents, (to say nothing of casualties, or what they call hard times) at so easy an expence as in other places. should no providence interpose, by any secret methods, towards the relief or support of the indigent, under the like circumstances, a great number of them would, in the natural probability of the thing, be in imminent danger of perishing by want. I may add, that a preserving providence is not only visible in furnishing men, but also other animals, with all the necessary supports of life. The several kinds whereof, if God had not interpos'd in their preservation by particular wills, might have perish'd, or by one accident or other been destroy'd; and so the ends of his creating them, which we ought not to admit, possibly at least frustrated.

BOTH these considerations towards inducing our belief of a preferving providence, are particularly infifted on in the holy scriptures. In general, God is the fountain of life; and preserves both man and beast. The earth is full of his goodness: He is the Lord, who exerciseth loving-kindness in it: He giveth food to all flesh, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. His delights, indeed, are more peculiarly with the sons of men. He gives them all things richly to enjoy. He preventeth them with the blessings of goodness. He is a father of the fatherless. He delivereth the poor and needy, and him that hath no helper. Yet the effects of his providence are also conspicuous in the particular care he takes of all animals, and the most inconsiderable of them. and great beasts, and things creeping innumerable, wait upon him, t hat he may give them their meat in due season. When he giveth them, they gather it. He openeth his hand, and they are filled with good. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without him.

As a presiding providence over the material world is necessary towards the preservation, and more happy being of the creatures in it; so it is also in order to the punishing or rewarding men in this life, consider'd as beings capable of a just retribution, in con-

sequence

sequence of their good or evil actions. But having shew'd, on a former occasion, the impossibility of adapting a fix'd and immutable law to the state and condition of free or mutable agents, I shall here beg leave to refer * to what has been most judiciously, and with his usual perspicuity, said on the occasion, by the excellent author, of The reasonableness and certainty of the christian religion.

CHAP. III.

The necessity of acknowledging a divine providence over mankind, consider'd as intelligent beings, endow'd with a principle of liberty, as social creatures; as exposid to ill accidents; as subject to errors in judgment; and to other defects.

EITHER, without a providence, could the great ends of creation be attain'd, with respect to the government of mankind; especially if we still suppose them capable of making an ill use of their liberty. For tho' we should grant, that in a state of innocence, they might have preserv'd themselves, and perform'd all their relative duties in that order, which was necessary to promote their

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^{* &}quot;The abettors of the mechanical hypothesis argue, that God acts in the most general and uniform ways; that it is more becoming his wisdom to let nature have its course; and that constantly to interpose, would be a disparagement to the order and contrivance in his establishment of the laws of motion; that matter and motion are with that wisdom set to work, that they can perform all, without any more than preserving and sustaining them in their being and operations; and that he is the best artist, who can contrive an engine that needs the least meddling with it, after it is made. But it ought to be considered what the nature of the engine is, and what the proper ends and uses of it are. And if the nature of it be such, that it cannot answer the ends for which it was framed, without sometimes an affisting hand, it would be no point of wisdom in the artificer, for the credit of his contrivance, to lose the most useful ends, designed by it. As if among other uses, this curious engine were designed to reward the good, and punish bad men; to remove the punishment upon amendment, and to a renew it upon relapse. Since brute matter is incapable of varying its motion, and suiting itself to the several states and changes of free agents, he mult assist it, unless he will lose the chief end, for which it is to serve. It is no desect in the skill and wisdom of the Almighty, that matter and motion have not free will, as men have; but it would be a great desect in his wisdom, not to make them the instruments of rewards and punishments; because it is impossible for them, of themselves, to apply and suit themselves to the several states and conditions of free agents. Jenkins of the reasonableness and certainty of the chiefican religion. Vol. 2. p. 198, 199.

own happiness, and that of the whole community. Yet in case, by an abuse of their freedom, they should fall from that happy state, and, above all, if a general corruption of manners should spread itself among them; such disorders would unavoidably have happen'd in society, that unless God had reserv'd to himself a power, on proper occasions, of rectifying them; we could not have justify'd either his wisdom, goodness, or justice in the creation of man, consider'd as a social creature. For otherways it might too probably have been the case of some persons, on account of the power and natural malignity of temper in other men, (irritated, perhaps, by the motives of self-love and revenge) that the miseries of this life would have more than over-ballanc'd the benefits of it. If, now, that a wife and good providence governs the world. there is so much evil, confusion, and injustice in it; what a dismal scene of misery would it have been, without an over-ruling power, to prevent or put a stop to the designs of wicked men; or, if they were suffer'd to be executed, to make them the accidental occasion of some great good, and many times, in direct opposition to those ends, which they were intended to serve? Certainly it would have been more eligible to good men, had God immediately after the creation abandon'd all care of them, never to have been at all, than to have been left under such circumstances of life, to which death had been continually preferable; nay, under which the better and more inoffensively they conducted themselves, the more they would have been expos'd to the common rapine and infults of wicked men. I might farther observe, that mankind, consider'd in a publick or national capacity, can only be punish'd or rewarded in this life. If it was therefore fit, upon any considerations of wisdom or justice, that societies, as such, should be at any time punish'd or rewarded; it was for the same reason, and in the same measure fit, that a divine providence should here interpose in the government of them, to that end.

And therefore in scripture the state of a nation, consider'd as morally good or evil, is made the reason of God's proceeding after a different manner in the dispensations of his providence towards them. Sometimes he visits a wicked people with dreadful and publick calamities; with earthquakes; with pestilence and samine; with fire and sword. At other times, the natural tendency which righteousness has to exalt a nation, is providentially improv'd by him to make it still more happy in all the advantages of peace, prosperity, and plenty. At what instant, he speaks concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom he has pronounc'd, turn from their evil, he will repent of the evil, that he thought

thought to do unto them. And at what instant, he speaks concerning a nation; and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in his sight, then he will repent of the good, wherewith he said, he would benefit them. He creates peace, and makes war. He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein *. Again, in favour of good men, he turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and water springs into dry ground †. Alternately as a people are wicked or obedient, he gives them the rain in due season, the first rain, and the latter rain, that they may gather in their corn, their wine, and their oil. Or, he shuts up heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit ‡. He causeth it, therefore, to come, whether for correction, or for mercy.

2. If we consider man in his more private capacity, the reasons of a providence to direct and govern him are equally conspicuous. The many accidents of life, especially of infancy, expose him to so great and continual dangers, that, to human appearance, 'tis scarce possible he should avoid them all with safety, if a particular providence, how invisible soever the methods of it may be, should not sometimes intervene to protect and deliver him. There are few persons, if any perhaps living, of a more advanc'd age, who cannot (how much foever they may be inclin'd to attribute to chance) but affent, to the truth of what is here observ'd, from their own experience; if they will but duly attend to all the circumstances of their deliverance, on certain nice and critical conjunctures. It is highly probable, that holy David, in the following pious ejaculations upon the subject of providence, founded them both upon experience, and the reason of the thing. My defence is of God. The Lord is my shepherd; I laid me down and slept, I awak'd, for the Lord sustained me. Thou art my hope, O Lord God; thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb. Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety. The Lord is a refuge to the oppress'd, a refuge in times of trouble. He holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be mov'd. He will be our guide even unto death.

3. There are also wise reasons to be assign'd for a divine providence, in order to the happiness of man, with respect to the government both of his thoughts and actions. We see but a very little way upon the chain of causes; and, for that reason, often make a wrong judgment concerning the tendency of things; whether in order to the attainment of what appears desirable to us, or towards the avoidance of any evil. For sometimes the grati-

^{*} Jer. 18. 7, 8, 9, 10.

[‡] Deut. 11. 14, 17. fication

fication of our desires, is observed to terminate in our misery; as, at other times, what we apprehended, and endeavour'd to divert as an evil, often proves, in the sequel, an occasion of some great

benefit and advantage to us.

4. If we cannot certainly judge, whether any end we propose (how-/ ever it may at present appear) will really prove good or prejudicial in its consequences to us; we are no less subject to error in confulting about the proper means of effecting such an end; or, if we judge rightly in this respect, we are not always capable of employing those means. As, on the other hand, whatever care we take to fly from any impending evil, it is not, according to the visible course of things, in our power to escape it. Upon which several accounts, it is highly reasonable for us to argue from the goodness of God, that he has reserv'd to himself a power both of directing our intentions, and of frustrating, or assisting our endea-The exercise of which power, in each respect, is therefore expressly attributed to him in the holy scriptures. He giveth wisdom to the wife, and knowledge to them, that have understanding. There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. For he knoweth the thoughts even of the wise, that they are vain. Again, when he sees fit, that the most probable and best form'd designs in human appearance, should not fucceed, he turneth wife men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; or, by one method or other, which perhaps they least of all suspected, disappointeth their devices, so that they are not able to perform. For, who is he that faith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not. As, on the other hand, when he would have the most improbable designs succeed, and, in all human expectation, by the most improbable means; his strength is made perfect in weakness; he giveth power to the faint, and to them, who have no might, he encreaseth strength. Or, lastly, when he thinks proper to inflict any present evil upon men, by way of medicinal or judiciary chastisement, they are equally incapable, by any human methods, of avoiding it. For, who is able to stand before him? Who may stand in his sight, when he is angry? In his hand is power and might, so that none is able to withstand him; neither is there any that can deliver out of his hand.

YET the great argument for a divine providence in the government of mankind, is still behind. I have consider'd man in his social and more private state of life, and shew'd, how, on both accounts, there is great reason to believe from the ends of divine goodness in creating him, that God did not, immediately after he was created, dismiss him from his hands, without any design of taking farther notice or care of him. Which is the very argument

of the apostle, by way of allusion indeed, to that natural affection all creatures are observ'd to bear to their young, but of itself strictly conclusive, in the following words, for we are also his offspring *.

CHAP. IV.

A farther argument for the providence of God over mankind, with respect to the ends of religion.

THEN we consider man as a religious creature, capable of worshipping and doing honour to God, who has prescrib'd him a law to that end; this capacity, how reasonable soever in itself, how ever excellent in the proper uses arising from it, yet would have been of very little use, without the belief of a divine providence. For confidering the power and corrupt maxims of self-love, few persons would have been effectually influenc'd by the sole motive of a generous and disinterested obedience †. And is it reasonable to suppose, that a wife and good God should make no competent provision towards attaining the most excellent end for which man was made, and in order to the attainment whereof, he was endow'd with all proper capacities? For be bath created us for his glory; he hath form'd us ‡: He made the earth, and created man upon it: He raised him up in righteousness, and will direct all bis ways **. All things were created by him, and for him ††.

As the obedience we owe to God, could not have been in general sufficiently enforc'd, but in consequence of our believing a divine providence, neither, in particular, could the duty of prayer to God, the most solemn and honorary act of religious worship, and whereby we must sensibly recognize his eternal power and Godhead, have had any reasonable soundation; whether consider'd,

** Ch. 45. 12, 13. ‡ Isaiah 43. 7. †† Col. 1. 16.

^{*} Alls 17. 28. † It is justly observed by Bishop Stillingsseet, on this occasion, that the incomparable and excellency and perfection, which is in the divine nature, to spirits advanc'd to a noble and generous height in religion, makes them exceedingly value their choice, while they difregard whatever rivals with God for it. But were it not for those magnetical hooks of obe-dience and eternal interest, there are few would be drawn to a due consideration of, much less a delight in, so amiable and excellent a nature. And it is impossible to conceive why God, in the revelation of his will, should ever so much as mention a future punishment, or promise an eternal reward, were not the consideration of these things the sinews of religion. Orig. facr. p. 318.

as an act of invocation; or of praise; so far as it imports an acknowledgment of some special favour or blessing receiv'd. For if all things come to pass either casually, or by a fix'd and immutable chain of sate, our prayers are wholly insignificant; nature will have its course, whatever becomes of the things, which we desire, or deprecate. As, on the other hand, whatever advantages we enjoy, they are, upon this principle, owing either to accident, or a necessary combination of causes, and not to any particular intention in our favour, upon which the motives of gratitude are always most sensibly founded.

As to the opinion of those, who say, God, upon foresight of the prayers of man to him, dispos'd the order of things in such a manner, that what they pray for shall happen, or what they deprecate be averted; this is altogether inconceivable, or rather, in the nature of the thing, supposing men free agents, impossible. For tho' God does foresee which way men will act; yet nothing, upon the mechanical hypothesis, can follow from his action, but, according to the laws of mechanism. In case any one, for instance, should pray to be deliver'd from the danger of some infectious or pestilential distemper, the vapour whereby it is propagated, will, notwithstanding, pursue its natural course, and produce its effect, wherever it falls upon a proper subject; it can make no manner of distinction between him that facrificeth, and him that facrificeth God may, indeed, by some secret impulse on the mind of man, which yet he is at liberty to follow, be the occasion of diverting him from the scope of its motion; or perhaps on some extraordinary exigence, by an invisible power, retard, accelerate, or obstruct its course; but still, if all things operate mechanically, whether man pray or no, it will unavoidably have its proper effect.

There is another case, wherein the motives to prayer, if all things come to pass by the fix'd laws of mechanism, appear still more evidently groundless. A man in the heat of battel, prays, that God would preserve him from the instruments of death, which sly every where about him: Yet a ball from a cannon, or a musquet will necessary pursue the line of its direction; it depends, however, on the choice of man, whether he will give it such a particular direction, as, by the natural tendency of it, will take away the life of the person who deprecates the danger, wherewith he finds himself surrounded. In this case, it is impossible, upon any foresight of his prayers, that the order of causes, which are in themselves of arbitrary, and uncertain determination, should be dispos'd after such a manner, as certainly to produce the desir'd effect of them.

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WHATEVER therefore is effected in the world, and especially as it relates to the state and government of mankind, the scriptures ascribe to an immediate action of the divine power: Secondary causes may be said indeed in a sense to act, but 'tis properly God who does every thing. He killeth, and he maketh alive; he woundeth, and he healeth. He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. Unto the Lord our God belong the issues from death. He delivers from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence: From the pestilence, that walketh in darkness; and from the destruction, that wasteth at noon-day.

WHATEVER has been faid concerning the necessity of believing a providence, in order to the great ends of religion in general, it may still perhaps be pretended, that there are sufficient grounds for securing our obedience upon the prospect of a future state, wherein we shall be call'd to a strict and impartial account for our actions here; even tho' God, upon his creating man, should have left him so entirely in the hand of his own counsel, that he had not the least intention of interposing, by any particular will, at

present, in the government of him.

But this, in effect, is to grant the point in question; and supposes it necessary for us to believe, at least, that God will, one time or other, exercise the highest and most important act of government, in the cognizance he will take of his creatures, whose actions render them accountable to him: And that the doctrine of a providence is not therefore, absolutely consider'd in itself, either repugnant to the nature of God, or the condition of men. And if there be a necessity towards enforcing our obedience, that we should believe God will sometimes exercise any judicial act of his providence, why should we believe that he will suspend all judicial acts of it in this life; where a sense of his favour or displeasure in distributing temporal blessings or evils, have so great an influence even upon the minds and conduct of those, who believe, they have here no abiding city, but look for a better country.

This principle also tends to remove the main objection of the Epicureans against a divine providence, taken from the inconvenience, which they apprehend would arise to the divine nature, if suppos'd to intermeddle in the affairs of the world, or to take the least notice of them. For whenever men become accountable to God for their actions, his knowledge of them must be conceiv'd as particular, as if he had gradually observed the progress, with all the circumstances of them, in this life. Tho' it is not necesfary, indeed, to say any thing farther in answer to this objection, than that it is founded in a mistaken notion, and highly derogates from the honour of the divine attributes. For what can embarrass infinite

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infinite wisdom in the contrivance, or obstruct infinite power in the government of all things. Infinite knowledge does as readily answer all those questions of the incredulous, who seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and say, who seeth us; or how doth God know; and is there knowledge in the most high?

WE must attribute it to the same cause; to their not having an adequate idea of absolute perfection; and their judging of the divine operations according to the model of their own narrow capacities, that some of the ancient philosophers, who examin'd into the nature of things after a more accurate and just manner, than the Epicureans; yet could not easily apprehend, how the providence of God should extend to take in all the variety of beings and events in the world, at once. Tho', indeed, the doctrine of a general providence, which only takes care of the several species of beings, without any regard to the several individuals comprehended under them, is altogether unintelligible. For generals being made up of particulars, and not subsisting abstractedly, but really, and after a certain order in them; it is impossible that the whole should be taken care of without a regular disposition, which necessarily imports a particular care of every part. And therefore the scriptures not only attribute the preservation and government of this whole system of things, collectively consider'd, or in respect to the more considerable parts of it, to God; but also represent the minutest creatures, as being severally within the protection and verge of his providence. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power. He, even he, is Lord alone; he made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host; the earth, and all things that are therein; the seas, and all that is therein; and he preserveth them all. They continue this day according to his ordinances. He ruleth over all, and is the judge of all. He doth according to his will in the armies of the heavens, and among the inhabitants of the earth. All things serve and obey him. He giveth food to all flesh. In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. The very hairs of our head are all number'd. We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Behold, he is mighty, and despiseth not any. He is a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows. He maketh poor, and maketh rich. He pulleth down one, and setteth up another. He ruleth by his power for ever. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without him. And he exercises all these acts of his providence after a manner, that when we confult the idea of infinite perfection, cannot possibly be attended with the least trouble or uneasiness. For he is strong that executeth his word, and there is no restraint to him. He neither sumbereth nor sleepeth. Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard? that the

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everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth, faintetly not, neither is weary?

What has been said, may be sufficient in general to evince the truth of a divine providence, and to shew us wherein it consists. And tho' I am sensible there are several popular objections against the doctrine of it, which may deserve to be consider'd; yet I have here taken no notice of them, as more properly falling under the sollowing heads, of the justice, the holiness, the goodness, and wisdom of God, in his providential dispensations. Upon all which articles, I shall be the shorter, as a great many things, which ought otherways to be said in treating of them, have been already anticipated under the head of the divine attributes.

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CHAP. V.

That all the dispensations of divine providence are just.

It will be of little use to assert a divine providence, or to shew the necessity of believing it, upon any considerations whatever, unless we can prove, that God, in the exercise of it, acts by the rules of a fix'd and inviolable justice. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? seems to be the first question, which naturally occurs to our thoughts in consequence of our believing, that there is such a judge.

Now, in order to a more distinct vindication of the divine justice in administring the affairs of the world, it may be necessary to enquire, what the proper acts of justice are in persons, with whom we have any entercourse; or who are invested with sove-

reign, or other competent authority over us. And,

I. Justice consists in enacting reasonable laws, and such as are proper to the state of those whom they are intended to oblige. The right of God to prescribe laws to his creatures, if there be any possible right of legislature, cannot be disputed. But could he be capable of prescribing such laws to his creatures, as are either in themselves unreasonable, or, under their circumstances, impracticable; this would be to exercise a power, whereof no just, or indeed tolerable reason could be given.

In the former respect, to require any thing of men, that is unreasonable, is to put them under an engagement of acting contrary to the original order, or, as I may call it, the essential constitution of human nature; contrary to that very law which was given them, as the rule of their actions, and whereby alone they ought to act. And tho' 'tis true, that in regard to the method of dispensing his favours, God is a debtor to no man; yet, in consequence of his creating men reasonable beings, he is so far a debtor to the eternal rectitude of his own nature, and of his own law, that he cannot require any thing immediately tending to subvert or destroy it.

The command, wherewith Abraham was charg'd, to facrifice his son, is of no force towards overthrowing what is here said. For tho' 'tis contrary to the natural reason of the thing, that a parent should arbitrarily, or by his sole pretended authority, take away the life of his child, or exercise a power he has not, and which was never given him; yet it is reasonable, that the universal Lord and proprietor of all things, should, by right of his sovereign dominion, have an absolute power of life or death, which he may execute after what manner, or by what instruments, he

pleases.

A like answer will indifferently serve to what is objected from the commission given to the Israelites to spoil the Egyptians. For tho' 'tis unjust in one man, on account of the laws of society, whether natural or positive (and particularly of that incontestable law, of doing to others as we would, in a suppos'd change of circumstances, be done by) that he should violently take away his neighbour's civil rights, or against his consent; yet God, in whom the propriety of all things is vested, and who cannot be bound in the exercise of his authority by any human contracts, may justly delegate a power to men to disposses others of what they have no right to, but in dependence on him, either in such manner, or to such ends and uses, as he pleases to direct.

In the latter respect, it is no less injurious to the perfections of his nature, to suppose, that God should enjoin any thing, under the circumstances of those, upon whom it is enjoin'd, absolutely impracticable; tho' in its own nature, or upon a general consideration of it, sit and reasonable. This reslection is sounded both on the wisdom and justice of God. For where can be the wisdom of requiring men to do what is impossible to be done? Or, in other words, of appointing means to no proper end? Or where the justice of putting men upon any attempts to effect what, after all their pains and assiduity, must necessarily prove inessectual? The scriptures therefore speak after a manner perfectly agreeable to

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our natural notions as to this point; in assuring us, that God does not expect to reap where he has not sown; that his strength is sufficient for us; that his ways are equal, but our ways unequal. From which I shall only take occasion to obviate a too common pretence of wicked men (and upon which even those perhaps, who are more piously dispos'd, are sometimes too apt to excuse their failures) that the commands of God are impossible, either in general, or in certain particular instances, to be kept. For if either we believe him wise or just in what he commands, such a pretence must, for that very reason, be groundless, as derogating from the two essential perfections of his wisdom and justice. And therefore the impossibility, which is objected, of keeping his commandments, must not lie in the nature of them; but arise from some accidental indisposition in our selves to be govern'd by them.

But are all commands then unreasonable, unless such as are founded in the natural reason of things? What shall we judge concerning such of them, as are purely arbitrary, and owe all their force and obligation to the power commanding? We say, that tho' such commands are properly founded in authority, and not in any natural reason of them, absolutely consider'd; yet, relatively consider'd, they are founded both in reason and justice; as being proper, and withal practicable tests of obedience; and possibly adapted to many other very wise, and reasonable ends of providence.

II. When a proper sanction is given to such laws as have a reafonable foundation, justice consists in distributing rewards and punishment according to it. I do not hereby intend, that God is oblig'd to annex any politive reward in consequence of man's obedience to his laws; becanse they are antecedently oblig'd to obey him in all his commands, by virtue of that natural and indispensable homage, which as his creatures, as reasonable creatures, they owe to him. But should he, out of his great goodness, or in order the more to encourage and animate the natural obedience of men, which he has a prior right to, give them, by express promile, an expectation of such and such rewards, upon condition of their obeying him; there they have a forderal right to the performance of his promise; and his justice obliges him, according to the clearest notions we have concerning any act of justice, to make it good to them. So that it now becomes, tho' originally proceeding from a pure motive of goodness, the subject matter of a proper and lawful demand. As the apostle plainly, but no less strictly argues, to him that worketh, the reward is reckon'd Gggg

reckon'd not of grace, but of debt *. And again, it is a righteous thing with God, that is, consequentially, and in regard of his pro-

mise, to recompense rest to you, who are troubled t.

The case both of enacting and of executing penalties is different. In both these respects, the exercise of Gods power seems more limited by the natural reason of the things themselves. It is not so necessary that he should propose rewards to men, for the encouragement of an obedience, they are antecedently bound to perform, as that he should denounce certain punishment against them, in case of their disobedience. This method of his treating with men, being absolutely required to preserve the honour and authority of his laws; and in order more effectually to secure the other

principal ends of his government.

But the great question is, whether God is equally oblig'd, in strict justice, to inflict what he has threaten'd, as to make good what he has promis'd. For in not punishing men, he is so far from doing them any injury, or dealing with them after a manner, which may give them just cause of complaint, that he exercises an act of clemency highly beneficial to them, and for which they cannot make too great returns of gratitude and obedience. Neither is his remission of punishment in any respect injurious to himself. For tho' he has a right of punishing, and may, for that reason, justly punish; yet, if he pleases, he may also suspend the exercise of that right, or even wholly recede from it. It being no wrong to any person, especially upon wise and good considerations, to remit what is justly due to him, altogether or in part; except we should suppose him antecedently oblig'd to punish, either by virtue of some superior authority, which can have no place in God; or of some express declaration to that end; or from an absolute necessity of nature. In the former respect, some have thought the veracity of God strictly obliges him to punish; in the latter, his invincible hatred of sin.

But in the administration of civil government, this way of arguing, from the veracity of the legislative power (how express soever the intermination of any penalty may be) will not hold good. It is so far from reflecting any dishonour, or charge of infidelity upon Princes, to pardon certain crimes, which they have a right to punish, and have threaten'd to punish; that acts of grace are frequently the first, as being, in common esteem, the brightest glories of their reign. Neither, in the ordinary way of commerce among men, is any one charg'd with falshood or prevarication,

^{+ 2} Theff. 1. 6, 7.

for not doing what he has threaten'd; provided he is influenc'd only by such considerations as properly affect himself, or from which he is under no engagement with respect to the authority or interests of other persons. The ground of which common judgment of men in the case, I take to be this; that the intermination of any penalty always implies, in the natural construction of the thing, a tacit reserve of power in the person threatning, to suspend, or wholly to remit the execution of it, as he thinks sit; since hereby he neither does any thing in prejudice of his own right, or that of the party threaten'd.

But if the veracity of God do not necessarily oblige him to execute his threats, may not his invincible hatred to sin render it absolutely necessary for him, in one kind or other to take vengeance on the sinner. Divines have been much divided upon this point. Some have thought that as God necessarily hates sin, justice indipensably obliges him to punish it. This being the proper and most effectual method of expressing his hatred to it. Others have thought, that if God should be supposed to punish sinners by an absolute necessity of nature, a great many inconveniences, and such whereof no good account can be given, would unavoidably

follow. For,

1. They say, the hatred of God to sin is evidently express'd by his law written on our hearts; which causes us to commit it with a sensible reluctance; and fills the mind, after the commission of it, still with a more painful, and, many times, very lasting regret. Especially in his reveal'd will, God has declar'd his detestation of sin, in such terms, and after such a manner, as leave us no room to doubt, but that he hates it, with a perfect hatred. In particular, by requiring no less a facrifice, than that of his own son, by way of attonement for it; and by his threatning many temporal evils and calamities to sinners; (for I shall not here enter upon the subject of hell torments) which evils he may justly inflict, if he pleases; but whether he should instict them, may possibly depend on other considerations, besides those of strict justice.

2. If it be a good way of arguing, that God must of necessity punish sinners, because he hates sin, and is just; it is said, the inference will be equally good, that he must of necessity pardon the sinner, because he is merciful. It may, perhaps, be alledg'd, that the sinner, in the natural order of our ideas, being antecedently liable to punishment, God must be suppos'd to act in relation to him according to that order, and so justice will take place upon him, before he can be capable of mercy. But this consideration is of no weight, if we distinguish between the justice and mercy of

God, consider'd abstractedly in themselves, and in the egress, or external operation of them. In themselves, according to our manner of conceiving them, we allow the idea of justice previous to that of mercy; for where no offence has been committed, that deserves punishment, there can be no occasion for mercy to interpose towards the prevention of it. Yet this does not hinder, but that God, in the external acts of his justice or mercy, may invert, as he pleases, the order of them, and immediately proceed to pardon, without ever proceeding to punish. Otherways he would have two essential attributes directly inconsistent, as to the exercise of them with one another. One whereby he must necessarily, and consequently immediately punish; and the other, whereby he may yet freely suspend, and, if he think sit, wholly remit punishment, or any part of it.

3. The doctrine of a justice purely vindictive, which they, who believe God necessarily punishes, ascribe to him, lies under a greater prejudice on this account; as such a justice in men, if it may be properly call'd so, always proceeds from some visible and great imperfection; either from sear; or want of power; or from a narrow, and, perhaps, malignant temper of mind; or a desire of revenging the injuries that have occasion'd them some sensible pain or disturbance. No Prince, except upon these motives (with any of which it is impossible the divine nature should be affected) can be suppos'd capable of punishing the most obdurate or notorious malesactors, and purely for the sake of punishing; or provided all the ends of government could be otherways secur'd as they

ought.

III. Justice consists in punishing men, only for their own crimes. The reason of this is evident. For as it is the abuse of our liberty, which, as we have prov'd on another occasion, formally renders us liable to punishment; and we are only capable of abusing our liberty by some personal act, however we may suffer by the action of another, or in consequence of it; yet we cannot, in a strict or proper sense, be punish'd, unless for what we do, or, at least, con-

fent to the doing of our selves.

How true soever this principle is in the theory, yet a great difficulty has been conceiv'd here to arise by occasion of the sin of our first parents. For tho' we could not actually consent, or (so far as appears) by any necessary implication, to that sin; yet it is certain we have, on many occasions, experienc'd the dangerous and unhappy effects of it. As to such of them, which are only of a temporary consideration, whether respecting the sufferings of this present life, or the loss of that happy state, which we were originally design'd for the enjoyment of, they may easily be accounted for,

for, from the prerogative of God and his just dominion over his creatures. In consequence of Adam's sin, he might justly deprive us of those blessings, the continuance whereof would have been owing to his mere favour and donation; and which therefore he might, with equal justice, have deprived us of, in case Adam had never sinn'd. This method of divine providence is highly agreeable to the ordinary proceedings of the civil magistrate in this world; where it is thought no injustice to exclude children on occasion of certain crimes or forfeitures in their parents, from those legal rights, that would have otherways descended to them by inheritance.

THE moral effects of Adam's fall are those, which men have found the greatest difficulty in reconciling with their notions of the divine justice. It has been thought to bear a little hard on this attribute, that all mankind, for the sin of one person, should be involv'd, as soon as they are born, in the same guilt with him, even without the least consciousness of it; and tho' they were ne-

ver, in any respect, capable of concurring towards it.

This difficulty is still the greater to those, who contend, that children and idiots, who cannot be guilty of actual sin, are many times severely punish'd; and therefore their punishment can only be ascrib'd to the guilt, which they have contracted by original sin. As to the latter part of what is here observ'd, it is easily answer'd, from the distinction between suffering and punishment; God has a right to inflict such evils, as he thinks proper on his creatures; provided they do not exceed the benefits of their creation; or will, in due time, be compensated in a state of happiness, which will more than over-ballance the present sense of them. Because, in these cases, there is a reasonable presumption, they would have consented to the treatment they meet with, had the conditions of it been antecedently propos'd to them. As we are not therefore able to conceive, how any action, which is not voluntary, should deserve to be punish'd; we cannot look upon the most acute pains, which infants or idiots suffer, strictly as punishments; but only as providential dispensations, which will, one time or other, after a method suitable to his justice, terminate in their happiness or advantage; in case they do not, by any actual sin, whereof they may be afterwards render'd capable, obstruct or prevent the proper design of them.

But, setting aside the temporary effects of sin, the main question is still undetermin'd; how persons can be justly charg'd with the guilt of those crimes, wherein they could in no proper sense be said to partake; and yet so as to become the proper objects of God's wrath and displeasure? This has been thought a hard say-

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ing, tho' several texts of scripture are produc'd to favour and support it. It is alledg'd, that by one man sin enter'd into the world, and death by sin, and so death pass'd upon all men *. That, through the offence of one, many are dead +. And that, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation ‡. But it cannot be necessarily inferr'd from these words, that they relate to any thing more than a temporal death. If they should extend to import, that all mankind are finners, and liable to the wrath of God, on account of Adam's transgression; there is still a greater necessity, in honour both to the divine justice and holiness, of explaining them, not as speaking causally, but only consequentially, upon the abuse of man's liberty. As to what is farther added in the following verse, that, by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners **; we are not to understand from the mere force of the words, men in an actual state of sin, but persons who are reputed as finners, on occasion of their being treated as such; or if the words should denote actual, and even habitual sinners, all we can conclude from them, is, that by occasion of that natural propension to sin, which we confessedly derive from our first parents, we are frequently seduc'd actually to commit it. The argument, that men may as properly be faid to have finn'd in Adam, as †† Levi to have paid tythes in the loins of Abraham, is altogether infignificant. St. Paul, in the passage referr'd to, introduces it as a more harsh illustration, with that softning form of speech, as I may so In the next place, this argument, if it may be consider'd as one, proves too much. It will unavoidably follow from it, so far as it has any reasonable foundation, not only that the first sin of Adam, but all his other fins; with all those of our progenitors in a successive order from him, ought to be charg'd upon us, as our personal sins; but for the same reason too a personal imputation ought to be made to us, of all their virtues.

born sinners, on account of the sin of Adam, and liable to be punish'd by a just and provok'd God, as such, have not sufficient force to convince us; there are other texts, which seem evidently to conclude for the doctrine directly opposite. After God had reprimanded the Israelites for a proverb, which, ill sounded as it was, had too generally obtain'd amongst them, the fathers have eaten sowr grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge ‡‡. He declares in the most solemn and awful manner, that they shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb, and that upon a clear

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^{*} Rom. 5. 12. † \$\ddy. 15. \$\dagger\$ \dagger\$ 18. ** \$\dagger\$ 19. †† Heb. 7. \$\dagger\$ 10. †‡ Ezek. 18. 2.

and incontestable reason of equity. Behold all souls are mine, as the soul of the sather, so also the soul of the son is mine. The soul that sinneth, it shall die *. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him †. The following command given to the sews in the Mosaick law, had the same equitable foundation. The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin ‡.

IT remains only, since the doctrine of the church of England in her ninth article, has been explain'd on the other side of the question, concerning original sin; that I should say something, in order to reconcile the true sense of that article, with the reasons before produc'd to shew, why man can only be punish'd for his own sin; and especially with the express authorities of scripture, above cited: This being the rule whereby, according to the ** determination of the church, all her doctrines ought to be try'd.

Now it is expressly afferted in the article under consideration, that original sin is the fault or corruption of the nature of every man; and that, in every person born in the world, it deserves God's wrath and damnation. These expressions are very strong, both with respect to the heinous guilt of original sin, and the punishment justly due to it. But as the articles were form'd with a particular view to the state of the controversies, which were manag'd with much heat at the time of their being compil'd; and in order, so much as possible, to bring all sides to a better temper; every expression in them ought not to be taken in the most strict and rigid sense: But due regard should be had to so pious and charitable a design.

WHEN original sin is therefore expressly charg'd as a fault in man, it is said, there is no necessity that we should thereby understand a fault, in the same sense that we do a sin, under a formal consideration of it: But as we understand any visible infirmity or defect; on occasion of our wanting certain powers or qualities; whereof, notwithstanding, we were originally capable. And this appears the more to be the true intent of the article, as corruption, in the use of which term both sides are agreed, is substituted as a synonymous, but softer word, to explain what is meant by fault: Which is afterwards affirm'd to consist in this, that man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclin'd to evil.

^{*} Ezek. 18. 4. ** Art. 6.

^{† ¥. 20.}

[‡] Deut. 24. 16.

Neither of which expressions, it is thought, necessarily infer actual The loss, indeed of original righteousness, by occasion of another person's sin, is a great unhappiness: But why should any one be thought criminal, without any fault of his own, for being unhappy? Neither is it the first tendency or volition to fin, which may be term'd inclination (and without which it is impossible to conceive, how man could ever have finn'd at all) that renders him really chargeable with fin; but his after-compliance with those primary motions towards it. Yet I do not suppose, but that fuch motions are now both much sooner excited, and in a more violent manner, than they would have been in a state of inno-The fin of Adam might, by a natural efficiency, put him into such a disorder, which would destroy the perfect ballance of his constitution, that render'd all the motions of his body entirely, and at the instant, obsequious to those of his will. This effect might be occasion'd by a certain fermentation of the blood; in consequence whereof, by virtue of the admirable laws of union. between the foul and the body, the foul might be more powerfully mov'd or affected by the action of sensible objects. And there is no greater difficulty in conceiving, how fuch a disorder should be communicated, than how men should now transmit a healthy, diseas'd, or more vigorous constitution to their children.

As to what is farther added to explain the nature of original sin, and to shew wherein it consists, that the flesh lusteth contrary to the spirit. These words, in the primary design of them, rather import the effects of original sin, operating in adult persons, than the first essays of it in children; in whom, except in an impro-

per sense, the flesh cannot be said to lust against the spirit.

AGAIN, when original sin is said to deserve God's wrath and damnation; no more may be understood by wrath than temporal evils; the proper consequences of that wrath, which Adam personally deserv'd; and which his posterity are still justly condemn'd to seel the permanent effects of. As to the word damnation, there can be no dispute; it is confessedly allow'd to signify no more by the apostle himself, in the first * epistle to the Corinthians, than certain temporary calamities inslicted on that people for their unworthy manner of receiving the Lord's supper.

In the clause of the article, where 'tis said, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin; the very expression, could it be understood in reference to infants, and not to actual sinners, seems to be mollifying. Had it been said, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the formal nature of sin, this had left the sense of the

* Chap. 11. 29.

article

article more clear and determinate on the other side. As it is now express'd, the words seem very capable of being interpreted, not concerning the primary and natural motions of concupiscence, which invincibly arise in us, and are confess'd to be in the regenerate themselves; but the very first tendencies of the will, at the instant they are perceiv'd, towards a compliance with them. For if they have formally in themselves the nature of sin, the regenerate, in whom by the article they confessedly are, would, I take it, with all submission, be, at the same time, in a sanctify'd, and

yet properly in a finful state.

THERE remains yet one material objection against the justice of providence, which may deferve to be distinctly consider'd. It is an undeniable conclusion from what has been said before, that rewards, consider'd properly as such, can only be due upon a free, and punishments upon a practicable obedience. And yet it is said, that a great part of mankind shall be sav'd by the power of an irresistible grace; whilst others, to whom the means of salvation are really impracticable, must, for that reason, necessarily perish. Both these assertions, without entring into the detail of the controversy about them, are fallly grounded. The texts produc'd from scripture to prove the doctrine of irresistible grace, are much less clear and sufficient to that end, than the texts produc'd on the other side, to prove that the operations of grace may be resisted. But if we consider, in point of reason, the grounds, upon which these two doctrines are separately founded, those alledg'd for the latter of them, are incontestably of superior force. For, upon supposition that the grace of God cannot be resisted, all the motives propos'd to men to induce their compliance with it, would be unnecessary; the freedom of human will, in the noblest act it is capable of, would be destroy'd; and the good which man does, could not, in any proper sense, be ascrib'd to his action, as a moral agent, or the subject of reward; but wholly, and entirely to the action of God. Yet tho' it must be own'd, there are several reasons, respecting the wisdom of God, that cannot be reconcil'd with the notion of irrelistible grace, the justice of God, so far as it imports the doing no injury to his creatures, is still safe: And if he make them happy, by over-ruling a choice, which would otherways have terminated in their misery and destruction, they will have no reason to complain; tho' such a procedure could not be perseally justify'd or accounted for in other respects.

The seventeenth article of the church has, however, been interpreted to savour the doctrines, both concerning the salvation of the elect, by an irresistible power of God's grace; and the exclusion of others, from all capacity of being sav'd, for want of hali i

ving the means of grace dispens'd, in due measure, to them. Neither of which inferences, much less the latter of them, can be made from the words of that article. Predestination to life, as defin'd in it, is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation, those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ unto everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Nothing can necessarily be inferr'd from these words, but that God foreseeing the good use, which the elect would make of that grace, he had from everlasting decreed to dispense to them, through Jesus Christ, determin'd, at the same time, to deliver them from that curse and damnation, which they would otherways have incurr'd the penalty of; and to bring them by Christ unto that everlasting salvation, which they could have had no right or pretentions to, but by virtue of his free and sole promise. The decree therefore, which God made of faving the elect, in both these respects, was not abfolute, or antecedent to any regard he might have to the good or ill use they would make of his grace; but in consequence of his certainly foreseeing, they would make a good use of their liberty, in complying with the motions of it. This procedure of God highly tends to magnify the riches of his goodness, without any necessity of supposing his grace irresistible, in order to the salvation of men; which would destroy, at once, the proper freedom of their wills in a state of probation, with all the reasons of his commands to them, his exposulations with them, and the very end of his proposing to reward, or threatning to punish them. None of which confiderations can influence or affect us, upon a supposition, that we are necessarily determin'd, in all the instances of our duty, by a power, which we are not able to resist.

When 'tis said therefore, that they which be endow'd with so excellent a benefit of God, through grace obey the calling. This is spoken eventually concerning those, to whom the grace of God proves efficacious; but does not in the least imply any necessity of its operating upon them after an invincible manner. When 'tis farther said, that they are justify'd freely, this denotes the order of God's proceeding in qualifying sinners for eternal salvation, by virtue of the free and general overtures of grace made to them, in Jesus Christ; but does not suppose, that God justifies them, out of any regard to their particular persons, exclusive of the good use they make of their liberty, in concurrence with the means of grace. Neither ought we to conceive justification less free, upon those fit and reasonable conditions pre-requir'd to it. We may, by parity of reason, argue, that it lessens the freedom of any gift from

from a friend, because it is not forcibly, and whether we will or no, put into our hands, or, in any other violent manner, obtruded upon us. But the conclusion of the article seems evidently to determine the sense of the church, as to the point in question. For if we are to receive God's promises in such wise, as they are generally held forth to us, in holy scripture; since an absolute decree cannot consist with a conditional promise; and the promise of eternal life is all along made on condition of faith and repentance, so far as words can express a condition; it necessarily follows, that the decree of faving men must be conditional also, and such as agrees with the nature of human liberty. A condition, in the very notion of it, implying (for otherways there can be no reason of making it) a power in the party to whom it is propos'd, of rejecting or complying with it.

But the most dangerous doctrine, which men can pretend to infer from this article, or indeed to affert upon any other grounds, is that of preterition; which, tho' a softer name, than that of abfolute reprobation; yet really, in effect, comes to the same thing. For where is the difference, as to the event, whether men be excluded by the positive will of God (if the very supposition be not too injurious to the infinite perfections of his nature) from all possible means of salvation; or left under such circumstances, not by occasion of their own fault, but the original transgression of Adam; that let them do what they can, they must in consequence of their disobedience, at last of necessity perish. In either case, there is a notorious and equal violation of the common rules of justice, which follow; and whereof the reasons appear so strong and incontestable, that they need only be recited, without loss of

time in making any reflections upon them.

I. THE first rule of justice, that I shall mention, hereby violated, is, that no man can deserve blame or punishment, for doing any thing it was impossible for him to avoid; or for omitting to do any thing, whereof he was altogether incapable: Provided especially, that he have not brought himself under such circumstances, by any antecedent abuse of his liberty.

2. THAT no man can be charg'd with the abuse of any talent, which he never receiv'd; or punish'd under a notion of his falsi-

fying a trust, that was never committed to him.

3. THAT obedience cannot be requir'd, where the power of

obeying is taken away, or was never conferr'd.

4. THAT where there is a necessary determination of the will to one part, there can be no crime in not chusing the better part.

It must be acknowledg'd, all these rules are but so many different ways of expressing the same thing. They are, however, proper, by being mention'd distinctly, to affect persons more or less, according to the different manner of their apprehending such truths, or the order, wherein they have been accustom'd to medi-

tate upon them.

THE only answer to be given to this charge, is, that it does not affect those who affert absolute reprobation; because God determin'd to give even the reprobate such a measure of his grace, as would be sufficient, in a due use of their liberty, to convert them: So that they are still left, and that upon a principle of justice, without excuse. But how can we think that grace sufficient, or really defign'd to be so, which in a succession of so many ages, and after innumerable tryals, has never in one instance taken effect? According to our ways of judging, concerning the sufficiency of men, consider'd as moral or artificial agents in other cases, this evasion must appear altogether groundless. But allowing that a measure of divine grace, which, in so many millions of instances, never attain'd the end for which it was given, was yet sufficient of itself towards the attainment of it; this must be granted, that there was, and is still, a possibility at least of attaining it; and so there will be an absolute and unfrustrable decree afferted, and yet in dependence on a condition, which may, perhaps, after all, frustrate the execution of it; which is, in other words, to assert that a thing may be possible, and yet, at the same time, absolutely impossible.

But let us suppose, what, for reasons concerning both the justice and holiness, the goodness and wisdom of God, ought not to be granted; that a great part of mankind are under an absolute decree, and, antecedently to their doing good or evil, of eternal damnation; yet this can by no means follow from the words of the article, which wholly relate to the methods of divine grace in faving the elect, without defining any thing concerning reprobation; or so much as making the least mention of it. It is said, indeed, that God has decreed to deliver from curse and damnation those, whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, by means of his spirit working in them. But even admitting that the Holy Spirit should operate in such persons by an irresistible power of his grace, how does it therefore follow, that those, who are not so chosen, are left in a reprobate state, without any possible means of deliverance from damnation? Since it may be in their power to escape it, by a due improvement of the common and ordinary means of grace, sufficient, tho' not of themselves absolutely or universally efficacious to that end.

THIS

This consideration leads me to obviate another difficulty that has been started in relation to the justice of providence, from the very different and unequal measures, whereby the means of salvation appear to be distributed to mankind. Tho' indeed what is here objected does not so properly affect the justice, as the goodness and other moral perfections of God. All we contend for, is, that the justice of God requires, he should afford men the necesfary means of performing that obedience, to which eternal life is promis'd; or, upon failure whereof, eternal damnation is inevitably consequent. But how far he will afford men more or greater assistances, than are requisite to this end, depends upon the free determination of his will, without any regard to the measures of strict justice. He does no man injury, by being more liberal in the distribution of his favours to another. All grounds of complaint are remov'd, if every one receive so much as he has any right to expect; tho' we may hope still better things from the goodness of God, and things which more effectually promote and

accompany salvation.

But how then do we reconcile such unequal measures of divine grace, with the express declarations of God, that his ways are equal; and that he is no respecter of persons? It is sufficient to say, that both these expressions refer to the methods of God's justice in dealing with men, and not to those of his goodness. Tho' all men are not equally favour'd; yet they are equally free from all unjust treatment. No one can say, whether he have more or fewer talents committed to him, provided he be capable of profiting with them, that he has any injury done him. And therefore we may observe, that the prohibitions in scripture against respect of persons wholly relate to judicial proceedings; or such duties, as in our more private capacity, we are in justice oblig'd to perform towards other men. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment. Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour *. Ye shall not respect the persons in judgment; but you shall bear the small as well as the great. You shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's †. Who is no respetter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him ‡. For, without respect of persons, he judgeth according to every man's work **.

* Lev. 19. 15. ** 1 Pet. 1. 17.

† Deut. 1. 17.

‡ Als 10. 34.

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Tho' I have said nothing on so proper an occasion, in reference to the salvable state of the heathen; yet it will undeniably sollow from the principles which have been laid down, that we ought, in honour to the divine justice, to believe them, if not in a state of that salvation, which is promis'd to christians (and which there is reason to suppose may be peculiar to christians) yet in such a state at least, wherein they are not under any necessity of perishing, or of being more miserable, than if they had never been; wherein, to conclude, God requires nothing of them, upon the sanction of any rewards or punishments, but what they are capable in a competent measure of performing.

CHAP. VI.

That God is holy in all the dispensations of his providence.

God; and it is necessary, that all his external works should bear the character of his attributes. They are conclusions therefore equally evident, from our consulting the moral perfections of his nature, that the Lord is righteous in all his ways; and boly in all his works.

In treating of the administration of providence, with respect to

this latter attribute, I propose to enquire,

I. Wherein the proper acts of it, may be supposed to confist: And,

II. WHAT are the principal objections, which may appear to

lie against what I shall assert concerning it.

I. It is necessary that a holy God, in governing mankind, should prescribe them such a rule of life, as is agreeable to the nature of holiness, and may have a proper tendence to promote it. That he has prescrib'd such a rule, is evident from the light of our minds, both as it discovers itself in the way of reason and reslection. For we need only consult it, either in order to know what is fit and reasonable to be done; or, if we have already proceeded to action; whether we have acted as we ought, and according to the order and persection of our nature. A practice conformable to these rules, does also highly conduce to recommend piety to others, and advance the interests of it in the world.

But

But the holy scriptures bear the clearest testimony to the holiness of God, in his conduct towards mankind, on all these accounts. We are assured in them, that every word of God is pure; that his precepts are true and righteous altogether; that his law is holy, and his commandment holy, and just, and good; that there is a law written on the hearts of all men; according as they act in obedience to which, or transgress it, their consciences hear winess, and they stand accused, or else excused by their own thoughts. But this law being, in many respects, obscure, and in some deficient, towards attaining the great ends of holiness; God has, by a special revelation, given us a more sure word of prophecy, and sorm of sound words, at once to direct and influence our practice; to the end we may be holy, both in our more private capacities, and in all godly conversation and honesty, to the edification of others.

The holiness of providence consists not only in prescribing the rules of holy living, but in affording men all the necessary means, and assistances to that end. This, supposing God to have any wise design in the rules he prescribes, is a necessary consequence: For otherways, how well soever they may be adapted in themselves to produce or promote holiness, they could not possibly operate. How far this consideration may affect the holiness of God, with respect to the state of the heathen world, will presently be considered. It must be allowed, that as to christians, they have the means of holiness dispensed to them after so liberal and powerful a manner, by the advantages of a standing revelation; a standing ministry; the use of the sacraments; and the assistances of a special grace; that it seems a question of much greater difficulty to resolve, why all of them are not more holy, than why the rest of the world are

generally so corrupt.

THE holiness of providence requires farther, that there should be proper motives, as well as means, towards rendring men holy. For no action can be reasonable which we are not, upon one consideration or other, induc'd to undertake. And in proportion as what we have in view is more affecting, or of greater importance to our interests, the more active and assiduous we shall still be in pursuit of it. Now, tho' all mankind, from a consideration of God's just retributions to be dispens'd to wicked and good men in another life; and from their observing, that he frequently takes occasion to make bimself known by the judgment which he executes in this life, have sufficient motives, (besides those taken from that variety of instances, wherein his goodness is every day exemplify'd) to be holy and obedient; yet it must be consessed, that those motives are much stronger under the christian dispensation, both as to the nature, and, in many respects, the brighter evidence of

them, than they are to men in a pure state of natural religion. But 'tis sufficient to vindicate the holiness of providence, if such persons have all the motives to obedience afforded them, proper to the state they are in, and of sufficient force to induce it. What is more than sufficient to this end, does not depend so much upon our considering, what a holy God is oblig'd to do, as what a wise and good God may think sit to do.

II. I shall in the next place consider some of the principal objections, which appear to lie against what has been said concerning

the holiness of providence.

It is pretended in the first place, that the concurrence of God being necessary to all the actions of men, we cannot well reconcile it with the holiness of his providence; that he should concur with them towards any sinful actions. And therefore that the rules of holiness, whether prescrib'd by the natural law of our minds, or by the positive and reveal'd will of God, are to be attributed to some other principle; to his wisdom probably or goodness; as the practice of virtue tends most effectually to preserve order, and all the other wise and good ends of government in the world. But the premises from which this inference is drawn, being ill found-

ed, it must unavoidably fall with them.

We grant in general, that God concurs towards preferving the nature of things, with their several faculties, and the functions for which they were made: But why should it be thought impossible, that, in consequence of those faculties and functions, God Almighty may not render them capable, in many respects, of modifying themselves, and of acting not independently of him (for he can overrule and restrain them when, and after what manner he pleases;) but by virtue of that general power, which was communicated to them, when they were originally form'd. So long as they can neither subsist in being, nor operate, but in subordination to the will of God, where is the injury done to any perfection of his nature, in supposing they may act of themselves (I speak here only of intelligent beings) by virtue of a power deriv'd from him? It feems rather injurious to his attribute of omnipotence to say, that fuch a power is, in the nature of the thing, impossible; except they, who deny the possibility of it, could prove, what they will never be able to do, that a contradiction is imply'd in the very idea of it.

I know there are some, who think a positive act of God's concurrence necessary, both towards the actions and volitions of men, and yet would evade the consequence, which charges him with being the author of sin; by saying, that he concurs towards all the actions and volitions of men materially, but not formally consider'd.

consider'd. But this appears to others a subtle, rather than a clear or solid distinction of the schools. For whatever becomes of the actions of men; yet as to their volitions, wherein the very formality of sin lies, there can be no imaginable grounds for it. If man cannot will or intend any sinful action, without God's actuating his will and intention, it seems necessarily to follow, that the obliquity of it must equally, at least, be ascrib'd to God, as a partial; if not principally as the first and moving cause.

THE instances, made use of, to illustrate the manner of God's concourse towards the sinful actions of men, from our causing any lame creatures to walk, are not pertinent. For first, their lameness is pre-supposed to our putting them in motion; but this gives no account of the principal difficulty in the case, and upon which the decision of it in a manner wholly depends; how Adam, in a state of innocence, was originally excited to commit sin. But, secondly, if some account could be given, how man, who, according to this illustration, is now suppos'd lame, came at first to be so; if his lameness proceeded from the same cause with his power to walk, then he who excites him to walk, and without whom he can have no motion, is also apparently the cause of his going lame. I shall only add, that creatures, which are lame, are in that respect wholly passive; but to say the will of man is wholly passive, or determin'd by the action of God, is not to make God concur towards what man wills, but to all intents and purposes to will, what man is only faid to will himself. A will without any power at all of motion or action, is such a will, as I do not see how men of the most metaphysical heads, can possibly distinguish from no will.

This account of the origin of fin, from that natural power, wherewith man was created, of abusing his freedom, perfectly solves a difficulty, which has been often objected; that in order to explain how moral evil was first caus'd and propagated in the world, it is necessary we should suppose an evil principle eternally co-existent with a holy and good God. For 'tis but asserting that when God had made man a free agent, he would not destroy his own work, but leave him to the natural use of his freedom; and then the principal ground of this objection is entirely remov'd. Tho' it must not be dissembled, that the Manichees carry'd it still farther, and argued not so much from the impossibility of the thing, that an all-powerful God could create man with a capacity of determining himself to good or evil; as upon supposition, that if this had been really possible; yet a holy God would not have exerted his power to that end; since he foresaw the ill consequences, in fact, of endowing men with such a capacity.

LIII

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This is the argument wherein the chief strength of the Manichees appears to lie. I shall endeavour to give a distinct and satisfactory answer to it, by laying down these following propositions.

1. That the abuse which God foresaw man would make of his liberty, was not necessary in the order of natural causes, but purely accidental; which perfectly frees God from the charge, at

least, of being intentionally the author of sin.

2. At the same time God created man with a capacity of committing sin, he gave him a law, both of reason and conscience, that laid very powerful restraints upon him from sinning; which proves farther, that sin, when originally committed, was directly

contrary to the intention of God.

2. HAD God created man impeccable, he could not have been capable, on account of his obedience, of reward or punishment, of blame or praise. For obedience, upon all these considerations, must be suppos'd to proceed, not from necessity, but choice. Fire is in as proper a fense capable of being rewarded or punished, of being blam'd or prais'd, for ascending, as a man for doing, what he is by a natural causality absolutely determin'd to do. So far then as God had any wife reasons in these motives to obedience. so far was it necessary that man should be free in the several instances of his obedience. Simplicius reasons excellently to this purpose, in a passage, which I shall here recite, as render'd from him by a learned * author. " Had God, to prevent man's fin, taken " away the liberty of his will, he had likewise destroy'd the foun-" dation of all virtue, and the very nature of man. For virtue " would not have been such, had there been no possibility of act-" ing contrary to the rules of it; and man's nature would have " been divine, because impeccable. In which notion the schoolmen are entirely agreed with him; for they argue, that whatever has not infinite perfection, is in some respect imperfect, and what is imperfect, may be deficient or faulty in its operations: If this argument be good, either God must have determin'd not to create man at all, nor any other intelligent being; or to create them capable of making default. But this philosopher proceeds, "there-" fore, tho' we attribute this self-determining power to God, as " the author of it; which was so necessary in the order of the uni-" verse, we have no reason to attribute the origin of that evil to "God, which comes by the abuse of that liberty. For, as he " farther adds, God does not at all cause that aversion from good, " which is in the foul when it fins, but only gave such a power to

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^{*} Orig. fact. p. 327.

"the foul, whereby it might turn itself to evil; out of which God might afterwards produce so much good, which could not

" otherways have been without it,

4. HAD God created man capable of fin, and yet continually restrain'd him by a preventing grace from sinning, he had given him a capacity without a possibility, at the same time, of his ever making any use or application of it; and consequently without defigning any reasonable end by it. But to suppose this, is much more difficultly reconcileable with the wisdom of God, than his permitting men the use of those powers he had given them, is with his holiness. To which we may add, that not only his wifdom (on the contrary) but also his justice and mercy are eminently discover'd by the effects of such a permission. His wisdom, in frustrating the designs of wicked men; or where he suffers them to succeed, in making them subservient to such good, and, many times, holy ends, as they least thought of or intended. cially in his contriving that admirable method of saving sinners, by the incarnation of his fon. His justice, in requiring an attonement for sin; and his mercy, in extending the virtue and benefits of it to all men. Whereas had man never sinn'd, there could have been no possible occasion for the exercise of either of these attributes; for then justice could neither have punish'd, nor mercy, in any case, interpos'd, to prevent punishment.

Now in the question, upon a difficulty, where several of the divine attributes are affected, it is reasonable, we should not only examine what the honour of any one of them may, in particular, seem to require; but what tends most evidently to serve the great

ends, or advance the glory of them, in general.

5. If there be still some difficulty, after all, in accounting, how a holy God could create any being capable of sinning, or of permitting the actual commission of sin; yet the difficulty, on the other side, which attributes the origin of sin to an evil principle, self-existent and co-eternal with the good principle, must be allow'd much greater. For how can that principle be God, which has not infinite power, which cannot govern the world, or prevent those evils, that another power may think sit to put intelligent beings, his own creatures, upon doing in it. The supposition of God's permitting sin, certainly cannot be so injurious to his holiness, as the supposition of his being forc'd to permit it, is to his power and sovereignty. But such a doctrine indeed does not terminate in the destruction of any particular attribute of God, but of all his attributes at once; by destroying the very proofs of his existence, from the idea of infinite perfection.

Now where the reasons of a known and acknowledg'd fact are

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controverted, those, without question, ought to preponderate, which are attended with the fewest inconveniences; or which are not liable to so many and great difficulties, as the arguments produc'd on the other side.

A second objection against the holiness of providence, is grounded upon a pretence, that God has not afforded men sufficient means of avoiding sin. He has requir'd indeed obedience of them, but left them in a state of ignorance or disorder, which renders them incapable of obeying. I need say nothing in answer to this objection, so far as it concerns christians. The promise of a supernatural grace, with all the other standing and ordinary means of salvation, upon the bare mentioning of them, perfectly acquits the holiness of God, from any charge of this nature. with respect to the blind and corrupt state of the heathen world, it may be thought to have a more reasonable foundation. withstanding the light of the gospel, the greatest part of mankind are still observ'd to sit in darkness and the shadow of death. their errors in point of doctrine be very groß and absurd, their morals are no less vitiated. Nay, they many times practise the most horrid and abominable crimes, even upon principle, and a pretence of conscience.

However this objection may be exaggerated, by general reflections, or a recital of the gross errors or vices, that obtain so commonly in the heathen world; yet the whole force of it lies in this, that God does not restrain men by an immediate interposition of his power, from running into those vices, which are naturally consequent to the ill use they make of their liberty. it has been prov'd before, from the reasons and ends upon which God made men free agents, that his holiness does not oblige him to destroy or over-rule their freedom; so 'tis sufficient for the vindication of this attribute, that God affords all men sufficient means, if they will but duly consult and follow them, from the natural light of their minds; or, where that is more obscur'd, from the assistances of a common grace, to escape the common corruption. And accordingly there have been very few nations in the world. if any, so wholly corrupt, wherein certain persons have not distinguish'd themselves, in many respects, by the practice of a more strict and refin'd morality.

If it still be said, that the particular persons may, by an abuse of their liberty, be justly deprived of that light, and those assistances, which, through the divine goodness, other persons enjoy the benefit of; yet it does not seem so agreeable to the holiness of God, that he should leave whole nations in that state of ignorance and disorder, wherein we behold them

them, without interposing, by a special grace, to recover them out of it. It may be reply'd, that if the holiness of God absolutely requir'd him to enlighten the minds, or restrain the wills of men, it would require him to do it in all cases, and at all times. Whether therefore he should so enlighten and restrain a greater or a less number of men, whole nations or particular persons, is a consideration not strictly relating to his holiness, but to his other attributes, which yet never interfere with it, of wisdom, goodness,

or justice.

WHAT is objected, in the last place, against the holiness of God's providence, from his not affording men sufficient motives to obedience, is still of less weight and importance. One of those motives; and which is common to all men in every state and condition of life, arises from the inward consciousness of their own minds; which never fail, when they attend to the judgment or decision of them, to reproach them for what they do ill, or to applaud and encourage them in well-doing. Another motive to obedience, and which is so very proper in the nature of it, to lead men to repentance, is founded on a consideration of the goodness of God; which all parts of the world indifferently experience the constant effects of: Whether we consider him as displaying it in acts of beneficence to his creatures, or of his patience and long-suffering towards sinners. For, he is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works. The apprehensions of incurring the displeasure of God by our offences against him, and the hopes of securing a special interest in his favour, by faithfully endeavouring to serve him, are also very powerful motives to obedience, and which in general affect, or ought sensibly to affect every man living.

But the great motive of all, to mention no other (whereby mankind are generally, and all considerate persons most effectually influenc'd) is taken from the belief of a judgment to come; and of that just retribution, which will one day be made to all men, according to their good or evil actions in this life. And this belief, which may properly be term'd catholick, is every where so deeply radicated, that it is not without good and sensible effects, even upon those ignorant persons, who are less able to account di-

stinctly for the reasons, upon which it is founded.

IT must be acknowledg'd, that all these considerations operate more powerfully upon christians; and there are others of great importance towards promoting holiness, peculiar to them. But so long as those I have mention'd, are in their own nature, generally consider'd, sufficient to engage the obedience of all men, and to leave them inexcusable for not attending to the natural force, or pursuing the natural design of them; the holiness of God in the M m m m

dispensations of his providence towards all men, is still safe; and the superior advantages, which christians enjoy above the rest of the world, are not to be considered, as properly respecting this attribute; but, what I am in the next place proceeding to treat of, the goodness of providence.

CHAP. VII.

That the goodness of God is conspicuous in all the dispensations of his providence.

Shall have the less occasion to enlarge on this head, in regard of what has been said of the goodness of God, consider'd as an essential perfection of his nature, and of those incidental restrictions, which have been made concerning the goodness of provi-

dence in the two chapters foregoing.

In general, the goodness of God consists in the preservation of the feveral creatures he has made, both as to their being, their proper functions, and order; but more especially in his preserving such of his creatures, in these several respects, who experience the more sensible effects of his goodness; and to whom he not only affords the necessary supports, but many comforts and conveniences subservient to the greater happiness of life. Upon which account are those pious ejaculations of the holy penmen. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord *. He is the Lord who exerciseth loving-kindness in the earth †. So that all the reasonable world, without distinction, are under continual, and yet, on many accounts, new and fresh engagements, to praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders, that he doth for the children of men. Tho' his goodness is still more eminently conspicuous to those, for whom he has, in a more liberal manner, provided all things, not only pertaining to life, but godliness: Especially, under the last consideration, such of them, as are the peculiar objects of his goodness and loving-kindness, in the methods of his redeeming the world by Jesus Christ.

THERE can be no dispute then, concerning the goodness of providence to men; who do but consider, what they, and all the world, see and feel, and taste every day. As God is essentially

^{*} Psalm 33. 5.

good, it is no less evident from all these sensible effects, that he does good. The great objection lies against the unequal dispensations of his providence to mankind, in reference to the state of religion among them; that being a consideration, which is of the last, or rather of infinite importance to them. There are, however, some objections against the goodness of providence, more immediately respecting the temporal blessings or evils of life, of which it may not be improper for me previously to take notice.

1. It is said, that the blessings and evils of this life, are dispens'd after a very unequal manner, and, as it were, with a careless hand. In certain cases, especially, the designs of goodness do not appear in so full and distinct a light, as might be expected. While some men slow in wealth and plenty, are surrounded with all the external pomp, and have all the pleasures of life at command; others, without any visible cause for such a discrimination, are exposed to the misery and hardships, not only of an indigent, but of a service, and what is thought many times, for that reason, a despicable condition.

All this, so far as the goodness of providence is concern'd in it, amounts to no more, but that God has put the generality of mankind under an absolute necessity of labour and industry towards providing for themselves or their dependents, the ordinary supports of life. For as to the other inconveniences of contempt or disgrace, suppos'd to attend poverty, they are not the proper, but only accidental consequences of it. And tho' a servile condition is not in general desirable, yet the circumstances of it are often much easier, and, for that reason, more eligible than those of poor people, who, as to their condust, are notwithstanding more independent.

So that the only thing to be consider'd, in answer to the obje-Etion, is, why all men are not born to a state of idleness. objection, which is so far from being well-founded, that had all men been born to such a state, the difficulty of accounting for the goodness of divine providence, would have been much stronger on the other side. For how many of the conveniences and beauties of civil life, are owing to the invention and improvement of arts and sciences, or other continual effects of human industry? How much evil is prevented in the world by the obligation men are under, for their necessary, or more commodious subsistence, of minding their own business; and working with their hands, the thing that is good? Even in private life, nothing is more pernicious to man, whether consider'd in his natural or moral capacity, than a perfect state of ease or inaction. The ill effects it has as to the more irregular and vicious frame, both of his body and mind, are very fignis

significantly express'd in that observation of Solomon. I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and behold, it was all grown over with thorns; and nettles had cover'd the face thereof *. In short, were it not for the truth of two maxims, which the same author has left us, that the hand of the diligent maketh rich; and, that in all labour there is prosit; the world, under what denomination soever we consider it, would be a scene of misery and disorder; which we should find our selves much more at a loss to reconcile with the goodness of providence; than the many difficulties and hardships, which 'tis pretended so great a number of men are at present expos'd to in it.

It is not only necessary for the good of the community, and, on many accounts, for their own good, that a great part of mankind should be under a necessity of working and eating their own bread; but considering the different designs, interests and capacities of men; except God were continually to exert a miraculous power in destroying the nature, the common course, and order of things, there is an absolute impossibility, that it should be

otherways.

Now where, at once, the nature of things, and, in several respects, the very reasons of goodness require, that there should be that discrimination in the circumstances of men, which is complain'd of; why should it, notwithstanding, be objected against the goodness of providence? Especially, since no man suffers so much, but the advantages of life, which therefore easily reconcile him to his condition in it, are still greater, in proportion, than his sufferings. If there are some who apprehend death, and even, if that were possible, annihilation itself more eligible than life; this is a consideration, which does not affect the goodness, but perhaps the justice of providence. For how good soever God may be in his providential dispensations towards men; this can be no reafon why his justice, when provok'd, should not take place in its own province; and where the wife or good ends of government may also particularly require, that in leaving men to the natural consequences of their sins, it should take place.

THE preference of death to a more unhappy state of life, may at other times proceed from some very sensible disturbance, which occasions, in the event, a distraction of mind. And therefore 'tis ordinarily thought a sufficient reason to prove, that a man, who has made away with himself, was really distracted. But distraction not being a moral evil, it will not in the least prove, especially if

we take in the regards of another life, that either a person under it, or who has felt the worst effects of it, is really, all things consider'd, more miserable than happy; or that, upon the whole matter, it had been better for such a one, that he had never been born.

DEATH may sometimes too appear preferable to men, under a due submission to God's will, from a desire of passing into a surver, more perfect, and unchangeable state of happiness. But the very reasons of this desire being sounded in the goodness of providence; certainly it cannot, with the least shew or pretence of rea-

son, be objected against the goodness of providence.

As to that part of the objection relating to those superior advantages of life, which the rich and fortunate enjoy above the poor or distress'd, they are evidently, tho' intended as a charge against the divine goodness, yet rather arguments of it; but of a goodness, whose acts are entirely free; and which God, who may do with his own as he will, distributes to what persons, or in what measure he pleases; without the least injury or cause of complaint to other men: Who yet enjoy more by favour of his good providence, than they are conscious to themselves, they in any kind deserve.

2. There are some evils objected against the goodness of providence, that are incident to mankind in general. Among these are enumerated, with all the aggravating circumstances whereof they are capable, diseases and death, wars, pestilence, famine and earthquakes, the raging of the elements, of the sea in particular, with the madness of the people. To which, tho' a distinct answer might severally be given, it is sufficient, upon the whole matter, to say, that, according to the present state of things, without the constant interposition of a miraculous power, which the goodness of God does not oblige him to exert, and which it does not confift with his wisdom that he should exert; all these evils must, in the order of natural causes, unavoidably happen. brings them upon men, as he frequently does, by a positive or special appointment; the reasons of his governing the world, with the beneficial effects of these evils themselves to mankind, collectively consider'd, require that they should be inslicted; particularly, in order towards preventing too great an encrease of people in the world, and preserving in the minds of men a more awful sense of the divine power and justice.

THE death of infants, so soon as they are born into the world, or before the ends for which they are born, appear to be in any competent measure accomplished, is thought an objection that has something peculiar in it. But we need only propose the following

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considerations to disarm it of all its force; that, it is not necessary God should always over-rule the natural tendency of second causes; that, yet considering the many dangerous accidents incident to childhood, 'tis reasonable to believe, he prevents a great many more of them, than he permits; that the life of children, if continued to them, would not perhaps be of that consequence, either to the benefit of the publick, or to the satisfaction or interests of their parents, which is apprehended; that parents prove sometimes very unhappy in the disappointments or distress, even of the most promising and dutiful children; that young princes, in whose life or death whole nations are interested; and who, from the first essays of those great and shining qualities, which draw the eyes of the world upon them, raise the most assur'd expectations of their future glory and atchievements; may yet, in favour to themselves, be taken away from the evil to come (for the best princes are not always the most happy) or even perhaps in favour to the people; to whom the very goodness of a prince sometimes proves the accidental occasion of great misfortunes. time and change happen to all, and there is so great uncertainty as to all human events; it is much better for us, that the power of life and death should be in the hands of God, than that it should depend, in respect to those we have the nearest or greatest interest in, upon our own option. In a word; that we are not to judge concerning the goodness of providence from particular events, but the general ends and views of it; which, amidst so various a combination of causes, may sometimes be best serv'd by those methods, which appear to us most foreign and unaccountable.

But the answer, which removes all difficulties at once, on occasion of the greatest evils in this world, in what kind or degree, or on what persons soever inslicted, is taken from the consideration of another life; wherein we shall be persectly satisfy'd, that they were all meant to us for good; so far as we were proper objects of goodness: But if we suffer'd them as the proper effects of justice, then they do not relate to the present, but to a former article; wherein, so far as any appearance of a charge can be drawn from them against the divine providence, it has been sufficiently obviated.

THE difficulty in relation to the goodness of providence, that has been most perplexing, and given the greatest uneasiness even to the minds of good men, arises from the unequal dispensations of grace, and the means of religion, to the world. If a holy God may, consistently with the infinite perfections of his nature, preserve to men the natural powers, wherewith he originally endow'd

dow'd them, and so permit sin, or moral evil, in the world; yet as he willeth not the death of a sinner, but that all men should be sav'd; it might be hop'd from his goodness, that he would indifferently afford all men the means of avoiding sin, and working out their own salvation, that can possibly consist with the nature of human liberty.

How great soever this difficulty may be thought, it admits of a clear and easy solution, and in few words. For, first, we may reply to it, upon this general and incontested principle, that acts of goodness are arbitrary; and that God is not oblig'd to dispense his spiritual favours to all men, or, strictly speaking, to any man; for then they would not, contrary to the very supposition of those, by whom the difficulty is objected, be acts of grace; but, in a proper sense, of justice or debt. But, besides this consideration, it may be said, that God may sometimes deny those assistances of grace, even upon a pure motive of goodness, which yet his goodness eminently discovers itself in affording to others: And that is, when he foresees they will receive it in vain, or not make that good use and improvement of it, which others do; and thereby render themselves more severely accountable and obnoxious to his justice; which is never more irritated, than by a contempt of mercies receiv'd, and generally rises in proportion to the measures of them.

It is not then an objection against the goodness of providence, but an argument of it, that God so unequally dispenses his grace, or the means of religion to men; seeing, on occasion of his proceeding with them after this manner, it will be more tolerable at the day of judgment for some persons, for whole cities, and nations, collectively taken, than otherways it would have been. They, to whom the talents of divine grace are in any extraordinary measure committed, have reason to be thankful for so high a trust, and the opportunities of improving it to their greater advantage. They, to whom sewer talents have been given, are in general less accountable; but have no account at all to render, or returns to make, for those, which they never receiv'd.

The objections, in particular, against the goodness of providence, from the many sufferings and affictions of good men in this life, may all be answer'd upon one or more of the foregoing principles; without my descending to enlarge on the several beneficial ends, which providence may be supposed to have in them; for the trial of their faith, or to discover the greater power of it towards confirming the faith of others; or in order to correct some secret errors and escapes, which they have been guilty of. For there are sew men so good, who are not conscious to themselves,

selves, they deserve what they suffer; and perhaps, if they duly attend to the occasion and nature of their sufferings, upon what account. Lastly, not to enumerate all the reasons which have been alledg'd for the sufferings of good men in this life, and even with great force and evidence by many of the heathen moralists, particularly by Seneca and Plutarch; there is one reason, for the goodness of God in them, founded on the authority of an express revelation. Which perfectly removes all scruples at once, that can arise in our minds concerning them. Namely, that they are defign'd, in the event, to work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; to which they are not at present worthy to be compar'd. Tho' they are not indeed, even in this life, without those inward consolations, which highly tend to alleviate them; nor sometimes, in the course of God's providence, when some special end of his inflicting them has been answer'd, without a visible reward. It is sufficient, in order to a full vindication of the divine goodness from the charge before us, that we are assur'd by a special promise, which yet is highly agreeable to our natural expectations, that all things, shall work together for good, either here, or hereafter, or both, to them, that love God.



CHAP. VIII.

That the wisdom of God is conspicuous in all the dispensations of his providence.

HAT which directs and regulates the measures of all other moral perfections, and which may therefore be term'd the president virtue, is wisdom; which appears therefore to have the like office, in relation to the acts of the mind, that the eye has to the motions of the body. But the perfection of the divine wisdom being infinite, and the knowledge of it, in all the methods of God's designing and governing events, too excellent for us to attain unto; we must be satisfy'd, in order to our having some more distinct notion of it, with enquiring, what are the proper and most eminent acts of wisdom, in the contrivance or conduct of men; and thence with inferring, how vastly superior the divine wisdom must of necessity be in all those respects.

Now the most general maxims, by which wise men, or persons

reputed so, are observ'd to proceed, are these following.

I. THAT

I. That they propose to themselves some good and desirable end.

II. That they employ the most proper means in order to effect it.

III. When the most proper means, which wisdom can prescribe, are frustrated, that they make the best use and advantage, they

can, of the disappointment.

I. THAT they propose to themselves some good and worthy end. Were it not for the truth of this maxim, how artful soever men might be in employing or improving the proper means of effecting what they design; in discovering the several powers of them; in preventing a disappointment, or turning it upon some other pursuit; yet wildom could have no manner of use, or rather would be highly detrimental to those, who are posses'd of it; since to act without any good or worthy end, is worse than not to act or delign any thing at all. It is true (and herein the great defect of human prudence confifts) wife men are often impos'd upon by false appearances of good, and somerimes, for that reason, impatiently defire those things, that are prejudicial to their true, and most important interests: Or where the object of their desires is some real good, it frequently happens by one accident or other, in the natural order of things, to be the occasion of much trouble and disquiet to them. But the perfection of God's wisdom excludes, at once, all possibility of error in his choice, and of every ill accident, that can be suppos'd to happen in consequence of it. As he makes a perfect estimate of the true nature of things, and cannot be milled by appearances; so he knows all their possible combinations, and whatever will in the sequel of his providence result from them.

IL Wisdom having propos'd some good or worthy end, its next office is to employ the most proper means of effecting it. here again the wisdom of the wisest of men, is, generally speaking, but vain. For when several methods are propos'd at once, of effecting what they have in view, all of which appear probable; not knowing distinctly which of them, for that reason, to prefer, or whether it would best operate; they many times chuse that, which, in the progress of their endeavours, appears to have been the only thing that could have obstructed, if not perhaps, in the end, wholly frustrated the success of them. Even a greater extent of knowledge, is sometimes observed to make men commit the greater and more dangerous errors; their views, indeed, are more open and exalted; but they stand upon a precipice, from which, as there is more hazard of their fall, so the effects of it are commonly more fatal. Do not we often see, that men of slow understandings, $\mathbf{O} \circ \mathbf{o} \circ$

and servile employments, who, excepting the settled rules and natural progress of their industry, seem, in great measure, to act by chance; yet often succeed better, as to the affairs of this life, than those who have acquir'd a competent stock of reputation for their learning or ingenuity; and who would not be thought, by any means, or on any account, to act without a just or well concerted design? How often does a fine genius envy the fortune of that man, whom he despises for his ignorance; and what would not the Poet, with all his bright thoughts, sometimes give to change circumstances with the dull mechanick?

The errors of men, in mistaking the proper means of effecting their ends, not only appear from what passes every day in the lower scenes, and common affairs of life; but on occasion of the most considerable and important events, that happen in the world. How many battles, for instance, have been lost (if we consult history) under the conduct of the most experienc'd and wise Generals, by occasion of some accident? Whilst others have been, on the same account, gain'd, against all the rules of military prudence. But as God, who is wise in heart, cannot err in chusing the most proper means; so as he is mighty in strength, and foresees all accidents that can possibly happen, neither can he be obstructed in the conduct or execution of his designs.

III. Another rule of wisdom, when the most proper means it prescribes are frustrated, is to make the best use and advantage

possible of the disappointment.

I do not lay down this maxim, as if it were possible any thing should happen to frustrate what God has absolutely design'd; for who, or what can resist his will? But only to shew, that, in consequence of the free choice of men, to which he has determin'd to leave them, he fometimes permits those things to be done. which he does not approve. But since the order of things requires, that in particular cases, where men make an ill use of their liberty, certain actions should happen contrary to the general will and design of God, the highest act of wisdom is to over-rule them, towards the accomplishing some wise or good end. Thus the designs which were form'd, and for a considerable time carry'd on, to all appearance, for the destruction of Joseph, open'd at last in a beautiful and surprizing scene of providence towards him; and prov'd the very means of his future glory: And, in particular, of the accomplishment of that prophecy concerning his superiority over his brethren, which they were first undertaken, and intended to prevent:

THE scheme, which Haman had labour'd so much for the ruin of Mordecai, contributed no less evidently to his advancement, and the

the benefit of that people, whose nation and religion it was de-

fign'd to effect the extirpation of at once.

I might observe the like effects of a wise providence in the preservation of Daniel; whose unjust and severe usage so visibly contributed, not only to his own honour, but that of religion in general; by occasioning a decree for the worship of the true God, enforc'd by an acknowledgment, that no other God could deliver after the same sort.

THE wildom of man, indeed, tho' it may in some cases do much in this kind, yet is not always able to improve ill accidents to his advantage. Both the ignorance and the impotence of men render the aphorism, laid down by the author of the book of wisdom, particularly applicable on this occasion. The thoughts of mortal men are miserable; and our devices are but uncertain *. Especially when men, who have a reputation for wisdom, repose too great confidence in their own abilities or experience, without having recourse to God for his direction or assistance; or when, perhaps, they leave him in the conduct of their affairs, wholly out of the account. For, as the same excellent author says, in a pious acknowledgment to God, though a man be never so perfect among the children of men; yet if thy wisdom be not with him, he shall be nothing regarded †. It is therefore, at once, the peculiar prerogative and glory of the all-wife God, who perfectly knows the powers and progress of natural causes, with all events depending on human will, that he is able at all times, and when, in human appearance, there is the least prospect of such an over-ruling power, to bring good out of evil, and order out of confusion.

THERE are, notwithstanding, some objections against the wisdom of providence, which, before I conclude this head, I shall consider

the force of, in as narrow a compals as I can.

1. It is question'd, if a wise God govern the world, why is there so much disorder and injustice permitted? It being the principal

business of all wise governors to prevent such evils.

To this we answer, that God governs mankind in a way proper to their nature and condition; and to the great ends of his government, in distributing rewards and punishments to them in another life. But should he continually interpose, towards preventing any disturbance in society, or in order to promote the peace of it; to punish men so soon as they deserve punishment here, or immediately to reward them upon any good action; the motives to faith, and of obedience from the regards of another life, would be too much over-rul'd; and the sensible impression of such a pro-

cedure, would bear too hard upon the freedom of human will. Now where a wife agent may be suppos'd to have two or more ends in view, we are not to make a judgment concerning the wisdom of his conduct, from what he does in relation to any accidental or

subordinate, but to his principal end.

2. It is said farther, that a wise agent does nothing superfluous or in vain. And yet the rain is not only observ'd to fall where 'tis necessary to secundate the earth; but on the high ways; on the tiles of houses; or the leads of churches; where it rather appears incommodious. Whereas it may seem rather agreeable to the design of providence in sending rain, that the clouds should be directed to fall only, where the fruits of the earth require; as watering pots in a garden, are only cast over the beds, where the plants or flowers grow, and not over the walks or statues, where water would be not so much useless as inconvenient. This objection supposes, that God, in the distribution of the rain, ought to interpose by a continued series of miracles. But that would more effectually destroy the ends of his wildom, in governing men as free agents, and whose belief in his providence he would have the effect of choice, not of an overbearing evidence of sense; than his permitting natural causes to go on in their proper course, or according to their own way. If particular reasons therefore could not be assign'd for the fall of the rain in certain places, it is sufficient to say in general, there are reasons for the ends of providence for the promiscuous fall of it, superior to those, which are objected from the inconveniences, that attend it.

3. Another argument against the wisdom of providence, is taken from untimely or monstrous births; which are thought not very reconcileable to the conduct of a being, whose peculiar character it is, that, his way is always persect. But we have, in great measure, already prepared the answer to this objection. For since God governs the world by the most simple and general laws; and its not necessary he should, on every occasion, interpose to regulate any accidental disorder, which natural agents may fall into; it is unavoidable, but that irregular or strange productions should happen on one occasion or other. Considering, indeed, the simplicity of the laws of providence, it is much more surprizing, and tends to give us the highest apprehensions of the divine wisdom, that they do not happen in a much greater variety of instances.

4. But one of the greatest dissiculties in reference to the wisdom of providence, is pretended to have some foundation in certain passages of holy writ. It is argued, that if, as we are assured in them, God willeth the salvation of all men, all men must necessarily, of consequence, be sav'd. For where can be the wisdom of God, in willing,

willing, what, according to his own establish'd order of things in leaving men to their liberty, will never be executed? In answer to what is here objected, it is not necessary to say any thing farther, than that the whole force of it depends on a wrong and controverted sense of the term willing. Those who make this objection, intend by it an absolute will of God to save all men, without regard to any terms or conditions previously requir'd to their salva-And then indeed it would argue great imperfection in the scheme of God's providence, to design any thing, that would never take effect. But if we understand by the words, that God would have all men to be sav'd (and so the whole tenour of holy scripture obliges us to understand them) as his will imports a general defire to this end, on condition of their complying with the means of salvation, which he has prescrib'd; then his will is not frustrated, nor consequently his wisdom affected, if at last they perish, for want of performing that condition. It would rather argue a defect in the wisdom of God, if when he had propos'd, and by the most earnest and repeated instances, insisted upon the performance of such a condition, he should, after all, save men without any regard to it.



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SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK IV.

Of the *Articles of the Christian Faith, as contain'd in the Creed; commonly call'd the Apostle's Creed.

ARTICLE I.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

CHAP. I. I believe.



HE latin word, which is render'd, I believe, and from which the whole confession of our faith is here call'd the Creed; the but twice express'd in it, yet is to be understood as presix'd to every article; and to every part or branch of any article, that may be resolv'd

into more propositions than one. It being therefore a word of so great and general importance, I shall in the first place endeavour

^{*} In justice to my very worthy and learned friend Dr. Waterland, master of Magdalen-College in Cambridge; I think it here incumbent on me publickly to acknowledge, that I owe in a manner the whole exposition of the two first articles of the Creed, to the papers he was pleas'd to favour me with. Yet I have taken the liberty allow'd me, to his disadvantage, I confess, of expressing my self ordinarily in my own way, and even of inserting some sew things, which I apprehended might not be altogether unuseful. Tho' I have been less injurious to him in both these respects, upon the subject of the Trinity; to which he has apply'd his thoughts with so great care and accuracy, and to so excellent purpose.

to discover, and in as distinct a manner as I can, the full import

and meaning of it.

WHEN I say, I believe, I intend the same thing, as if I should say, I assent to this or that proposition; I receive it for truth; and make it an article of my belief or faith. But because faith and belief may be distinctly consider'd; faith, as a species of belief; and belief of judgment; that I may more clearly prosecute the subject before me, it will be necessary that I should carry my enquiries as high as judgment; and so gradually resolve it into its proper kinds. But before I can do this, it may be convenient that I should examine and settle the true signification of the word; which, in common acceptation, is ambiguous, and stands for very different ideas.

We may observe, in general, two senses of the word; the one improper; the other proper. The latter of which is what we are

now principally concern'd in.

THERE is one sense of the word judgment, which I call improper; tho' it has obtain'd in the schools, and pass'd current in our systems of logick and philosophy, for a considerable time. The operations of the understanding have been commonly referr'd to three heads; simple perception, judgment, and discourse. By the first of which is meant the naked view and perception of a thing objected to the mind, without our affirming or denying any thing of it. By the second is understood our uniting or separating the ideas of the mind, by affirming or denying one thing of another. By the third, our deducing one thing from another.

But all these three distinctions are reducible to one general head, and are, in truth, but so many perceptions. The first is perception, without dispute, and so may be term'd simple. The second, call'd judgment, is nothing but the relation of ideas one to another, and so is a complex perception. Discourse, the last of the three, is nothing else but the perception of that relation, which is between two ideas, by the intervention of a third; and so is a complex perception, as well as the former; only with this difference, that judgment is a complex immediate perception; discourse a complex mediate perception. The operations therefore of the understanding are all reducible to one; namely, to perception, simple or complex; and complex is divided into mediate and immediate. The last of which has gone under the name of judgment.

But there is another sense of the word judgment, which more peculiarly concerns us, and ought to be carefully explain'd. It is the determination which the mind makes of the truth or falshood

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of any thing propounded to it. This differs from perception in

many respects. For,

1. The mind is passive in every perception, as it is in sensation, receiving the ideas which offer themselves as they are, and which cannot possibly be receiv'd otherways. But in determining upon the truth or falshood of any thing, the mind is active. And this very determination, call'd the last judgment or dictate of the understanding (it should rather be said of the mind) is the principle of action, influencing and informing the whole man, consider'd as a moral agent.

2. Perception is always true, and necessarily what it is; and consequently infallible. For a man cannot be deceived in what he perceives; any more than he can be in what he sees, hears, or feels. What he does not truly feel, hear, or see, he does not feel, hear, or see; and what he does not truly and really perceive, he perceives not at all, but only imagines he perceives. Perception therefore is infallible. Whereas judgment is often uncertain, precarious and fallible. It may be true, or it may be false; it may be right, or wrong; as it happens in a thousand cases, where the

mind has no clear or distinct apprehension of things.

3. JUDGMENT is often without perception, or goes before it; and therefore certainly is not perception itself. This is the case in all salse and erroneous judgments, which men make precipitately; when either they are impatient of examining, or under the power of some prejudice or blind passion, which hurries them on to make the conclusion, before they have duly consider'd the premises. Even when perception and judgment go together, yet they are manifestly distinct acts of the mind; and differ from one another, as the cause does from the effect. For we respectively judge a thing to be, or not to be, for this reason; because we perceive it is, or that it is not. The mind sully acquiesces in either determination; because she sully discovers the different grounds of it.

4. That perception of the evidence, and judgment of the conclusion, are very different, appears farther from hence; that tho' the evidence be no more than probable, yet the mind often receives the conclusion for true and certain; and with as much assurance, as if there were the most evident proofs of it. Perception therefore (which is the conclusion I would draw) is one thing, and judgment another.

This being establish'd, let us proceed one step farther to enquire, what power of the mind judgment belongs to? Whether to the understanding or to the will; as it has been customary to di-

stinguish

stinguish the operations of it. The use of this enquiry will appear presently. It is not the effect of a vain or fruitless curiosity; but of such importance, that neither the nature of human liberty, nor the true soundations of morality, can be rightly understood without it.

Now, from what hath been already observed, it appears very plain, that judgment is an act or power of the will. For since it certainly belongs to the mind of man, and is not perception, which is all that properly relates to the understanding, it must be referred to that operation of it, which we call will. The understanding is passive in receiving its ideas or notices of things; the will active in the choice it makes. Therefore since judgment has been proved to be an act of the mind, and a principle of action; and is generally, indeed, acknowledged to be so, it must necessarily belong to that active power of it, which we call the will.

YET this plain and certain truth has not so generally obtain'd, as it ought, and as might reasonably have been expected. Tho' perhaps the revival of the controversy concerning human liberty, may have some good effect, in order to establish so necessary a principle; it being the best, I will venture to say, the only key to open all the mysteries of that subject, and to let us into the true state of it, which has been commonly thought and complain'd of as so impervious to human understanding. For the sundamental error, which has render'd the controversy about it so intricate and dark, arose wholly from hence; that men have referr'd judgment to the understanding, as a distinct faculty of the mind; instead of referring it, as they should have done, to the will, the true and proper source of it.

By this method (if I may be here allow'd to resume the subject of human liberty, in order to some farther illustration of so dissipantly and by this method only, morality is establish'd upon its true basis. All our miscarriages and disorders are owing to the abuse of our liberty; to those acts of the will, those precipitate erroneous judgments we make before the understanding is permitted to apprehend or see things in a true light. The foundation of every irregularity we are guilty of, lies in an erroneous sentence; not of the understanding, for that passes no sentence; but in general, if you please, of the mind; or, if we specify the proper and distinct power exerted on this occasion by it, of the will.

This distinction, well considered, will fully obviate all the difficulties relating to human liberty. Which is no inconsiderable advantage arising from our position, that judgment is an act of the will. However, because so important a truth cannot be explicated

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in too clear or particular a manner; I shall proceed to enquire into the nature and extent of that freedom, which I ascribe to the mind, in the judgments made by it. As such an enquiry may farther contribute, for that is the great scope of my present design, to enlighten the subject of faith; and to shew us, in what respects it is a virtue, and in what it is not; and how far men may be look'd upon as masters of their own faith.

SECT. I. Of liberty of judgment.

HERE are two principles, or hatural instincts, if I may so call them, which put a bar to our liberty of judging; and which we must therefore always consider it with a reserve to. The first of these obstacles consists in our attachment to truth, already perceiv'd. The second in our continual and invincible desire of good.

I. In the first place, it must be allow'd, that a distinct and clear perception extorts and commands our assent; the mind is overborn and captivated by the force of it, without any power of resistance. The will immediately yields and submits to it, and is so far under a moral necessity of coming to a determination in favour

of what it perceives.

YET were there nothing but clear and distinct perception to obstruct or restrain our liberty, there would still be scope enough for
the play and exercise of it. For there are things innumerable
which fall under our consideration, that are far from affording us
so clear and irresistible an evidence, as must necessarily determine
the mind, one way or other, to come to a certain or absolute decision concerning them. And as to those few things, in comparison, which might afford the mind, when attended to, such an evidence, the will has, in great measure, a power of intercepting the
light of them, of denying attention to it, or turning away from
it. And then as to any effect upon the mind, it will be the same
thing, as if they had been, in their own nature, much more intricate and obscure.

THEY, who have well consider'd human nature, will believe this to be very possible; and will hardly imagine the will to want any liberty in this respect; or to be necessarily determin'd on the side of the clearest truths; such, I mean, as, upon a due and strict examination, would appear so. They will be apt to suspect, that

that the byass on our minds runs strongly the other way; and that men are rather under a necessity of determining, where they have no clear or distinct perception; or against such truths; as do, or might upon the least attention, afford it. But however, there is certainly no necessity of determining except one way, and in one case; and that is where the mind perceives clearly and distinctly the truths propos'd, and attended to by it. So great is the goodness of the creator towards mankind, that tho' he has, in some cases, put us under a necessity of determining right; yet he has in no case necessitated us to determine, nor, consequently, to chuse wrong. If we then consider the principle before mention'd; as laying a restraint upon our liberty, it is observable we have, notwithstanding, full liberty to assent or dissent, or to suspend judgment, either when we can have no clear and distinct perception, or where we will have none. So that there are yet grounds large

errough for our liberty to act and expatiate itself in.

II. But there is another principle, which brings our liberty still within a narrower compass; a continual and invincible desire of good, founded in self-love; which suffers us not to suspend our judgment, in cases, where, having no clear or distinct perception, we might otherways do so; because it is very necessary for our ease and quiet, that we should come to a determination one way or other. So that, by this principle, the liberty of suspending absolutely, is confin'd chiefly to speculative points, or matters of no immediate concernment to our interests. However, there is liberty still left, if not of suspending, yet of determining as we please, or as we think most proper. And since we are apt to consider, from the sensible impression they make on us, the present good or evil, to be the greatest good or evil; it is owing to this mistake, and the precipitate sentence it occasions, that all our sins, disorders, and impieties are committed. That men make such rash and erroneous judgments, is every moment visible; and it is too plain they form the rules of their conduct by them. Yet they are so far from being necessitated, after all, to make such judgments, that they often question the truth of them at the same time, they are in particular cases, or under any violent circumstances of temptations, led into them:

IT follows from what has been said, that neither our attachment to truth, clearly perceiv'd, obliges us to perceive, what we either cannot, or will not perceive; nor our incessant desire of good necessitate us to believe that to be our true good, which, how desirable soever it may appear, really is not so. Men, notwithstanding, are in general left very much to their own liberty; and so far, that their judgments may, in most cases, be call'd their own judgments.

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judgments. From the principles foregoing, I shall take occasion to deduce and lay down these five observations.

to incline them at any time to determine one way or other, in matters where they have no clear or distinct perception, are under

no temptation either to judge, or to act amis.

2. All beings, whose understandings are so perfect, as to see clearly, on every occasion, the truth and reality of all things, to which I may add their several relations, must necessarily both judge and act right. Yet their determinations, however voluntary, are not, in a proper sense, free.

3. The freedom of such beings can only be understood in opposition to a physical necessity; they are under a moral necessity both of chusing and doing well. And such a necessity is a perfe-

ction, and a happiness proper to a state of glory.

4. THE freedom of man may be understood in opposition both to moral and physical necessity. It is respectively a perfection or an impersection, as we compare it with the state of creatures below him, or of beings above him. This kind of freedom is pro-

per chiefly, if not folely, to a state of probation.

5. Since it is apparent that our judgments influence our practice, and that we frequently both judge and act wrong; the latter error being the inevitable consequence of the former; if we be under any moral necessity of judging at all; either there is no such thing, properly speaking, as sin; or this supposition makes God the author of sin, as well as of our false judgments and deceptions. Which implying a contradiction to the clearest ideas we have of the divine nature and persections, it must follow, that our false judgments are our own, chargeable upon us as such, and therefore not necessary; and so not properly belonging to the understanding, whose perceptions or operations are all necessary. They must then belong to the will; and are properly so many volitions or acts of it. And consequently, upon the whole matter, willing and judging will be in this sense, philosophically and strictly speaking, the same.

HAVING thus examin'd, what the general notion of judgment is, and wherein it consists, it may not be improper for me, in pursuance of my design, to reduce it under its several kinds. The first and immediate division of it, is into affirmative and negative. Affirmative, when we judge any thing to be; negative, when we judge it not to be. The first is call'd assent or belief; the second disbelief or denial. Suspending is properly neither assenting nor denying, neither believing nor disbelieving; in a word, it is not judging, but the preventing or deferring judgment, till some

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farther evidence may oblige us to give it. As to the negative branch of the division, I shall satisfy my self with having barely mention'd it; the affirmative only being of present importance to our enquires, which comes next in order to be consider'd.

SECT. II.

Of belief or affent in general.

Here take the word belief in its largest signification, as denoting any kind of assent, or degree of it, upon whatever ground or motive it may arise: For this alters not the nature of belief in general, but only serves to specify its several kinds. Some would confine the notion of belief to those matters only, whereof we have no infallible or demonstrative evidence; and so oppose it to knowledge, strictly so call'd. Which is a very improper notion of it, on a double account. First, because one kind of assent, if opposed to any thing, should be opposed to another kind of assent. Whereas knowledge is not affent, but the cause or ground of affent. And, secondly, because allowing that knowledge should signify asfent, grounded upon infallible evidence; yet why may not the word belief signify that too, and so knowledge be a species of it? There is no impropriety in saying, we believe the existence of God, tho' we know it by a clear and infallible deduction of rea-And, I presume, that the apostles in general, or Thomas in particular, who were eye-witnesses of our Lord's resurrection, might have been properly said to believe it, however evident to sense. Believing therefore may very well fignify affenting in general.

I shall here then consider the words belief and assent, as terms fynonymous, or equivalent; and my next business, now that the signification of the name is settled, is to enquire into the nature,

and true notion of the thing.

Belief being a species of judgment, must imply every thing that judgment does in general. As man being a species of the animal creation, must have all the properties requir'd to constitute an animal. Belief therefore must be an act of the mind, as judgment is; or an habit of the mind, if we consider that act repeated, and so an habitual belief will be a species of habitual judgment. It must be always voluntary, as judgment has been shewn to be; tho not always free. And as it must have all that judgment hath in general, so it must have something special to distinguish it from any other kind of judgment. And that is discover'd in its being Rrrr

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Book IV.

affirmative, to distinguish it from negative judgment. There is also this difference between belief and judgment in general, that belief may be often free, where judgment is not. For we may be oblig'd in certain cases to judge one way or other, where we are not oblig'd to believe. If the question, for instance, were put, whether there shall be a future state of rewards and punishments? This is a question of such concernment to us, and upon the resolution of which our conduct in this life so much depends, that a man who thinks at all, it might be expected, would find himself under a kind of moral necessity, for his own ease or quiet, to determine one way or other about it. But since determining either way may be sufficient to free him from the uneasiness of suspence; he will still be left at liberty either to believe or disbelieve. And therefore may thus far be look'd upon as free in respect of believing, tho' And the like case might happen in a thousand not of judging. other instances.

What has been said of judgment in general, that where the mind has a clear and distinct perception, there judgment must follow of course according to the perception, is so far applicable to belief, that where there is a clear perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, there belief or assent must follow. And tho' there be no such perception, yet assent or belief may follow. The mind being free to imagine an agreement, where the understanding really perceives none; and so to receive the conclusion with as little doubt or scruple, as if it had been clearly deduc'd from the premises. Which is the case of all persons, particularly of all enthusiasts, in the rash and erroneous judgments they make; and to which, notwithstanding, they many times tenaciously adhere.

HAVING thus stated and consider'd the nature and properties of belief in general; I shall proceed to observe the grounds and motives upon which it arises, and the several degrees of it. Which, as they serve to specify the particular kinds of belief or assent, so will they help to give us farther light into the present subject.

SECT.

SECT. III.

Of the grounds and motives of assent.

I. HE proper ground of belief or assent is evidence; rational evidence: For to believe without reason, is the same thing as to believe without any ground. And where the evidence is not rational, it is not real, but apparent only. We do but fancy we see it, when, in truth, we do not see it. It is not therefore evidence, strictly so call'd. Whatever it be; it is not the ground, but some false motive of the assent, which follows upon it.

ALL rational evidence is the medium, by the intervention of which, the mind discovers, that the subject and predicate of the proposition it assents to, are connected. And the mind proceeds as to this evidence either in the way of reasoning from the cause to the effect, or from the effect to the cause, or else from the abfurdity of supposing what is false. Thus, in the evidence of sense, our own sensation is the medium, and the argument is from effect to cause; or else from the absurdity of supposing that our senses should, under such circumstances, impose upon us. In the evidence of testimony, testimony itself is the medium; and the argument proceeds either from the nature or circumstances of it, or else from some absurdity arising upon a supposition of its not being true. In the evidence of abstracted reason, the medium is an abstracted idea; and the argument may proceed in either of the ways before mention'd. Evidence therefore may be conveniently distinguish'd into pure and mix'd. I call that pure evidence, which confists entirely of abstract ideas, that neither suppose nor infer the existence of any external object, as in mathematical demonstrati-Mix'd evidence takes in such facts, with their proper circumstances, as we have seen or heard, or concerning which we have read. This mix'd fort of evidence may be again divided into evidence of sense, and evidence of testimony, divine or human. There is also another general and convenient distinction of evidence, into intrinsick and extrinsick. Intrinsick is that which arises from the nature and properties of the subject, its consistency and agreement in the several parts and circumstances of it, and their mutual subserviency to the same common end and design; as we have observ'd concerning the internal proofs of the christian revelation. External evidence, is that which arises from testimony, or such collateral proofs (whether from sense, history, or tradition) concerning any doctrine or fact, which are proper to establish

blish the truth, and induce our belief of them; as may appear from what has been said concerning the external proofs of the The last, and one of the most important christian revelation. distinctions of evidence, which I shall observe, is that of infallible and fallible. Infallible, where the connexion is clear and certain, as in strict demonstrations, or immediate inspiration. Fallible, where the connexion is not so immediate, or so perfectly visible. The former of these evidences is irresistible, and penetrates the mind with a force, which it is oblig'd to yield and affent to. The latter does not so necessarily captivate the mind; but yet may be strong enough to induce a firm and rational assent. Divine testimony is infallible evidence; there being a clear and certain agreement of the parts, or terms, in this proposition; whatever God reveals is true. As clear and certain, as that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones. Human evidence is consider'd in itself fallible; yet it may be attended with such strong circumstances, and in so great variety, as to render us equally unreasonable in making a doubt of it, as in disputing the plainest mathematical or moral truth in the world. Tho' fuch a testimony therefore, barely consider'd, as human, may be accounted fallible; yet all the parts of it being laid and compar'd together, may have sufficient force to persuade our assent, as if it had been really infallible. As where, for instance, it can be made appear by reasons drawn from the justice or goodness of God; or from the nature and faculties of men, that such testimony (and such is the testimony we have produc'd in proof of the christian religion) ought either to be admitted as true, or cannot, without the greatest absurdity, be suppos'd false. Evidence of sense is in like manner of itself, and under a general consideration, fallible. But all circumstances and cases considered, with the several collateral reasons and proper consequences of it, it has, for the most part, the force of an infallible evidence. Yet if any one thinks, that evidence of sense, and evidence of testimony are improper phrases; and contends, that all evidence, strictly speaking, is evidence of reason; and that the other ought rather to be call'd, the means of information by sense or testimony; or simply of information by sense; I shall not contest with him about words, so long as we still agree in the thing itself, or in the following conclusion; that the ground and foundation of all rational assent, is reason; or the perception of the agreement between the subject and the predicate, by whatever means we come to perceive it: Whether by consulting such ideas of our mind, as are more abstracted; or by reflecting on the sensations we have felt; or the attestaattestations we have receiv'd from others; or by all these means together.

HITHERTO I have consider'd only the grounds of assent, it may be useful, as I design'd, to subjoin a few remarks, about what I call'd,

II. Motives, as distinguish'd from the proper grounds or foundations of belief.

THESE are inducements inclining the will to assent, whether with or without evidence: And they are either internal or foreign. Internal are such as arise from natural temper or inclination; from our passions or habits; from the method of study; from prejudice; or any quality of mind more peculiar to the person affected by them. Foreign inducements of this kind, are such as depend on outward or accidental circumstances; as to education, authority, example, the motions of the Holy Spirit, or the suggestions of evil spirits. Every thing, in short, is reducible to these motives, that moves, or inclines the will to affent to such evidence as is offer'd; whether weak, or strong; precarious, or certain; distinct, or obscure. When motives of assent arise from rational grounds, the mind more easily opens to the evidence, and more firmly embraces it. The assent becomes, for that reason, more agreeable, as well as more strong and permanent. When at other times, upon any finister motives, we blindly or obstinately assent to what is propos'd, without, or even against reason, they may be justly call'd the motives of an irrational assent. And yet, reproachful as they are to human nature, we shall discover them, in fact, to be too ordinary and frequent, if we do but observe, how easily we are induc'd to believe what we wish or desire; and to receive for truth whatever the imagination represents as agreeable to our passions, or convenient with respect to our interests. If it be objected, that our wishes and desires arise from some previous judgment: For why should a man wish or desire one thing more than another, but because he judges it preferable? To this I answer, that, admitting the false or foolish desires of men do arise from some previous judgment; it may still be true, that those defires will excite or occasion other judgments, as erroneous as the first; and so one absurdity or folly, as is too common and natural, will draw on a train of like consequences, if not still more absurd and foolish in the progress of them. Yet the leading error, and rash judgment, upon which all the rest depend, is from hence; that what appears to be good and desirable in part, or in one view, we judge to be so in the whole, collectively taken, if not separately in every part. But why it may be question'd, after all, do we make such a judgment? It is because we wish to have the good SIII

without the evil attending it, or which, in the natural order of things, will follow it. In consequence of which, with all our attention to the good part, as we apprehend it, is taken up; and we resolve to see nothing farther; or if we cannot avoid some transient and imperfect view of the bad part (which it is sometimes imposfible that we should) still it is in our power, either by false colours in great measure to lessen the desormity of it, or suspend those enquiries concerning it, which might be necessary to set it before us in a more clear and open light. It is from this abuse of our liberty, in neglecting to make all the use we might make of our rational faculties, that the origin of all fin, of all error, and folly, is primarily to be resolv'd. An abuse arising from these two general heads; a strong propensity to some particular good; and our want of attention to the evil, which would more than overballance it; either because we will not see it, or chuse to see it under some false and flattering disguise. Hereby we become chargeable, both for willing what we should not; and for not willing what we should: That is, both for the abuse of the faculties God has given us, and for our neglecting to employ them. for the abuse, whether positive or negative, of our liberty.

What has been said, will not, I hope, be thought too great a digression from my principal subject. I shall be the more excusable, at least, for stepping a little out of the way, in order to take in and settle so material a point, as that of the morality of hu-

man actions, and into which only it can be refolv'd.

HAVING consider'd the grounds and motives of assent, it may not be improper, in the next place, to say something as to the several degrees of it, so far as they are known to us, or we have any terms, whereby to express them.

SECT. IV.

Concerning the degrees of affent.

HEN the mind assents firmly and perfectly to any thing propos'd to it, and without the least doubt, or appearance of dissiculty; this is the highest degree of belief; and may be call'd a rational assurance, in opposition to that which is false or ill grounded: For we often observe, that men put on the same air of assurance, with, or without grounds; according to their different dispositions, or the circumstances they are under. As a Christian, a Mahometan, or a Pagan, may have equally strong persuasions.

fuasions, tho' not founded upon equal evidence. We may apply this observation to the different sects among them. A firm and full persuasion therefore, upon good grounds, is what, for the sake of distinction, I term'd a rational assurance. That which is ill grounded, tho' equally strong, and many times, to appearance, stronger, may properly be express'd by considence or presumption.

As to rational assurance, tho' that may be thought the highest degree of it, which is founded on strict and clear demonstration; yet neither is it always so in fact. Neither is there any reason why it should be so. There may be evidence short of strict demonstration, or propos'd in a different method, sufficient to remove all reasonable grounds of doubt or scruple concerning the truth of it. Now since the brightest and strongest evidence of all can do no more, it will follow, there may be a rational assurance, and the highest degree of it, where, notwithstanding, the grounds of our assent are not the same. And that such assurance is not therefore constantly fortify'd or weaken'd, according to the different nature or kind of the evidence, upon which it is founded.

Having observ'd this, concerning the highest degree of affent, I should next descend to the subordinate or lower degrees of it. But here we want proper and distinct terms. For how indeed should we assign them for the information of others, when the difference, as to such degrees, in so many cases, is almost imperceptible to our selves; and it would be as easy for us precisely and distinctly to define any certain degree of pain or pleasure, of heat or cold, whereof we are fensible, as to explain in terms peculiarly adapted to that purpose, every different affection or sentiment of the mind, arifing from the feveral degrees of evidence. When there is any considerable abatement, as to that degree of it, which we call assurance, we have the word opinion to substitute in the room of it; and, if we descend yet lower, that of conjecture; or some other diminutive term to signify that our assent grows still weaker and weaker, till at last it is but one remove on this side of suspense. And if we still suppose the mind carry'd on to the least or the most insensible degree beyond suspence, there begins the first degree of dissent; which may likewise be imagin'd to proceed gradually, till it reaches the last pitch of disbelief or infidelity. Thus a full assent, and dissent, are the two extremities, wherein the several degrees of evidence terminate; and the intermediate degrees of them, may be consider'd as gradual approaches towards each other, till they both, at last, meet, and are lost in suspence.

THUS

Thus I have endeavour'd to explain the nature of belief in general; together with the grounds, motives, and degrees of it. I shall now proceed to treat of faith, which I represented as a species of belief; and with an eye to which, I thought proper to lay down these previous considerations; to the end so nice a subject might be treated of with greater accuracy; and the ease and benefit of the reader, in going along with me, be more effectually consulted.

SECT. V. Of faith.

HO' faith is a word of the last importance; yet there is scarce any word, as 'tis commonly us'd, of more ambiguous or uncertain signification. It would be difficult to enumerate the several ideas, or the several complications of them, which it has been made to stand for. This term alone has occasion'd many long, intricate, and warm disputes; wherein not only private persons, but whole communities have sometimes interested themselves. Tho', after all, such disputes have been often little more than verbal; the disputants, as to the main, agreeing in the thing; and differing chiefly, because they apply'd the name to different or indistinct ideas.

Some have made obscurity, or want of a clear light, essential to faith; grounding their opinion principally on two texts of * St. Paul; where faith stands for a strong and lively hope; or however for the belief of a suture state.

If this be the true notion of faith, the belief of St. Thomas concerning the resurrection was not true faith: Nor the belief of the first christians upon the evidence of sense, concerning several other articles of the creed.

OTHERS will have a certain degree of assurance, to be an essential article of faith. According to which notion, a doubtful, weak, or wavering faith, is not faith.

OTHERS, again, think it necessary to include the proper effects and fruits of faith, in the notion of it. According to which, a man may firmly believe all the articles of the creed, and yet have no faith.

* Heb. 11. 1. 2 Cor. 5. 7.

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WHEN we speak, indeed, of justifying faith; or that faith, in consideration of which, God, out of his great goodness, is pleas'd to accept or repute us, as just; this, we grant, does imply an actual obedience to his laws; at least, an habitual disposition of mind to obey him, in the several instances of our duty, on every proper opportunity of reducing it to act. But faith, in this sense, does not fall directly at present under our consideration. However having incidentally mention'd it, I shall here take occasion to fay something upon that article of our church, the sense of which has been very much controverted; Of the justification of men *. It is declar'd in this article, that, we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith. And, that we are justify'd by faith only. From which words, some have inferr'd it to be the doctrine of our church, that faith justifies men before God, exclusive of works, or without any regard to them, as a condition of their being justify'd. If this were the true sense of the article, how is it possible for any m an to distinguish that faith in the merits of Christ which is saving, from that which we call purely historical, and which is comm on to the most wicked and corrupt christians? If it be said, that justifying faith consists in a particular application of the merits of Christ's death to our particular persons; but that a faith purely historical can make no such application; this, we answer, is spoken precariously, and is even contrary, indeeed, to acknowledg'd fact; it being certain, there are great numbers of those, whom our adversaries, as to this point, will not allow to be in a justify'd state, who yet firmly believe the general redemption of mankind by the death of Christ; and consequently their own interest in it, in particular. And indeed, if faith alone, without any regard to works, justify men, all men, who equally affent to the truth of this proposition, Christ dy'd for all, must of necessity have an equal interest in the salutary effects of his death.

2. That which distinguishes therefore a saving from an historical faith, cannot lie in a particular application of the merits of Christ's death to our particular persons, which it was design'd, upon this principle, should indifferently extend to all men. But the distinction between these two sorts of faith will be founded in the different degrees of assent. He, for instance, who is suppos'd to have the saving faith, must believe that Christ dy'd for him upon some more convincing and brighter evidence arising in his mind, than he who is only said to have an historical faith. According to this account, justifying faith will admit of the degrees of more

* Art. 11.

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or less; and he who has a stronger persuasion of this truth, that Christ dy'd for all men, and for him, in particular, will, for that reason, be in a better or higher state of justification, than he whose persuasion of the like truth, is less strong; tho' it may, notwithstanding, rise so high, as to be a saving faith. I shall add, that to found the formal reasons of justifying faith in the stronger degrees of conviction or assurance, may be the occasion of betraying men into very dangerous errors and illusions of mind. As, upon this principle, persons of a sanguine or assuming temper, may be too apt to speak peace to themselves without any other reason, and when there is no peace; so others, of a temper naturally more diffident or melancholy, may lie under great dispondency of mind for want of perceiving in themselves those lively and sensible emotions; which are thought necessary to distinguish the faith which justifies, from that which implies only a rational, however firm assent, to the doctrine of Christ's death; and the universal attonement made by it.

3. Neither can we, according to the sense of the article, be justify'd by faith, in opposition to all manner of works; because faith, consider'd as an act of the mind, is, in that respect, a work or proper operation of it. The distinction, that faith, the faith which justifies, tho' it be an act of the mind; yet does not justify as an act of the mind, is so nice and curious, that it serves only to discover the difficulties which the authors of it find themselves under, in answer to what is here objected to them. Neither can it be conceiv'd that the gospel, which was calculated for the instruction of mankind in general, should render the most important, and, in the opinion of those against whom I am arguing, in a manner, the only necessary article of it, above all others, the most abstruse and unintelligible, whether with respect to ordinary, or the most improv'd and strong capacities. Now if faith be a work of the mind, the stronger persuasion any one has, that his faith is such as justifies, it will still operate in him after a more strong, lively, and effectual manner.

4. FAITH, according to the letter of the article, is not oppos'd to works in general, or to such works, as, through the grace of God, are the natural and genuine effects of it; but to our own works or deservings: That is, to works done, or pretended to be done, by virtue of any natural power or strength in our selves, without God's special direction or assistance; and, upon the performance whereof, we may be so vain as to arrogate to our selves any merit. But it is one thing to say, that works, even such as proceed from a due use we make of the talents of divine grace committed to us, are not meritorious towards our be-

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ing justify'd; and another thing to say, we may be justify'd without them. That our justification cannot be owing to any works, which it may be in our power, exclusive of the grace of God, to perform; or upon any pretence of merit, by occasion of them, is very evident from the words of the article. Yet this does not prove, but that such works, as slow from a lively and operative faith, in concurrence with God's grace, may be essential to our justification by it. Whether faith be not the primary, or more immediate condition of our being justify'd, I shall not dispute. It is sufficient, that without obedience, or an habitual disposition to perform it, no man can be justify'd; and that every man therefore is oblig'd, as he would give any evidence to himself or others, that he is in a salvable state, to shew his faith by his works.

5. I call faith a condition, because, strictly speaking, neither faith nor works do justify; that is, neither of them are a meritorious, but only an instituted means of justification. It is God that justifies; and, as the article expressly affirms, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. God, who, of his own free goodness, has offer'd a new covenant to us, through the mediation of Christ; in whom if we believe, and accept him as Christ; that is, in all his mediatorial offices, as a Prophet to instruct, a King to govern, and not only under the notion of a Priest to attone or intercede for us; we shall be at present receiv'd to grace and favour, and hereafter judicially acquitted of all guilt, how great or numerous soever our sins have been. For, in a strict sense, we are not justify'd till the final sentence is pass'd upon us, and has declar'd us to be so. As a man, in a damnable state, is said to be condemn'd already; because, should he die in such a state, his damnation would be necessarily consequent to it. So the faishful are faid to be justify'd, because, as such, they are in a state of favour with God; and, if they live and die in such a state, shall be finally justify'd. But as a wicked man may, by a lively faith and true repentance, escape the the sentence of damnation, to which he is, in his present state, obnoxious: So the faithful, by their future apostasy, may fall from the salvable state they are now in, and, by that means, notwithstanding, finally perish. What is here said, persectly agrees with the sense of St. Paul concerning justification. He every where understands it of our being put in a state of reconciliation or favour with God; and not of our being absolutely or eventually acquitted from all those sins, whereby we may be afterwards charg'd.

THAT persons, in a state of grace, may fall from it, (and there is consequently a necessity of understanding justification in this sense)

is evident from a great number of passages in holy scripture. That of the prophet Ezekiel is so full and express to this purpose. that I need not recite any other. When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done, shall not be mention'd: In his trespass, that he hath trespass'd; and in his sin, that he hath sinned: in them shall he die *. And the reason of this proceeding, is asfign'd particularly in the sequel of the chapter. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God †. Whereas if faith were the only cause, or rather condition of our being justify'd; the final sentence to be pass'd upon us, wherein justification formally, and in the strict sense confifts, would not depend on any judgment God might make according to our ways; or, as it is express'd in the New Testament, according to our works; but upon the enquiry to be made concerning the nature or evidence of our faith. It is not usual, in reciting the reasons of any award, to leave out the principal condition upon which it is made: But it is contrary to all usage to leave out the only effential condition of making it, and barely to recite what is accidental to it.

But to say something farther concerning this doctrine, since I have mention'd it, of the possibility, and something more it may be fear'd than a bare possibility, of our falling from a state of grace; it is a doctrine, conformable to the sense of the holy scriptures, expressly asserted by our church; which, in another article declares; that, aster we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin ‡: This, considering the dependence this doctrine has, and is so universally confess'd to have on that of absolute predestination, may be occasionally observed as a farther argument, why the seventeenth article ought not to be explain'd in the more rigid, or calvinistical sense; but in a sense agreeable to the nature of faith and repentance, as antecedently conditional means of our being sav'd.

Some pious and learned men have, notwithstanding, strenuously maintain'd the opposite doctrine, concerning the necessity of final perseverance by the saints, and even cited certain texts of scripture to support it. But, without entring upon a particular examination of them, I shall satisfy my self with observing in general, that they are far from being either so numerous or clear to their purpose, as those, on the other side, are against them; that they import rather God's general will and intention, that men should

^{*} Ezek. 18. 24.

finally persevere, than his effecting their final perseverance by any such over-ruling method of his grace, as 'tis impossible for them to resist; and lastly, that the promises, in particular, which God is said to have made to the faithful; that, they shall not depart from him *; that he will confirm them unblameable unto the end †; and persect the good work begun in them to the day of the Lord ‡. That these and the like promises, I say, are not to be understood absolutely, but with such restrictions, as may consist with the nature of human liberty, and the means of salvation God has prescrib'd to us, in this probationary state.

Ir we judge abstractedly, or without regard to the authority of scripture, concerning the doctrine of final perseverance, neither of the reasons, which have been commonly produc'd for it, are

of any force.

It is said, in the first place, this is a most comfortable doctrine, as it establishes the faithful in a firm belief concerning the certainty of their salvation. But how does it follow, that a doctrine is therefore true, because it is comfortable? If this argument prov'd any thing, it would prove, that the truth of things does not depend on the nature or intrinsick reasons of them, but on their relative use and subserviency to our interests.

AFTER all, this doctrine is not so comfortable to particular persons, as in general is pretended. How true soever it may really be; yet when a person, who believ'd himself in a state of grace, falls into any great or heinous sin, his fears will be apt to suggest to him, that he has no interest in it; that he was deceiv'd in the application he made to himself of it, having perhaps mistaken the illusions of his own mind, for the seal of God's Spirit; and that, instead of discovering in himself any certain evidence of his being in a sanctify'd state, he discovers under his present circumstances more violent suspicions of his being in a reprobate state. misgiving doubts and apprehensions must necessarily arise in the minds of all men, who have any conscience, or are not wholly given up to the spirit of enthusiasm, when their minds reproach them with some great or extraordinary guilt; even tho' they have formerly given proper testimonies of their being in a state of grace; if, for that very reason perhaps, they have not still more desponding thoughts, as to the safety of their condition. It is sufficient to all the reasonable grounds of comfort, that God, in the duc use of our liberty, and the means of grace, will save us; and that our destruction, if we do finally perish, can only be of our selves. In short, whatever comfort a man may take in believing,

^{*} Jer. 32. 40.

[†] i Cor. 1. 9, 10. Uuu

[‡] Phil. 1. 6.

that he shall continue faithful unto death, or be found so at the article of it; yet we are to consider, on the other hand, how uncomfortable his condition must necessarily be, in case he should find reason (as on occasion of his committing any grievous sin, he

will naturally do) to suspect the grounds of his belief.

Another argument for the final perseverance of the faithful, is founded on a consideration of the divine goodness. When God has once, through his grace, put men in a falvable state, it feems to be more irreconcilable with this attribute, that they should be permitted to fall from it, or perish in view, and, as it were, upon the confines of heaven, than if they had never made such advances towards entring into it. This way of reasoning would be very just, if God, by any positive act of his will, or by withdrawing the necessary means of grace, should leave those, who had once tasted of the heavenly gift, inevitably to destroy themselves. But as he only leaves them to their own freedom; affording them. at the same time, all those assistances, which may at once enable and incline them to chuse the better part; if they finally miscarry, their destruction cannot be ascrib'd to any desect in the divine goodness, (for that is, in the very nature of it, arbitrary) but wholly to their own neglect or perverseness. Should the goodness of God oblige him to save men by a constraining grace, without any regard to the good or ill use they might make of their liberty, the most profligate sinners would have equal grounds to hope, that they shall finally be sav'd, as good men, that they shall finally persevere. But to return from this digression (which I hope may not be altogether unuseful) to the subject of justifying faith, I would observe,

orks, is agreeable to the whole scope and design of the scriptures in general, as well as to many express and particular texts, which may be cited from them. It is said by the apostle St. Paul, whose words have been most perverted to savour the contrary doctrine, that God will render to every man according to his works *; that no man without holiness shall see the Lord †. By St. John, that he who doth righteousness, is righteous ‡. By St. James, that saith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone; and, that a man is justify'd by works, and not by saith only **. Now if works are equally necessary, and pre-requir'd to the salvation of christians with faith; why are they not also of equal necessity, in order to their justification? Since, in strictness, and according to the final sentence to

^{*} Rom. 2. 6. † Heb. 12. 14. ‡ 1 John 3. 7. Sinaics is 1, is just, is reputed so before God. ** James 27. 24.

be pass'd upon man, to be sav'd, and to be justify'd, imports the same thing. But, in truth, neither faith, nor works, as we observ'd before, are the formal cause of our justification, but only the conditional means of applying it; and must therefore inseparably concur towards it. As the apostle whom I last cited argues. What doth it prosit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him *?

7. The faith of Abraham, so much insisted on by St. Paul, to explain the nature of saving faith, did not barely consist in his believing that God would make good what he promis'd to him, contrary to all expectation he could have from the natural course and order of things; but in that ready obedience to the command of God, which accompany'd his faith. He was not therefore justify'd by faith, abstractedly consider'd; but as including his obedience, in the most generous and severe instance of it. So this apossile argues, to the same effect, in another place. By faith Abraham, when he was call'd to go out to a place, which he afterwards receiv'd for an inheritance, obey'd; and he went out, not knowing whither he went †.

8. In order therefore to reconcile those passages of scripture, which attribute our justification to faith, exclusive of works, or in opposition to them; and those which attribute it to an operative faith, or such a faith as worketh by love; we are to observe, that when St. Paul entirely excludes works as causes of our justification, he means the works of the law, consider'd properly as legal works; but with a more special regard to the rite of circumcision. Some of the jewish converts having afferted, that except a man were circumcis'd after the manner of Moses, he could not be sav'd. He shews, on the contrary, that none of the legal ordinances, not that of circumcision itself, are now of any force, either as causes, or indeed conditions of our justification. He argues particularly in order to obviate that prejudice, that Abraham was justify'd, not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision ‡. He asserts to the same effect in the epistle to the Galatians, that we are justify'd by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law **. To explain the nature of which faith, he afterwards tells them, that in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love † : Which, in the following chapter, he expresses by a new creature ##. But this apostle no where opposes justification by faith alone to good works, or the moral law. These passages, on the other hand, plainly argue, and more might

[#] James 2. 14. + Heb. 11. 8, 10. ‡ Rom. 4. 10. ** Gal. 2. 16. †† Ch. 5. 6. ‡‡ Ch. 6. 15.

be cited to the same purpose, that the faith which justifies, must be accompany'd with good works, or imply an habitual disposition, at least, to practise them, whenever we are call'd to do it. If some passages, in the writings of St. Paul, may be interpreted to shew, that the works of the moral law are insufficient to the justification of men; we readily grant they are so of themselves, and in the sense this apostle intends them. But it will not by any means follow, that because good works are not, separately consider'd, sufficient to justification, that they are not therefore necessary in order to our being justify'd upon any account, or in conjunction with faith.

9. THERE is not then so great difficulty in reconciling these two apostles, St. James and St. Paul, upon this head, as some persons have imagin'd. When St. Paul afferts, that man is justify'd by faith, without the works of the law, he argues against the Jews, who would still have impos'd upon the faithful the yoke of the Mosaick ordinances, in particular that of circumcision, as necessary to their justification. In opposition to this, he shews, that such a faith in Christ, as is accompany'd with evangelical obedience, is sufficient to that end, without any farther obligation of observing the legal rites instituted by Moses. We may observe therefore, that when he speaks of legal works, under the Mosaick institution, he calls them, the works of the law, or simply works; but when he speaks of those moral or evangelical duties, which the gospel prescribes and requires, he calls them, good works, as being really, in their own nature, good and profitable to men. St. James argues, on the other hand, that a dead and unactive faith, which does not produce evangelical works, and, in the sense of St. Paul himself, good works, is insufficient to justification. Both these apostles speak and delign the same thing; tho' in arguing on different occasions. and to different persons; the one to jewish converts, the other to hereticks, who thought faith sufficient without works to justification (and probably had perverted some difficult passages in St. Paul to favour that doctrine) they propose their arguments in different terms; instead of explaining which in a consistent manner, some persons have interpreted St. James, as if he wanted rather to be excus'd for not expressing himself with more caution, than as if he had really spoken by the Spirit of God. Which is not to reconcile these two apostles, as persons divinely inspir'd; but to oppose St. Paul to St. James, as a greater, and more considerable authority, to a less.

by faith only; we must explain the words in a sense agreeable to that of St. Paul; with regard to whose doctrine and authority,

the article appears to have been principally form'd. That is, by faith, we are to understand the whole complex of christianity, in contradistinction more especially to the law, to which it is so frequently oppos'd; or we are to understand by it the gospel of Christ in general, as the great covenant, which God is enter'd into with mankind; and in consideration whereof, all other covenants offer'd to them were founded and establish'd. That this was St. Paul's notion of faith, is farther evident from the caution he gives, lest men should interpret, as probably he foresaw some would be inclin'd to do, what he had said concerning it, in prejudice of good works, or as if he had spoken too slightly of them. Do we then make void the law, the moral and immutable law, through faith?

God forbid; yea, we establish the law.

THERE is another common distinction of faith, into implicit and explicit. By an implicit faith, we affent without doubt or examination to every doctrine reveal'd, and to every fact reported in the holy scriptures, in consequence of our believing them, upon good grounds, to be divinely inspir'd. For otherways, indeed, such an implicit faith would be altogether blind and unreasonable, as wanting the only evidence and authority which could justify or support Tho' it is not of equal necessity that we should believe every historical truth recorded in the Bible; such as that of St. Paul's leaving his cloak at Troas; or Trophimus fick at Miletum. Nay, all doctrines are not, consider'd in themselves, of equal necessity to be believ'd in order to salvation; which has occasion'd the distinction; tho' it is extremely difficult to assign the precise bounds and limits of them, between doctrines fundamental, and not fundamental; or rather, perhaps, it should be said, less fundamental. It being matter of absolute and indispensable obligation, that we should affent to every thing reveal'd by God, when it appears to us, that he has reveal'd it; tho' we may with more safety be ignorant of certain truths; as not having so great or immediate influence towards our salvation, than we can be of other truths. I shall only take occasion here to observe, that the difficulty which has been urg'd against this distinction, seems much of the same nature with that, which unbelievers have pretended against miracles. They do not know how far the power of matter may extend, and therefore would conclude, the very unphilosophically, as we have before observ'd, that we cannot know to what it does not extend. Thus we are call'd upon by sceptical persons, to shew, where those doctrines, we call fundamental, end; and where those, which are thought not fundamental, begin. It is not absolutely necessary, that we should come to a precise determination as to this point. We think it sufficient to say in general, that all do-Xxxx **etrines**

Etrines whatever are fundamental, or of indispensable necessity to be believ'd, in order to the salvation of those, to whom it is evident God has reveal'd them; that the degrees of evidence not being equal as to certain doctrines, they are in proportion more or less important, in respect of those to whom they are propos'd; that, however, some doctrines are so clearly reveal'd, and of such direct and special influence towards our salvation, (and such, we conceive, are the doctrines contain'd in the creed) that no christian without an affected, at least, without a vincible ignorance, can be suppos'd to deny his affent to them. But whether there may not be more fundamental doctrines; whether the number of them ought to be precisely determin'd; where they terminate, and give place to non-fundamentals, the church has no where declar'd; but leaves the decision of this point to private judgment; and the different degrees of evidence, according to which particular persons may find themselves differently affected. But it is far from proving, that we are not therefore able to assign or specify certain doctrines. which are really fundamental, because it may be very difficult, in particular cases, to distinguish them from such as are reputed not fundamental. It might, with as good appearance of reason, be argued, that because we do not know exactly how far the power of natural causes may go, in respect to the subject of miracles; and where God begins to interpose by a power supernatural, we are not capable of determining what a true miracle is, or whether any miracles were ever really done. This illustration may serve to give us some better light, as to the distinction I have been considering; tho' I am sensible it will not hold parallel in every respect.

By an explicit faith, we believe the scriptures to be divinely reveal'd, upon such evidence, as is proper to produce a rational and well-grounded assent to that principle. This is, what the apostle supposes necessary, in requiring, that we should always be able to give a reason of the hope, that is in us *. When we descend to the particular doctrines of reveal'd religion, tho' our assent severally to them, is imply'd in a general belief, that the scriptures are the word of God; yet our faith concerning them, and which we therefore call an explicit faith, is more lively and strong, when having assented to them upon the authority of God, we are able to discover the particular grounds, or natural reasons of them. In this respect, we are requir'd to prove all things †; to examine our selves, whether we be in the saith ‡; and to encrease in the knowledge of God **; to the full assurance of understanding ††. To proceed;

OTHERS,

^{* 1} Pet. 3. 15. † 1 Theff. 5. 21. ‡ 2 Cor. 13. 15. ** Coll. 1. 10. †† Ch. 2. 2.

OTHERS, if I may not say the generality of divines, make it of the essence of faith, that it be sounded on the testimony of God. According to this notion of faith, an assent to the truth of the scriptures, is not faith; neither to those, who do not believe the scriptures, can the belief of a God be properly call'd an article of faith; if, after all, it be, in a strict sense, an article of faith to those that do: Since this principle, that God exists, is rather antecedent to all divine revelation, and pre-supposed to the belief of the scriptures, than formally revealed in them, as a doctrine which we were or could be ignorant of before. It is certain, however, that, according to this sense of faith, what the apostles or others believed purely on the credit of their senses, could not be called an article of their faith.

I have before incidentally mention'd their notion of faith, as being both groundless, and of dangerous consequence; who make it consist in a firm and settled persuasion of their being absolutely, and without any other regard, elected, by an eternal decree of God,

(in favour of their particular persons) to salvation.

Notwithstanding all these different senses of the word faith, we may certainly come to some fix'd resolution concerning what it is necessary in general for us to believe, in order to our being sav'd. Tho' perhaps, if the notion of faith were left undetermin'd, disputants would find less matter of cavil and altercation, than they have hitherto perpetually done on this head; which yet might, in great measure, be avoided, if every man would distinctly define his own terms, and be understood according to the true and proper sense of them.

THERE will, however, be some difficulty in contriving such a definition of faith, as may be large enough to comprehend all the grounds, and degrees of it; and yet particular enough to distinguish it from all other kinds of assent. For that it is an assent of the mind, is sufficiently evident. But how shall we specify it, without excluding something that should be taken into the definition of it. Such a specification cannot be made from the principal ground of affent; which, tho' it peculiarly depend on divine testimony, yet it depends not on that singly, but on all kinds of evidence; whether of sense or reason; or of testimony, divine and Neither can such a specification be made from any particular degree of affent: For both a strong and a weak faith, being equally faith, ought to be included in the notion of it. It must therefore be specify'd from the object or matter of our belief; and should we say, that faith is an assent of the mind to such religious truths, upon good evidence, as are of the greatest consequence to us; this might serve for a general, tho' but an imperfect description of it. For tho' it would take in practical truths, as well as those peculiarly term'd articles of faith; still it would exclude all such historical or other truths, of less concernment to us, as are contain'd in the holy scriptures. And yet the scriptures at large, and every part of them, when propos'd to us, are the objects of faith. I should chuse therefore to define faith in general, an assent of the mind to all truths, whether speculative, or practical; whether discoverable by the reports of sense, or the clear deductions of natural reason; whether propos'd to us upon a divine testimony, or sufficient human testimony. I would define that faith, in particular, which has the articles of the creed for its object, and in the definition whereof we are now principally concern'd, to be an affent to the several speculative truths express'd, or necessarily imply'd in the creed, both upon the evidence of reason, and of testimony, divine and human. Of reason, as to such of them, concerning which we are able clearly to discover the natural grounds; of testimony, where the nature of them is less known, or would have been, without a special revelation, altogether unknown to us; human testimony, mediately; but principally, and in the last resort of faith, divine testimony.

SECT. VI.

Of the dependence of faith upon the will.

act, or habit of the mind. It is always voluntary, and, for the most part, free. Voluntary only, when we have a clear and distinct perception of the agreement between the parts of any proposition. Voluntary and free too, where we have no such clear perception. And we may be without it; either where, by reason of the intricacy or imperfect view of the subject, it cannot be had; or where the mind resules or neglects to employ the proper means of coming at it; or, after some trial, being weary in its pursuits, is content with making such precipitate judgments, as the inclinations or prejudices, which it is chiefly under the power of, may dispose it to make.

FROM whence I shall, by the way, take occasion to observe, that temporal encouragements, in order to propagate and support the true faith; and either positive or negative penalties on those who oppose the establishment or growth of it; are by no means, in themselves, improper or unreasonable; but might be of excellent

use to ballance those evil propensions, whereby men are carry'd away to deny the christian faith, in general, or in certain essential articles of it, upon any worldly or sinister motives. For where can be the injury of engaging the minds of men to examine things more carefully, in order to enlighten their minds with a clearer discovery of truth, or to prevent their making rash and erroneous judgments? That is, where can be the injury of doing men good, and the greatest good we are capable of doing them? If there are so many motives of vanity, interest, or prejudice to byass the minds of men towards error, why should it be thought a crime, to add as much weight, if that can be done, on the other side, to carry the mind towards truth?

The great objection, which lies, and, we allow it a very confiderable one, against such a proceeding, is, that a power of influencing the minds of other men, can only be exercis'd by those, who are fallible themselves. From whence some would conclude, that there neither is nor ought to be the least power or authority lodg'd with any man, or society of men, to that end; lest it might, in general, do more harm than good in the world; or that, if there be really any such power, it ought only to be exercis'd in a few particular cases, where the doctrine is so clear and obvious, that all pious and well dispos'd persons may easily and certainly know, upon examination, that it is of God. But this being a point of some difficulty, and falling properly under the head of the rewards and punishments propos'd in the Old and New Testament, I shall reserve the more particular dicussion of it

to that place.

WHATEVER becomes of the question, how far men may be accountable for their faith to men? There is no doubt to be made, but that they are accountable for it to God. As every erroneous judgment is an act of the will, and which a man is no more necessitated to make, than he is to commit sin. Every man having a power, at least, to suspend his judgment, where he has no clear and distinct perception, (and that, it is certain, he cannot have of any thing that is not) an erroneous belief must, for this reason, especially concerning the primary articles of religion, have some degree of immorality in it, and generally perhaps more, than we are apt to suppose; which may render it, what charitable dispositions soever we may have in other respects towards those who err, or are deceiv'd, yet of dangerous consequence both to themselves and others, to affert the innocency of error in too general and indefinite terms. For it is not sufficient for a man to say, this is my real, or this my settled persuasion; which frequently amounts to no more, than if he had said, this is my real choice, and most agreeable Yyyy

agreeable to my inclination; or I was really dispos'd to believe thus, rather than otherways, or than to keep my mind any longer in suspense; but it ought to be consider'd, what reasons he had for such a choice, or upon what good evidence he was induc'd to make it; and whether he was, upon the whole matter, oblig'd or ne-

cessitated to determine either way.

How far any man's faith depends upon his own will, may be understood from what has been observ'd above with respect to judgment in general, which I need not here repeat. The great fin of infidelity and herefy, confider'd strictly under the notion of immoral acts or habits of the mind, may easily be deduc'd from the same principles. Herefy therefore, and the same reason neceffarily holds with respect to infidelity, and I may add schism, are expressly number'd among those * works of the slesh, which suppose the greatest and most sensible depravation of human will. And the ground of attributing corrupt principles radically to the same cause, with a corruption of manners, appears from hence; that tho' a man may be under a moral necessity of submitting his will to the true faith; yet he never is, nor can be, strictly necesfitated, or, except in consequence of his own fault, to oppose it; any more than he is to make a false judgment. He is therefore as answerable before God, and upon as just and evident grounds, for the ill use of his liberty, which occasions his opposition to the truth; as for that, which betrays him to commit any other vice or immorality whatever.

Having thus made some general reflections concerning the dependence of faith upon the will; such a dependence, as properly constitutes it a virtue, and makes the want or corruption of it, in a strict sense, criminal; I shall only add, that tho' we may be under a moral necessity of believing several points of faith, having a clear and distinct perception of the truth of them; yet this does not destroy the virtue, or, in a sober sense of the word, the merit of saith: Because, generally, all the previous steps towards our attaining such a perception, were so many acts of the will, and severally depended on our own free choice. But what is here observed, will appear still in a better light, when I have laid down the grounds and certainty of faith, which I am now proceeding to do.

* Gal. 5. 17, 18. 1 Cor. 3. 3.

SECT. VII.

Of the grounds and certainty of faith.

[EN have been apt to run into extremes, upon the head of certainty; some into that of excess; some, upon different motives, into that of defect. There are good and learned men, who, not content with sufficient certainty, have, out of a pious design of doing greater honour to faith, pretended to make it more certain than science. Others, bringing the notion of it as much too low, have scarce allow'd it any greater certainty than that of human fallible testimony. The plea, which the former make for the certainty of faith above that of science, is, that science depends upon human reason, which is fallible; but faith upon the divine veracity, which is infallible, and an unquestionable ground of certainty, or else nothing can be so to men. And yet the argument from the divine veracity must be resolv'd into some principle of reason, that is, into clear and distinct perception; and so can have no greater certainty, than the foundation of all certainty, the truth of our faculties. He who would attempt to shew, that the certainty of faith is above that of reason, has no other way to do it, but by reason, or by proving the conclusion from some premises; but no conclusion can be stronger or more evident, than the premises from which it is drawn: This pretence therefore, by the inconsistency of it, consutes itself; and cannot be admitted, but upon one of the most absurd suppositions in the world, that conclusions may be more certain than premises; inferences than principles; in short, reason more certain than reason.

Is there then no good or reasonable foundation for what so many divines assert, that the certainty of faith is greater than that of reason? We do not deny that there is a good sense here design'd by a very improper expression; and I shall take occasion to open and explain it. The easiest method towards clearing up the whole matter, will be, first, to consider the absolute certainty of faith, or what it is; and, in the next place, to treat of its comparative certainty, with respect to reason, improperly so call'd: To which I shall add, something concerning the certainty of faith upon the first preaching of the gospel, and the faith of succeeding christians.

FAITH is a rational belief, founded upon all sorts of evidence, proper to create a firm and entire assent. The sum of the evidence, taken all together, is made up of intrinsick and extrinsick,

of fallible and infallible evidence; of the testimony of sense, of reason and revelation; all more or less contributing to support, to strengthen, and illustrate each other. Even if we consider such articles of faith, as may peculiarly be said to rest upon the authority of God revealing them; yet the truth that God did reveal them, rests upon the truth of miracles, and the truth of miracles upon the evidence of sense, and that again upon the evidence of reason in general; and in particular upon such arguments, as are resolvable by reason, into the truth and veracity of God; which terminate in the proofs of his existence; as those proofs terminate again in the principles of science, and the truth of our rational faculties, the last resort. As to the question of fact, whether any miracles have been wrought in confirmation of the christian religion, it must be resolv'd at this distance by scripture, and collateral arguments from history. And the proof of scripture must be made out by human testimony; as that again from several reasons drawn from the nature of things; with respect to the force and strength of such moral evidence, and the innumerable absurdities, which would follow, in case such evidence should not be admitted. All which arguments again must be confirm'd by reason, founded on the nature and attributes of God; who has laid men, in so great variety of instances, and in cases of the last consequence to them, under an inevitable necessity of submitting to such evidence, or of having no evidence.

FAITH therefore, all things consider'd, and upon the whole matter, stands upon infallible certainty. And we cannot be deceiv'd in our belief, that the christian religion is the true religion; or that the holy scriptures are of divine authority. As to the particular doctrines, we may be as certain of the sense and meaning of them, as we can be of the sense and meaning of those texts of scripture, upon which they are founded; that is, as we can be of the true power and proper signification of words; which sometimes must be allow'd to admit of infallible certainty, or else men could never be sure that they understand one another; tho' words may often be apply'd to fignify what is very foreign to the original design of them. And here the last appeal must be to our rational faculties; and, except we are not at liberty, by reason of the importance of the subject, to suspend our assent; the strongest reason, upon a clear and full view of the case, ought to persuade and determine it. What has been faid concerning the absolute certainty of faith may be sufficient. Let us, in the next place, consider its comparative certainty.

SECT.

SECT. VIII.

Certainty of faith and reason compar'd.

USTOM has in a manner authoriz'd the abuse of the word reason; but if we would instruct mankind in general, we must be content to follow the vulgar way of expression; only it will be necessary that we should distinguish a little upon the meaning of the word, in order to avoid too great consusion of ideas in the use of it.

REASON is sometimes taken in a very restrain'd sense, as signifying properly one particular way of reasoning from intrinsick evidence, tho' without clear and distinct ideas, or any certain connection. The heathen philosophers pretended, for instance, to reason against the resurrection of the body, the possibility whereof was, notwithstanding, consirm'd by a known fact, the resurrection of Christ, from their own inveterate prejudices, and very impersect ideas. Those who oppugn the doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation, argue in like manner, or rather pretend to argue, from the intrinsick nature of things, whereof they know little, and have

only, at the best, very imperfect and indistinct ideas.

YET this way of arguing often goes under the name of human reason, and may well be term'd fallible, as being no more than human conjecture, about things beyond our reason, and which our capacities are too narrow to take in the whole extent of. indeed, the very nature of things, from which these men would yet be thought, in other cases, to argue, supposes them so. must therefore be allow'd, that the certainty of faith is much greater, and the evidence of it much stronger, than the evidence fuch mighty pretenders to reason are able to produce for the certainty of reason in their way. It is much safer and better to reason upon extrinsick evidence, where we have something certain, and can demonstrate what is scripture, and what perhaps the true sense of it, than in quest of intrinsick evidence, where really there is none to be found; where the subject is too obscure or incomprehensible in itself to furnish any; or where, in a word, we neither have, nor can have any adequate conception of it. By this rule, we do not prefer faith to reason, as opposite to it; but only chuse a certain way of reasoning before an uncertain; demonstration before conjecture; and truth before the weak or false appearances of it.

SINCE

Since we have then certain principles to go upon in one case, which are wanting in the other, it is evident where the certainty, I need not say, the greater certainty, lies; while faith proceeds properly in concert with human reason, or is resolved into it: And whilst, in the other case, we only argue from human conjecture, and, many times, in opposition to reason. I shall dismiss this point, after having made the following remarks, which may not be improper towards some farther illustration of it. That,

- tion all denominations of thoughtless and unreasonable men have been of late comprehended, that of the free-thinkers; these men, I say, merely declaim, when they so much pretend to magnify and extol the use of reason. Their principal and sundamental error is, that whatever attachment they profess to reason, yet they really prefer conjecture to rational assent; and, instead of sollowing the light, as they ought to do, upon their own principles, and which they would have thought proper to them, they are hurry'd on by their passions, their prejudices, or their vanity, to go before it.
- 2. THE advocates for faith, on the other hand, in opposition to reason, are often caught by the sound of words, when, in the heat of dispute against their adversaries, they run into a sort of common place (for that has been too usuall even with learned men) of decrying reason, and bringing it into contempt. there could be any hopes of our being able to convince men of the reasonableness of believing without or against reason; or we could expect to prevail by our particular way of reasoning, after we had feriously endeavour'd to expose the weakness and uncertainty of reason in general. Our reason, however limited in extent, or short in its notices, yet is true and just, and may therefore be depended upon, so far as it extends, or within its own province; or else both faith and reason would be mere empty names. It is in vain to dispute against the use of reason, since every dispute necessarily supposes it; and it is equally establish'd, whether by arguments for or against it. There is no just complaint, in short, to be made against the use of reason, but against the abuse of our liberty, in making false and precipitate judgments, without waiting for the orders of it.
- 3. From what has been observed, we are better able to judge, in what sense reason and faith may be said to be opposite; reason I mean according to the more popular and abusive acceptation of the word, whereof I have been speaking. For to say, that a rational assent, and such is faith, may be opposite to reason, properly so called, is a contradiction in terms. But human conjectures.

Etures, and precipitate judgments, are often inconsistent, not only with the principles of true faith, but of reason too; and it is owing to mere accident, if they be not, in both respects, always so. That imaginary or pretended reason of vain men, who would be thought wise, and capable of penetrating farther, than men of vulgar or common capacities, into the nature of things, concerning which, they distinctly know little or nothing; yet pronounce with a bold definitive air, and so without understanding what they say, or whereof they affirm; reason, we aver, in that salse and counterfeit sense, is the wisdom which the scripture condemns as vanity and folly; and to which that solemn rebuke by the propher, in the name of God, is particularly applicable. My thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth; so are my ways higher than your ways; and my thoughts than your thoughts *.

Reason, we allow, is too good a word to stand for rashness, pride, or presumption: And it were to be wish'd, among other abuses of speech, that of applying words to signify directly contrary to their true and proper meaning, might be rectify'd. An abuse, which not only lays a great obstacle in the way of private persons, who profess to search after truth, but by confounding the ordinary dialect of men, is very often prejudicial to the publick peace and tranquillity. But till we can hope to see things call'd by their right names, or are able to prevent the abuse or misapplication of words, we must satisfy our selves, as well as we can, with endeavouring, where there is occasion for it, to state and ex-

plain both their proper and improper fignification.

4. From what has been said, we shall be likewise better enabled to answer a popular question, or, as some may perhaps think it, a problem; namely, what are the proper boundaries of faith and reason? If by reason be meant such discoveries, as mere unassisted reason might make without revelation, we cannot precisely determine the extent of it: And, what would it avail if we could? It is sufficient that we know many things by revelation, which we had otherways been wholly ignorant of. And some things that we might perhaps have discover'd by the light of nature only, are reveal'd to us in the holy scriptures after a more clear, distinct, and persect manner. If by reason be meant reason in general, or our rational faculties, then 'tis impertinent to seek for the boundaries between faith and reason; which have strictly no boundaries distinct from each other: For faith being a rational assent, wherever reason ends, faith must of necessity end with it.

^{*} Laiab 55. 8, 9.

Some things, indeed, according to the vulgar way of speaking, are said to be above reason, or beyond reason. Whereby is intimated, that we may be capable of believing farther than we understand. This may be true in a qualify'd sense; but, in strictness of speech, our ideas do really extend, as far as our faith extends. As there can be no faith without assent; nor any assent, but to some intelligible proposition; nor any intelligible proposition, without intelligible terms, that have proper ideas to answer them; it is evident, that our ideas are of the same extent with our faith, and that we understand as much, and no more or less, than we believe.

THAT I may not be suspected of having a design to advance any new or heterodox notion, whilst I am only endeavouring to free the common way of expression from ambiguity, which tends to breed confusion of ideas in the mind upon this head; I shall descend to illustrate the state of the case, by two or three

pertinent instances.

We understand that there is a God, and that certain attributes essentially and incommunicably belong to him. But as to his particular essence or substance, wherein it formally consists, or distinguishes him from all other beings, we believe nothing, because we are able to determine nothing. We understand in general, what the resurrection of a body means; and what it is for a body to continue for ever in a state of order, tranquillity, and perfection. to the manner how it subsists, or acts in such a state, we can believe nothing, neither is it requir'd that we should, more or farther than we understand. We believe the thing, because it is reveal'd, and in terms, the meaning whereof is clear and intelligible. the manner of it can only be so far an object of our faith, as it is of our perception; neither can a wife God require us to believe, what we perceive nothing of. As to the doctrine of the everblessed Trinity, we understand what we mean by one, and what by three; the meaning of the terms co-eternal, co-equal, or coessential is also known to us; but how, or after what manner a Trinity of Persons, or, if that be not admitted, of any distinct qualities, powers, or operations; or, in other words, of three, under whatever distinction we conceive them, should consist with the perfect unity of the divine essence, is what we can neither believe, nor be requir'd to believe any farther, than we know. We believe, as far as we have ideas; and where we have no ideas, can have no belief. Where our reason falls short, or leaves us in the dark, our faith does so too.

Men therefore declaim against the belief of mysteries, after a most impertinent manner, when they run out into a common place,

place, about the impossibility of believing without ideas. have ideas, so far as we believe, or may have them, so far as we can be oblig'd to believe; and distinct ideas too. But it is unreafonable to disbelieve, what we understand concerning any subject, because we understand no more of it; or to deny our assent to the truth of a thing, or the reality of its existence, only because the manner of its existing is unknown to us. If this were a good ground for denying our assent, we ought not to believe that we fee any thing, till we can accurately and fully explain the whole mystery of vision; or that there is indeed any sensible object, till we can shew how our inward ideas, which have no figure or dimension, should represent statues or circles, fields or meadows. If we must not believe any thing, till we are perfectly able to account for it, and in all its relations, there will be nothing left for us to believe. We must deny, in particular, that we think, because we know not how we do so, or by what secret springs our thoughts are excited, and put in motion. But where can be the reason of rejecting what is clear, because there are some things obscure; or of denying that we know any thing, because we do not know all things. If those who reject mysteries, would be thought men of reason, let them first make good their title, by shewing, that they form their judgments upon the true rules or maxims of reason; and that they are able to maintain the reasonableness of their principles by any clear connexion.

THESE reflections may be sufficient to shew, how fruitless and vain an attempt it would be to determine the precise boundaries between faith and reason; or to describe, as some may affect to call them, their distinct provinces. Revelation gives us new notices of things; it extends and enlarges our prospect; but leaves us the same faculties, which we had before. So that our reason has still the same use, only a wider compass to employ and exert As in all other things propos'd to our belief, so conitself in. cerning any articles of religion, we are to consult the light of our own minds, and examine by our rational faculties, how far they are to be admitted, and with what restrictions; what weight they should have with us; and what may be justly inferred from them? What may be look'd upon as certain truth; and what as being founded only in probability or conjecture? Nothing must be admitted, where the strength of the evidence lies another away; nor any thing rejected, where the reasons why we ought to receive it, appear evidently stronger. The most comprehensive and general rule, is, that the best reasons, if it be necessary to judge at all, should always preponderate; and consequently, the truest faith is that, which, upon the whole, is most rational. The Bible, by this rule,

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will be found the best system of philosophy; and a true reasoner from the proper lights and assistances of it, will differ very little from a true believer.

THE comparative certainty of faith being thus settled upon a true and distinct foundation; it shall be my next enquiry, as I propos'd, whether, or how far any material difference may be suppos'd, in point of certainty, between the faith of the first christians, and that of succeeding christians.

SECT. IX.

Primitive faith compar'd with traditional.

OME have been of opinion, that faith, according to the gradual advances of time, must grow more weak and precarious. An opinion, which has not the least grounds, either in the reason of things, in fact; or history. We do not find, that there is now any more occasion to doubt, whether there were two such persons as fulius Cæsar or Cicero, than there was a thousand years ago; or that our old histories ought, for that reason, to have less credit, than those of a later or modern date. Traditional truths, well attested, are to be as firmly believ'd in one age as in another; and should not be thought less credible for being often told or reported; it should rather be an argument, the greater distance of time there is from their first discovery, and the more they have been consider'd and examin'd, that the original evidence of them was so much the stronger,

But this is not the point, which I would speak to at present. The question is, whether those, who saw the miracles of Christ, or of his apostles, and convers'd with them, had any greater certainty to build their faith upon, than those, to whom those miracles were reported by the testimony of others? And the resolution of this will turn upon another enquiry, whether the evidence of sense be not more certain, I do not say, more affecting, than that of human testimony, or history, what confirmation soever

may have been given to the truth of it?

It has been already observed, that the evidence of faith, as it now stands, the founded upon human testimony, is nevertheless really infallible: So many, and so strong circumstances all conspiring to ratify and strengthen it; and a contradiction to reason, observation, history, and common sense, as well as to the wisdom and goodness of God, being imply'd in the denial of it; these consi-

considerations, I say, exclude all doubt, as to the certainty of faith, and even extort assent from those, who strictly and impartially at-Such an evidence therefore cannot be conceiv'd, tend to them. upon any reasonable grounds, to have less force to persuade than the evidence of sense. Neither can there be more or stronger arguments offer'd to prove the truth of our senses, than there are to prove the truth of those testimonies, upon which our belief was originally grounded, or is still supported. The certainty for those reasons must be allow'd equal in both respects; tho' it is not pretended that the latter is so apt to affect the mind, or, in general, to make so strong, lively, or deep an impression upon it. So far as reason goes, both these kinds of evidence are upon an equal foot. But cool and fedate reasoning is not ordinarily so moving, as what comes before the senses, or is reported by them. Especially if it have any proper and direct tendency to gratify the imagination or passions; or is better adapted to preserve the mind in a supine or indolent state; which is so commonly averse to labour, but never sooner weary or discourag'd, than when the truths propos'd to it are made up of many parts, and require a close and continued attention. But what comes into the mind by the way of the senses has a more easy and free admission, or rather it naturally makes its own way, by awakening the man, who would sleep over reasons; and engages the attention of those, who, in regard to points, as we call them, of mere speculation, would stand wholly unmov'd, as having neither strength or liberty of mind for such dry and tasteless enquiries. We have here assign'd the cause, why the still voice of reason is so little or seldom attended to by the generality of mankind. cannot be prevail'd upon so much as to give ear to it. Others, whose attention is in some measure at first awaken'd by it, soon grow weary of so jejune, and, as they apprehend it, dull an entertainment; or are diverted from it by the more strong, vigorous, and agreeable action of sensible objects upon them. In order therefore both to excite and keep up the attention, testimony of sense is of much greater force than cool or naked reason. It carries all the weight in it that reason itself does, and has, in the foregoing respects, a more powerful and extensive influence. This kind of evidence, in a manner commands our assent; while the other rather appears to follicit, and, at the most, to persuade it. They may be equally forcible, if equally admitted or entertain'd. But the difference is, one must find its way, while the other makes it; and when the way is open to both, the manner of receiving them permits us not long to doubt, which of them we are more inclin'd

Tho' christians therefore, in the infancy of inclin'd to prefer. the church, had not more certain proofs than we have of the truth of christianity, or the principal articles of the christian faith; yet the proofs they had were near, more sensible, and awakening, and for these reasons in general, more irresistible. As the first converts to christianity had greater difficulties and stronger prejudices to master, than those who were afterwards born within the bosom of the church, and educated under her care; so it was agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of God, that their attention to the proofs of the christian religion, should be excited after a more powerful and affecting manner. To conclude this section, tho' we want no rational evidence at present either of the truth in general, or of the particular fundamental principles of christianity; yet it must be acknowledg'd, that mere rational proofs propos'd to the mind, without any thing to move or strike upon the senses, operates but very flowly upon creatures, which have so little force of mind, as men, especially the generality of men, are endow'd with. I shall only observe farther, that what has been here said, feems highly agreeable to the defign of our Saviour in the following words; Blessed are they that that have not seen, and yet have believ'd. It seems reasonable to conclude from the preference which appears here to be given to succeeding christians, in respect to the greater merit of faith, that to believe without the evidence of sense, requires greater strength, liberty, and a more ingenuous disposition of mind, than to believe upon the evidence of sense. take occasion from hence to conclude this chapter with an enquiry, how far we may be under a necessity or moral obligation to believe any truths clearly propos'd, or reveal'd to us.

SECT. X.

How far faith is a necessary or moral virtue.

S some attribute too much to faith, in opposition to works; concerning which they speak upon the comparison very slightly, and sometimes as if it were really dangerous for a man to think the practice of moral virtue of any consequence towards his salvation; so others are no less apt to cry up morals in opposition to faith, as if it were an act or habit of the mind, that had no manner of relation to them. The former error resolves all obedience into a strong faith; the latter all orthodoxy into a good life

Between them both, obedience and faith are made things almost indifferent. Both extremes arise from the same principle, the love of liberty, or rather a false and criminal desire of independency. The former are more impatient of restraint in point of practice; the other as to matters of opinion. Those are more under the power of the passions, which renders them enemies to fober living; these of the imagination, which makes them equally averse to sober thinking. They are the latter, whom I am now more immediately concern'd to speak to. It has been afferted in other words above, that men are accountable for their erroneous judgments, as well as for an immoral conduct. Indeed, strictly speaking, we are only accountable for making such judgments, as our liberty properly consists in the power we have to make them. An immoral conduct is but the necessary effect and consequence of our judging wrong. And therefore we are as much oblig'd to think regularly, and according to a certain order, as we are to live so; or rather the latter obligation necessarily arises out of the former. So that all morality is resolvable, at last, into the power we

have of regulating our own thoughts and judgments.

THE question therefore about the necessity of an orthodox faith, will not turn upon this, whether we may be accountable for the false and erroneous judgments made by us; it being evident, that we are under no necessity of making such judgments; which is the same thing with making a bad choice? But the question is, whether speculative points in religion, which do not directly influence our practice, may not be of themselves so obscure, or of so little consideration, that a man is more excusable, at least, for proceeding to judge, without a strict examination of them; or without that attention, which was requisite to prepare him for making a true judgment. To which we say, that tho' men ought never to pass judgment without evidence; yet they are indeed less culpable for being mistaken. Wherever then the subject matter of their mistake is of little or no consequence, or there is not evidence sufficient to ground a firm and rational assent upon, after a due, serious, and impartial examination; nay if a man happens, in certain cases, where he apprehends himself more particularly oblig'd to judge one way or other, to mistake or determine wrong, tho' concerning a point of greater moment; yet provided he keeps his thoughts and opinion to himself, and does not endeavour to spread or propagate his error; it is certainly more excusable in him, than an immoral conduct would be; because his private judgment hurts no body, nor gives any visible occasion of scandal or offence; and it is also much easier to mistake in points of speculation, than concerning the rules of practice.

But

But if the question should be put, whether it be not, upon a general consideration, a greater crime to propagate herely, or corrupt the true faith of Christ, to say nothing of infidelity, than to lead an irregular, or vicious life? We must affirm that it is; as being a crime, at once, of a more dangerous, and a more diffusive influence. It must be allow'd, that he who poysons the fountains of natural religion and morality, if we may judge of his crime by the direct, and malignant effects of it, is much more criminal, than a mere immoral man: Because his principles tend, if they be not fo delign'd, to introduce an universal corruption of manners, and to destroy the very grounds and reasons of moral virtue in every kind. Heresies, in like manner, which tend to overthrow the do-Arines of reveal'd religion, and especially if they be industriously propagated to that end, import more flagrant guilt, than a neglect of conforming our selves, in other respects, to the rules of An heresiarch, in a word, when oppos'd to a bad that religion. christian, is as a Julian or a Celsus, upon the comparison, with a mere practical pagan.

THEY are impos'd upon therefore by a great fallacy, in their way of reasoning, who pretend, that men are not, in so high a measure, accountable for heretical notions, which yet they openly advance, as for a bad life; or that a man may more safely corrupt the faith of Christ, than be corrupt in his morals. For they do not state the case right, nor make a just comparison. any one lay down principles to justify impurity, or excess in eating or drinking, and so be a heretick (if the manner of expression may be allow'd) in morality; such a one might we grant render himself more obnoxious and detestable, than a heretick, with respect to points properly theological. But, as the comparison is made, between an heretick, and a bad immoral man; the question comes to this, whether it be not more dangerous, or do not argue, in the attempt, a greater depravation of mind, to corrupt the faith of the whole church, than to lay an occasion before certain particular persons of scandal, or perhaps of a guilty compli-

ance, by a finful example.

It is not then without reason, that some persons are acted with a stronger zeal against hereticks in opinion, than against libertines in practice; the preservation of the whole being of greater consequence, and more to be consulted, than the preservation of a small, or, in any degree, of a less part. While principles remain firm and unshaken, tho' men may act contrary to them, there is something still lest to reduce them, and to prevent the desection of others. But when soundations are cast down, nothing but consusion, and every evil work, can be expected to follow. I shall, upon

upon all these accounts, take occasion to infer the necessity of a becoming zeal for preserving the purity of the faith, against all innovations whatever, as a necessary and indispensable duty. A duty, indeed, expressly enjoin'd in the holy scriptures, which require, and with which sanction I shall therefore enforce this inference, that we should earnessly contend for the faith, which was once deliver'd to the saints; and hold fast the profession of it without wavering.

HAVING thus previously observed what I thought might be proper, and of some good use, upon the subject of faith in general; I proceed, and, I hope, to the greater advantage and edification of my reader, to treat of the articles of the creed in particular.

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CHAP. II.

I believe in God the Father.

TAVING, in the first book, prov'd the existence and unity of God, in opposition both to Atheists and Polytheists, that is, to all such as either do not believe a God, or that believe there are more Gods than one. I shall not here farther employ any arguments directly against them; but address what I have to say with a peculiar regard to Christians; by considering what they are to believe concerning God, under the notion of a Father; and as one God, with respect to the doctrine of the blessed Trinity. For tho' it is only here said in general, I believe in God; yet it is observable, that in the most ancient creeds this article runs, I believe in one God; wherein they follow the style of St. Paul *; and perhaps designedly, in opposition both to heathens and hereticks; and all such as might suppose more self-existent, or unoriginated, beings; more first principles, than one. But there is immediately added, Father; which, as it restrains the title of God, in some sense, to one person only; so it intimates likewife, that the person thus emphatically or eminently styl'd the one God, is not a solitary deity, but has a Son of the same nature with him, and existing from him, and with him, and in him. Ruffin says, when you hear the word Father, understand it Father of a Son +; meaning of his Son Jesus Christ, as all the primitive creeds

are to be understood *. At what certain time the ancient creeds were form'd or perfected, is not evident; there is no doubt, but they owe their original to the form of baptism, and were gradually enlarg'd as there was occasion, with some difference of expression, in different churches; but still agreeing in the principal do-Etrines contain'd in them. Tho' the Roman creed, which we here undertake to explain, did not particularly, as the rest, say, one God; but simply, God; yet it certainly imports the same fense, and might omit the mentioning of it, either because it was fufficiently imply'd; or because the church of Rome met with less opposition, in the article of the unity, than other churches. That the Father is the God, or the one God, intended in the article. and that the Son is not here comprehended in the Father, is evident, (as Bishop Pearson justly observes †) not only from the original, or occasion, but also from the very letter of the creed; which teaches us to believe in God the Father, and in his Son. For if the Son were included in the Father, then were the Son the Father of himself.

However therefore the other two persons may be comprehended in the one God, of which I shall say more hereaster; yet there is a certain sense, in which the Father only, may be styl'd the one God, and is so styl'd in all the ancient creeds, as well for the sake of order and method, as for other great and weighty reasons,

which will appear in the sequel.

For the fuller explication of the words of this article, it will be proper to consider,

I. THE notion of God, or what the name of God here implies.

II. THE notion of the one God, and what that implies, or how

it is peculiarly applicable to God the Father.

I. Let us consider the notion of God, or what the name God here implies. Ruffin ‡ remarks upon this occasion, that the name God denotes that nature or substance, which is supreme, above all; is without beginning, and without end, invisible, incorporeal, inestable, incomprehensible, &c. The Arians, some time before, the better to disguise their heresy, and prepare the way for its reception, had pretended that the word God was nothing more than a relative word, not importing nature, but office. So that a made God, or an adopted God, might be thought to be truly God, in a proper signification of the word. This subtersuge was recurr'd to, in order to obviate a plea of the Catholicks for the divinity of Christ; namely, that he was not call'd God in a loose metapho-

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^{*} Pertinent to which is the remark of Hilary. Ecclesiæ sides solum verum Deum Patrem consessa, consitetur & Christum.

[†] P. 32. ‡ Naturæ ipsius vel substantiæ, quæ est super emnia, appellatie. Ruff. in Symb. p. 540.

rical sense, but in the strict and proper acceptation of the word God; and therefore was truly and really God. This could not be deny'd without open defiance to scripture and tradition; and therefore they were forc'd to bring down the sense of the word God, and, that they might serve their own hypothesis, to make it a mere relative term. And hence it was, that the Catholicks so much insisted upon it, that the word God denoted, not the office, but, strictly, the nature and substance of the person to whom it was apply'd; and that nothing could be truly and properly God, which was not of a divine, uncreated, immutable, and eternal substance. Hence it was, that * Basil, the two † Gregories, ‡ Athanasius, ** Hilary, †† Austin, and other catholicks, contended that the name God denoted substance, and was a word of absolute sig-This pretence of the Arians hath been since revived and improved by the followers of Socious. Crellius, in particular, thought it worth his while to spend a whole ## chapter in order to corroborate it; and it must be confess'd to be a point of some moment both in the Socinian and Arian controversy. For, if the sense of the word God be merely relative, denoting only power or authority; if it signifies only, protector, ruler, governor, or the like, then any ruler, protector, or governor, is, in the proper fignification of the word, God; and the supreme God is no otherways call'd God, than as he is called Lord or King; both which titles are properly applicable to creatures, or to mortal men, only in different measure and degree. He that rules, governs, protects, be it more or less, is as truly and really a ruler, governor, or protector, as the supreme Governor of all; that is, if the Arian and Socinian sense be right, is as much a God, tho' not so great or powerful a God, as God, the maker of heaven and earth. If this be so, two very material points are gain'd against the Catholicks; first, that no advantage can be made of the title of God apply'd to the Son, or Holy Ghost, in scripture or antiquity; and, secondly, that an Arian, or Socinian, may maintain his novel hypothesis, and yet keep up to the ancient way of speaking; may say, that the Son of God is truly, really, strictly, and properly God, and believe him a creature, or a mere man, at the same time: Which, as it very much contributes to mollify the harshness of their principles, otherways grating to christian ears; so it may serve for a blind to more ignorant or inconsiderate readers.

For

^{*} Ep. 80. † Nazianz. orat. 36. p. 586. Nyss. adv. Græc. p. 82. ‡ Vol. 1. p. 228. ** P. 922. †† De Trin. 837. ‡ De Deo & attrib. c. 13. p. 31.

For these reasons, it may appear very proper to examine this pretence a little farther, and to determine the true meaning of the name God, in opposition to such false glosses and dangerous com-

ments upon it.

THE etymology of the wodr God in english, or of Deus in latin, or of Θeos in greek, or of Elohim in the hebrew, will signify very little. The question is, in what sense scripture and antiquity have us'd the word; and whether they do not distinguish one peculiar proper sense of the word, from other relative, metaphorical, and

improper acceptations of it.

IRENAUS is positive, that the sacred writings never call any thing, or person, absolutely and definitively God, but what is truly God; and what he meant by being truly God, is sufficiently clear from his works; particularly from the last paragraph of his eighth chapter, book the third; where he expressly maintains, that no creature can be justly call'd God: And from the first chapter of the sourch book, where he interprets truly God, by naturally, God; or God by nature.

If we look into the scriptures themselves, we shall there find that the word $\Theta \epsilon \delta c$, or God, has often an absolute signification, and not merely relative; particularly when the term *Jehovah* is render'd by it; a word, undoubtedly, of absolute signification,

and expressing being itself, or a self-existent substance *.

So when it is faid, I am God, and not man †; and, thou art a man, and not God ‡. The word God denotes the effence and substance of God, as being different from, and infinitely more excellent than the nature of man. For of what proper signification or use would it be to say, I am governor, ruler, lord, and not man? Or why should the word God be thought a word of office, more than the word man, to which it is oppos'd? Add to this the samous text of St. Paul **, where he rejects those as no Gods, which are not Gods by nature; that is, which are not essentially or substantially such. And, in another place ††, he distinguishes those that are called Gods in the large sigurative sense, from him that is really and properly so called; that is, from him that is God by nature. So that he only is, truly and strictly, God, who is God by nature; and nature is but another word for essence, or substance, in the place above cited.

To confirm this, let us next enquire into the sentiments of the ante-nicene writers, who lived before the Arian controversy; and may be allow'd as competent judges of the sense of the word God

^{*} John 6. 45. compar'd with Isaiah 54. 13. and Rom. 4. 3. compar'd with Gen. 15. 6. + Hos. 11. 9. ‡ Ezek. 28. 2. ** Gal. 4. 8. + 1 Cor. 8. 5, 6.

in scripture. At least, we may learn from them the sense of the christian church in the first ages of it. I have before shew'd what it is in the sense of Irenaus, to be truly and properly God; and shall here only add one citation more from him relating to the divinity of God the Son. The Holy Ghost, says he *, has very pun-Elually signified the manner of his generation, that it was of a virgin; and his substance, that he is God. Tertullian † is very full and express to our purpose. In his dispute with Marcion, who afterted two gods, and, to soften the harshness of his affertion, urg'd those places of scripture, where the name of god is apply'd to several besides the one supreme God; he tells him that the name of God was properly applicable to one substance only; and that unborn; uncreated, eternal. He observes, that the pagan idols were vulgarly call'd gods; but yet none of them were properly so; that is, none of them were gods in respect of substance ‡, the only thing that can properly entitle any being to that name.

To the same purpose, in his dispute with the heretick Hermogenes, who afferted matter to be co-eval with God, he fays **, the name God is a name denoting substance, and is thereby distinguish'd from the name Lord, or Dominus, denoting power and do-

minion.

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HERMOGENES pretended, that God had always been God and Lord, which words being relative, and expressing dominion, must imply that there was always fomething for God to have dominion

over, and therefore matter was co-eternal with God.

TERTULLIAN allows the argument with respect to the name of Lord, and freely acknowledges that God was not properly Lord, till something existed over which he became Lord. But it would have been shocking to have said, that there was ever a time when God was not God; or that he had not been God from everlasting; which is a necessary consequence, if God be a mere relative word. Tertullian's ## answer is certainly very wise and just; and agreeable to the orthodox fentiments of all antiquity. For, how ever some persons might make it a question, whether God was always Father, as the Arians did, and Tertullian himself seems to do in

* Diligenter leitur fignificavit Spiritus Sanctus-generationem ejus quæ est ex virgine, & substantiam quoniam Deus. Iren. 1. 3. c. 21. p. 217.

[†] Non nomini Dei, nec sono, nec notæ nominis bujus, summum magnum in creatore desen-do, sed ipst substantiæ cui nomen bos contigit. Hanc invenies solam innatam insectam, solam atornam, &c.-Deus jam vocari obtinuit substantia cui adscribo, &c. Contr. Marc. 368.

[†] Deus nemo ea re, quâ Deus dicitur. ** G. 3. p. 234. †† He therefore observes; Deus substantia ipsius nomen, id est divinitatis: Dominus verd non substantiæ, sed potestatis.

this very chapter, tho' in a different sense from what the Arians pretended afterwards: I say, how ever some might make a queftion of the former point; yet none of them ever doubted, whether God was always God; which makes it clear to a demonstration, that they did not understand the word God, as a mere relative word, but as a word of absolute signification, expressing

IF any farther proof be necessary in so clear a point, it may easily be had from innumerable passages of the ancients, wherever they express their notion of what is truly and properly God, as they frequently do in their disputes with the Gentiles, in order to shew that their gods were, in truth, no gods. But I shall chuse to infift upon one argument only, which will both shew in what sense they always understood the word God, and that they apply'd it to the Son, in the very same sense. It was a constant rule and maxim with them, that whatever is begotten of God is God *. This is said frequently by most of the + ante-nicene, as well as post-nicene fathers. Novatian's manner of treating on this argument is worth observing. He tells us ‡, that the nature or reason of the thing itself must convince us, that as he that is born of man, is man; so he that is of God, must be God. Now it is impossible to give any tolerable account of this common maxim of the ancient writers, if they took the word God in the relative sense only, or did not understand it strictly to denote substance. In the citations from Irenaus, Eusebius, and Tertullian, it is not said, he that is begotten, but that thing (or that substance) that is begotten. Besides, if it were said; that the person who is begotten of God, must be God, as it is said, or meant, in the other writers referr'd to; it is not only reasonable, but necessary, to interpret it in the same sense with the former. For it is as ridiculous to pretend, that every son of a ruler must be a ruler, or the son of a governor a governor, or of a lord a lord; as it would be to affert, that any person is a king, only because he is the son of a king. How far the argument will bear with relation to the divinity of God the Son, is not now the question; but it certainly proves thus much,

Com. in Col. p. 56.

that

^{*} Thus Ireneus expresses himself; το β οπ Θεῦ γεννηθὲν Θεός ἐςιν. p. 41. Eusebius thus; το γειεννημένον οπ τῦ Θεῦ Θεός ἐςι. Eccl. theol. p. 72, 123. Tertullian thus; Quod de Deo profestum est Deus est. Apol. c. 21. p. 20. Ed. Rigalt.

+ Justin. Mart. p. 53, 75, 260, 278, 280. Edit, Sylb. Theoph. Antioch. l. 1. c. 1. l. 2. p. 100. Clem. Alex. p. 113, 86. Novat. c. 11. Orig. de princip. l. 1. c. 2.

[‡] Ut enim præscripsit ipsa natura hominem credendum esse qui ex homine sit: ita eadem natura præscripsit & Deum credendum esse qui ex Deo sit: ne si non & Deus suerit, cùm ex Deo sit, jam nec homo sit licèt ex homine suerit, & in alterutro utrumque periclitetur, dum alterutrum altero fidem perdidisse convincitur.

that the ante-nicene writers (and as to the post-nicene there's no dispute) did not understand the word God in a mere relative sense, but thought it imply'd something of the nature and substance of the person to whom it was ascrib'd, as well as dominion; and that dominion imply'd but the secondary and consequential, not the principal and primary notion of a person that is truly and really God.

THE argument of Crellius * drawn from the relative terms, frequently and properly join'd with the word God; as when it is faid, our God, their God, your God, or the like, is of very little weight; unless it can be shewn, that a word of absolute signification cannot be used relatively; or that the same word may not have either an absolute or a relative signification, according as it is differently apply'd; or may not sometimes have both to-Suppose the word God to carry in it the idea of an infinite, eternal, uncreated governor; it is manifest, that it may express both the nature and the office; and, in respect of the latter, may be properly join'd with relative terms. And thus when we fay our God, or your God, it does not barely mean one who has supreme dominion over us; but one whose nature and perfections. are the ground of that dominion; whose essence or substance is as truly divine, as his dominion. So, upon the whole matter, when we declare in the creed that the person of the Father is God, we do not only mean that his office is to rule, and that he has dominion over us; but that his substance, nature, and perfections are infinite. And so we are to understand of every other person, that we believe to be properly called God.

SECT. II.

Of God the Father, consider'd as one God, with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Am next ro consider the notion of one God, and in what sense that title is peculiarly applicable to the person of the Father. The ancient creeds, as hath been before observed, read one God the Father; and most of them likewise one Lord Jesus Christ; as does the nicene creed: And this, no doubt, in opposition to other gods or lords, improperly so call'd; as in that text of St. Paul †,

* P. 85.

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+ 1 Cor. 8. 6.

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from whence the expression seems to be taken. But why is the title of God peculiarly reserv'd to the Father, when it is plain from other places of scripture, and even from this very place likewise, that the Son is properly God, as well as the Father? The design of the scriptures, is to teach us, that there is but one God absolutely, which is primarily to be consider'd in the person of the Father, as the root and fountain of the divinity; not excluding whatever effentially and inseparably belongs to him; but only abstracting from the consideration of any thing farther. This manner of speaking is well accounted for by Eusebius*, who, with respect to the real divinity of the Son, at least, was certainly very orthodox. He observes how the faith in the one God had been taught and inculcated, both in the Old and New Testament, in opposition to the Polytheism of the Gentiles; and that the Father was the one God principally intended in both. But how? Was it exclusive of the Son's divinity, or in opposition to it? No; but to idols only. "In like manner, says he, now in our disputes "with the pagans, we are used to wave the consideration of what " relates to Christ's divinity (that must be his meaning) to a pro-" per season, and to content our selves for the present, only with " confuting the Polytheism of the heathens, and demonstrating " the unity of the Godhead in opposition to it. The words are not strictly translated, but the sense of them faithfully observed.

FROM the like reason, it may probably be presumed, that the creeds consider the one God as primarily and principally subsisting in the person of the Father, the sountain of unity, the root and source of every thing, and of every person; even of the Son and

Holy Spirit, existing from him, and in him.

I am sensible, that the point now under consideration has been much disputed in the christian church; and therefore shall not satisfy my self with this general and superficial account of it, but descend, for the benefit of my reader, to give it a more sull and distinct examination. Some have been so weak, as to imagine, if they could but shew that the Father is frequently represented in scripture and antiquity as the one God, there would be nothing more required towards overthrowing the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead; not considering, that those the Father may be primarily, or in a certain respect, so represented, yet he is not so solely, or in a sense exclusive of the Son or the Holy Ghost. For the same scriptures, and the same ancient writers, which sometimes style the father the one God, do likewise either expressly, or by necessary implication, make the whole

three

^{*} Eccl. theol. 1. 2. c. 22.

three persons together, the one God. The best way of clearing up this matter, will be to enquire, what grounds there are from scripture, antiquity, or reason, for styling the Father, in a certain sense, the one God; and what also for styling the whole three Persons, the one God, in another sense.

I. We have the authority of scripture for styling the Father emphatically or eminently, not by way of exclusion, the one God. I need not be particular in citing the many passages, where God absolutely signifies the Father, or where he is call'd the one or only God. The texts referr'd to * are remarkable, and will be suffi-

cient to this purpose, without mentioning any other.

ALL the dispute is, whether these texts do not speak of God the Father as one God, in so absolute a sense, that neither the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, can be properly called God, nor a Trinity of Persons, if we may argue from the natural force and signification of words, be supposed to subsist in the unity of the divine nature? As to the first of these texts, it may easily be accounted for. When it is faid, the Word was, in the beginning, with God, we readily grant, that the Father is here call'd absolutely God; but his being call'd so, cannot, we say, be interpreted to exclude the Son from having a personal subsistence in the Godhead; for this evident reason; that in the following part of the verse, and the Word was God, the Son, who is acknowledg'd to be the same person with the Word, is call'd God in a sense no less absolute, than that wherein the Father is call'd God in the former part of it. The other text cited from the same apostle, this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast fent, may be thought more difficultly reconcileable with the do-Etrine, which afferts more Persons than one in the Godhead; fince the Father seems here styl'd not so much absolutely God, as directly in contradistinction to the divinity of any other Person, and in particular to that of the Son. But neither shall we find any great difficulty in what is here objected, if we can but prove, that the title of true God is any where in scripture expressly attributed to the Son: For then it will be necessary that the word onby should not be understood in a sense exclusive of the Person of the Son, but in opposition to false gods, or as it is in the primary and more eminent sense applicable to the Father. Otherways there would be two, and both of them, in a proper sense, true Gods.

Now that Christ is expressly styl'd the true God, is evident from that famous text. We know that the Son of God is come, and hath

^{*} John 1. 1.—17. 3. 1 Cor. 8. 6. Ephes. 1. 3, 4.

given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him, that is true; even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. The most material objections against the sense which the orthodox put upon these words, may be reduc'd to the three sollowing particulars. That,

I. This is the only place, wherein it is so much as pretended,

that Christ is styl'd the true God.

II. THE principal design of the apostle is not to speak here concerning the divinity of the Son of God, but to caution men against idolatry.

III. THAT the relative this may not improperly, according to

a usual way of interpreting scripture, be referr'd to the Father.

I. The first objection is of no force, or rather very trisling. For if this place, since it is not so much as pretended to be spurious, or in any material point corrupted, do really speak of Christ as true God, it is of equal authority to prove the truth of his divinity in the highest sense, as if it had been deliver'd in several other places of the holy scriptures, and expressly in the same terms; except the Holy Spirit should be suppos'd, which is impossible, both in the nature of the thing, and by the confession of our adversaries, to contradict himself. One proposition clearly reveal'd in the inspir'd writings, is of the same force to persuade our assent, as if it had been repeated in every page of them. But whether this place do really speak of Christ as true God, will appear more evident even on occasion of the two following objections. For,

II. If it be the principal design of the apostle, in this place, to caution men against the worship of idols, it is strange that he should express himself after a manner, if Christ be not truly God, most proper to mislead men into idolatry; by declaring him to be fo, according to the most natural and obvious sense of the words. It had been sufficient to his purpose of condemning idolatry, if we argue only from his intention in these words, to have afferted, that there are three Persons in the unity of the divine nature; as much as if he had expressly afterted, that there is but one divine: Person. And therefore his design in these words, if it was principally to condemn the worship of false gods, can be no argument against the truth or reasonableness of such an assertion. The one God of the Christians, in opposition to idols, is the whole three Persons together in the unity of the Godhead. Supposing therefore, what we have as yet a right to suppose, that Christ is truly. God, it cannot be objected, that the apostle, by calling him so, would lessen the force of his caution against idolatry, or the worship of false gods. But rather, I say, a strong proof might be drawn from the very scope of his argument, that Christ is in a true,

true, and in the strictest sense, God: For otherways he had propos'd it after such a manner, as, to the most natural apprehensions of those whom he argued to, would not so much have deseated the great end of it, as have introduc'd an error in direct contradiction to the truth, he was going to establish.

III. As to what is pretended, in the last place, that the relative this may not improperly be referr'd to the Father, it does not by any means follow from hence, that therefore, according to the most natural order and construction of the words, it ought to do fo: Nay, the very reason assign'd why it should do so, (namely, that the relative does not always in the scriptures necessarily refer to the immediate antecedent) proves that the interpretation, which our adversaries put upon these words, is contrary to the common rules of interpreting them. For the ordinary method, in this case, is never to be departed from, except where there is, in the natural reason of the thing, some visible necessity for it. But there is so far from being a necessity of our departing here from the common interpretation on any such account, or in respect to any unreasonable consequences, which would follow upon our keeping to it, that it is at once most agreeable to the natural order of the words in the text, and another character of our Lord, confessedly on both sides here given him. For he is describ'd in the abstract, and in repeated terms, as him that is true; which we think a character that can only be apply'd and properly belong to the true God. It is also one of the characters which God appropriates to himself, by way of distinction, in the holy scriptures, that he is the true God; but no expression could have been more strong or emphatical to denote that character, than that which is here apply'd to the Son, and, as we observ'd, in repeated terms, him that is true. This is what we argue, that God, who has declar'd himself jealous of his honour, would not have given the glory of a name so peculiar to the divine nature, to another; to any creature or person whatever who was not God: And that if the Son be him who is true, abstractedly, and in the sublime sense of the words, which the repetition of them still more powerfully imports, then the Father, consider'd as having a distinct essence from the Son, cannot be only, or indeed essentially, true God. A created intelligent being may be said, in a sense, to be true, as he is divinely commission'd or inspir'd; or as he thinks and speaks the truth: But to be call'd him that is true emphatically, or in an absolute sense, which is the same as if he were denominated truth, in the abstract, is a character which ought not to be appropriated to any other being than the true God. It is not therefore of great importance to our present enquiry, whether Christ be omitted in the 5 E

original text or not *. The word Son being sufficient to distinguish the person spoken of, and to connect the relative with the

character here apply'd, and properly belonging to him.

From all which, we may conclude, that the following text of the same apostle, which has been commonly understood as parallel to that I am considering, ought to be explain'd to the same effect. This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God; and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. From which words, it has been argued, that the Father is called the true God, not only absolutely, but directly in contradistinction to the Son. This is granted on both sides. But then, we say, the Father is here contradistinguish'd from the Son, not in opposition to his divinity, but to his human nature, which he assum'd, in order to qualify him for his mission from the Father, to transact with mankind. It is one thing to consider our Lord in his divine Person, and another thing to consider him in his mediatorial, or with respect to which he is here more especially describ'd, his prophetical office. even some difference to be made when we speak of his divinity, absolutely consider'd, and of the order according to which he subfists in the divine nature. In the first sense, as God, he is equal to the Father; as a Prophet sent by the Father, inferior to him. And I do not know whether it may not also be allow'd, in the last place, that, consider'd as the Son, or second Person in the Godhead, according to the natural ideas we have of order, and if we restrain them wholly to it, the Father is greater than he.

THE distinction especially between the dignity of Christ, consider'd as God, and as a Prophet sent from God, is sufficient to justify our explication of this text as denoting the divine nature, not in contradistinction to Christ, as God, but as acting in his pro-

phetical capacity, or by virtue of his mission.

THERE will be still less difficulty, if we attend to what has been said in explaining the last text †. Where God is styl'd absolutely God, and the Father of Jesus Christ, after such a manner, as may be proper to shew, that these expressions do not exclude the divivinity of the Son; and that they are spoken of the Father, not in contradistinction to his divinity, but to his character, or relation to the Father, in one or more of the foregoing respects.

I shall only observe upon the whole matter, that the argument against a plurality of Persons in the Godhead, because the Father is styl'd absolutely God, or the only true God, really proves too

+ Ephes. 1. 3, 4.

much,

^{*} Dr. Mills, tho' he retains the word xessis in the text, yet observes it was wanting in the Alexandrian, and vulgar copies.

much; and must do so, even in the opinion of those who urge it. If it be reasonable or necessary to conclude from these expressions, that there is but one Person of the Godhead, it will prove, for the same reason, and contrary to what our adversaries will admit, that the Son is neither God nor Lord; because it is said absolutely, that the Lord he is God *; and the true God †. And the question is put exclusively of all other persons, who is God, but the Lord ‡? Now in this way of arguing, if there be any force in it, the Father himself will not be God. For since there is no God, but the Lord, and our Saviour is confessedly in scripture styl'd the Lord, and one Lord, there can consequently be no other Person properly styl'd God, but himself.

II. Let us, in the next place, consider, to our present purpose, some few of the numerous authorities, which might be cited from the ante-nicene fathers, who religiously follow'd the language of the scriptures, as to the present article. This is confessedly the style of the ancient creeds down to the nicene creed; as of that creed itself, and of others that were subsequent to it. And the primitive writers, tho' they often call the Son God, and sometimes the Holy Ghost, God; yet when they name Father and Son together, they generally call the first, God, absolutely; and the other, either Lord only, or God of God, or Son of God, or the like: And when they speak of the third Person, they call him generally the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, reserving, as it were, the title of God, as the more peculiar title of Father, chiefly to the Father.

A good account of which may be had from Tertullian and Origen. The words of the former are, ** "I will not say Gods, nor "Lords, in the plural number; but will make the apostle's ex-" pression a rule for mine. If Father and Son are to be named together, I will style the Father God, and Jesus Christ Lord. Yet " when I speak of Christ alone, I may call him God, after the " example of the same apostle, whose words are, of whom Christ " was, who is over all, God, bleffed for ever #.

ORIGEN speaks to this purpole, in answer to such as charg'd the Catholicks with believing more Gods than one. ## " That which " is self-existent (underived) is * God absolutely; for which rea-" fon our Saviour fays, in his prayer to the Father, that they

" may

^{**} Tertul. * Psal. 100. 3. + Jer. 10. 10. ‡ 2 Sam. 22. 32.

Contr. Prax. c. 13. p. 57. †† Rom. 9. 6.

‡‡ Λεκίεον ἢ αὐτοῖς, ὅτι τότε μβὶ Αὐτίθε، ὁ Θεός ἐςι. Διόπες κὶ ὁ σωίής Φησιν ἐν τῆ πρὸς τὰ πατέρα δίχη, ἴνα γινώταωσί σε τὰ μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεόν. Πῶν τὰ ποθὰ τὸ Λύτόθε, μεθοχη τὰ ἐκείνης θεότηλ. Θεοποικμενον κίχ ὁ Θεὸς, κίλλὰ Θεὸς κυριώτερον ἀν λέγοιλο. Orig. in Joh. p. 46. * 6 Ocos.

"may know thee, the only true God. But whatever is God besides that self-existent person, being so only by communication of his divinity, cannot so properly be call'd God absolutely; but rather God of God. The meaning of both these writers is the same; either Father or Son is properly God, as equally having that nature or substance, which only can denominate a person really divine. The ground of this distinction is primarily and underivatively in one, derivatively in the other. Wherefore the former is God absolutely and eminently, as the first Person; the other only God of God. This doctrine of the ante-nicene fathers was so far from being contradicted by the Catholicks succeeding them, that they all receiv'd and taught it. The nicene creed expressly confirms it.

ALEXANDER, bishop of Alexandria ‡, the great scourge of Arius, is as full for the prerogative of the Father in the true sense, and of his being the only underived Person in the Godhead, as any

writier before him, or after him.

HILART, another zealous Trinitarian, expresses himself to this purpose. "Our making the Son God, is no objection against the Father's being the one God. He is the one God, became

" the only underiv'd God **.

ATHANASIUS himself frequently says the same thing. I need but cite two or three passages from him to this effect ††. "When the Father is said to be one or only God ‡‡; those expressions are very right: Because he is really the one, and only, and the first God; not exclusive of the Son. In another place, "God is one, because there is but one Father. And again, "He is the only God, because he is God of himself, and the only fountain of the Godhead.

Basil * and Epiphanius † both say, that there are not two Gods, because not two Fathers. The same Basil says, in another place, of the Holy Spirit, that ‡ He is not the God absolutely so called, and by way of eminence; but only the Spirit of God, and with God. All which expressions are very orthodox. Conformably to which, Eusebius says of God the Son; that he was not that God over all; that is, he was not the first Person, not the Father, primarily and eminently styl'd **, God. And from hence, by the way, we may understand what some of the ante-nicene writers

[‡] Apud Theodoret. l. 1. c. 18. Vales.

*** Ob id, unus Deus; quia ex se Deus. Hilar. Trin. l. 4. p. 836.

†† Athanas. vol. 1. p. 556. †‡ Exod. 3. 14. Deut. 32. Isaiab 44. 6.

** Bas. orat. contr. Sabell. 27. † Epiph. vol. 1. p. 615, 742. Edit. Petav.

† Οῦτε αὐτὸς ὁ Θεὸς, ἀπαὶ Θεῦ πνοῦμα, κὰ κὸς Θεῷ. Hom. 17. in Sanat. Bapt. tom. 1. p. 511.

** ὁ Θεὸς.

mean, by denying the Son to be the God over all *. Notwithstanding which, the fifth verse of the ninth chapter to the Romans, was, in a manner, universally understood of Christ, as being over all, God, bleffed for ever. The title of God over all, was never thought too high for the Son, in any other sense; but as it was made the customary appellation to denote the Person of the Father, of which more hereafter †. It would be endless to cire all the passages from the post-nicene writers, where they style the Father the one God, or fometimes, the true and only God, which Epiphanius # himself did not scruple, not to mention others. The doctrine of the Father's being primarily the one God, was never deny'd by any sober catholick writers; and therefore it is mere trifling for our modern unitarians to infift so much upon it; or to imagine that they can gain any advantage to their cause by it. The church was always careful to maintain the Father's superiority. under that character; but never pretended that there were three principles, three absolute, original, independent divinities: But condemn'd that doctrine for downright Tritheism. Indeed, the doctrine, (which I am to speak to presently) that the three Persons are but one God, meeting with the greatest opposition, especially from the time of Arius; it became the great concern of the Catholicks to maintain and establish that doctrine. And the other doctrine, tho' very confistent with it, and very necessary to be asfented to, came by degrees to be less insisted upon. So we find it,; in a manner, pass'd over in the Athanasian creed, in the eighth century; and it is but transiently mention'd by the schoolmen; which gave great advantage to Socious, and his followers, upon the first publication of their heresy. For it being almost forgotten, how, or in what sense, the Father was styl'd the one, or only God, by scripture and antiquity; it appear'd, in a manner, inconsistent for the Father to be one God, and three persons to be one God likewise. Crellius his celebrated book runs all upon this topick; and he has sufficiently prov'd that the Father is, in a certain respect, the one God. But the inference, which he would draw from it, to the exclusion of the two other Persons from the Godhead, turns upon mere fallacy and abuse of words.

III. AFTER having cited these testimonies to shew in what sense the Father is styl'd the one God, I need not insist upon the reasons why he was so styl'd; those very reasons appearing from the testimonies themselves, and being interwoven in them. The Father is the one God, and, as we see, styl'd the one God; as he

^{*} Ignat. ad Trall. Tarf. Phil. Just. Mart. apostol. const. 6, 25. † See Euseb. E. H. l. 8. c. 11.

Vol. 1. p. 70.

is the one head, original, cause, root, source, sountain of every thing, and even of the two other Persons. The divinity of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is the Father's divinity, as being deriv'd from him; the substance of the two Persons, as being deriv'd from the Father, is the Father's substance. This consider'd; no wonder if the Father be eminently styl'd the one God, or if the Godhead be often consider'd as subsisting primarily in the first Person, without explicitly mentioning the communication of it to two other Persons; but leaving that as sufficiently intimated, and virtually and implicitly understood in the word Father. Having seen, what ground and soundation there is from scripture and antiquity, and the reason of the thing, for calling the Father the one God; I am next to consider,

SECT. III.

Upon what grounds, and in what sense, we call the whole three Persons, the one God?

T will contribute very much towards clearing up the former point, that we should proceed upon this enquiry. Now it is very evident from the titles, epithets, attributes, and powers ascribed to the three Persons in holy scripture, that each Person is properly, that is, according to what I have said above, substantially, or essentially God. The same doctrine may be prov'd from the form of invocating them, of baptism, of the doxologies; and from other topicks. Yet scripture has no where taught us to say three Gods, or three Lords; but has expressly and frequently told us, that there is but one God. What hypothesis soever we take, Arian, or Socinian, or any other besides this, which the patrons of it pretend to found upon scripture, they must be oblig'd to acknowledge more Gods than one; either co-ordinate, or which quite destroys the idea of infinite perfection, having only a dependent arbitrary existence. The catholick scheme alone has so admirably guarded against all extremes, and is so well adjusted to scripture and reason, that it can neither be chargeable with Tritheism, properly so call'd; nor with Polytheism in general; nor with the doctrine of a Trinity purely nominal, and without any real foundation; the Catholicks owning but one Father, or one Fountain of the divinity; and, in consequence thereof, asserting all the three Persons to be one God. Some have had assurance enough to pretend,

pretend, grounding their pretence upon what has been observed above, that the Father only is the one God, exclusive of the other two Persons, and have not scrupled to say very ignorantly, to speak in the softest terms, that the first christians knew of no other one God, than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. On the contrary, nothing is more certain, than that the primitive writers did both know and affert Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be one God; many, expressly and directly; almost all of them, implicitly and consequentially. I shall not insist on that remarkable, and early testimony, concerning the faith of the christian church, and their styling the three Persons one God, given us in way of ridicule by Lucian, or the author of a dialogue under his name; but proceed to christian writers, such as expressly styl'd either Father and Son, or all three Persons together, one God. objection against the style, and manner of speaking, equally affects one, or other; and as to the thing itself, it would be clear enough, tho' they had not used that particular way of expressing it, from numberless other passages. There is no dispute about this matter down from the time of the nicene council. Every body knows how usual it is with Athanasius, Hilary, Austin, and all the catholick writers at the time of that council, and fince, to call the three Persons, or the Trinity, one God. We are only to enquire, whether they then introduc'd a new language, or manner of expression; or, whether they follow'd the dialect in use with their I shall begin with Irenans, that able champion for forefathers. the christian faith, in the second century.

It is frequent with him to speak of the Father and Son together, in the singular number, and to make them both one God. * "He who was ador'd by the prophets as the living God; he is the God of the living; and his Word, who spake to Moses, &c. —Christ therefore, with the Father, is the God of the living, who spake to Moses, &c.—"One and the same God the Father, and his Word, always affishing to mankind, &c.—"He that made all things, is, with his Word, justly call'd the only

" God and Lord.

AND, that it may not be suspected that the Son is here only figuratively or improperly call'd one God with the Father, as deriving his authority and power from him, tho' far inferior to him; it is observable, that Irenaus expressly makes the Son uncreated,

eternal,

^{*} Qui igitur à prophetis adorabatur Deus vivus, hic est vivorum Deus & verbum ejus, qui loquutus est Moysi, &c.——Ipse igitur Christus cum Patre vivorum est Deus, qui loquutus est Moysi, &c. Iren. p. 232.——Cum sit unus & idem Deus Pater, & verbum ejus semper adsistens bumano generi, &c. p. 266.——Is qui omnia secerit, cum verbo suo juste dicatur Deus & Dominus solus. p. 183. vid. & p. 184.

eternal, and truly God. And that he look'd upon nothing as truly God, but what is naturally and essentially so, has been before shewn; and also, that an inferior God is the same, in the sense of this excellent writer, as no God; that is, it implies, in other words, a contradiction. If the reader demands still any farther satisfaction in so clear a case, it may be added, that Ireneus afferts the Son to be the creator and maker of man, of angels, and of all things; the testimonies to which purpose are so numerous, that they need not be particularly cited. And if you would know from him what creator imports, he observes *, that the devil could not create any thing, being himself a creature. And, in another place †, laying down the difference between God and man, he fays, one creates, the other is created; and then adds ‡, that he who is able to create is of an immutable substance, both, as the words may be understood, with respect to his nature and his duration.

Since therefore Father and Son are, according to Irenaus, one and the same God, tho' two Persons, and each of them God in the same sense; we may reasonably conclude, that the catholick church, in his time, neither thought there was any folecism or impropriety in styling more Persons than one, one God; nor any absurdity in the thing itself. It would be very easy to shew, that he comprehended all the three Persons in the one God, tho' he does not lay to in express words; yet from such expressions as these. He made the world, by himself, that is, by his Word, and by his Wisdom **. By which, as himself interprets it ††, he means the Son, and the Holy Ghost, whom he often calls the hands of God ##, at once to express both their consubstantiality with the Father, and their joint operations: I say, from many such passages as these, which, at the same time, are sufficiently guarded against any Sabellian evasion, it is manifest, that this judicious and ancient Father of the christian church believ'd the doctrine of three Persons in the unity of the Godhead as fully, and afferted it almost as clearly and expressly, as afterwards Athanasius himself. one might justly wonder, with what attention those persons read, or with what conscience they write, who pretend any authorities from him in favour of the Arian herefy. Let us proceed, in the next place, to

ATHENAGORAS, whom we have postpon'd a little, for the sake of Irenaus. In answer to the common calumny of the pagans, who

^{*} P. 288. † P. 240. † Et quidem, qui facit semper idem est. ** P. 163. †† P. 253. ‡† Iren. p. 228, 253, 298, 299, 312, 327. charg'd

charg'd the christians with atheism for despising the heathen gods; * We are not atheists, in as much as we believe he answers thus. the Creator of all things, and his Word, to be God. He had said before, in answer to the same objection. + Who can but wonder to hear us charg'd with atheism, who declare there is God the Father, and God the Son, and the Holy Ghost?

WHAT I am to remark, is, that in the first citation, he speaks of Father and Son together, and calls them God, in the fingular number, not Gods. From whence we may again observe, the manner of expression was not thought improper at that time; and that Father and Son were each of them properly God, one as much as the other, and in the same sense. The second citation is not so express and full to our purpose; but both together may serve to illustrate and strengthen each other. And since he here brings in all the three Persons in answer to the same charge of atheism; it must appear by necessary inference and implication, that he believ'd the whole three Persons equally comprehended and subsisting in the one God. To confirm which, I might observe farther, that the same author describes the Son as being one with the Father ‡; uncreated and eternal **; and that he makes both Son and Holy Ghost emanations from the Father, as light from fire ††: With a design, by all these expressions, to signify their perfect unity, and consubstantiality. And yet to guard against Sabellianism, as it was afterwards call'd, he speaks more than once concerning the order according to which they are distinguish'd ‡‡.

FROM Athenagoras, I descend to Tertullian, who is so full and . clear to our purpose, that hardly any of the post-nicene writers can be more. * It is, says he, mere Judaism to believe one God in fuch a sense, as not to include the Son, and after the Son, the Holy Ghost. And a little after, he adds; the three together make one God. In the second chapter of the same book against Praxeas +. he calls all the three, one God. It would be needless to make out by inferences and deductions, that he means essentially, or substantially one God. It is his avow'd declar'd doctrine, wherever he speaks of the subject ‡, that all the three Persons are one God; having

all

^{*} Ούκ έσμεν άθεοι, Θεόν άγονθες τે ωοιηθήν τέθε τε ωανθός κὶ τે ωαρ αύτε λόγον. Apol. f. 26. p. 122.

[†] Τίς 🕏 κα ἀν ἀπορήσαι λέγονίας Θεον Παίέρα τη τόν Θεον τη 🖘 ου μα άγιον--- ἀπέσας άθέυς

[#] P. 38. ** P. 39. †† P. 40, 67. †† P. 40, 46.

* Judaicæ fidei ista res, sic unum Deum credere ut Filium adnumerare ei nolis, & post Filium, Spiritum.— + P. 501. —Tres crediti, unum Deum sistunt. Contr. Prax. p. 518. Rigalt.

[†] Unus omnia, dum ex uno emnia per substantiæ scilicet unitatem. p. 501.

all the same root or principle, they are one by unity of substance. And it may be remember'd, from what has been observ'd in another place, that Tertullian, upon his principles, could not express himself in different terms. He allows nothing to be God but one uncreated, infinite, eternal substance; nor any dominion to be really divine, that is inferior to the supreme. His very calling of the Son, or Holy Spirit, God, both which he does over and over *. were alone sufficient to justify our other inferences. venture to add, that the same inferences may be justly drawn, with respect to any other of the catholick ante-nicene writers, who have used the like style; and that any man may be safely challeng'd to

disprove them. But I pass on to

CLEMENT of Alexandria, contemporary with Tertullian; and altogether as full and express to our purpose. The following citations from him will be sufficient to make good our assertion. Nothing is hated of God; no, nor any thing of the Word †: For both are one, namely God. In another place, he observes, that " the God of the universe, is one only; good, just, creator, " the Son in the Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Here the Son in the Father (or with the Father) is styl'd the one God, and God of the universe: Words too plain to need a comment; nor can we well conceive any thing more express, except what follows be allow'd so, being part of a prayer where he addresses himself to both Father and Son jointly as to one Lord, in the singular number; ** Son and Father, both one, Lord. The whole prayer is very remarkable, and as clear an acknowledgment of the holy and undivided Trinity, as one would expect to meet with in the fathers of the fourth century, or the ages following.

Here the patrons of the Arian scheme have nothing left but to charge the author with Sabellianism; a word, which they are used to employ in this controversy so ordinarily, almost against every thing they do not approve; or which is too strong, and too expressive, to admit of any tolerable evasion. Yet it happens with this excellent writer, as it has with most who have kept in the middle way: He has several passages so full and clear for the distinction of Persons, that he has been thought by some to lean too far towards the other extreme, and almost to border upon Arianism ††. Which, tho' it be as false a charge as the former;

†† P. 699, 769.

^{*} Adv. Prax. f. 13. p. 507.

† "Εν γας ἄμφω, ὁ Θεός. p. 135.

‡ Τῶν συμπάνθων Θεὸν ἔνα μόνον ἐναι, ἀγαθὸν, δίκαιον, δημικερον κὸν ἐν καθελ ῷ ἡ δόξα κὸς τὰς κἰῶνας τ αἰώνων. Clem. Alex. Pæd. l. 1. c. 8. p. 142.

** 'Υιὲ κὰ Παθής, ἐν ἄμφω, Κύειε. Pæd. l. 3. c. 12. p. 311.

++ P 6 600 -60

yet may serve, however, to shew, (which is the only use I would at present make of it) that this father was no Sabellian. an author fometimes seems to incline too much one way, and fometimes to be carry'd too far the other way; it is a reasonable presumption, that he is not, in truth, inclin'd to take either way; but to keep between the extremes. The best rule of interpreting such an author, is to compare his several expressions and sentiments together; and then common justice will require, especially if he were a person, not only of good sense, but of great learning, as well as probity, to believe, that he had some consistent meaning; and did not defign to say, and unsay; or to fill his writings with flagrant and notorious contradictions.

Our next authority shall be the famous and learned Origen. answer to Celsus, who had charged the christians with worshipping more Gods than one; he refers * to that text of St. John, I and my Father are one †; and, after some explication of the meaning, that it might not be interpreted to a Sabellian sense, he adds, $\pm We$ therefore, in the sense I have told you, worship but one God, the Father and Son. In another place he says of the Son, that ** he is one and the same God and Lord with the Father. In his comment on the epiftle to the Romans, he says of Father and Son, that †† They are both one God; because the Son has no other fountain of his divinity, but the Father; being (according to what wisdom says of him) a most pure emanation from the one fountain, the Father. It were easy to vindicate any one of the three citations, as to the manner of expression, from the charge of novelty. But the last is clear and full for the essential or substantial unity. no reasonable doubt to be made, but that the two former ought to be interpreted to the same sense with it; if it be consider'd what just and worthy sentiments Origen has elsewhere express'd of the Son of God: That he is ## properly Son of God: Son, by * nature, and not by adoption: Eternal †: Eternally generated ‡: Uncreated **: Creator ††: God by nature; the power and wisdom of God; frequently ##: Consubstantial *: Omnipresent #: Immutable ‡: Incomprehensible **.

I might

^{*} P. 385. † John 10. 30. ‡ Ένα ἔν Θεὸν, ως ἀποδεδώκαμεν, τ΄ παθέρα κὶ τ΄ ψὸν Θεραπδόρμεν. Contr. Cels. p. 386. *** Unus atque idem est cum Patre Deus & Dominus. De Princ. l. 1. c. 2. p. 772.

Edit. Basil.

^{††} Unus autem uterque est Deus, quia non est aliud Filio divinitatis initium quam Pater; sed ipsius unius Paterni sontis (sicut sapientia dicit) purissima est emanatio Filius. p. 467. Vol. 2. Edit. Basil.

[#] Contr. Cels. p. 52. * Pamph. Apol. p. 122. # Huet. Orig. vol. 2. p. 31. ** Contr. Cels. p. 287. # Ibid. p. 171. * Athanas. vol. 1. p. 233. + C † Athanas. vol. 1. p. 233. 287. †† Ibid. p. 63, 317. † Contr. Cels. p. 63, 164, 239. ** Ibid. p. 320. 1 Ibid. p. 169, 170.

I might have produc'd several other testimonies to the same purpose; but these are sufficient to shew, that to style the three Perfons, or the whole Trinity, one God, was no new form of expression begun by Athanasius in the fourth century, but what had been constantly us'd by the catholick writers of the greatest learning and character long before. And it is a strong presumption. that those, who discover so great an aversion to the language of the ante-nicene fathers, are far from agreeing with them in doctrines; and are very sensible of their disagreement. Supposing, however, that the manner of expression had been new, and first introduc'd about the time of the council of Nice, which manifestly it was not; yet what will such a concession signify, if we are able to prove, that they all taught the same doctrine, even where they do not follow one particular form of expression? If they teach it, tho' but indirectly or consequentially, they do it as certainly; and it amounts, upon the whole matter, to the same thing, and is equally serviceable to the cause of the orthodox. For instance:

1. THE ancients, in general, unanimously maintain'd against heathens and hereticks, that there is but one God in the strict sense. And the same ancients affirm'd the Son to be God in the strict sense; and the Holy Ghost to be God likewise; some, in express terms; others, in words equivalent; from whence it evidently follows, that they look'd upon the three Persons as

one God.

2. The ancients, in general, unanimously afferted a co-essential and co-eternal Trinity, either directly and expressly, or implicitly and consequentially; which, in essect, is to teach, that the Tri-

nity is the one God.

3. The titles and attributes ascrib'd to the Son expressly and frequently, (and sometimes, tho' not so often, to the Holy Ghost; but always understood and implied) are demonstrative proofs that all the three Persons are supposed to be comprehended in the idea of the one God.

^{*} Tertull. contr. Prax. c. 13. Origen. in Basil. de Sp. S. p. 219. Cyprian. Ep. ad Jubai. p. 203. Dionys. Alex. Labbe. tom. 1. p. 873. Sabellius's taunting question to the Catholicks; "Eva Oeòv ¿χομεν ή τρεις Oeós. Epiphan. Hær. 62. shews, that the title of God, as apply'd to the Holy Ghost, was the common language of the church, at that time. And the argument may be carry'd up much higher from this consideration, that the Praxeans and Noëtians made the three Persons of the Godhead, one Person. Wherefore they are much to blame, who, merely upon the credit of Erasmus, persist in so notorious an untruth, as that the Holy Ghost was not styled God within the three first Centuries: Which, if it were true, as it is manifestly false, yet would not at all affect the cause of the orthodox, the divinity of the Holy Ghost being clearly acknowledg'd, even by those that did not give him the title of God in their writings.

To mention only fuch as are ordinarily apply'd to the Son, by the ante-nicene writers. He is styl'd God by all in general; God and Lord by many of them; Lord God absolutely by several; particularly by Justin Martyr, and Irenæus, in the application of texts of the Old Testament: True, or truly God by most of them; great God by some, and perfect God: God by nature; Son by nature; true and proper Son; by many: God of the Jews, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, very frequently: Sometimes, the only God, and the living God, and counsellor to the Father: Creator of men, of angels, and of all things, constantly by all the ancients. As to his attributes, he is represented uncreated, eternal, consubstantial, either expressly, or in effect, by the concurrent testimony of the ante-nicene writers. Omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, immutable, incomprehensible, impassible; &c. by several. In short, every thing is attributed to him that can tend to raise our ideas of his dignity, and to denote

a Person strictly and essentially divine.

4. THE worship, hymns, doxologies address'd to the three Perfons, as old as christianity itself, and as unanimously and constantly adhered to, are all so many proofs of the truth of what we assert, that the blessed three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were the God of the primitive Christians. And it deserves to be consider'd, what reproach and ignominy they were all along expos'd to from Jews and Pagans for their worshipping a man, a crucify'd and mortal man. Yet they never deny'd the charge, but vindicated their practice; strenuously afferting, that they ought to worship that crucify'd man, because God and man; and this at the same time that they expressly charg'd the heathens with polytheism and idolatry, for giving worship to any thing or being, besides the one supreme God. What can all this mean? Should not they at least have said, that the worship paid to the Son was only honour and respect; and that the Father alone had a just title to religious worship? Or should not they have declar'd plainly, that he was only metaphorically call'd God, or God in a more large and improper sense; should they not have been moderate and tender of giving offence to Jews and Pagans, as some pretend we ought to be now, with respect to Jews, Infidels, and Mahometans? No: they had not so learned Christ. His divinity (and the same is true of the Holy Ghost) was a settled point, an article of faith with them; and they persisted in their practice, and their defence of it, as resolutely, as for the truth of christianity itself. I shall refer the reader to two or three passages of Arnobius to this purpose; and which may serve for a specimen of the courage and constancy 4 H

constancy of the first christians, in maintaining the truth, what-

ever infults they were expos'd to from their enemies *.

AND yet this is the same Arnobius, that tells us over and over in his books; that there is but one God; that nothing is God that is not uncreated and eternal; and that the heathen gods were no gods, because they once began to exist, and were produc'd in time. What I have observed of this author, is equally true of all the ancient apologists; and we may now conclude, either that the doctrine of three Persons in one God, is fix'd and radicated in the constitution of christianity itself; or that the whole army of martyrs and confessors; the whole church of Christ, as early as the days of inspiration, were the most inconsiderate, rash, and inconfistent men that ever lived, or committed their thoughts to writing; men, who did nothing but contradict and confound themselves; who impos'd both upon the Jews and Heathens, and, instead of promoting, hindred their conversion; who labour'd earnestly to root up heathen idolatry, and when they had done, planted christian idolatry in its room, and by such reasons and arguments, as were equally forcible and conclusive against both heathens and christians.

THERE is no instance, we grant, in nature, sufficient to illustrate the unity, and distinction of the three Persons of the holy and undivided Trinity. Three Suns exactly of the same kind would be specifically one. But the unity of the three Persons is not such. The rays of the same Sun, is an instance which the fathers apply'd, as more expressive, and more pertinent than the former. And as the Sun, with his undivided rays, is one individual Sun; so the Father, with the other two Persons proceeding from him, and inseparably existing with him, and in him, is one individual substance, one God. Another may have the very same notion, and yet think this should not be call'd individual, lest it might seem to infer personal identity. This is nothing but cavilling about words. If any do not like the phrase of individual substance, they may put undivided substance in the place of it. While we are agreed, that there is one head, the Father; and that the Son and Holy Ghost are two real Persons, eternally deriv'd from him, existing in him, and inseparably, and substantially uni-

ted

^{*} Ergone inquiet aliquis furens, iratus, & percitus Deus ille est Christus? Deus, respondebimus, & interiorum potentiarum Deus. p. 24. And in another place; Derideatis licèt ex more, atque in lasciviam dissolvamini cachinnorum. Deus ille sublimis suit, Deus radice ab intimà, Deus ab incognitis regnis. p. 32. And in another place; Cum verd Deus sit, recertà & sine ullius redubitationis ambiguo; insiciaturos arbitramini nos esse, quam maxime illum à nobis coli, & præsidem corporis nostri nunsupari? p. 24.

have abundance of leisure, may dispute as long as they please, whether this union shall be call'd specifick or individual. The disficulty is not in the thing; but in defining precisely what is specifick, or what numerical. Let but any man define the words; and it will be as easy to determine, whether the unity of the three Persons be specifick or individual, as it will be to determine, whether they are modes and attributes only, or real Persons; which can admit of no difficulty, among any that know how to distinguish between the sound and the sense of words *.

THE sum then of what has been said, is this. In the creed we profess to believe one God, the Person of the Father; one, not excluding the two other Persons (in the Jewish, Sabellian, Arian, or Socinian sense) from partaking of the same divine nature, or substance with him; but excluding all other first principles; all pretence to any seperate and co-ordinate God; all Persons or things whatever, except what is so contain'd in him, deriv'd from him, and united to him, as to be substantially and essentially one

with him.

This is the sense of the Apostle's creed, and of the Nicene creed, and not contradicted by the Athanasian, but necessarily imply'd. This is the sense of the ancient creeds of the whole Christian church from the beginning, convey'd to us by as clear a tradition, as the books of scripture themselves; the sense which has prevail'd against all possible opposition from Pagans, Jews, and Hereticks; and will prevail while the church stands, and to the end of the world. It has been obscur'd indeed sometimes, but never lost, not in the darkest times of Popery; it was embrac'd by all the churches of the Reformation, and it is still, blessed be God, almost universally establish'd and taught in them.

The Liturgy of the church of England, in conformity to the ancient Liturgies, considers the Father as the head of all; the Son under the character of mediator; and the Holy Ghost, as sanctifier. Prayers are address'd to God the Father principally, as they ought to be; and sometimes to each Person singly, or to all together. Here is nothing but what consists with the primitive doctrine

^{*} This is all the meaning of the modal distinction or difference, and is not opposed to real, as if they were not three real Persons; but only to real, as it might signify a real disparity of nature, or different kind of substance. The Persons are really distinct; but have all the same nature; powers; persections; &c. that there's no imaginable difference lest, but their different manner of existing. Thus Adam and Seth had equally the same human nature, and every thing essential to man: But one existed without a father, the other from a father; and so they differ d in their manner of existence. Tho' the similitude will not hold in every respect, nor indeed will any we can think of.

and practice of the faithful, and what tends to keep up a religious sense, as of the co-eternity, and co-equality of the three Perfons together; so of the distinct personality, order, and office of each.

CHAP. III.

I believe in God the Father Almighty.

THE word * which we translate Almighty, signifies both supremacy and power; and carries more ideas in it, than can be fully express'd in any one word in our language. It is a title emphatically and eminently ascrib'd to the Father in the ancient creeds; and even in the Athanasian creed itself. In speaking to it, I shall take occasion to say something of the Father's distinguishing titles and appellations; a matter, which, because of the stress generally laid upon it in the controversy about the Trinity, deserves to be particularly consider'd. The Arians and Socinians have thought it of great importance to their cause, to be able to find any particular title or epither, that has been constantly apply'd to the Father only; imagining, that the titles intended to denote the first Person particularly of the ever-blessed Trinity, the head and fountain of all, were design'd to signify, that the other two Persons are not co-eternal and consubstantial with him: Whereas, on the contrary, it may much more reasonably be inferr'd, that since the titles and appellations proper to distinguish the nature of God from all other things; such as God, true God, the eternal and immutable being, or the like, are not sufficient to distinguish between one person and another; but other titles denoting some peculiar acts, or offices, or the same titles, with the addition of an article, or some particular emphasis, must be used for this purpose; I say, it may be much more reasonably inferr'd from hence, that there is no difference of nature between one and the other, but only a distinction of Persons. And yet what would it argue, admitting that any such titles were constantly appropriated to God the Father, which they are not; but that the nature of the three Persons is so entirely the same, that it is hard to find

words,

^{*} Πανδοκεάτως.

words, which shall serve to discriminate one Person from another; and to express what Person we distinctly mean.

OR, suppose that some particular titles and epithets have, by scripture and antiquity, been apply'd peculiarly to the Father, so long as words of a like import, if not of the very same, are apply'd to the other Persons likewise, what does this prove, but that the Persons have been distinguish'd, as it were, by proper names; and that, as feveral words may ferve to denominate the Son, or the Holy Ghost; so likewise others may stand instead of the title of God the Father, and mean no more than the first Person of the ever blessed Trinity, not differing in nature, but in the manner of sublisting, from either of the other two. The title of Father, for any thing that appears, may as well be insisted on, to ground a difference of nature upon, as any of the rest. For it will be difficult for any man to shew, that the other titles, as ascrib'd to him by way of eminence, or by way of contradiction mean any thing more than that he is primarily, and originally, not exclufively or folely, what these titles or appellations denote. several titles then been as constantly ascribed to the Father, as is pretended, and to him only; yet the Arians and Socinians would be as much at a loss for a proof of what they design, as ever. But it happens a little unfortunately to these gentlemen, that, with all their painful researches into antiquity, they have hardly been able to meet with any one title or epithet apply'd to the Father, which has not, upon some occasion or other, been apply'd by the ancients to the Son too. Who, remembring * the texts of scripture; I and my Father are one; all that the Father has is mine; who is the express image of his Person, and the like, scrupled not sometimes to apply to the Son those very titles and epithets, which they ordinarily and generally reserved to the Father.

TERTULLIAN is not only an evidence for the fact; but he pleads the case, and justifies it from the reason of the thing. "The "titles, says he, belonging to the Father, are, God Almighty, the Highest, the Lord of Hosts, the King of Israel, he † Who is, as the scriptures teach. These, we say, belong'd to the "Son likewise. In these characters he came, and acted all along; in his own Person proving to mankind that he was invested with them. All things, says he, that the Father hath are mine. "And why not then his titles? This he urges against Praxeas, who pretended that these several names belong'd to one Person solely: Wherefore Tertullian goes on to shew, that they belong'd

+ 6 av.

^{*} Vid. Tertul. cont. Prax. c. 17.

to the Son also, as a distinct Person from the Father. " Consider, says he, when you read of God Almighty, the Highest, " and Lord of Hosts, and King of Ifrael, and Who is, whether " the Son may not be meant by these names; he being God Al-" mighty, in his own right, (or own Person) as the Word of God "Almighty, and as receiving dominion over all; the Highest, as " being exalted to the right hand of God, as St. Peter tells us in " the Ats; Lord of Hosts, as all things are put under him: "King of Israel, as that nation was his peculiar people; and al-" so Who is, because many are called Sons, and are not properly " such. Praxeas had argued against the Catholicks, that the eighth verse of the first chapter of the Apocalypse, where the Lord is called * Almighty, could not be meant of the Son, as a distinct Person from the Father; because nothing really distinct from the Father can be † Almighty. Since therefore that text is undoubtedly meant of the Person called the Son, mention'd in the verse before, and yet not of any real distinct Person, it must follow. that Father and Son are not distinct Persons, but one and the same

This I take to have been Praxeas's argument: And I the rather mention it, that it may be observ'd this verse was at that time understood by all sides of God the Son. Praxeas took it for granted; and Tertullian himself durst not deny it, however he might have got rid of a specious objection, as it was thought, by denying it. But he answers, by telling him, that the Son is really Almighty ‡, in as much as the Son of the Almighty, is as truly Almighty; as the Son of God, is God. The same, or the like answer, (probably to the same objection) we meet with in Hippolytus, in his treatise against Noëtius **. And Origen †† interprets the text of the Son, as they do, and draws the like inference from it. So that the title of Almighty was frequently apply'd to the Son, as well as to the Father. We find it thus apply'd in Clement ## of Alexandria twice or thrice; and even in Eusebius * himself, how ever strenuous an assertor of the prerogative of the Father. This therefore we may take for a certain rule in interpreting the writings of all the catholick fathers. There's no name or title (excepting what expresses merely a personal relation, as the name of Father) apply'd to the Father, but what they thought properly applicable to the Son too, as well as the thing, power, or property, fignify'd by that name: Only it was primarily applicable to one, and secondarily to the other. Both were conceived to have all the

^{*} Πανδοκεφτως † Πανδοκεφτως ‡ Πανδοκεφτως ** P. 238. †† De Princ. l. 1. c. 2. † P. 148, 277, 647. * Demonstr. ev. l. 6. c. 16.

same perfections and powers, and in the same degree, allowing only for the different manner of subsistence, as one is God of himfelf, the other God of God. It is in vain therefore to endeavour at any argument from the Father's distinguishing titles, which were never distinguishing in any other sense, but as denoting the Father to be the first Person; from whom the other two Persons proceed, co-eternal, and co-equal with him: Which amounts to no more, than if it were said, the Father only is Father, or that he only is the first Person.

I might confirm what is here said by observing particularly that the title of * God over all, generally reserved to the Father, yet is applyed to the Son too, by all the ante-nicene sathers, as well as the post-nicene, in their interpretation of the ninth chapter of the Romans, and the sisth verse; but still, God of God. So for † maker of all things; it is another distinguishing title of the Father; but how? Only as he is primarily so, being the Father, or sirst Person. Otherwise, in the sullest signification of it, it is as properly applicable to God the Son, and is so applyed expressly by Ireneus ‡ twice; and in words equivalent by all the sathers.

THE Father then had always some peculiar title generally reserved to him; and the Son and Holy Ghost respectively had theirs too, to distinguish their Persons, and that it might be understood which Person particularly was intended, or spoken of. But as to any difference of nature, or substance, as it was what the good fathers never suppos'd, so they never design'd any thing like it by those distinguishing appellations. The title therefore of ** Almighty in the creed; whether denoting the power or supremacy of God, is not to be apply'd to the Person of the Father only; so as to exclude either of the other Persons from being, in a proper sense, all which this name, or title signifies: Only it belongs to the Father primarily, and to the other two Persons derivatively. are all three, one Almighty, in the same sense or respect, as they are one Substance, or one God. The attributes are as really one, as the substance is; and as really distinct, as the Persons are. as there is but one Almighty Substance; so, it must be own'd: there are three Almighty Persons.

I am sensible that the word render'd Almighty in the Athanasian creed ††, is not the same with what is here render'd Almighty, nor of the same latitude and extent. But the difference being only this, that one of the terms expresses more attributes, or powers, than the other; and the reason being the same for one,

^{*} Έπὶ πάνθων Θεός.** Πανλικρήτως.

[†] Πηοθής τ πάνθων, ΟΓ τ όλων. †† Πανθοδύναμος.

[‡] L. 1. p. 44, 79.

or for many, a greater critical exactness, in the application of them,

was not necessary.

I have shewn, that the title of * Almighty is properly applicable to any of the three Persons, in respect of what it really signifies; and so the ancient writers apply'd it indifferently to Father or Son. But if any man will be contentious, and make it a synonymous term, equivalent to Father, or the first Person; he may use his liberty. For then there will be only a dispute about the word, whether it shall be understood in a more restrain'd sense, or in its

larger signification.

And this is all that I think necessary to be said upon the word Almighty, as it stands in the creed; not designing here any other explication of it, than as it relates to the Father, consider'd as such. As creeds were intended to assert the doctrine of the Trinity, and at first, very probably, were compiled with that view; so when they come to be perverted, and men pretend to draw arguments from them, even against that very doctrine which they were design'd to establish; particular care should be taken to guard against such impious attempts; whether undertaken by ignorant pretenders to criticism, or men of known distinction in the learned world.

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CHAP. IV.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

Some creeds, particularly one in Irenaus †, one in Tertullian ‡, another in Origin **, explain creation by the production of the world out of nothing. In conformity to which, I take it to be the general meaning of the present article, that all things besides, whether visible or invisible, whether in heaven or earth, not only owe their formation, but their being and original to the true God. So that there is no pretence, either for making matter eternal, as some philosophers, and some hereticks have afferted it; or for saying, that the world, or any part of it, was created by certain inferior powers, angels, or principalities; nor that any other being coordinate to, or of a distinct substance from God, had bore the least part, either in making or forming the world. God the Fa-

^{*} Πανδοπεάτως. † P. 98. ‡ P. 206. ** Pamph. apolog. ther.

ther, and he only, was, and is Creator, in opposition to all beings before mention'd: But not in opposition to, or exclusive of God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost, who are one with him in the same divine nature and essence, and inseparable from him. Neither of them is excluded from being any thing, or every thing, that the Father is; but only from being so originally, and underivazively. Tho' the creation of the world be attributed to the Father, to whom ultimately is referr'd all that the Son is, or does, as to the fountain of all; yet it was ever allow'd *, that the creation was the more immediate work of God the Son, by whom all things were made †. By whom were all things created that are in beaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: All things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist ‡. By whom God made the worlds **. In consideration whereof, the most ancient creeds, when they mention the creation of the world by God the Father, subjoin thereto, by his Son, or his Word ††. The creeds that omit the mention of it in the first article, do all, or most of them, insert it in the third; as, the creed of Origen; the Jerusalem creed, that of Cyrill; the creed of Lucian; that in the apoltolical constitutions; that of Casarea, left us by Eusebius; the Alexandrian, as is supposed by the learned, offered by ## Arius and Euzoius; the two creeds of Epiphanius; and, to name no more, the nicene creed, which retains the words, by whom all things are made; tho' fo disadvantagiously placed, that an unskilful reader maynot easily distinguish whether they refer to the Pather, or Son. Gregory Thaumaturgus, in his creed, expresses it very emphatically: * The operating Word, the Wisdom comprehending the whole system of the world, and the Power productive of the whole creation.

How this came to be omitted in the Apostle's or the Roman creed; which seems to have been so religiously preserved in the other creeds, some of them, probably, older than the Roman, I pretend not to determine. Whether it were for brevity sake only, or because it was thought sufficiently imply'd in the first or second article; or because (as is most probable) the Roman church was less

Greg. Thaumat. p. 1.

+ This article came late into the creed. Vid. Pearson. p. 47.

. infested

^{*} See Orig. contr. Cels. p. 317. + John 1. 2. ‡ Coloff. 1. 16, 17.

^{††} Omnia condidit per Verbum suum. Iren. p. 98. And in another place, Per Christum Jesum Dei Filium. p. 178. And Tertullian, Per Verbum suum primo omnium demissum. p. 206.

^{- ‡‡} See Socrat. E. H. p. 51.

* Λόγ & ἐνεργης, σοφία τ΄ όλων συς άσεως περεκθική, κλ δύναμις τ΄ όλης κθίσεως παιηθική. Oper. Greg. Thaumat. p. 1.

infested with heresies, and so there was less occasion for laying any great stress upon this particular form of confession. scripture and antiquity have constantly ascrib'd the creation of the world to the Son, as well as the Father, and to the Son more immediately, as I have observed; and, to confirm what I have said, may refer to Origen *, who speaks the sense of all antiquity, where he tells us, that the Father's part in creating of the world was to issue out orders, and the Son's, to execute them; and therefore the Father was primarily, but the Son immediately, creator. And it is in this respect chiefly, that the Son is so often called by Ireneus, Tertullian, Cyprian, and others, the hand of God, or of the Father; and particularly by Methodius †, the omnipotent, and mighty hand of the Father. By which, and the like expressions, as I observed above, was signifyed the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, and their joint operations: Wherefore Ireneus interprets the Father's creating by his Word and Wisdom, to be creating by himself, allowing only for the distinction of Persons. The Son particularly is acknowledg'd by all the ancients to be properly Creator ±.

Testimonies to this purpose are so numerous, so clear, and so incontestable, that I may save my self the trouble of charging the margin with them. I shall cite one passage from Ireneus, which will shew very fully, in what sense the ancients understood the creation of the world to belong either to Father, Son, or Holy Ghost,

and what consequence they drew from it.

DISPUTING against hereticks, who attributed the creation of the world to angels, and powers separate from the one true God, he says thus. ** "Angels did not make us, nor did they form us; "neither was it in their power to make the image of God: None but the # Word could do this; no powers distinct from the Father of all things: For God did not want their assistance in making the things which he had ordain'd. For his Word and his Wisdom, the Son and the Holy Ghost, are always with him; by whom, and with whom, he made all things freely, and of his own accord; to whom also he spake, in these words; Let us make man in our own image and likeness ##. To which we may

fubjoin

^{*} Contr. Cell. p. 317. † Apud Plot. cod. 235. † Δημικεγος, τεχνίτης, είνης, ποιηίνς, Αθεώπων, Αίγελων, τ παίνων, τ έλων.

subjoin one passage more. * " Man is made after the image and " likeness of the eternal God; the Father designing and issuing " out orders; the Son executing them, and making man; the "Holy Ghost supporting and strengthening him when made.

Thus the ancients allotted to every Person of the ever blessed Trinity their respective operations, and offices in the creation of things, to fignify their intimate union with each other, and their

joint operations...

THE Son is called †, the Father's counsellor, by ‡ Hermes, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Theophilus bishop of Antioch, and others: A character which would border upon blasphemy, if ap-

ply'd to any creature.

THE pretence therefore of the Arians, that the Son was no more than an inferior instrument, a creature which the Father employ'd in his creation of things, was as novel, as it was impious. sides that, the absurdity of supposing a creature properly Creator, and endow'd with creative powers, which the Arians, upon the evidence of scripture and tradition, could not but admit, was alone, like a dead weight about the neck of Arianism, sufficient to sink it.

I shall observe farther, that tho' the Son is represented by the ancients, as ministring to the Father, and executing his will; yet they hereby only intended the subordination of the Son, as a Son to the Father; not any inferiority of nature of power. So Tertullian, who allows of some difference of order, or ** superiority in the former sense, denies it in the latter ##. And Justin Martyr, who in his dialogue styles the Son ‡‡ Minister of the Father in one sense, expressly denies that he is so in another sense. Eusebius, who calls him * a subordinate agent in executing the Father's good pleasure, does, in the same sentence, make him joint creator with the Father; as did also Dionysius of Alexandria before him, giving him the title of † joint creator with the Father.

Upon the whole then, it appears, that the work of creation is, in an eminent sense, ascrib'd to the Father; not in opposition to

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[🗯] ΤΕ μίν Παθρός δίδοκέντω η κελούοντω, τε ή ής προκουτω η δημικργέντω, τε ή πνούματώ τρέφοντω κ αύξοντω. p. 285, † Σύμδελω τε Θεε.

[‡] Herm. sim. o. c. 12. Iren. l. f. p. 292. Clem. p. 769, 832. Theoph. p. 100. Tertull. contr. Hermog. p. 239.

** Apolog. c. 21. adv. Prax. ε. 3, 9, 30.

†† Divinitas gradum non habet, utpote unica.

† Τπερέτην. Vid. Bull. Def. F. N. p. 258.

* Τπυργός, Eccl. Hift. 1 1. c. 2.

[†] Συνδημικερος τῷ Παθεί. Dionys. Alex. epist. cont. Paul. Samosat. Labbe. tom. 1. p. 873.

the other two Persons essentially one with him; but to all other beings or persons whatever. And thus we profess in the creed, that God the Father emphatically, all the three Persons strictly and properly, are one creator of heaven and earth, in the same sense as they are one God. They wanted not any previous matter to make the world with, nor the assistance of any thing external, nor was there any such thing: Not any heathen deity, or heretical deity of the Gnosticks, of Cerdon, or Marcion; not any angels, or archangels had any hand in creating or forming the universe. The one eternal supreme Father, with his co-eternal and co-essential Word and Spirit, was the sole Creator and Maker of all things.



SPECU-



SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK IV.

Of the Articles of the Christian Faith, as contain'd in the Creed; commonly call'd the Apostle's Creed.

**ම්යන්ත්වරයන්ගේ විශ්යවරුව *

ARTICLE II.

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord.

CHAP. I. And in Jesus Christ.

N explicating the former article relating to our faith in the first Person of the holy Trinity, I thought proper to intermix several things relating to the other two Persons; which, tho' a fault in strict method, yet was serviceable to my design, of giving a strict and true account of our christian faith in one God the Father, clear'd from the false notions and misrepresentations, that former or latter heresies had introduc'd. Having, I say, first endeavour'd to settle this great point of our belief in one God the Father, upon sound

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found and catholick principles; I proceed now more directly and especially to consider what relates to God the Son, here call'd and distinguish'd by the name of Jesus Christ. I must not omit to take notice, that many of the ancient greek creeds, as well as the nicene, read one Lord Jesus Christ, laying a particular emphasis on the word one; either in conformity to an expression of St. Paul *, as Ruffinus + hath remark'd; or in opposition to Cerinthus and others; who, in the early times of the church (to avoid the difficulty, as is probable, of confessing a God incarnate) divided Christ from Jesus, making them two different Persons, instead of one Christ Jesus. This appears more probable than Ruffinus his account; as well from the reason of the thing itself, as because Irenæus in his creed, does not exactly follow St. Paul's expression, but fays \(\psi\), one Jesus Christ, leaving out the term Lord; and so does Ignatius ** before him, on the same occasion. The word one is omitted in the Roman creed, very probably for the same reason, which Ruffinus gives; namely, that the church of Rome was not disturb'd with hereticks ††, nor had not given origin to herefies, as the eastern parts of the christian world had done. But to proceed, we profess in these words, that the Person known by the name of Jesus, or Jesus of Nazareth, was, and is the very Christ, the promised Messiab. I need not be particular in explaining the etymology of the name Jesus, signifying a Saviour, and expressly declar'd in the holy scripture to be given our Lord for that reason. What Jesus was, andwhat he did and suffer'd, and in what respects he was the Saviour of the world, will more properly be consider'd in the following parts of the creed. What we are to observe at prefent, is, that the very Person, whom both lews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers, equally acknowledg'd to have appear'd in Judea at such a time, and to have been the author and founder of a new religion; was the anointed of God, and commission'd by him in every thing he said or did. In other words; that he was the very Christ the Messiah.

This is the fundamental article of the Christian religion, confider'd properly as such; implicitly containing, or virtually including all the other articles of it. The founder of any religion must first open his credentials, and be recommended and assured by them as a teacher sent from God. When this is done, the rece-

ption

^{* 1} Cor. 8. 6. + Exposit. in Symb. p. 540.

[†] Ένα Χειρον Ἰησεν τ΄ τίον τε Θεε. p. 48.

** Ενα Ἰησεν Χειρον τ΄ ἀφ΄ ενος Παθεός ωςοελθόνθα, κὶ εἰς ενα ενθα κὶ χωρήσανθα. Ep. ad Magn. c. 7. p. 19. Cot. Ed.

†† Quod neque hærefis ulla illic sumpsit exordium. Exposit. p. 539.

ption of whatever doctrine he teaches, is suppos'd to follow of course.

Upon the first conversion therefore of men to the christian faith. little more was requir'd of them at their baptism *, than a serious and solemn profession, that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God +: or, as it is express'd with something greater emphasis by St. Peter, that Christ, the Son of the living God ‡. This was devoting themselves to the service of Christ, accepting him for their Ruler and Law-giver, their King and their God; and engaging implicitly to believe every doctrine, and to obey every precept of the gospel. Such an engagement was then sufficient to recommend any person to christian baptism, and, in consequence of it, to make him a disciple of Christ. I thought it might not be improper to take notice of this by the way, because it has been made matter of dispute, whether the belief of this one article, that Jesus is the Messiah, be sufficient to constitute a person a christian. In answer to which, it may be observed, that a mere assent to that proposition does no more constitute a person a christian; than the devil's belief of it entitled him to the same character. But if by believing that article, be understood our receiving Jesus as our Lawgiver and King, and submitting our selves to be govern'd by him; this is, in other words, receiving christianity; and, no doubt, a man's receiving christianity, is the same thing with his becoming a christian. And it is certainly sufficient, in order to an admission into the christian society, to acknowledge the founder and ruler of It to be divinely commission'd; to accept him for our Lord and Master, with entire resignation of our faith to his doctrine, and of our practice to his laws.

This was the case of the first converts, who, being admitted to baptism upon their solemn professing Christ Jesus to be the Son of God, or, what imports the same thing, the Messiah, did thereby, in general, receive christianity, and oblige themselves to be conformable to the rules of it in every particular. So that an assent to that one article, was, in effect, and implicitly, an assent to all which that article contain'd; the whole christian religion.

Ir it be question'd then, whether the explicit belief of that article, with an implicit engagement to all it contains, be sufficient to qualify any person for admission into the christian church, it may be answer'd in the affirmative. And so to receive the scripture as having the fanction of divine authority, and to accept them as a rule of our faith and practice, may be thought equally sufficient with this article, as of necessity implying it. And thus all the

^{*} Acts 2. 38.

articles of the christian faith may summarily be reduc'd to one. But it is really matter of wonder, why any should give themselves the trouble of laying this down as an useful discovery, when it really signifies very little or nothing. For the question among christians of different persuasions, is not, whether the whole of our religion may not be reduc'd to, or summ'd up in, that one article, that Christ Jesus was a teacher sent from God? Nor, whether a serious and solemn acknowledgment thereof, might not have been a qualification sufficient for christian baptism, especially in the primitive times? But, whether this divine teacher, or those commission'd by him, have not deliver'd such or such doctrines, and oblig'd us to believe, or, at least, not to disbelieve them, under pain of damnation? This is the material point; what is said, without any relation to it, is nothing but amusement.

It may here be expected, that I should proceed to the proof of this proposition, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promis'd to the Jews, invested with the several offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. But the consideration of them more properly salls in with the other parts of the creed. Besides that, the dignity of his Person, antecedent to the economy of man's redemption, is what ought to be consider'd in the first place, and what was chiefly design'd in the present article. It is the constant method indeed of all the creeds, first to consider what he was in his divine nature, antecedent to the redemption of mankind, or even to the creation itself; and then to proceed to his incarnation, and the proper effects of it. I shall therefore decline the proof and consideration of his being the Messiah for the present, and consider how the Person of Jesus Christ, is God's only Son, or in what respect he is here so styled.



CHAP. II.

And in Jesus Christ his only Son.

TE need not make a doubt of what is design'd by the character of our Saviour in the creed, if we compare but this article with the like expressions in other creeds, probably as ancient, or some of them more ancient, than this. The Jerusalem creed, in this place, reads the article thus. "And in one Lord "Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father

" Father before all ages, true God, by whom all things were " made. Tertullian in one of his creeds has it thus. " of the one God, his Word, that proceeded from him, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made *. Origen, "Begotten of the Father before all creatures †. naus, in one creed, is short upon this article; but he plainly refers the fonship of Christ to his divine nature, and not to his human nativity. The other creeds, in general, are very full and particular in the article of Christ's filiation, antecedent to the creation of the world. So that there can be no reasonable doubt made, but that the Roman creed intended the very same sense with the rest, and only express'd it more briefly for reasons before mention'd, with respect to the greater purity of its faith. Besides that, the known constant sense of the word ‡ only begotten, in ecclesiastical antiquity, leaves us no shadow of doubt about the sense and meaning of it in the creed. What ground they had for the sense they understood it in, will appear presently; and how unanimously they taught the doctrine imply'd by it; and what opposition it met with from hereticks of all forts, will be seen too in the sequel. That our bleffed Lord is frequently call'd the Son of God in scripture, is well known. It is no less evident, that this was one of the titles of the Messias, in familiar use at the time of his appear-Not that Christ and the Son of God were thought synonymous terms, any more than Christ and Immanuel, or Christ and Tefus: But they were different titles denoting the same Person, consider'd under different respects **. The Jews had learn'd from the scriptures # of the Old Testament, that the title of Son of God belong'd to the Messiah, tho' perhaps they might not generally understand it, according to the true and proper sense, in which the prophets intended it, and some of their own doctors had expounded it. And no wonder if the generality of the Jews in the time of our Saviour, who thought of little but a temporal kingdom of the Messias, might have lost the true sublime notion of his being the Son of God.

But sufficient care was taken by our blessed Lord himself, and his apostles after him, to revive and inculcate the true doctrine of his divine filiation in a more exalted sense, than could, or had ever been apply'd to any other Person whatever. John the Baptist, our

++ Pfal. 2. 7, 12. -- 72, 17. -- 89. 25, 26. Prov. 8. 22, 23, 24. -- 30. 4. Ifaiab 4, 2. -- 9. 6, 7.

Lord's

^{*} P. 701. † Pamph. apolog. † Morogress.

** Messiah or Christ, fignifies apojuted; and so the Lord's Anointed had been an usual phrase for King. The title of Christ therefore, in common acceptation, denoted his relation to the People as their King; the title of Son of God, his peculiar relation to God.

Lord's forerunner, began with proclaiming him to be the Son of God *: And that with such circumstances, and high expressions of him, as shew'd that he did not mean any common and ordinary relation of a Son. Our blessed Lord himself, in his discourse with Nicodemus +, magnifies the exceeding great love of God to mankind, in fending his only begotten Son into the world to save it, and intimates the heinous aggravation of their guilt who shall reject him, and shall not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Now why so great emphasis laid upon this appellation, the only begotten Son? And why is it so highly magnify'd? If not on the account of some very extraordinary dignity of his Person, not only beyond that of any prophet, but of any angel, or archangel, who had been employ'd before between God and man. These emphatical expressions of the only begotten, and coming too from our Saviour himself, certainly give us an idea of a Person something more than a mere man born of a virgin; and the phrase of his being fent into the world, does at least denote, according to the natural and proper sense of it, that he was the only begotten, before he came into the world.

THE next testimony we meet with concerning him, is again from John the Baptist; who, if there had been any doubt of what he meant before by the Son of God, now sufficiently explains his meaning. He that cometh from above, is above all; and he that cometh from heaven, is above all ‡; speaking of our blessed Lord: Whereas, speaking of himself, however great a Prophet, and inspir'd of God, he uses this humble style. He that is of the earth, is earthly, and speaketh of the earth. He goes on ** in telling the people how greatly the Father esteem'd his Son, how super-eminent his dignity was, as having all things given into his hands, and the communication of the spirit without measure; and then concludes with promifing immortality to all that receive the Son, and denouncing the wrath of God upon those that believe not the Son. We see the Son is repeated again and again; and what emphasis is laid upon this character, which furely was not done without a particular design. It is pretty remarkable, that tho' our blessed Lord studiously conceal'd from the Jews his being the Messias, and would not suffer it to be divulg'd, lest he should give any umbrage to the civil government; or the people might be encourag'd to come by force and make him King ††; yet he permitted himself to be declar'd the Son of God publickly, by John the Baptist, and he frequently declar'd himself so. The reason whereof seems to be this:

that

^{*} John 1. 34. † Ch. 3. 16, 18. ‡ Ch. 3. 31. ** * . 35, 36. † Ch. 6. 15.

that the word Messias among the Jews had been made equivalent to King Messias, a temporal Prince, as they understood it. But the title of Son of God did not directly carry the same idea with it; but rather was very proper to correct the false notions of a temporal Prince, and to turn their expectations upon a Messiah, who should save them, not from their temporal enemies, but from their worst and greatest enemies, their sins.

When our bleffed Saviour was accus'd by the Jews * for breaking the sabbath, he immediately took occasion from thence, by way of justification of what he had done, to declare who he was; telling them, that his father (not their father) wrought on the sabbath †; and that he had a right to do as his father did. The Jews presently took offence at his making God his father ‡, in such a sense, as to claim an equal right with him of being Lord of the sabbath, and of acting in as authoritative a manner as he did; and, had he not been in the Temple at that time, would very probably have immediately attempted to stone him, as a blasphemer, for making himsals and swith Cod

for making himself equal with God. Our blessed Lord, who was never sollicitous to take off, or answer the charge of making himself God, as we may see in another case, when the same ** charge was brought against him for taking upon himself to forgive sins; proceeds to shew of what great power, eminency, and authority the Son is ††; that he could not but do as the Father did, being so intimately united to him; and that whatever the Father did, the Son did likewise, with more expressions to the same effect; still magnifying the Son, and letting them know, that all men ought to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ‡‡. These are too strong expressions to come from any person who knew himself to be no more than a man, or a mere creature; and even in answer to a charge of blasphemy, for taking too much upon himself before. This does not look as if the dignity of this relation to the Father consisted only in the immaculate conception; or as if it meant nothing more, than that he was an extraordinary teacher, or embassador sent from

THE account which he was pleas'd to give of himself afterwards is is no less remarkable. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no one knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father, save the Son*, &c. What? Did no one know of the immaculate conception? Or, were there none that knew

^{*} John 5. 16. † \$. 17. ‡ \$. 18. ** Matt. 9. 2, 3. Mark 2. 5?
6, 7. Luke 5. 20, 21. †† John 5. 19. ‡† \$. 23. * Matt. 11. 27.
Luke 10. 22. that

that Jesus was the Messiah? Certainly some higher sense of the word Son is here intended. It is much too low a construction which a modern critic * here gives: None but the Father knows what the Son shall do and suffer. Why should that be call'd knowing the Son? Or, what reference has it to the great power and dignity conferr'd upon him before mention'd? All things are deliver'd unto me. The plain meaning is; that Father and Son, by reason of their ineffable relation, and intimate union, know each other perfectly; and that the surest way to know the Father, as far as we are capable of such a knowledge, is to apply to the Son for it; that only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, and hath declared him +. We find, not long after, that the devils knew him to be the Son of the most high God ‡, and reverenc'd him accordingly, and seem to have had much higher, and more worthy thoughts of the dignity of his Person, than our modern Unitarians.

UPON our Lord's calming a violent tempest on the sea, the people in the ship came and paid him worship, saying, Of a truth **, thou art the Son of God + . Here certainly their notion of him was rais'd something higher than the common notion of King Messias: And if they meant by Son of God, Messias, they understood Messias to be something more than a Person sent from God, because they worshipp'd him. We never find that the apostles accepted worship, on account of the miracles done by them ##; but refus'd it when offer'd, with the utmost detestation; referring all worship to the living God *, and him only. 'Tis strange that our blessed Lord, who was all meekness and humility, should not have been more resign'd in this particular, had he been any thing less than the eternal Son of God. After this, we find him telling the Jews, that no man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God +; which is to the same purpose with the passage before cited from St. Matthew; and shews, that to be the Son of God, means not only to be commission'd from God, but to be of heavenly extraction, as the context of this chapter proves; and not only that, but to be from God, in a sense peculiar to the Person of Christ. ‡ He who is from the Father, in a very emphatical sense; ** he, and only he, bath properly seen the Father, or known him perfectly. Soon after follows St. Peter's noble confession, in the name of the other disciples, with himself.

^{**} Le Clerc Harmon. 136. † John 1. 18. † Mark 5. 7, 9. Luke 8. 28.

** 'Aantige. † Matt. 14. 33. † Atts 14. 14, 15. * Ch. 10.

26, 27. † John 6. 46. † 'O we are the constant of the constant

We believe, and are assured, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*: Which shews that he understood what our Lord had been talking of, and therefore was not content to say he was the Christ only, but with the addition of this peculiar and transcendent title, the Son of the living God, in the sense that our Lord himself had intimated to them. He reproves him † indeed, for answering so indistinctly for them all, knowing the treachery of Judas his heart; but finds no other fault with him.

Our Lord, as usual, forbids the disciples to publish that he was the Christ, or Messiah; because the generality would take it in a wrong sense, interpreting it of King Messiah, according to the current prejudice of that time. But we no where find that he lays any restraint upon them from publishing him to be the San of God: Which, tho' it imply'd the other article; yet because it was apt to lead men's thoughts off from the notion of a temporal Prince, was not generally understood in the true sense of it.

THE next remarkable attestation to the divine Sonship of our blessed Saviour, was the voice from heaven at his transfiguration; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: Hear ye him **.

This was declaring him to be the Son of God in such a sublime and peculiar sense, as could belong to no other Person, and must relate to the dignity of his own Person, and not to the condition he was in as man, being then in his state of humiliation, not yet exalted, according to the Socinian hypothesis, to be the heir of all things; not being yet made our Ruler and Lord, our King and our God.

The next remarkable passage which occurs to our purpose, is on occasion of the tribute money demanded of our Lord for the use of the Temple; a duty exacted in the name of God, and for the special service of the place of his worship. Upon this, our blessed Lord again takes the opportunity of intimating his peculiar relation to the Father. What, says he to Peter, do the kings of the earth take tribute of their sons †? Peter answering in the negative, our Lord infers, that he might plead the like exemption from paying tribute to God, being the Son of God. But however, that he might give no offence, he chuses to wave his privilege, and to pay tribute, tho at the expence of a miracle. Let any man seriously consider this, and think, whether it be consistent with the regard we owe to the wisdom or humility of our blessed Saviour, to imagine, that he should so much insist upon his own dignity as a

^{*} John 6. 69. † v. 70. ‡ Mat. 16. 20. ** Ch. 17. 5. Luke 9. 35: †† Mit. 17. 23, 24, 25. 5 N Son,

Son, were it founded only on his immaculate conception, or his adoption? Or any other relation to the Father, which was not to

be understood in a strict and proper sense.

AFTER this, our bleffed Lord cures a blind man *; who was thereupon called before the Sanhedrim, and excommunicated, for the reverence and fense of gratitude which he shew'd towards his great benefactor. Our Lord, meeting him soon after, asks him if he believes on the Son of God †, declaring himself to be the Person. The man answers, Lord, I believe; and, falling down at his feet, adores him. Here again, we see what title it was that our Lord most insisted on, and what regard was due to him on that account. Certainly this was understood in a much higher sense, than that of a man miraculously conceiv'd; or of a mere adopted Son.

Another time, as our Lord was walking in the Temple, the Tews came to circumvent him, asking him if he was the Messiah. He, knowing their design and malice, did not think fit to answer them directly ‡; but appeals to his miracles; and tells them moreover expressly, that God was his Father, and that be and his Father were one **. The Jews immediately charge him with blasphemy, for making himself God, and prepare to stone him. Our blessed Lord, in his own vindication, does not tell them that he is not God, or that he does not make himself God; a method, which one would think he would have taken, had it been consistent with truth and justice, in order to take off so severe a charge as that of blasphemy. But he makes them two answers, which, instead of removing, rather confirm'd their suspicion, and provok'd them still more #. They are to this effect; as if he had faid; If some of your own Sanhedrim or Judges, who have no more than a remote and imperfect refemblance of divine Majesty, in respect of their office, are called Gods in holy scripture ##; shall one, who has a proper right and title to that name; one, whom the Father (having had him with him all along) hath sanctified, and fent into the world *, be charg'd with blasphemy, for styling himself the Son of God; a title, which he has a strict and natural right to? Yet if you will not believe my words, at least believe the works that I do; being manifestly the works of my Father +; so that you may easily judge from my + doing the same things that the Father doth, and from the unity of power and operation, that we are both one, and the Father in me, and I in

him.

^{*} John 9. 7. † \$\ddynum . 35, 36, &c. † Ch. 10. 24. ** \$\dynum . 30. † \$\dynum \cdot \dynum P fal. 82. 6. * John 10. 36. † \$\dynum . 37. † See John 5. 18.

bim. The Jews were so enrag'd at this *; perceiving how, instead of clearing himself of what they call'd blasphemy, he had the more strongly asserted his divine generation, that they again would have laid hold of him to draw him out of the temple, with an intention to stone him.

We may next observe Martha's consession †, that our Saviour was the Christ; but with this addition or explication; The Son of God, that was to come into the world. We may take notice how, all along, this title of Son of God, was united with the title of Christ, in the person of our blessed Saviour; which, tho' not generally understood, or not sufficiently consider'd, was not without some wise and special reason. And it seems to have been the particular concern of our blessed Lord to open and explain the design of it by degrees; and to raise the thoughts of the jewish nation above the expectation of a mere temporal King, to a just idea of the Son of God, whose nature was truly divine, and whose kingdom properly spiritual. When the Pharisees came about him, he presently put a question to them, which discover'd their weakness, and shewed wherein principally those men were lost and infatuated, in respect of their notions of the Messab.

He asks them, how the Messiah could be both David's Son, and David's Lord ‡? The men were so surprized at this question, that they had nothing to reply. They knew not the distinction between the human and divine nature of the Messiah. There it was that our blessed Lord sound them desective; and his putting the question to them in that manner, carries in it the sorce of a very solemn rebuke, for their being at once so ignorant, and so as-

furning.

As he had before discover'd the great perversences and disingenuity of the Chief Priests and Scribes **, by a strong interrogation, relating to John the Baptist; so, by this second question, he exposes the blindness of the Pharisees, and tacitly reproves them for their low and unworthy thoughts of the Messiah whom

they expected.

WHOEVER carefully considers the nature and tendency of our Saviour's discourses, excepting those which related to morality, will find them, for the most part, tending to this one point; that there is another Person, besides the Father, whom men ought to honour and respect together with the Father; which Person, is his Son; the Person that tells them this, who is one with the Father, and inseparable from him. I have already given sufficient

demon-

^{*} John 10. 39. † Ch. 11. 27. † Matt. 22. 41. Mark 12. 35.

Luke 20. 41. ** Luke 20. 3.

demonstration of this, from our Saviour's own words, in the preceding pages. And indeed his own discourses run more upon this topick, than the epistles written by St. Paul, and the other sacred writers. The reason whereof is obvious. His discourses were to those only who believ'd in the true God the Father before; and therefore the chief design to be effected, was to induce them to believe in the Son also.

Hence it is that he says: Ye believe in God; believe also in me. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me *. He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father †. If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him ‡. Is this a style proper, I do not say to any mere man,

but to the highest, or most perfect of all created beings?

LET any Socinian, or Arian tell us, what occasion there was for a mere embassador or agent between God and man, to assume so much every where to himself, to lay so much stress upon his own personal dignity; to set forth his own personal powers and prerogatives, and, upon these grounds, to demand honour and worship to himself, together with the Father. Would it not have been sufficient for him to have press'd and inculcated the doctrine of the one God; the necessity of obedience to his laws; the rewards attending it; and the penalties consequent, upon the neglect of it? Did ever any teacher, prophet, or angel, think religion so much concern'd in his own personal honour, and not rather in the honour of his Lord and Master? Might not all the practical duties of christianity have been just what they are, and men have been instructed in their very way to heaven, and taught to refer all worship to God the Father only, without the consideration of what other persons he was pleas'd to employ, or any regard to them, more than to prophets, or angels, acting in his name, or serving under him?

Why all this weight and stress laid upon the duty of believing in the Son, as well as in the Father; loving the Son; keeping his words; and honouring the Son, even as men honour the Father; with more characters of distinction, proper only to a Perfon truly divine, throughout the New Testament? There must be something more in all this, than either the Socinian or Arian principles can be sufficient to account for; more than, according to the common terms of speaking among men, can comport with the character of an extraordinary embassador, as such, or a mere mediator. One would be rather apt to conclude, and it is the

* John 14. 1, 6.

† ¥. 9.

‡ ¥. 23.

most

most natural conclusion that can be made upon our reading the New Testament, that the principal end and design of Christianity, consider'd as a new religion or dispensation grafted upon the jewish, was to let mankind into the mystery of three Persons in the Unity of the Godhead; and to teach them to pay distinct honour and worship to each person. Tertullian seems to have taken this matter very right, when he tells Praxeas, that it was reverting to Judaism, to believe the one God in such a sense, as to exclude the " For, fays he, what other difference of Son and Holy Ghost. " any moment is there between us and them? What do we owe " peculiar to the gospel? What has the New Testament, (which "tells us, the law and the prophets were until John *) added of " fuch mighty importance, were it not that, from the time of it, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are believed to be three distinct " Persons, and to be one God? God was pleas'd to introduce a " new dispensation, for the sake of a new faith in the one God, " as comprehending the Son and Holy Spirit, that God might " now be clearly represented under distinct names and personali-" ties, who had indeed before been manifested, but not so distinct-" ly, in the Son and Holy Ghost. This is Tertullian's sense, tho not a literal translation. The thought is very just, as well as noble and elevated, and apt to raise in our minds ideas suitable to the Majesty of God, and the dignity of the evangelical dispensa-As the glory of God is the ultimate end and design of all things; so particularly the great end and design of the christian dispensation, was to display God's glory, not consider'd as a single solitary Deity, in the Jewish, Sabellian, or Arian sense, but in three distinct Persons therein illustriously represented, according to their distinct names, characters, and offices. And whoever well considers, among other things, the form of admission into the christian church, prescrib'd and left by our blessed Saviour, and the particular stress always laid upon it by the ancients, and for the sake of the doctrine it imported, will be inclin'd to believe, that this is not a mere specious conjecture, but a truth founded upon very good and weighty reasons.

To return now to the fourteenth chapter of St. John. Let any man attentively read, and consider it throughout, and he will find it a strong consistent of what we have been asserting. Let it especially be consider'd, what our blessed Lord was so careful to inculcate to the disciples, and what he meant by that kind and gentle rebuke to Philip. Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip †? Was it that he did not know

. * Luke 16. 16.

† John 14. 9.

of

of his miraculous conception? That is too slight an evasion to be pretended. Was it that he did not know him to be the Christ, or Messiah? This, Philip was one of the first who had discover'd*; and all the disciples, except Judas, had not only more than once confess'd it by the mouth of Peter; but also, that he was the Son of the living God. What was it then that Philip still wanted to be more fully instructed in? It was plainly this, that, he that had seen the Son, had therein seen the Father too †; that he was in the Father, and the Father in him. In a word, that he was Son in so transcendent and eminent a sense, as to be one and the same God with the Father. This was the sublime mystery which the disciples themselves were but let into gradually; and the full and sublime sense whereof, was yet, in some measure, a secret to them.

WITH this light we may clearly discover the argument and coherence of all that we meet with in that chapter; and particularly, the reason of our Saviour's mentioning ‡ the Paraclete, or Holy Ghost, immediately after he had given so full an account of himself. But without this, it will be difficult to make out so clear a thread; or to account for the several very remarkable particulars of it. And, that we may not be offended at what our bleffed Lord says, my Father is greater than I **; which is very true in a certain sense, in respect of his derivation as a Son from the Father: yer the context shews, that something else is there meant. loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I: That is, greater in respect of that state of glory, of which the Son, by his condescension, had, in a manner, to appearance at least, divested himself; and which he had ever enjoy'd with the Father, before the world was t. condesception, or humiliation of the Son of God, from a state of glory, to a low passive asslicted state, is the great mystery of the divine philanthropy, so much magnify'd in holy scripture: and is what the angels desire to look into ##. The Antiochian fathers. against Paul of Samafate, well express this humiliation of the Son *; God emptying himself of that glorious state of equality with God; to take on him the form of a servant.

Our blessed Lord, in the next chapter but one, still persists in repeating and inculcating the same great truth. After a third mention made of the Holy Spirit, and what he should do, he adds, he shall glorify me. And why? Because his works will be my

works;

^{*} John 1. 47. † Ch. 14. 9, 10. † John 14. 26. compar'd with 15. 26.

** John 14. 28. †† Phil. 2. 7. John 17. 4, 5. †† 1 Pet. 1. 12.

* Θεὸς μθὸ κενώσας ἐαμδὸν ἀπὸ τε είναι ἴσα Θεῷ. Labbe, vol. 1. p. 848.

works: be shall receive of mine *. But why mine? Doth not he proceed from the Father †? Yes: But he proceeds from me too. For all things that the Father hath are mine ‡. These are strong expressions, but must appear very strange too, and unaccountable, if the Son were a creature only; or if no more were meant by them, than that he was a teacher fent from God. If we may believe plain words spoken by our blessed Saviour himself, here is a full proof of a perfect communication of all things, and of an individual unity of power in the three Persons of the ever blesfed Trinity, as could have been, supposing our principles really And it is observable, as hath been before intimated, that this was spoken to persons who were already believers, and did not doubt of his being commission'd by God. But now they receiv'd farther light, understanding that he had been ever ** with the Father, before his coming into the world, and was again to return to the Father, to the same state of glory he had with him from All which must convince them, that he was the the beginning. Son of God in a peculiar, sublime, and strict sense.

In the next chapter, we find our Saviour praying to the Father to glorify the Son ††: And why? That the Son also might glorify him. Is this the style of an embassador? Or is it suitable to the decorum and distance to be observed in the addresses of any

creature towards his creator?

The same word glorify is equally applied to both the offices, represented as reciprocal. Afterwards he adds, this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God. Why might he not put a period to what he was saying here? Novatian has told us the reason of it ‡‡; because he would be understood to be God as well as the Father; therefore he added; and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. So far were the writers before the council of Nice from countenancing the Arian interpretation of this text. It is not entirely foreign to our purpose to take notice, that eternal life, is here said not to depend upon our knowledge of the Father only, but of both Persons; which is an argument that the Son came to propose himself, as well as the Father, to the world, the great object of our faith and hope *.

THERE

^{*} John 16. 14. + See Ch. 15. 26. ‡ Ch. 15. 16. ** \$. 28, 30.

^{††} John 17.

†‡ Quoniam & (se) Deum accipi voluit. Novat. c. 14.

* In this fense it is, that Ireneus tells us: In Novo Testamento ea que est ad Deum sides bominum austa est, additamentum accipiens Filium Dei. It will be no easy matter to reconcile this with the notion of a mere mediator, himself a creature, and sent to reduce us to a sirm faith in God only.

There is one place more in the gospels *, which will deserve our careful consideration. When our Lord was brought before Caiphas and the Sanhedrim, and they were much at a loss how to find any sufficient ground for matter of accusation against him; their witnesses not agreeing, or their evidence not coming up to the point; they next endeavour to draw something, if possible, from his own confession. According to St. Luke †, (who seems to have reported distinctly, what St. Matthew and St. Mark contracted into a narrower compass) they first ask him if he was the Christ; to which he made them no direct answer; probably because they would interpret it King, in the sense of those who look'd for a temporal Messiah, and thereupon form an accusation before Pilate, that our Lord had set himself up for a King. This question therefore he declin'd with his usual caution.

They next ask'd him, if he was the Son of God ‡; and he immediately acknowledg'd that he was. Upon this they charg'd him, not with making himself King, (as they would probably have done, had Christ, and Son of God, been synonymous expressions) but with blasphemy; and we find that the Jews insisted upon this charge against him before Pilate. We have a law, say they, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God **.

THE law is recorded against blasphemy in Leviticus ##, and the penalty was, that the blasphemer should be ston'd to death. The very penalty which the Jews would have executed upon him for the same charge of basphemy in making himself the Son of God ±±. This they interpreted one time, as if he made himself equal with God *. At another time they charg'd him with making himself God +. So that, whatever notions the Jews had of this phrase, Son of God, as ordinarily attributed to the Messiah; which seem to have been very obscure, loose, and indefinite; yet they had sense enough to perceive, that our Lord apply'd it to himself in the strict and proper meaning; such as could not be justly applicable to any creature whatever. Pilate himself was shock'd ‡, when he heard that our Lord had taken upon him the title of the Son of God; and it put him into such a consternation, that he repair'd again into the judgment-hall **, to make farther enquiry about so important a claim; and the first question he ask'd our blessed Lord related to his extraction; Whence he was? To which he receiv'd no answer, our Lord not thinking it fit to communicate so

high

^{*} Matt. 26. 57. Mark 14. 53. Luke 22. 66. † Luke 22. 66. ‡ \$\dot 70. 70. ** Matt. 26. 65. Mark 14. 64. John 19. 7. †† Lev. 24. 16. †† See John 5. 18. Ch. 8. 59. Ch. 10. 31, 39. * Ch. 5. 18. † Ch. 10. 33. † Ch. 19. 8. ** \$\dot 9.

high a mystery to a Roman governor, not prepar'd to receive it. Or rather, perhaps, lest a direct answer might occasionally have obstructed his design of laying down his life at the time, or after the manner predetermin'd, for the sins of the world. Thus much, however, we may infer from this incident, that Pilate understood the phrase of Son of God, as it denoted his divine extraction, in the proper sense; and thought the Jews, in their charge, so understood it, as well as that our Saviour design'd it, in his taking it upon him; and he was therefore under very terrible apprehensions, lest he should blindly pass sentence upon a person, that might be, after all, really of divine original.

ALL that I shall farther remark concerning our Lord's own testimony, as to the present article, is, that after his resurrection, he permitted several to worship him *; and suffer'd Thomas to recognize him with the titles of, my Lord, and my God †: And afterwards left orders with his disciples to baptize in the name of Fa-

ther, Son, and Holy Ghost.

I have laid these things together, in the order of time, as they occur in the gospels, that the reader may be able to form a judgment from what our Lord himself, directly and in person, raught, in the discharge of his prophetical office. I shall now only sum up the evidence, that the reader may have it in one view, and see the more clearly the application of it, and what it amounts to. The question is, in what sense our blessed Lord is the Son, or only begotten Son of God? We have these marks and characters to determine the sense of these appellations. By the confession and acknowledgment of all fides, the title of Son of God was peculiarly and emphatically ascrib'd to the Messiah, he was the Son ±. was a title, which our Lord himself particularly insisted on; and as he was pleas'd, upon that topick especially, to magnify the exceeding great mercy and favour of God in the new dispensation; so he resolved the great guilt and heinous aggravation of unbelief into this; that it was rejecting a person of such eminent dignity, as the only begotten Son of God. He frequently explains it to such a sense, as made the hearers charge him directly with blasphemy. In all his answers to which charge, he insists upon his own perfonal dignity, and afferts, that he affum'd nothing but what he had a strict and proper right to. He never would declare, that he was not God, or not equal with God, tho' press'd by his adversaries upon that head. He accepted worship and adoration, and the title of Lord and God, without any marks of dislike, with favour and approbation. Tho' he referr'd every thing to the Father, as

^{*} Matt. 28. 9. † John 20. 28. ‡ ὁ ψὸς, so called κατ' ἐξοχήν.

5 P

the fountain and original; yet he claim'd honour, glory, and worship to himself, together with the Father. He never so referr'd all to the Father, as to leave us to imagine, that it was not by his own power that he did every thing that he did. Peter and John renounce all pretence to self-honour, on account of the miracles they wrought *, not being wrought by their own power or But the case was different with our Lord. His miracles were his own. As he had life in himself †; so he had power in himself too, tho' deriv'd from the Father; and his distinct powers, and personal persections were by himself made a foundation for personal honour; that all men might honour the Son, even as they bonour the Father ‡. He had all that the Father hath, and was able to do all that the Father doth; and claim'd equal authority and power in the highest acts of authority, those of remitting sins, executing judgment, enacting laws, and demanding obedience to them, upon the sanction of rewards and punishments. he gave laws, his language was not, The Lord Saith; but, I say unto you. And when he heal'd the leper, he expresses his own proper volition to that end; I will; be thou clean. The least that can be inferr'd from his authoritative style and manner, in the whole course of his ministry, is, that he was in the place of God, invested with all the authority and sovereignty that the Father himself is invested with; and had the same rightful claim to submission, homage, and adoration with him. How can such plenary authority; such titles as manifestly suppose and imply omnipotence, omnipresence, and every divine attribute, belong to any creature? Or, could the relation of a proper Son of God, admitting that Jesus Christ really was so, have been describ'd in more strong, lively, and fignificant terms? They all denote such intimacy, such perfect union and equality, as can only be conceiv'd between perfons of the same nature and essence, and which cannot, according to any rules of reason or propriety, or the high veneration we owe to the dignity of the divine nature, be said to subsist between God, and any of his creatures.

I have insisted the longer upon the testimonies which we meet with in the gospels, concerning the divinity of the Son, and chiefly in our blessed Saviour's own discourses, because they may very probably have more weight with some persons, than the testimonies to the same purpose which occur in the Acts of the apostles, or the Epistles which were occasionally written by several of them. However, it is to be hop'd, there are very wise and good men, who will be glad of any other proper evidence towards con-

^{*} Ats 3. 12.

⁺ John 5. 26.

[‡] Ch. ibid.

firming so important an article, which I shall therefore endeavour, in the next place, to produce.

SECT. II.

Testimonies concerning the divinity of the Son from other parts of the New Testament.

If HO' I might cite certain passages from the Acts of the holy apostles to prove the * divine siliation of Jesus; yet as he is describ'd in them, not as Christ, but as the Son of God; a title which, as I have shew'd before, imported a more special, or rather, proper relation to God, and was understood to do so by the Jews; I shall not, in proof his divinity, insist any farther upon that distinguishing appellation, consider'd abstractedly, and without any additional light to determine the sense of it, but proceed to consider what proofs may be drawn towards establishing this article from the sense of Emission.

from the canonical Epistles.

In the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, there occurs & remarkable passage relating to the point under consideration. His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declard to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness t, by the resurrection from the Here we have a plain distinction made between the Son of David, and the Son of God; or, in other words, between our Lord's human and divine nature. A distinction of which, as I have before observ'd, the Pharisees were ignorant, tho' their ignorance was so culpable, that our blessed Lord took occasion to rebuke them for it. There is a parallel text of St. Paul, which should be subjoin'd to the other, that from both together we may the more clearly apprehend the apostle's meaning. It is that where he fays; Of whom **, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever ##. In the two texts the antithesis between the words #t, according to the flesh, and according to the spirit, is very observable. With respect to the former, he is the Son of David; in respect of the latter, he is the Son of God; or, what is equivalent, over all, God blessed for ever. And it is

well

^{**} Atts 8. 37. Ch. 9. 20. † Kalà wơớ μα το μα το ματύνης. † Rom. 1. 3, 4.

** Τὸ καλὰ σάςκα. † Rom. 9. 5. ‡‡ Καλὰ σάςκας το κάλὰ πνόῦ με.

well known, that the word * which we render spirit, is used by the earliest christian writers to denote the divine nature of Christ †. From these two passages therefore of St. Paul, two things may be clearly deduc'd. First, that our blessed Lord is the Son of God, not in respect of office, power, or dominion; but in respect of his nature. It is ‡ according to the Spirit of holiness, in respect of his holy, or divine nature, that he is styl'd the Son of God. And secondly, that in the same respect, he is God over all, blessed for ever. So that to be Son of God, or to be truly and essentially God, does, in the language of St. Paul (sufficiently authoriz'd by what I have before cited from the words of our Lord himself) come to the same thing. I shall not think it worth my time to defend the vulgar reading of the latter text **, or the application of it to the person of our Saviour; both are supported by all antiquity, as well before, as after the nicene council ††.

THE argument for the Son's real divinity founded upon these two texts, is so full, clear, and convincing, that the poor evasions found out hitherto, in answer to it, have serv'd only to sup-

port and confirm it.

ST. Paul, in the eighth chapter of the same epistle ‡‡, speaks of God's sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful slesh; and, to shew us what he means by Son, a little after he makes the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ, equivalent expressions *, to denote one and the same thing, or person. Which is a farther proof, that the Son of God, with St. Paul, is the same in effect; with being really and truly God.

Another very remarkable passage to our purpose, is in the first chapter of the epistle to the Colossians, where our blessed Lord is styl'd the † Son of his love ‡; which character the apostle explains afterwards in very high and magnificent terms. Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature **. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether thrones, or dominions, or

princi-

^{*} Πνόῦμα.

[†] See the testimonies in Grotius, on Mark 2. 8. To which the learned Bishop Bull has added others. Def. F. Nic. p. 19. and brought several texts of scripture to confirm them. Mark 2. 8. 1 Tim. 3. 16. Heb. 9. 14. 1 Pet. 3. 18.

† Καθά παθύμα άγιωσύνης.

** Rom. 9. 5.

†† See Dr. Mills upon it. Bull's Def. p. 78. Or Petavius, 1. 2. c. 9. p. 154.

^{††} See Dr. Mills upon it. Bull's Def. p. 78. Or Petavius, 1. 2. c. 9. p. 154. Pearson on the creed, p. 132. Never any ancient christian, interpreter, or expositor, or any other writer (as a learned author observes) did otherwise understand this text, but of Christ; and not only catholicks, but even hereticks and schissmaticks, &c. Dr. Grabe on Whist. Testim. p. 23.

^{‡‡} Rom. 8. 3. * y. 9. † Coloff. 1. 13. ‡ Τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτᾶ. ** Πεωτότοκ. Φ πάσης κτίσεως.

principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist *.

THE first remark I have to make here is, that our Lord is represented as the Son of God, not only before his incarnation, but antecedently to the creation itself: And therefore it is a vain and fruitless attempt for any one to endeavour to account for the title of Son, or only Son, from his immaculate Conception, or even from his Messiaship; both which are confessedly posterior to that Sonship, which St. Paul speaks of here; and from whence it may be again observ'd, that Son of God and Messias, tho' titles belonging to the same person, are not phrases strictly synonymous. the next place, St. Paul has in these two or three verses so emphatically and magnificently describ'd the superlative dignity and eminency of our blessed Lord, making him as well Creator as Preserver of all things, that one can hardly imagine how any other expressions, either clearer or stronger, could have been employ'd to fignify, that the Son of God is very God of very God, truly and

estentially God.

LASTLY, his being call'd + the first-born of every creature, suggests a thought, which was very familiar to the ancients, and may deserve the particular notice of the reader. They suppose, that when it pleas'd God to create the world, he sent forth the Word t, or ** his only Son, who had been always with him, to create all things, and, as it were, to present them to him when created, to the end they might be approved and accepted of him; nothing being worthy of his acceptance, but by, and in his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. In this sense, all things were created by, and for the Son; and in him all things consist. is the head of all things that are; † having in all things the preeminence. He goes out from the Father, creates the world, lays it before him, as his own, and then puts himself at the head of it, and in this sense is ## the first-born of every creature. Afterwards he was pleas'd to dignify human nature, by affuming it into a personal union with the divine nature, and so too made it his own. He is therefore the * head in this respect; and styl'd likewise t the first-born from the dead. St. Paul tells us, that Christ both died, and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. And in like manner, he condescended to take upon him the charge of the whole creation, that he might as the apostle infers, in all things have the pre-

eminence

^{*} Coloff. 1. 15, 16, 17. † Πεωτότοκ 🚱 Βάσης κτίσεως. . \$ A6700 ‡‡ Πρωτότοκ 🚱 πάσης κτίσεως. * A(X1) ** Movolevns. † Πρωτότοκ 🗗 καιρών.

eminence; thus he is our mediator, our Lord, and the su-stainer of the whole creation *. As the Son of God then condescended to be the head of the whole creation, to render it accepted with God the Father; so, in the second creation, or redemption of mankind, he was pleas'd to take upon him the like office; to be the head of the church; and to recommend and reconcile those whom he had redeem'd to the savour and acceptance of God the Father, by virtue of his filial relation to him, and perfect union with them.

I shall only remark farther; that as the Son is represented both as making and sustaining all created beings, he could not himself be a creature. And if all creatures, as creatures, stand in need of such assistance from the Son of God, which is represented by the ancients as a condescension in him to afford; it is again plain, that he is infinitely superior to the rank of creatures, and is therefore

essentially God.

BUT I need not labour this point by inferences and deductions; for the apostle, in the very next chapter, speaks so plainly and expressly, that there is no room left for any reasonable doubt concerning it. After he has mention'd the † mystery of God ‡, relating to the Father, and his Son Christ Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; of whom he had before faid, it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell **: I say, after this, he cautions the Colossians against enticing words, of philosophy, and vain decent ††; whether of Jews or Gentiles, or, as is most probable, of the Gnostick hereticks, that labour'd to introduce a low and mean opinion of Christ Jesus the Lord. And, to prevent the ill effects of their doctrine, he exhorts the Colossians to constancy and perseverance in the faith ##; particularly in what relates to the personal dignity of our blessed Saviour, in whom, says he, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily *. If, instead of bodily, we should translate the word substantially, or essentially, for which version, we might urge the authority of some learned criticks, the least that can be inferr'd is, that the whole divinity was united with the humanity of Christ, to render him both God and man; as the Antiochian fathers well explain it against Paul of Samosate †. And this explication is very agreeable, not only to the sense of the verses going before, but to the argument of the whole preceding chapter, which, as we have already seen, is chiefly de-

^{*} See Ensebius, Panegyr. in Constant. c. 11. p. 525. And Athanasius, vol. 1. p. 530, &c. † καὶ Παθεὸς ὰ τε Χειςε. ‡ Coloss. 2. ** Ch. 1. 19. †† Ch. 2. 4, 8. ‡ ў. 7. * Έν αὐτῷ καθοικεῖ Φᾶν τὸ Φλήεωμα το Θεότητ ⑤ τωμαίντῶς. † Labbe, tom. 1. p. 848.

fign'd to represent the supereminent dignity of our Saviour's Person.

THOSE who would interpret this of the Father's dwelling or residing in Christ, if they understand his inhabitation only in such a low sense, as God may be said, in a sense, to reside in a creature, do really say nothing; but make the apostle's whole discourse, in this and the preceding chapter, very foreign to his principal argument. But if they intend the intimate union and communion between Father and Son in all things, and in all perfections, it amounts to the same with what we have asserted.

Some pretend that the word * Godhead fignifies dominion, power, and authority, not real divinity. But, besides that, this pretence is groundless, and easily confuted by the interpretation of the place, from the most early ecclesiastical writers; it is a pretence that can serve to little purpose; since it can never be believ'd by any rational man, that a person, who is not strictly and essentially God, ever had, or ever can have, all the power, authority, or dominion of God. It is to no effect to fay, that divinity is only an attribute, and that there is a difference between the Godhead and the divine nature, the latter properly denoting substance. For let Godhead, or divinity, fignify an attribute, as well as the word infinity, or omnipotence; yet divinity can be no where without a divine sub-Stance, any more than infinity can be any where without something infinite; or Almighty power without a subject, wherein it resides. And if perfect divinity, and perfect humanity, were both united in the person of our Saviour, what does it but in other words imply, that he had both the divine, and human substance united; was perfect God, and perfect man, which is the truth of the case; and it will be impossible otherways to make out a just coherence, or thread of argument, from what the apostle says in this, and the preceding chapter.

LET us proceed, in the next place, to the epistle to the Hebrews,

attributed to the same apostle.

This epiftle begins with setting forth the dignity of the person of the Son of God, as the leading article of the christian religion, and the strongest motive to excite our gratitude, and to raise in us ideas suitable to a mercy so transcendent and inestimable, as that of God's sending his own Son to take our nature upon him. Here we find him describ'd in the most bright and sublime characters. It is the Son, by whom God made the worlds; the † shining forth of the Father's glory; the express image of his person; upholding all things by the word of his power; whom all the angels of God are

* Θεάτης.

† 'Απαύγασμα.

commanded

commanded to worship; whose title is God, and whose throne is for ever and ever. The Lord (Jehovah) who in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and the work of whose hands the heavens are; whose property it is to be immutably the same *, and to endure from generation to generation. This is the description and character of him, who is emphatically and properly the Son of God.

The judicious reader will observe, that what is remark'd of the Son, in this chapter, is the very same, only differently express'd, with what we met with in the epistle to the Colossians: And there is, indeed, a natural congruity in the thing, that the same person who had born so considerable a part in the first creation, should have the like pre-eminence in the second likewise; that the creator of the world should be restorer of it too, and be both Lord and Heir, with respect to the new state and condition of mankind in right of redemption, as he had been Lord before in

right of creation.

In the third chapter, the inspir'd penman still goes on to set forth the supereminent dignity of our blessed Lord; and this he does by a comparison of him with Moses, shewing the dissernce betwixt them in a twofold respect. First, that Christ is the builder and founder of the jewish church, and really God: Moses only a member of that church, under Christ the head. Secondly, that Christ is the Son of God, and master over his own house: Moses a servant only. The words run thus, with a little variation from the common reading. This person (Christ) was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in as much as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house; for every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things, is God. And Moses was verily faithful in all his house as a servant; but Christ as a Son over his own house †.

There is no reason to doubt but that the title of God in the fourth verse is apply'd to Christ, if we consider how pertinent it is to the argument of the inspir'd author: And that the same author, in the first chapter, ascribes the making and upholding of all things to the Son. But were this less certain than it is, yet the sixth verse implies the same thing; interpreting the relation of Son in so high a sense, as to give him all the right and power in the Father's house, as if it were really his own house: Which, as it is conformable to the whole tenour, and constant language of the New Testament, as we have observed from the passages above cited; so it is a clear and undeniable argument, that Christ is Son

^{*} Heb. 1. 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12.

of God, in the strict and proper signification; and not a creature of God. What poor jejune sense must those persons make of the sacred writings, who either pretend to refer all the high powers and privileges of the Son to his immaculate conception; or resolve them into I know not what imaginary adoption, of which the scriptures say nothing, and which is much too weak a foundation to bear all the stress and weight, that is every where laid upon the relation of *Christ* to the Father.

FROM what hath been collected and laid together from our Lord's own discourses, and the epistles of St. Paul, the impartial and ingenuous reader will find it necessary to believe, that the title of Son of God was not apply'd to him in a loose figurative sense; but was intended to signify his peculiar relation to God the Father, antecedent to the creation of the world: And not only that; but his intimate union and communion with the Father in all things, in nature, power, and every divine persection consider'd abstract-

edly from the Father's personality.

I shall only add a confirmation of what has been said from the writings of St. John, whose testimony is the more considerable, as coming last, and as being principally defign'd against the hereticks of his time; who had endeavour'd to corrupt the faith, and to introduce mean and unworthy notions of the person of our blessed Saviour. The doctrine of a God incarnate, was a doctrine which the earliest hereticks could by no means assent to *. It was a point that seem'd so very incredible to them, that they chose rather directly to deny the faith which they had been baptiz'd into, than to admit what appear'd so much above their low apprehensions, and the notions commonly receiv'd. Two ways they took of avoiding the difficulty. One was to deny the divinity of our blessed Lord, making him a mere man. Cerinthus and Ebion took this method, only with this difference, that Cerinthus, the better to account for the apparent, marks and characters of divinity in our blessed Lord, was pleas'd to suppose Christ (whom he makes a distinct person from Jesus) to have descended upon him at his baptism, and to have continued with him till his passion †. Ebion contented himself with acknowledging one self-existent person ‡, exclusive of God the Son, making him a mere man, the Son of Joseph and Mary; and, for that reason, very probably accounting for his miraculous works, and other characters of divinity conspicuous in him, from the power and presence of the Father with him. This was one way of eluding the doctrine of a God.

^{*} See Iren. p. 185. Tertull. ad Marc. 1. 3. c. 8. † Iren. p. 105. Theod. p. 219. Epiph. p. 110. † Eva 7 ayévvilov. Theodor. 1. 2. c. 1.

5 R incarnate.

incarnate. The other was, not to deny the divinity of our Lord, but his humanity, resolving the whole history of the incarnation of our Lord, his appearing as man, his conversing as such in the world, and at length his suffering, into mere shew and delusion. These were the Doceta, or Phantasiasta, the most early and numerous sect of hereticks, who seem to have form'd their heresy with no other view, but to avoid the difficulty of believing God and man in one person *. And finding the divinity of Christ to be a point so sirruly establish'd in the church, and so deeply rooted in the minds of all sober christians, they thought it the safer way to deny his humanity; which, however absurd it was, might, they imagin'd, have some better appearance of probability than that evasion, which, as I have observ'd, Cerinthus and Ebion had recourse to.

It was after the rise of both these heresies, that St. John wrote his Epistles, his Revelations, and Gospel; and therefore it is that he is more express and particular in what relates to the personal dignity and divinity of Christ Jesus, than any other of the inspir'd writers. He begins his gospel with a full declaration of the divinity of the † Word; who had existed with the Father from the beginning ‡; and was God; not mere man of Joseph and Mary, as Cerinthus had pretended. He immediately after attributes to him the work of creation **; and interprets his coming into the world, by his coming unto his own ††.

AFTER he had thus sufficiently afferted the divine nature of the Word, he proceeds to affert, that this very Word was personally united to the man Jesus, and really took human nature upon him ‡‡, not in appearance only *. The Word was man, or became man, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father †; as of one who had been from the beginning with God, and was God; that is, God of God, as now

explain'd by the title of ‡ only begotten.

THAT our Lord is here call'd the only begotten, in respect of his divine pre-existent nature, is evident from the context, and the whole scope of the apostle in this chapter. ** The Word was made sless, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glo-

** Ο Λόγ Φ σαρξ εγένείο, χ εσκήνωσεν ξν ήμῖν, χ εθεασάμεθα χ δόξαν αὐτῆ, δόξαν ψς μονοίενῆς ΦΕ Παλερός.

^{*} Alii quoque hæretici usque adeo Christi manisestam amplexati sunt divinitatem, ut diversit illum suisse sine carne, & totum illi susceptum detraxerint hominem, ne decoquerent in illo divini nominis potestatem, si humanam illi sociassent, ut arbitrahantur nativitatem. Quod tamen nos non prohamus, sed argumentum offerimus, usque adeo Christum esse Deum, ut quidam illum substratto homine, tantummodo putarint Deum. Novat. de Trin. c. 18.

† $\Delta \omega_{\gamma} \otimes \omega_{\gamma}$.

‡ John I. I.

** \$\frac{\psi}{2}\$. 3.

† \$\frac{\psi}{2}\$. 10, 11.

† \$\frac{\psi}{2}\$. 14.

** O $\Delta \omega_{\gamma} \otimes \omega_{\gamma}$ sait iyévélo.

† \$\Delta \cdots
my as of the only begotten of the Father. It is of the Word that the apostle speaks; which, he says, * tabernacled, or dwelt, in our nature; whose glory was manifested to be such as became a person of so high an extract; one that had been with God, and was God. and had created the world. So that there is a full and plain declaration of the divine generation of our Lord; which may let us into the meaning of this apostle in other places, where he so often gives our Lord the title of Son, or Son of God. And for this reason it is, that I chose rather to begin with St. Jobn's go-

spel, than with his other writings, tho' wrote after them.

In his first epistle, and in the first chapter, he delivers the same doctrine with what we have seen in his gospel, and almost in the same words. Our Lord is there call'd the Word of Life, and Life +. as in the gospel the Word. He is said to have been ‡ from the beginning; as, in the gospel, ** in the beginning. And, instead of the Word was made flesh, &c. we have here, † which was manifested unto us: And, instead of ## with God, we have here, * with the Father. All which confirm to us, what we have before obferv'd, that God is call'd the Father of Christ, in respect of that nature, which he had with, and from the Father, before the foundation of the world; and that the Word was properly the Son of God before he assum'd human nature; and that therefore it is in this respect, that our Lord is every where emphatically styl'd the Son, or only Son, or only begotten Son of God; which being so clear from scripture, and confirm'd by all antiquity, is a truth too firmly established to be eluded by any artifice of criticism. And now we may readily understand what St. John means; when he tells us, that he is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son; and that, whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world. We have seen, and do testisy. that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him t. With more to the same purpose. The antichrists which the apostle speaks of, are the hereticks of those times, of whom he says: They went out from us, but they were not of us: For, if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us ‡. were they who deny'd the union of the man Jesus with the Word, or Son of God; either denying that there was ever really any such

^{**} Ev dexi. † Λόγ 🗗 τ ζωής, and ή ζωή. ‡ 'Απ' ἀξ. ‡ Πςὸς τ Θεών. ‡ Πςὸς τ Παπέρα. ‡ Απ αρχης. * Έσκηνωσεν. tt Epareguln nipit. † John 2. 229 ‡ Ch. 2. 19. 23. Ch.4. 9, 14, 15.

man; or afferting him to have been a mere man, not God and man.

BOTH these, in effect, deny'd that Jesus was the Christ: One, by making Jesus nothing but a mere ghost, shadow, or apparition; the other, by separating the person of Jesus from that of Christ, and pretending that they were not one person, but two distinct persons; Christ occasionally descending on the person of Jesus, and afterwards leaving it. And from hence we may understand what the apostle means by charging those hereticks with denying Jesus to be Christ *. Not that they deny'd (as many of them as own'd Jesus to have been a real man) that he was a teacher sent from God, or that he was the prophet foretold under the name of the Messiah; neither did they believe, with the Jews, that any other Messiah would come, or was to be expected: No; but their error was in denying the hypostatical union of the two natures, the divine and human, in the person of Jesus Christ, and not acknowledging that Jesus, who was in one respect really the Son of man, was also in another, really the Son of God; begotten of the Father before the worlds, very God of very God. These were the antichrists, who, by denying the Son, deny'd the Father also †; because, tho' they receiv'd the Father as God, yet they did not receive him as Father of his only begotten Son Christ Jesus; who had been from the beginning the Word, and the Son of the Father, of the same divine nature, $\ddagger God$. As St. 70hn expressly styles him in his gospel, the maker and framer of all things, and the Lord of all men; who condescended in time to become man. and so to be ** perfect God, and perfect man, by an ineffable union of both natures in one.

As this is the most obvious and natural sense of the words of St. John in his epistle and gospel, confirm'd by all the ancients, and deny'd by none but hereticks; so it is in vain for any man, by any subterfuge of criticism, or turn of wit, to attempt a different exposition of them. The apostle concludes his epistle with words still more expressive of the dignity, or rather divinity, of the Son of God, calling him not only eternal life, as he had done before \(\frac{1}{2}\), but true God likewise. This is the true God, and eternal life \(\frac{1}{2}\). In his second epistle, he hath these words; Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. Where, from his willing grace, mercy, and peace equally from both, we may reason-

^{*} See Ch. 2. 22. See also Irenæus, 1.8. c. 16. † Ch. 2. 22. ‡ Θεός. ** Θεάνθεωπ. † Ch. 1. 2. ‡‡ Ch. 5. 20.

ably infer the divinity of Christ, and of his being equal to the Father, with respect to his Godhead; and from his being call'd Lord, and Son of the Father, we may no less justly conclude, that he is Son in respect of that nature which he had with the Father before the world was *. So uniform and constant is this divine writer to himself, and to the whole tenour of the scriptures, that it is really matter of wonder, how any person, that has the least regard or reverence for the sacred writings, should make the least scruple about so clear and evident a doctrine, as that Jesus Christ was, in respect of his divine nature, truly and really Son of God, as much as, in respect of his human nature, truly Son of man.

I will not employ any farther time in confidering what testimonies may be cited from the Revelations to the same purpose, tho many of great weight might be brought from thence, in confirmation of what hath been faid. Nor shall I trace the point through the ante-nicene, or post-nicene writers, who all, with one voice, conspire to assert this great truth, and lay the greatest stress upon it, as a fundamental doctrine of christianity, and the great basis of our faith and hope. The proper Sonship of Christ was, what all catholick antiquity steadily and constantly adhered to; and so were able to keep the right, and even path, which scripture had mark'd out to them, without being carry'd away by the chimerical fancies, and vain delusions of the Gnosticks, Valentinians, Sabellians, Tritheists, Samosatenians, and Arians; who were all betray'd into a defection from the true faith, by giving too great a loose to their imaginations, and by endeavouring to understand more of the mystery of Christ's relation to the Father, than their weak capacities could attain to, or is possibly attainable by any human capacity.

SECT. III.

A summary account of the catholick doctrine, concerning the divinity of the Son.

HE true catholick faith concerning Jesus Christ, which has obtain'd universally, and from the beginning, and still, God be thanked, obtains in all the churches of the world, is, that he is the true and proper Son of God, of the same divine nature

* John 1. 1, 21 -17.1.

and

and substance with the Father. He is properly a Son, and therefore no creature, which is against the Arians and Socinians. He is not the Father, but the Son; which confutes the Sabellians. He is not specifically one with the Father, (as two original, absolute, independent divinities might be supposed specifically one) but he exists, as a Son, from, and in the Father; and therefore, in a certain sense, is individually the same with him; which is against the Tritheists.

HERE then let us fix our faith, in relation to the article of the Son of God. He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father, coessential and co-equal with him. How this can be, is an enquiry, for which neither men, nor perhaps angels, have sufficient strength or extent of mind. Almost every age of the church has produc'd men of warm, lively, and strong imaginations, who have fancy'd themselves of a superior and more penetrating genius, than is common to men; and so have been endeavouring to explode the doctrine of this article, under pretence of some appearing con-But the force of scripture, tradition, and sober tradiction in it. reason, has as constantly prevail'd, and bore them down. It were now time for them to defift, and to take warning from those who have miscarry'd before them; tho' they had done all that was possible for human wit, art, or learning to do, towards overthrowing this great truth. For fifteen centuries, at least, the charge of contradiction has been brought against the orthodox, and never yet could be made good. The wifest, the greatest, the best of men, have, upon examination, all along submitted to this strange, and, as it is pretended, contradictory doctrine; and could never yet be convinced that there is any contradiction in it; but have plainly discover'd that the contrary doctrine to it, is most repugnant both to the words and sense of the holy scriptures in general, and to one principal design of the New Testament. men will indulge their fancies, they may imagine many contradictions in what relates to the divine essence and attributes. The eternity, the immensity of God, and his prescience, will furnish men of ingenuity with as many appearing contradictions, as the doctrine we are speaking of. All, at length, must terminate in this: Finite is not able to comprehend infinite; man is man; and God is God.

I shall only remark farther with relation to the present article, that many of the ante-nicene fathers held a twofold generation of the Word: One proper and eternal; the other improper and temporal. All implicitly held the eternal generation, believing the distinction of persons; the consubstantiality and co-eternity, together with the prerogative of the Father, as first in order; which,

laid together, make up the notion of eternal generation. Among those who expressly afferted it, may be reckon'd these following, and perhaps others; Ignatius, Irenæus, Origen, Dionysius Bishop of Alexandria, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Novatian, Methodius, Alexander Bishop of Alexandria: To whom we may add, Constantine the emperor, and Eusebius. And it is chiefly in respect of this eternal generation, that the Son is styl'd by the ancients * only begotten.

As to the temporal generation of the Son, or of the Word, more properly call'd his † coming forth from the Father, in order to create the world; we find mention of it in several of the ancient writers; particularly Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tatian, Theophilus bishop of Antioch, Tertullian, Hippolytus; besides Origen, Novatian, and Constantine; who expressly mention both. respect of this latter, and less proper generation, the Son is call'd, the first-born of every creature; and it is frequent with those that speak of him to ascribe it to the will and power of the Father; supposing it a voluntary thing, and using the like expressions concerning it, as they do of the Son's third generation, when he became man. This I do but intimate, (not having room to enlarge) with design only to caution the reader from giving in too precipitately into the opinion of such as would persuade us, that the ancients intended these expressions of the Son's first generation, as defign'd to make the Son nothing more than a voluntary production of the Father's, which is perfect Arianism; a heresy which the ancients abhorr'd.

Some of the post-nicene fathers indeed, do allow of the Son's eternal generation, by the will of the Father, in a certain sense: But they feem to have been led into it unawares, on occasion of this dilemma propos'd by the Arians, that the Son must be generated, either with the consent, or without the consent of the Father, which they knew not readily how to answer, but upon that concession. But as the dilemma itself was purely sophistical; in a while they discover'd the weakness and impertinence of it; and answer'd it better, by retorting this question upon the Arians. Whether God the Father was God, with, or without his own confent? Which effectually filenc'd the former cavil about God the Son, and his generation; and shew'd it to be altogether trifling. Having sufficiently shewn in what sense our blessed Lord is the Son of God, there remains no doubt or scruple about the sense intended in the creed. Only begotten is the word us'd in the creed; the most expressive of any single word, to denote the proper genera-

^{*} Moroleris. † Heoédoris.

[‡] Πζοτότοκ 🕒 πάσης κτίσεως.

tion of the Son, that could have been us'd. The pretence therefore of such men is groundless, who think they may fairly subscribe to the Apostle's creed, without believing the Son's proper filiation, which is there express'd in the word only begotten; if it be interpreted, as it ought to be, according to scripture and catholick antiquity. And vain is the pretence, whether of Arians or Sociains, from the simplicity of the creed, as opposed to the Nicene or Athanasian creed, both which last, only express in mamy words, what this doctrine delivers in one word. And, I may add. the same concerning the second article of our church; which declares. that the Son is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father; the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father. And tho' this article, as well as those two creeds, may be of greater force against artful and designing men, who would interpret good words to a sense never intended; yet, to men of christian simplicity and sincerity, the Apostle's creed imports the very same doctrine with them. And he that refuses to subscribe to them. or to any of them, for the lake of the doctrine of the Son's divinity, cannot, I am persuaded, conscientiously subscribe to the Roman creed; if he understand any thing either concerning the scripture doctrine, as to this point, or the primitive faith of the church.

CHAP. III.

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord.

HE only thing that remains to be consider'd in this article, is the character of Christ, consider'd as the Lord Christ. I have occasionally observed before, that the title of Lord is ascribed to him in right both of his creating and his redeming the world. The dominion which he exercises over all created beings in general, was founded on the former consideration; and that which he exercises over mankind, especially over christians, and for which reason he is here, in a more peculiar sense, styled our Lord, is sounded on the latter consideration.

I shall not, in speaking to this point, particularly insist on the several texts of scripture which attribute this character to our Saviour in both respects, and in the highest sense; a sense proper only to a person who is truly and essentially God; but only cite two or three

three of the most clear and considerable testimonies out of them to my purpose. In the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, the name of Lord, or Jehovah, the proper and incommunicable name of God, is more than once expressly attributed to one of the angels that appear'd to Abraham. In the following chapter *, it is said, that the Lord (or Jehovah) rain'd upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord. The person who here assum'd an angel, is the same who afterwards appear'd in the person of man. But if he were not really God, and therefore Lord in the highest sense, what account can be given that God, who is jealous of his honour, and has declar'd he will not give his glory to another, should yet communicate to another his proper and peculiar name; a name so sacred to the Jews, that they did not think it lawful to pronounce it, and than which, there is no name in scripture so proper to denote the divine nature and perfections. For which reason the psalmist uses this solemn invocation to God; Thou, whose name alone is Jehovab †. Accordingly he declares by the prophet Isaiah; I am the Lord, that is my name ‡.

Now we have no way of knowing God, as distinguish'd from all other beings, but by his name, and the perfections of his nature. If such a name therefore, whereby those perfections are most eminently and peculiarly express'd, be really attributed to him, and to him alone; or in terms exclusive of all other beings, as his name; how is it to be suppos'd that any other being should, either of himself assume, or be permitted by God, to assume it; without opening a door to the most gross idolatry, and even rendring men excusable for paying that honour and worship to a creature, which

is due only to the supreme God.

THE only pretence, in answer to the argument which we draw from our Saviour's being styl'd Lord, or Jebovah, in the Old Te-stament, is, that he may be call'd so, as the minister, or embassador of God. But where, or with what propriety of speech, does any minister, or embassador, call himself by the name of the Prince; from whom he is commission'd. To suppose that one who acts in the name of another person, should really assume his name; the name whereby he is properly known, or personally distinguish'd; is to make such an agent that very person; directly to consound the natural reason of things, and all real distinction between the principal, and the agent.

But, admitting there were any grounds for this evalion, which there are not either in reason or fact, still it would be of no service to our adversaries in the present controversy: Because not only the

[#] Gen. 10, 241 + Pfalm 83. 18.

[‡] Kaiab 48. 8.

proper name of God is attributed in scripture to the person commission'd by him; but such other characters and authoritative acts, as can only belong to God. Thus, when our Lord favs in the declaration prefatory to the decalogue, I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: And then immediately adds, Thou Shalt have no other Gods The words import, so far as we can conclude any thing from the natural force and import of words, that the Lord was not only nominally God, but really God, and in two of the highest and supreme acts of dominion; that of giving laws, and excluding all other persons whatever from a participation of the same honour or authority with him. This could not be the language of one who merely personated the supreme God and Lord; but of one who was, in truth, himself both God and Lord. Otherways indeed the first commandment, if we consider the Father and Son as two distinct beings, would, in the literal and direct sense of it, render the Father incapable of having any worship paid to him, by proposing the Son exclusively of the Father, as the Lord God of the Jews, and the sole object of their homage and adoration.

But I would principally observe, that Christ is Lord in the strict and highest sense, from his right of dominion as creator of the world. The invisible things of him, saith the apostle, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. From which place, it is evident, that the sovereignty of God over his creatures, for that is here the proper import of the word Godhead, is sounded in his right of creating them. If then, as has been proved before, Christ was the creator of the world, we have here a clear and incontestable proof, if the apostle's way of arguing be just, that he is too, and ought to be, the Lord or Soveriegn of the world.

There is but one way of answering this, which our adversaries find themselves under a necessity, weak as it is, of taking resuge in. They pretend, that the Son created the world only as God's minister, and wholly by his direction and appointment. Now the there is not so great an impropriety, according to the natural and common forms of speaking, in a man's attributing what he does by order of any person to his own action, as in styling himself by the proper name or title of such a person; yet, to mention none of those texts which attribute the creation of the world to the Son absolutely, and as his proper and personal act, this answer cannot be of any force or significancy, for another plain and evident reason. It being expressly declar'd in scripture, that all things

things were not only created by the Son, but for him; that he is alpha and omega, the first and the last; not only the efficient

cause, but intentionally the great end of all things.

Now tho' a minister should call what he does, by virtue of the powers vested in him, his own proper act; should we farther allow, that he might even assume the name and title of the Prince, whose minister he is; yet to say, that his great or primary end is to act for himself, or his own glory, is to give us such an idea of his conduct, as at once destroys both his relation and his sidelity under that character. I need not descend to illustrate, what

is so very obvious in the application.

2. CHRIST is styl'd Lord, and more peculiarly our Lord, as christians, by virtue of the general redemption of mankind made by him. In regard to which design of his, St. John Baptist, his forerunner, open'd his ministry with exhorting the lews to prepare the way of the Lord; and accordingly it was prophetically represented by Zechariah, as his peculiar office, to go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways. And tho' he might justly be styl'd Lord, as our lawgiver; yet that which constitutes our more peculiar relation to him, and still gives him a farther propriety in us, is founded in the merits of his death, and the atonement made by it. For we are bought with a price; he has now acquir'd a fresh and federal right of dominion over us. And how this acquisition was made, and upon what valuable consideration, the scriptures elsewhere expressly inform us. For we were not redeem'd with corruptible things, such as silver or gold; but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We are told in another place, that in consequence of his humiliation and death, God highly exalted bim, and gave him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knew should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth; and things under the earth; and that every tongue should vonfess, * that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father +. Himself declares, after his resurrection, to the apostles, that all power in heaven and earth is committed to him. In conformity to which declaration, St. Paul argues in his epistle to the Romans; To this end, Christ both dy'd, arose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living \$. But I need not multiply texts to shew, that Lord is the ordinary, the distinguishing, and proper ritle of Christ, throughout the New Testament; or for what reason God hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to his church. This character, indeed, is so peculiar to Christ, that he it styl'd one Lord, in opposition to

^{*} Ott Kuelo 6 Ingus Kelsos eis dokur, &c. + Phil. 2. 9, 10, 11. ‡ Rom. 14. 9.

all other lords, and in the same sense as the Father is said to be one God. To us, says the apostle, there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord Jefus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him *. Not that the Son is here call'd one Lord, in opposition to the supreme power and dominion of the Father, any more than the Father is styl'd one God, in opposition to the divinity of the Son; but they are so differently styl'd on account of their personal and more peculiar characters, in opposition to lords many, and gods many; which were not, in truth,

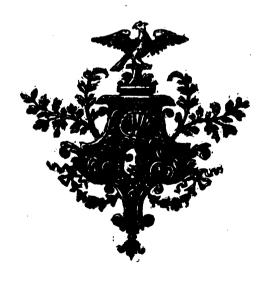
but only nominally so call'd, and in an improper sense.

THERE appears, however, no necessity, because to us there is but one Lord, that consequently no persons can be invested with any authority in his kingdom (where he does not visibly interpose) in order the better to maintain the peace, discipline, or other interests of it. In other cases, it is not thought derogatory to the honour or power of the sovereign, that persons should act in an authoritative manner, tho' in his absence, by commission from him. Why then should it be thought, in the nature of the thing, impracticable, that Christ should depute persons to act in his kingdom, or church, so far especially as concerns the external polity, or order of it? If other reasons could possibly be assign'd against such a deputed power from Christ, now in heaven, and not interpoling in the government of his subjects after a visible manner; yet certainly this can be no reason of itself against such a power, that he is fole Lord, or Law-giver in his church. For if this reafon simply, or by the mere force of it, prove any thing, it will prove undeniably, that there ought to be no civil authoritative administration exercis'd under Christ, who is Lord of all; and to whom all things, whether of things in heaven, or things in earth, are made subject. Nay, Christ, consider'd strictly as creator, has an equal right to be sole ruler in the kingdom of men, as Christ the redeemer, to be sole ruler in his church, or spiritual kingdom. I do not here examine, I say, what other arguments may lie, tho' none of sufficient force have as yet appear'd to lie against this principle, that Christ may depute persons to act in a judicial authoritative manner under him in his church: I only infer, if it be a good argument to the contrary, that Christ is sole Lord or Law-giver in his church, it is a necessary consequence, that the civil magistrate cannot, without usurping on his authority, as he is the creator and governor of mankind in general, exercise any proper or judicial act of authority in the state.

1 Cor. 8. 6.

For Christ is King himself, and equally King in both respects, and is therefore in both as much sole governor. So that the consequence, from his being sole governor, must hold equally and indifferently good with respect to the administration of either kingdom. Tho' as persons indeed, who participate the benefits of his facrifice, which was made for all mankind, and especially as christians, and profess'd members of his church, he is our Lord, by a more peculiar relation, and stricter propriety of dominion over us; and which brings us still under new, and more powerful engagements of obedience to them. He made us, and not we our selves; he preserves us in being; and all the blessings we enjoy, are the effects of his goodness, whether pertaining to life or godliness. For, even in our natural state, he did not leave us without good and wholsome rules for our conduct. Yet, consider'd as our redeemer, he is the Prince of life, still in a more sublime sense; even the Lord of glory. And, if we live in a faithful and confcientious obedience to his laws, will, in his due time, translate us too to a state of glory, that where he is, there we may be also. Which should be an invincible motive to us to observe the apostle's exhortation, wherewith I shall conclude this article, that what we do, we should do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord we shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for we serve the Lord Christ *.

* Coloff. 3. 23; 24.





Of the CREED.

ARTICLE III.

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost., born of the Virgin Mary.

CHAP. I.

Who was conceived.

T is evident from the relative in the front of this arti-

cle, and which connects it with the former, that we are to understand and explain it concerning the same Person, who was the subject of the last article. He, whom we have confess'd and prov'd to be, in a strict and proper sense, the Son of God, was, in order to accomplish the great work of our redemption, at the time pre-determin'd by his Father, to become incarnate, and take upon him the nature of man. there being some difficulty in apprehending how the human nature could be assum'd into a personal union with the divine, to prevent any suspicion, that he, who was the Son of God, was not also, in truth, the Son of man; two material circumstances, the the one of his conception, the other of his birth, are particularly recogniz'd in the creed. Notwithstanding which precaution, there were hereticks who early afferted, that Jesus Christ was not truly man, but only in outward appearance; and that his body, with the several actions of it, consider'd as a human body, were altogether visionary and supposititious.

THERE have been also some modern enthusiasts, who pretended that the body of *Christ* was not produc'd in the womb of his mother by any immediate operation of a divine power: But the Holy



Ghost brought a body of a more pure and refin'd nature from heaven, which he caus'd to pass through that of the holy virgin, without any proper or vital communication with it. In opposition both to the former heresy, which too much prevail'd in the primitive ages of the church, and to this propagated by certain phanaticks about the time of the Reformation; we need only recite the express words of the holy scriptures to those who believe the divine authority of them.

IT is faid in those sacred oracles, that the seed of the woman Shall break the serpent's head *; that God sent forth his Son made of a woman +; that he took on him the seed of Abraham +; and was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh **; of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came ++. All which passages are so full in proof of our Lord's humanity, so far as it relates to his asfuming a human and real body, which is the only subject of our present enquiry, that no forms of speech could have been contriv'd more directly to affert it. But it is ordinary for men, in the heat of their zeal, and especially in the infancy of their conversion, while they oppose an error which has been openly disclaim'd by them, to run into some error equally groundless, or perhaps more impious, on the other hand. This, when the Reformation first began to spread itself in Germany, was particularly the case of some persons there; who, having more zeal than knowledge, and observing, that in the communion from which they had separated, a greater part of the publick worship was address'd to the Virgin-mother, than to the Son; and that men honour'd her, in many respects, even as they honour'd the Father, in detestation of an idolatrous practice, so injurious both to the Father and the Son, they deny'd her that share and propriety, which, as a Mother, she had, and ought to have had, in the conception and birth of Christ.

IT is owing to the same origin, that other weak, tho' perhaps well-meaning persons, having conceiv'd a just indignation at the many superstitious rites and ceremonies of the church of Rome, which had contributed so much to destroy the very vitals of religion, and to make it, in common apprehension, principally to consist in outward pomp and address, took an occasion thereby of declaiming against all ceremonies in general, as inconsistent with that pure and spiritual worship, which is more peculiar to the christian dispensation, and wherein one distinguishing character of it confists.

^{**} Rom. 1. 3. * Gen. 3. 15. † Gal. 4. 4. ‡ Heb. 2. 16. †† Rom. .9 5.

In opposition again to certain usurp'd powers and temporal emoluments of the Clergy, whereof they were at that time posses'd; and which they claim'd as justly due to them, others were so far carry'd away by their prejudice, on that account, against them, that they were even for destroying their true, stated, and original rights; and especially, for abolishing the Episcopate, as being the superior order, and invested, for that reason, with higher, and more extensive powers: Under colour of which, persons of this character had taken occasion, and in too many and flagrant instances, to lord it over God's heritage, and to treat those under their administration, even as having dominion over their faith.

IT is from this false way of reasoning, which puts no distinction between a just claim to the sacerdotal powers, and the actual, or perhaps possible abuse of them, to the prejudice of civil society. that some men are of opinion, the Clergy neither have, nor ought to have, properly speaking, any authority at all, tho' in things merely relating to conscience and religion. And 'tis no wonder, that persons, who maintain such principles, should farther assert, in conformity to them, and by so obvious and natural a consequence, that it is in vain to talk of a regular and uninterrupted succession of the Clergy; and of the nullity or validity of God's ordinances, upon account of such niceties and trifles. they are so, will be more particularly consider'd in another place; I shall only here observe, that if there be no regular, or uninterrupted succession of the Clergy from Christ; then, after the chain of that succession, which continued for some time after christianity was planted in the world, was once broken, except Christ had interpos'd by an immediate power, which will not be pretended, towards authorizing a peculiar order of men to minister in things pertaining to God; from that time, the appointment of all persons to the sacred office, of what denomination soever, especially if they have been commission'd to that end by the state, will be equally regular and authentick. Where there is no divine authority from Christ to commission persons for the work of the ministry; what can be more evident, than that their commission must depend upon mere human authority; and, if so, there can be no particular kind of ordination, but what is mutable, and will be fo to the end of the world, at the discretion of men, which is of more fignificancy or importance to this end, than any other kind.

A doctrine, which, instead of consulting the honour, dignity, or prerogative of *Christ*, as sole King in his Kingdom, is calculated to justify an invasion upon his regal authority, in the highest and most necessary act of it, that of deputing the principal ministers of his Kingdom to serve under him by his own commission.

HAVING

Having thus afferted the conception of Christ, so far as is necessary to establish our belief concerning the verity of his human body; and withal made these occasional reflections on too common a practice of men, who, to avoid an error on one hand, precipitate themselves into as great or perhaps more dangerous an error, on the other; I proceed to a more distinct explication of the remaining part of the article; and which especially relates, when we consider the conception of Christ, to the more immediate act and power of the Holy Ghost.

CHAP. II.

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost.

HAT I may explain this branch of the article, not only with respect to the doctrine here expressly asserted; but to certain other doctrines, which have a natural or obvious connexion with it; I shall proceed; in treating of it, upon these following enquiries.

I. What we profess to believe in saying, that Christ was con-

ceived by the Holy Ghost.

II. Why he was conceived after so extraordinary a manner.

III. Upon what account the union of the two natures in him was necessary.

IV. How the union of the two natures was so made, as to con-

stitute but one person.

I. What we profess to believe in saying, Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost. As the conception of this great and glorious Person was not in the ordinary way of generation, but by a special and immediate power of the third Person (as we shall afterwards prove him to be) in the ever blessed and glorious Trinity, the manner of whose action we are not capable of comprehending; it does not become us to be too curious, or to give our imaginations too free a scope in our enquiries concerning it. The prophet therefore might, even in this respect, have put it as an unanswerable problem with respect to Christ: Who can declare his generation? Who can pretend to shew, from any natural principles, how his body was, or could be, in the origin of it, form'd; or how the seminal powers of life in it sirst began, out of the ordinary course of nature, to operate and unfold themselves? It is sufficient

ficient to answer, and all we can answer upon any good or reasonable grounds in the case, that God is not limited in his action by the general order of things, which he has establish'd; that the same power which originally made man out of the dust of the earth, and afterwards woman from one of his bones, can, with equal facility, produce a human body, without the concurrence of what himself has, in all other cases, made absolutely necessary towards The power of God answers all objections, the production of it. which do not, in the reason of the thing objected, imply an impossibility. And what indeed can be more reasonable, than that the author of nature, who gave it those laws by which it acts. should reserve to himself the prerogative, especially upon extraordinary occasions, of dispensing with them at pleasure; and cause them to act, if, after all, any action can properly be ascrib'd to them, after what manner, or to what ends and purposes he thinks fit.

Some learned men of the church of Rome have indeed carry'd their disquisitions, upon this article, farther than consisted with that profound reverence, which was owing to the action of God in so extraordinary an instance. But as the writers of that church, especially the casuists, have been very ingenious in putting nice and curious questions upon such subjects, as rather tend to gratify a corrupt imagination, than to enlighten the mind; it is less matter of surprize, if, on certain occasions, they have treated even concerning some of the most sacred and awful subjects, with that view, and indulg'd themselves in such incidental resections, as are not to be strictly examin'd by the ordinary rules of decency.

As the scriptures speak of our Saviour's conception in the most simple and natural terms, and withal most agreeable to the dignity and purity of the divine nature, let us not affect to be wise above what is written, or pursue a point, which might possibly admit of many nice speculations, farther, than may be necessary to give us some intelligible notion, at least, of the nature and possibility of

the thing in general, which we profess to believe.

To which end, indeed, it seems requisite, and withal sufficient for us to conclude, that by virtue of a power of the Holy Ghost, which supply'd the ordinary method of generation, the holy Virgin conceiv'd our blessed Saviour in her womb, and of her substance; which render'd her properly, and in the natural and most strict sense of the word, his mother. For tho' the conception of our Lord is here expressly attributed to the Holy Ghost, without the least mention of the holy Virgin's concurrence, in any respect, towards it; yet we are not to suppose her excluded from having that share in it, which is proper, in like cases, to mothers; and therefore

therefore the personal action of the mother is also necessarily supposed in his conception, not only from the reason of the thing, but the express words of that prophecy, Thou Shalt conceive and

bear a son *.

But however, the Holy Ghost concurr'd by a special and immediate act of his power, towards the conception of Christ; we are not to suppose that he concurr'd by way of a † material agent, or by any communication of his substance, but-purely as an efficient agent, or operative power of God. So that, notwithstanding Christ was conceiv'd by the Holy Ghost; yet the Holy Ghost could not properly be styl'd the Father of Christ. Nay, Christ was not the Son of God the Father, with respect to his temporal generation, how miraculous so ever, in a proper sense, any more than Adam, who is expressly call'd the Son of God ‡, could be call'd so, from his being form'd by the immediate action of God, out of the dust.

THE Socinians indeed, not being able, upon their principles, otherways to account for the character of the only begotten Son, so ordinarily ascrib'd to our Saviour in the holy scriptures, have pretended this title was given him, because in his conception, one part whereof his body was form'd, was taken from the substance of his mother; the other part was compos'd by the divine power, of foreign matter. In the former respect, they say, he was the son of man; in the latter, the Son of God.

This notion, which is advanc'd to serve an hypothesis not otherways tenable, is not only of itself precarious, but of no consequence to prove what is design'd by it, were it really supported by any good or sufficient reasons. For, supposing it true, Christ, in being produc'd by the immediate power of the Holy Ghost, would be, in a stricter sense, the only begotten of the Holy Ghost (which the Socinians will not admit) than of God the Father. Secondly, the matter, which was superadded by the Holy

made of the substance of his mother. p. 166.

† St. Ambrose expresses himself on this occasion in very clear terms, and to the same effect: Quod ex aliquo est, aut ex substantia, aut ex potestate ejus est. Ex substantia, sicut Filius, qui à Patre est. Ex potestate, sicut ex Deo omnia. Quo modo in utero babuit Maria ex Spiritu Santto.

‡ Luke 3, 38.

Ghoft

^{*} Consequently (as Bishop Pearson argues) no more is lest to be attributed to the Spirit, than what is necessary to cause the Virgin to perform the actions of a mother. When the scripture speaketh of regeneration, or the second birth, it denyeth all which belongeth to natural procreation, describing the Sons of God, as begotten not of bloods, nor of the will of the sless, nor of the will of man, but of God. And in the incarnation of our Saviour, we remove all will, or lust of the sless. We deny all will of man concurring. But as the bloods, in the language of the Hebrews, did signify that substance, of which the sless form'd in the womb; so we acknowledge, in the generation of Jesus Christ, that he was made of the substance of his mother. p. 166.

Ghost towards forming the body of Christ, no more proves Christ to have been the Son of God, in that high sense, which the Socinians sind themselves under a necessity of admitting, than it proves our first parent to have been the Son of God, in the same sense; because he was originally form'd, as we have before observ'd, by the immediate power of God. In the last place, Christ, who is said to have been like to us in all things, sin only excepted, upon supposition that his body was compos'd of two parts (the one of celestial, or any foreign matter whatever, the other of his mother's substance) would be in part like us, with respect to the matter of our bodies, and in part unlike us; and therefore could not, as the Holy Ghost in scripture asserts, be made like unto us, sin only excepted. But I proceed, under a distinct section, to my second enquiry.

SECT. II.

Why our Saviour was conceived after so extraordinary a manner?

HE principal reason which divines have assign'd for the conception of Christ, besides the ordinary course of nature, by the power of the Holy Ghost, is, that he might be sanctify'd, in a special manner, to the offices to which he was appointed, and which requir'd, especially his sacerdotal office, that he should be perfectly free from sin, and consequently, from those strong and natural motions of concupiscence, whereby men are usually carry'd away to commit sin. If it be pretended, that, on suppofition the body of Christ had been generated in the ordinary way, he might, as the scriptures record of other holy persons, have been sanctify'd in the womb: And so the effects of that concupiscence and disorder, common to the rest of mankind had been prevented, as to his particular person; it may be answer'd, that the sanctification here referr'd to, of other holy men, did not denote their perfect freedom from sin, or the natural propensions to it, which men, in general, are subject to; but some peculiar designation of their persons to certain sacred offices, and to the end they might minister in things pertaining to God, by virtue of a more immediate and spiritual relation to him.

We do not dispute, whether God could not, by an Almighty power, have prevented any latent disorder, or defect, which, according

cording to the common course of generation, had possibly been incident to the body of Christ; but as God always effects his designs by the most simple means, and without having recourse to a greater power than is necessary to effect them; as all the ends of the incarnation of Christ, consider'd as the son of Abraham and David, were answer'd by his being born of the holy Virgin; and as it tended to give us a greater idea of the dignity of his person, that he was so born; we conclude it upon these several accounts, most reasonable and agreeable to the wisdom of the divine conduct, that he should have been so born.

IF original sin consists, as we have before observ'd, in that strong and natural propension to sin, which we all derive from our first parent, by occasion of that disorder, which, in consequence of his transgression, happen'd in his body, it is reasonable to conclude, the effects of that disorder will be less sensible and malignant, the farther any generation is remov'd from the ordinary me-

thod of transmitting them.

We may also probably suppose, besides other reasons respecting the sacredness and dignity of the divine action, that the blessed Virgin was design'd for this peculiar honour of conceiving Christ, on the account of her distinguishing graces, both perhaps of body and mind, and the natural consequences of them, towards the better and more perfect conformation of his sacred body.

Do not we continually observe the ill qualities, which parents transmit to their children, not only with respect to an ill state of body, but an ill temper of mind too, which generally indeed follows the disposition, or mechanism, shall I call it, of the body, and is often discoverable even from the exterior form and signatures of it. We may as reasonably suppose, that pious, regular, and virtuous parents, other circumstances being equal, should transmit such a happy constitution of body to their children, as, by a natural effect of the laws of union, between the two different substances, whereof they are composed, may render them more susceptible of good and religious impressions.

For these reasons, we may piously infer, that Christ was not only conceiv'd after so extraordinary a manner, but in particular by the blessed Virgin, and of her sole and proper substance. For, however God may effect his designs by immediate acts of his will, without the concurrence of any natural means; yet as he can make nature, in many cases, subservient to the ends of grace, so far as natural means may conduce to those ends, it is agreeable to his wisdom, that he should accordingly make use of

them.

1.

WHETHER

Whether therefore we understand by original sin, the actual corruption of man's nature, formally consider'd as sin, or his natural propension to sin, arising from the irregular state of his body since the fall, and which the scriptures express by the name of concupiscence; it was highly agreeable to the divine wisdom, and congruous in the reason of the thing, that, to prevent the guilt, or malignant effects of it, Christ should have been conceiv'd in the manner he was conceiv'd.

Tho' indeed there feems this inconvenience to lie against the doctrine of original sin, if it suppose the corruption of man's nature fuch, as really to conflitute him a sinner, that the formal nature of fin does not lie in any disorder of the body, but wholly in the disorder of the mind. However, therefore, we may suppose the body, as to the proper state of it, dispos d or viriated. by reason of any undue fermentation of the blood, or some other physical cause; yet till the mind actually consents to the irregular passions or appetites of it, it is not strictly chargeable with the guilt of sin, because it will still retain a power of not consenting to them; or if it have no such power, then its consent (which would destroy the very nature and formal notion of sin) is not voluntary, but the plain effect of necessity. It can only be said then, in order to give us any diffinct notion how original fin, confider'd formally as fin, is conveyed, that the foul, as well as the body, is deriv'd from our first parents, and generated after the same manner that flame is communicable from one lamp or candle to another. But this is a notion so generally exploded, and upon so just grounds, from the simplicity and indivisibility of a pure uncompounded substance, that I shall not insist in consutation of it. And yet if the foul be not so traduc'd, but immediately created by God, it is impossible to apprehend how it should receive any contamination, which should render it obnoxious to the wrath of God, from its union to a body, to whose motions it cannot give any criminal consent, and which it never so much as consented to be united with.

A celebrated philosopher, finding the common notion concerning original sin, not easily reconcileable with the justice of God, as it renders infants, before they are capable of actual sin, objects of the divine displeasure, has produced an argument for it, from the idea of his infinite wildom and holiness. God, says he, as infinitely wise, acts by the most simple laws, and as infinitely holy, and a lover of order, necessarily hates all disorder, wherever he sees it. Now, in the natural course of things, the soul, by reason of its union with a disorder'd body, being turn'd; or having at least, upon that account, a strong tendency to turn itself itself from God towards the creature, he is not oblig'd to interpose by an immediate and miraculous power to prevent the natural effects of this union; and since his mind always represents things to him as they really are, seeing infants in a state of disorder, he cannot but judge them to be so; and, in consequence of his judgment, as he is infinitely holy, they must necessarily be the objects of his dislike and aversion.

This seems the most specious account that can be given of the opinion which subjects children, by reason of original sin, to the wrath and displeasure of Almighty God. And, it must be confess'd, in the first place, if we were only to consult the idea of God's wildom and holiness, without regard to his justice or goodness, there might be some reasonable soundation for what is here advanc'd. But as a wife and holy God can do nothing irreconcileable with the character of a just and good God, and it is directly contrary to all our notions, both of goodness and justice, that any creature should be treated as criminal, upon the charge of a crime, which it has not, in fact, committed; and when it cannot be suppos'd, by any reasonable implication, that it ever so much as virtually consented to. All the attributes of God are attended with an idea of infinite perfection. But we ought not, we cannot for that very reason, if we attend to it, in honour to one of them, detract from the perfection of another. According to our natural way of conceiving things, it seems that the wisdom and holiness of God should rather, upon a competition (could that posfibly be imagin'd) with his justice or goodness, give way to them, than that these attributes, or either of them, should be sacrific'd to his justice or holiness: Because, in this case, there is a visible injury done to his creatures, as well as to two of the effential perfections of his nature, and whereby he is pleas'd, in so peculiar a manner, to distinguish himself in the holy scriptures. In the latter case, the injury, if we still argue upon an impossible supposition, would wholly terminate in the divine being himself.

It is farther supposed here, that God sees the soul of an infant new born, or perhaps in the womb, in a state of disorder, by reason of its being united to a body, that draws it off from him towards sensible objects, and gives it certain irregular motions that justly render it liable to punishment. But this is a precarious way of arguing: For God either sees the soul of such an infant in an actual state of disorder, or only consequentially so. If he really see it in an actual and irregular motion towards the creature, this, we grant, may be a just occasion of his withdrawing those favours from it, which otherways he might and would perhaps have con-

ferr'd.

ferr'd. God, by such a conduct, does the infant no injury, nor

gives it the least reason to complain.

This is only a negative way of expressing his displeasure, whereby his justice is not at all affected. What we think so irreconcileable with this attribute, is, that, supposing the soul of such an infant actually in a state of disorder; yet as it is brought into such a state, not by any antecedent volition or fault of itself, God cannot, with the safety of his justice, inslict any positive punishment. or any evil, consider'd properly as a punishment, upon it. If God only see it in a consequential state of disorder, it will be still more difficult to assign the reasons either of his withdrawing any favour from it, or his inflicting any punishment upon it; because, in this case, it may possibly, by a good use of its liberty, in concurrence with the common grace of God, prevent the ordinary effects of concupiscence. Or if they be such, as cannot possibly be prevented. how can we reconcile it with the justice or goodness of God, that he should punish a poor impotent creature for not doing what was, in the nature of the thing, impossible to be done: Nay, whose very foreseen endeavour to conquer the natural motions of concupiscence afterwards, should rather, one would hope from the goodness of God, be a means of recommending it to his more special favour.

I would not pretend, after all, to produce any reasons against the plain and express authorities of scripture, if they really should prove so, which are alledged to shew, that original sin actually renders infants liable to the wrath of God. It may not, however, be improper to examine, in a few words, the force of two or three texts, upon which the greatest stress, as to this

argument, is commonly laid.

THE words of the plalmist are often cited to this purpose: Behold I was Shapen in iniquity, and in sin hath my mother conceived

me *. But it is observable,

1. That David does not here say, he was born in sin, which render'd him obnoxious to the wrath and vengeance of God; neither is there any necessity why the sin and wickedness here mention'd, should not rather be understood of the actual sin of his mother, than of any original sin, consider'd properly as such, in himself. In sin hath my mother conceiv'd me; that is, I was conceived by a sinner, or by a woman subject to the common passions and infirmities of human nature †.

2. DAVID

^{*} Psalm 51. 7. † Quidam intelligunt hune versum de actuali parentum libidine, in actu matrimonii. Vid. Pol. in Loc.

2. David does not here derive his sin, if we are to consider it as his sin, from Adam, but from one of his immediate parents. He speaks only of his personal corruption, not concerning the corruption of mankind in common. He speaks more particularly in excuse of the sin which he had committed, and which the reason here insinuated for his being betray'd more easily into it, might, in some measure, tend to alleviate the guilt of it. If by his being conceiv'd in sin, we were to understand his being originally from his conception a sinner, this would be to charge the sin he had committed, and for which he was now humbling himself before God, not so much upon himself as a voluntary act, but upon God, as the effect of some natural and invincible necessity; than which, there cannot be a more just or reasonable excuse for any action.

THE words of the Jews to the blind man, who was restor'd to his sight, are also urg'd to support the same doctrine: Art thou born in sin, and dost thou teach us? But they are far from concluding what they are brought in proof of: For if original sin be here intended, it is plain this argument against the man's teaching, upon whom the cure was wrought, had not been peculiar to him, but which quite destroys the sorce of the interrogation, would

lie against teaching in general.

It may probably therefore be supposed, they referr'd to a notion, at that time receiv'd by many of the Jews, concerning the pre-existence of souls, in which state some might have been greater offenders than others, and so incurr'd the wrath and just ven-geance of God in a more provoking manner. Upon this principle, indeed, the particular exception against this man's teaching, had, we allow, a particular force and significancy in it. And that they argued upon this principle, farther appears from that other question; Hath this man sinn'd, or his parents? Which cannot refer to original sin, (that must be granted to be here out of the question) and must therefore be understood concerning some actual sin, or sins, which he, who was so miraculously restor'd to sight, had been guilty of in a former state.

It is objected to us again, that men are said by the apostle to have been by nature children of wrath. But if he had intended, that original sin renders men justly obnoxious to punishment, he would not have said we were, but we are by nature children of wrath. It is evident he is there opposing the state of the Ephesians at that time, to the corrupt state, wherein they liv'd before their conversion, not that wherein they were born: For this reason, he charges them with the actual commission of several sins in their unregenerate state, which they are now freed at once from the

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power,

power, and from the punishment of. If then the apostle here means that they were children of wrath, antecedently to their committing any actual sin, the sins which he charges upon them, as the causes of God's wrath, were not according to the tenour of his argument, in truth, the causes of it, but mention'd without any proper relation to his principal design. Besides, there is no necessity that the word which we render by nature, should import the original, but only the real or true state of things. As when the same apostle charges the Galatians * with serving those, who were by nature no gods, he plainly intends those idols, which were

only nominally, and not, in truth, gods.

In answer to that text from the book of Job; Who shall give a clean thing out of an unclean? So often cited to shew, that original sin has formally the guilt and demerit of sin, we say, no argument can be drawn from these words to that end, because they do not appear, in the natural design of them, to be spoken of any moral, but rather in reference to the natural imperfections of men, especially upon a comparison of the best and most holy men, with the infinite purity and holiness of God. With respect to which, the angels are charg'd with folly, and the heavens are said not to be clean in his fight. Or the words may be explain'd to fignify, that God alone, by his power of forgiving sin, can restore a sinner to that pure and holy state he was in antecedently to his corrupt state, or can cleanse him from his sin so effectually, that he shall be reputed clean and innocent in the fight of God, as if he had never sinn'd. According to this sense, David addresses himself to God in the following prayer. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine offences. Wash me thoroughly from wickedness, and cleanse me from my fen.

To these authorities, and some others which I do not think it necessary to mention, those who contend for the doctrine of original sin, in the calvinistical sense, add a particular reason to confirm it. Children, say they, die, and death is the wages of sin; they must therefore necessarily be supposed sinners; otherways they would not deserve punishment. But how does it follow, that because sin deserves death, therefore God cannot inslict death without sin? The life of every creature depending, both as to the origin and continuance of it, on his mere grace, he may take it away when, after what manner, and on what occasion he pleases. And it is not necessary, when the apostle says, the wages of sin is death, that we should understand by death, especially when apply'd

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to involuntary agents, any positive eternal punishment of sin, but only a cessation of the powers of life. In the former sense, death, we think, cannot; tho, in the latter, it may be inslicted on innocent creatures; or, which is the same thing, on such as are charged with involuntary crimes, and can only therefore be the wages of actual sin. But the reason of inslicting any evil (for it cannot properly be called punishment) is, in the other respect, very different, as it may not only be done without injury to the infant which dies, but also prove a means of its being translated, by death, to a suture and more persect state of happiness.

SECT. III.

Upon what accounts the union of the two natures in Christ was necessary.

HE conception of Christ, after the manner we have declar'd, by virtue of a divine power, does not prove him to be really, or in strictness, a divine person. Yet as he, whom we have demonstrated to be, in a proper sense, the Son of God, was the very person, who, by that means, became incarnate, and is therefore, in a proper sense, also the son of man, they seem two questions naturally, and in the original grounds of them, to arise from his conception.

1. Why the two natures, the divine and human, were thus united in him; and, 2. Why after such a

manner, as to constitute but one person.

The resolution of the former point, depends on our considering Christ, as design'd for the office of a mediator: As one, that in order to reconcile sinful man to God, was at once to propose and effect the conditions upon which God might, with the safety of his honour and justice, be reconciled. No man, considered simply as man, was qualifyed for so high an undertaking; for all men, without distinction, had sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God. It would therefore have cost more to redeem the soul of any one man, than the whole race of mankind were capable of performing. So that sinners, if there had been no mediator, who was himself without sin, could have proposed no terms of reconciliation on their part, which either a wise, a just, or holy God could have accepted, on his part. And therefore, as to any method of restoring themselves to the grace or savour of God, if no such

such mediator had interested himself in their behalf, they must

have left that alone for ever.

But if every man was incapable as being a finner, of paffing between God and the rest of mankind in quality of a mediator, might not an angel, by taking upon him that character, give us more reasonable hopes of our being reconcil'd to God by virtue of his mediation? Especially if God himself had propos'd to such an angel the conditions upon which our reconciliation was to be made; and, at the same time, declar'd his gracious acceptance of them. For may not the offended party, without any wrong to his justice, if regard only be had to that, pardon the offence committed against him, upon what terms and considerations he pleases? Not to examine too nicely what an offended God might justly have done in order to the pardon of sinners, especially by right of his absolute power and authority, it seem'd more agreeable to his wisdom and goodness, in his design of redeeming mankind, to propose the mediation of a person to that end, if such a one could be found, still more nearly ally'd to him, than any created being whatever. This person was found, and only to be found, in the unity of the divine nature: And his free acceptance of that office gives us the highest assurance, we could possibly have had, that his mediation is at once most suitable to the dignity of God, and will have all the good and happy effects which ought, on any account, to be expected from it by man. This sentiment concerning the merit and efficacy of Christs mediation, is highly agreeable to our common way of judging concerning the success of any intercession made in our favour; as we naturally promise our selves a more happy issue of it, either from the superior character of the person interceding, or from some peculiar interest he has in the person to be interceded to.

It was highly expedient, at least, if not absolutely necessary, for these reasons, that the mediator, who was to pass between God and man, should have been himself a divine person. It was no less requisite to this end, that he should have been also man. The very notion, indeed, of a mediator, implies one that has some personal and common interest in the parties between whom he mediates; that, by consulting what is respectively due or proper to them, he may propose a more effectual method of bringing them together. Christ, by taking upon him our nature, and knowing experimentally in his own person whereof we are made, is naturally supposed to be more sensibly affected with our wants, and more powerfully inclined to relieve them; judging our case his own, as being made in all things like unto us; for which

cause, be is not asham'd to call men brethren; this is a security, which leaves them no room to doubt of their interest in him, or to fear that he will leave any thing unattempted, which it is proper for him to effect in their behalf. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews is very copious and eloquent, in representing the great advantages of Christ's taking upon him human nature, especially with respect to his sacerdotal office; and that both on account of the expiation which he made here upon earth, and (in reference to which I shall barely cite one text) of his continual intercession for us, at the right hand of God, in heaven, by virtue of it. For we have not an High Priest, who cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our infirmities; and are therefore encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain grace, and help in time of need.

As this mediator was to be an example both of active and pasfive obedience, particularly as he was to suffer by way of atonement for the fins of men, it was most congruous indeed on both accounts, in the reason of the thing, that he should have been a human person. Had an angel descended from heaven, and been render'd by many means visible to us; yet he could not have exemplify'd fuch duties in his conduct, as are properly human or focial, but only such as are of a more abstracted and spiritual nature. Or if he had appear'd in a human body, without being united to it after the same manner, or by the same laws of communication, which are at present establish'd between our souls and bodies; men might have pretended that his example was altogether, considering the different state they were in, impracticable to them. We are men, and not angels, had then been a real excuse; as it is now a common unjust pretence for a less pure and strict morality.

NEITHER could the suffering of any other being, design'd as an expiatory sacrifice, unless united to a human body, have been proper in the nature of it to that end. The soul that sinneth, it shall die, is a rule so far founded in the general reason of the thing, that every criminal should at least suffer, if not in his individual person, yet in a person of the same species, or common nature with him. Representatives or vicarious undertakers, according to our common notions concerning them, being always of the same kind with those they represent.

IF, for these reasons, it was not absolutely necessary, it was, however, highly expedient in the nature of the thing, that he who was to reconcile sinful man to God, by passing between them, should himself have been both God and man; perfect God, and perfect man, yet not two, but one mediator. One, not by conver-

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sion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. Which leads me to my last enquiry.

SECT. IV.

How far this union of the two natures in Christ is made, so as to constitute but one person.

HERE had been no difficulty in conceiving, how Christ might have continued perfectly one person, if, with respect to his divine nature, he had only, as some hereticks have maintain'd, united himself to a human body, and not to a rational soul. on that principle, we might as easily apprehend, how the Word, or Son of God, might, after his assuming a Body, have continued the very same numerical person, without confounding our idea of one person, as how the union of a human soul and body constitutes at present no more than one person. But, besides the reason before mention'd, why it was requifite that one of the same nature which had sinn'd, should suffer by way of expiation for sin. Besides that, if he had not assum'd a human foul, as well as a human body, he could not have been said, in any proper sense, to suffer, or in any kind. The divine nature being confessedly incapable, and a body, as such, however modify'd, altogether insensible of suffering: Besides these arguments, I say, (which there is no evading the force of) for the perfect humanity of Christ, there is one, in particular, founded on an express and undeniable authority of scripture. It is that famous text, where Jesus is said to have encreas'd in wisdom and stature, and in savour with God and man. body could not be, in any proper, or rather intelligible sense, the subject of wisdom: And, with respect to his divine nature, it will be granted, that he was equally incapable of improving in wisdom. The increase of his wildom cannot therefore, in any conceiveable manner, be otherways accounted for, than with respect to the gradual communications of light and grace, to his human or rational soul, as he grew in years *.

Neither

^{*} Erasmus expresses his sentiments excellently to this purpose, and on the same occasion. Deitas, per gradus quosdam, dotes impertivit nature humane assumpte; id quod Lucas
bis docet; supra, v. 40. confortabatur, &c. Quod autem corroboratur, auctu quodam virium, fulciri videtur. Et hoc loco. Cum verò tria, H. L. conjungat sapientiam etatem & gratiam sicut verè profecit etatis accessu, ita verè profecisse videtur dotium incrementis.

NEITHER could Jesus, consider'd as God, increase in the favour of God, nor consequently as God united to a body; but only in regard to his rational soul in a due use of its faculties, directing and governing the motions or appetites of the body (to speak the common dialect) in a due regular manner, and perfectly conformable to the will of God.

This text affords us so full a proof of the perfect humaniy of Christ, that our adversaries have no other way of evading it, but upon a supposition, which contradicts one of the most common and clear principles of natural philosophy. It is said then, and the authority too of certain ancient writers is produc'd for it, that man consists of three parts; a rational soul or spirit, a sensitive soul, and a vegetative body. That the sensitive soul and vegetative body are the formal essential parts of man, and the rational soul a mere accessory part, by the special savour of God, which some would have it, is proper only to a regenerate person. According to this principle then, as to all the essential parts requisite to the perfection of human nature, our Saviour was perfect man, without a rational soul, which the divine nature supply'd all the proper powers and sunctions of.

But upon what reasonable grounds can it be said, that the soul of man, which properly distinguishes him from other animals, and which they have not in common with him, should not be a necessary constituent part of human nature. In what age or part of the world was it ever known, that a body was look'd upon as a human body, without a rational foul to inform it. Even children and idiots are only reckon'd among the species of men, as they are supposed to have rational souls; tho the exercise of reason is at present obstructed in them by the weakness and indisposition of their organs; as it is in other persons, who are acknowledg'd to have rational souls, when they are asleep; because their organs, which are the occasional cause of communicating those ideas to their minds, upon which they reason, are then in a state of inaction. Upon this principle, there might possibly be a society of men in the world, without any laws or government among them, but those mechanical laws of motion, which obtain among the several forts or herds of animals; and which, if they might be sufficient to denominate man, in an improper sense, a social creature, yet would destroy the notion of him, contrary to the judgment and practice of all mankind, as a moral agent; contrary to the ends for which he was created, God's honour and service; with several other ends, for which a wife, or, I may add, a good God could only be suppos'd to create him; in a word, contrary to the very authority of the holy scriptures, which are pretended to favour the opposite

opposite doctrine, and wherein God treats with men, the worst and most profligate sinners, as reasonable agents; and even condescends to appeal to them, that is, to their own reason and consciences, for

the equality of his proceedings towards them.

But perhaps I have already faid too much, in an argumentative way, against an opinion, which no man can seriously give into, without incurring a forfeiture at once of his character, both as a divine and a philosopher. I shall therefore add but one text out of the epistle to the Hebrews in confutation of it, and which alone is sufficient, were there no other arguments to the same effect either from reason or scripture, for ever to overthrow it. fays the author of that epistle, where he speaks concerning the particular reasons why Christ became man, he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that be himself hath suffer'd being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted *. What can be more evident, than the argument in this passage for our Saviour's having assum'd a rational soul, or human nature, in a true sense, from the opposition of the seed of Abraham to the nature of angels; from the necessity of Christ's being made in all things like unto his brethren; and from the very nature and end of his facrifice for us. Certainly there is no occasion for any comment upon these words, (if men will be determin'd by the most plain and express words of holy scripture) to shew, that Christ, who was perfect God, was also perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting.

So that the great difficulty lies in what I proceed, after having premis'd this, to speak to; how the divine nature of *Christ* was so united to the human nature, or to his rational soul, as still to con-

stitute, in any intelligible manner to us, but one person.

It is not necessary that I should descend to a formal proof of the sacts, upon which this question arises; that our Saviour is every where represented in scripture, not as two, but one Christ; that he is all along spoken of and address'd to as one person. Besides, had the mediator between God and man consisted of two persons really distinct; his sacrifice, with respect to his human nature, could not have had that merit or essicacy, as in a personal union with the divine nature. These are truths that cannot be disputed, and which we ought to acquiesce entirely in, tho' we might not be capable of giving any satisfactory account concerning the grounds or manner of

this union. Whatever difficutly there may be in conceiving it; these are sufficient grounds to induce our belief of it; provided fuch a belief implies no contradiction, either directly, or by any natural consequence; which we deny that it does, in both respects. On the other hand, many pious and learned men have argu'd, that this union is so far from being in the nature of the thing impossible, that an apt and obvious illustration may be made use of to bring it nearer to our thoughts. This method of rendring it more easy to human conception, is taken from the union of the foul and body of man; which, tho' confisting of two distinct, and altogether different substances, yet constitute but one man. must be acknowledged, that the body, after the union of it with the foul, does not move or act in the same manner, that it would have done in a separate state. The soul, by which it is now inform'd, modifies it a thousand different ways, and gives it quite another course of operations. Notwithstanding, it preserves all the qualities and affections proper to a body; from whence it is concluded very reasonable to suppose, that the human nature may still retain all its natural powers and properties, tho' so intimately united to the divine, and acting after such a manner in subordination to it, that they both constitute but one individual person. For by reason of this dependence, the human nature has now, properly speaking, tho' it has all the affections belonging to human nature, and acts according to all its natural powers, no distinct personal subsistence of itself, but is so united to the divine nature, that there arises from the union of them but one proper individual person. Yet it is not pretended that this argument from the union of a human body and foul, is in all respects just, or correspondent to the personal union of the two natures in Christ. It is only to be consider'd as an illustration, which, without representing the manner of the thing, it is design'd to illustrate, in a full and perfect light, may tend at least to give us some better conception, how the two natures in Christ, when united, still continued, with all their distinct qualities and affections, the same; tho' but one person, and not two persons; one mediator, and not two mediators, resulted from that union. The properties of which were explain'd by the council of Chalcedon, against the heresies which at that time infested the church, by the following distinctions.

1. That this union was made so, as individually * to constitute but one person. This was done in direct opposition to the Nestorian heresy, (condemn'd before in the council of *Ephesus*) who asserted, that *Christ* was compos'd of two persons; that the divine person,

by a continual and more immediate communication of grace, assisted and supported him throughout the whole course of his life and ministry; but that the man Christ alone, considered as having a personal distinct subsistence from the Word, was born and crucify'd; and consequently, they would not allow the holy Virgin to be, or to be called the mother of God, but only the mother of And tho' it was objected by the Nestorians, that this expression, the mother of God, was no where found in the holy scriptures, the rule which we should conform our felves to, in speaking of divine and more difficult subjects; yet the catholicks did not think their argument of sufficient force to oblige them to disuse an expression, which, if not founded in the very words of any one text, yet was justify'd by clear and undeniable consequence from many texts of holy scripture. For if the mother of Peter might properly be call'd the mother of him as man, by reason of the union of his soul and body; and as man principally imports an intelligent being, tho' she contributed nothing towards generating the intelligent part of him; so the person of whom the holy Virgin was mother, being expressly styl'd God, and having every divine perfection attributed to him in the holy scriptures, she may, for the same reason, and therefore with the same propriety, with respect to the personal union of the divine and human nature, be styl'd and consider'd as the mother of God *.

2. That the union of the two natures was made without confusion †: For if we were to conceive them so commix'd, as after their union, to make but one nature, our mediator, from that period, could not be either persect God, nor persect man, but a compounded and altogether unintelligible being, and of a distinct nature both from God and man; as all mix'd beings are different from those principles, separately consider'd, which enter into the composition of them. It is also hereby intended, that the different affections of the divine and human nature of Christ, remain'd, after the union of them, in the same state and condition, which was severally proper to them before it. But having already spoken something concerning this point, I shall here satisfy my self with producing one text out of the holy scriptures, which is com-

monly

^{*} The great schoolman has, after a very clear and solid manner, answer'd this objection of the Nestorians. Licet non inveniatur expresse in scriptura dictum, qued beata virgo sit mater Dei, invenitur tamen expresse in scriptura, qued fesus Christus est verus Deus, ut Johannis ultimo. Et qued beata virgo est mater Jesu Christi, ut patet Matthei primo. Unde sequitur ex necessitate, ex verbis scriptura, qued sit mater Dei. Dicitur enim Rom. 9. Qued ex Judiess est secundum carnem Christus, qui est super omnia benedictus in secula; non autem est ex Judies, nisi mediante beata virgine. Unde ille qui est super omnia Deus benedictus in secula, est verè natus ex beata virgine, sicut ex sua matre. 3². p. quæst. 35. art. 4.

monly alledg'd to support and confirm it: And that is from the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, where it is said, that Christ was made of the seed of David, according to the sless, and (the same Christ) declar'd to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of boliness *.

3. This distinction therefore naturally prepar'd the way for the next, or rather indeed of necessity imply'd it. That this union was made † without any change of the properties effential to each nature, so as to render those properties convertible. For the there is a communication of names and idioms, in consequence of the personal union between the two natures of Christ, so that the very same person that is called the Son of God, and the son of man, is faid to have been born, and to be from everlasting; to die, and to have life in himself: Yet this manner of speaking, which wholly arises from the unity of Christ's person, does no more suppose any change of the two natures, so as to render the properties of them convertible, than it supposes, that because the same man is called tall or healthy, with respect to the state of his body; or wise and learned, with respect to the qualities of his mind; that therefore his foul and body have no separate or distinct properties, but only such as may be reciprocally or indifferently attributed to them both.

This distinction was more peculiarly defign'd against the heresy of Eutyches, who afferted, that the Word was made shesh by a true and proper conversion. So that, notwithstanding before the union, the two natures were really distinct, yet there was a perfect and entire coalition of them afterwards into one.

I shall only observe against the possibility of such a conversion, that it implies a direct repugnancy, in the reason of the thing, with respect to both natures. It was absolutely impossible for the Godhead to be transmuted in this sense, from the notion we necessarily conceive of God, as an immutable, simple, and unlimited being; whereas it is evident, upon this principle, he must have been a murable, divisible, and limited being, and even subject, as God, to the same common passions and infirmities of men. Such a conversion was no less impossible on the part of man, as it would suppose him, by parity of reason, a dependent, and yet an independent; a mortal, and immortal; a persect, and yet an impersect being; which is, in other words, to suppose him a man, and yet no man.

SEEING then there are certain characters and passions belonging to Christ as man, which it is inconsistent with the perfections of the divine nature, that we should ascribe to him, consider'd simply or separately as God; seeing, on the other hand, there are certain characters and powers belonging to him as God, which cannot possibly be ascrib'd or communicated to him, consider'd simply or separately as man, and yet the same attributes, passions, and powers are attributed to one and the same person. We must, by necessary consequence, acknowledge the identity of the person of Christ, and, at the same time, the diversity of the two natures united in that person.

4. This union was made * so as to be for ever inseparable. That it will and ought to continue so long as the mediatorial office of Christ subsists, is evident from the very reason and nature of that office, as well as from an express promise of God to him in this capacity, that he shall reign (for so the promise must be understood) till he bath put all his enemies under his seet, and deliver'd up the kingdom to God, even the Father. So that the question is, whether, after the expiration of his regal power as mediator, or after this cession of it has been made to the Father, and when some of the principal reasons, at least, of his assuming human nature into a personal union with the divine, are ceas'd, that union will not also be dissolv'd, and cease, at the same time with it?

THERE seem to be but two ways of determining this question: Either from revelation, or the reasonableness of supposing, why the divine and human nature of Christ may still continue united in one person; even the some of the ends, for which that union was originally made, and has till that time subsisted, are persectly accomplished. For it will be sufficient to our purpose, notwithstanding the accomplishment of those ends, if we can assign any

other good end or reason, why it should still subsist.

IF we consult the holy scriptures upon this point, we may observe, that when they speak concerning the suture happiness of
the saints, they represent it as consisting in a participation of the
same happiness and glory with our Lord; they speak of him as
Lord. We shall be ever with the Lord †. As Christ; When
Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear
with him in glory ‡. As Jesus Christ; That they may obtain the
salvation, which is in Jesus Christ, with eternal glory **. As Lord
Jesus Christ; He hath called you to the obtaining of the glory of the
Lord Jesus Christ ††. From all these texts, it appears, that so

long

^{* &#}x27;Axweisws. + 1 Theff. 14. 17. ‡ Coll. 3. 4. ** 2 Tim. 2. 10. † 2 Theff. 2. 14.

long as the saints shall continue in a state of glory, the Son of God will continue the same person, and be distinguish'd by the very names and titles, whereby we know, and now confess him to be one person. Whereas, on supposition that after he has gather'd together the number of his elect, and so the ends of his mediatorial office should, in that respect, cease; he would not be separately, either as God or man, the person here describ'd; or rather indeed, if the divine and human nature were to have a separate subsistence, he would not, contrary to what these texts evidently suppose and import, be one person, but two persons.

Besides these testimonies concerning the perpetuity of the union between the two natures of *Christ*, I might distinctly cite others from the *Revelations*, where glory, honour, and worship are said to be continually offer'd, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb (which must, in a more peculiar manner, refer to the

human nature of Christ) for ever and ever.

LET us enquire, in the next place, whether, setting aside the authority of divine revelation, as to this matter, there are not also sufficient grounds, from the reason of the thing, to suppose, why the union of the two natures should be perpetual, notwithstanding some of the principal ends of it have been fully attain'd. For we may distinguish between the end for which any thing is done, and the reward consequent to the doing of it. A great end for which the Son of God became man, was, that he might fave penitent finners; this end will be perfectly effected, after the saints are translated to heaven. One reward of his service in effecting it, is, that God has given him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in beaven, and of things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue Should confess, that Jesus is the Christ, to the glory of the Father. Now how does it follow, that because one principal end for which the Word was made flesh, is attain'd, therefore the reward ought, if not for some time, yet however, after a period of many ages, to be discontinued. If it were a reward of Christ's obedience, that he should receive this adoration, till the suppos'd time of his delivering up the kingdom to God, what period soever we assign for it, the reason of continuing that reward, except (what does by no means appear) God had, by a positive act of his will, limited the grant of it to such a period, will still and eternally hold good, for the continuance of it. Why should the personal glory of Christ be supposed temporary or determinable, when the glory of the faints, owing to the merits of his mediatorial office, shall continue for ever. It appears rather, in the nature of the thing, reasonable, that he who merited for the saints

all the glory, whereof they are possess'd, should himself possess, if that were necessary, a more permanent state of glory, and be in this respect too, anointed with the oyl of gladness above his fellows.

This argument, I acknowledge, is of no force against those, if there really are any such persons in the world, who deny the eternity of the joys of heaven to the saints. But I barely take the occasion here of mentioning so capricious and singular an error, reser-

ving the consideration of it to a more proper place.

I shall only here add another reason for the perpetual union of the two natures, more peculiarly respecting the state of the blessed in heaven; and which arises from what has been cited out of the Revelations, concerning the glory, honour, and worship, which they continually offer to the lamb. It will be granted, that what he has done and merited for them, ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. But it is reasonable to suppose, notwithstanding the great illumination of their minds, that they will still be more sensibly affected with all the proper motions of love, veneration, and gratitude towards him, from the visible appearance of his human nature in union with the divine, to which, by virtue of that union, all their present glory and felicity is owing; and to whom therefore, as visibly appearing to them, their worship and adoration is represented as so peculiarly address'd.

I have enlarg'd the more upon these two points, both concerning the nature and the perpetuity of the hypostatick union; because our excellent church has thought these doctrines of so great importance, that it is declar'd in her second article, as Christ took man's nature upon him, in the womb of the blessed Virgin, and of her substance; so these two natures were join'd in one person,

never to be divided.

CHAP. III.

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.

HE mother of Christ, the not mention'd in the former part of the article, yet necessarily imply'd in it, as having perform'd what was proper to her as a mother, in the conception of Christ, is here expressly describ'd both by her name, and by a peculiar

culiar character (when we consider her under that relation) of her person. Having observ'd what appears necessary, or most considerable upon these two particulars, I shall proceed, in the next place, to consider the three principal circumstances of the birth

of Christ; the manner, the time, and the place of it.

I begin with the name of the holy Virgin, which, tho' mention'd as proper to distinguish the person, who really was the mother of Christ, yet, consider'd barely as a name, does not seem to be of that singular or extraordinary importance, which some have imagin'd; it being a name common at that time to other persons. And therefore, if admitted in other respects, or in the original design and etymology of it, to denote some peculiar excellency, yet can have no peculiar relation to the holy Virgin,

consider'd properly under that character.

Several fathers, and other learned men of distinction in the church, have discover'd, or rather have sought to discover, particular reasons for appropriating this name more eminently to the holy Virgin, from the natural fignification of it. But there is so much scope for conjecture, and the essays of a fertile and lively imagination, in deriving the origin of names, so as to render them fignificative of the nature or qualities of the things and persons, to which they are apply'd, that I shall not enter upon a critical disquisition of this kind, even in reference to the name of the holy Virgin. Those who have any taste for such curious entertainments, may consult Bishop Pearson, in his marginal notes upon the place; tho' it might be proper for them to observe this caution, that what the good fathers have said concerning the etymology of the word Mary, is not to be understood as design'd so much for an account of it, strictly critical and just, as by way of accommodation, or some moral improvement to be drawn from it. So we are to understand St. Bernard, when speaking of the holy Virgin, as distinguish'd by this name: * Let us, fays he, make an observation or two upon the name itself, which, by interpretation, is render'd the star of the sea, and is very properly apply'd to the holy Virgin .- For as a star projects its rays, without any change in the form or contexture of it; so the holy Virgin brought forth a son, without changing the state proper to her as a Virgin.

^{*} Loquemur pauca & super boc nomine. Quòd interpretatum maris stella dicitur, & matri virgini valde convenienter aptatur.——Quia sicut sine sui corruptione sidus suum emittit radium, sic absque sui lassone virgo parturit filium.

IT will be of more importance to enquire concerning the defignation of her person, by this name, as she was of such a particular tribe or family; it being one end of imposing names, the better to preserve and ascertain the genealogy of those, to whom they are given; particularly, in relation to the genealogy of the Virgin-mother, the mother of Christ, the Son of David, and for that reason call'd so, because he was to descend lineally from him.

IT is equally necessary then, that the genealogy of the holy Virgin should be ascertain'd to us, as that of Christ. For the' some learned men have been of opinion, it was sufficient to denominate Christ the son of David, according to the sense intended by that appellation; that Joseph, his reputed father, and espoused to his mother, was of that tribe; a woman, by the law of Levirate, who was to marry the man nearest in blood to her, being by her marriage consider'd as of his line, and so as to compute her descent by it *. The son, accordingly, of such a mother, deduc'd his line from the same husband, by right of inheritance; and by parity of reason, that one who marry'd the relict of his deceas'd brother, was expressly requir'd to do it, in hopes, or with a design of raising up seed to that brother. And there was the stronger reason, why the genealogy of Christ should have been deduc'd according to St. Matthew, in the line of Joseph, because he was himself of the same tribe with that of Mary. And so the two different families of the tribe from which our Saviour deriv'd, from the one by a legal, from the other by a lineal descent, were united in these two persons. Yet, perhaps, there may be some difficulty in determining exactly, when, or by which of their more immediate predecessors, this union first commenc'd; tho' if Joseph was, as is here suppos'd, espous'd to her, by right of proximity in blood, the period of its commencing could not, upon any reasonable presumption, have been far distant from the birth of Christ.

But whatever right he, who legally succeeded any person as a son in his inheritance, might have to be called his son, and to derive his genealogy in the same common line with him; yet God having promis'd to David, that the fruit of his body should sit upon his throne, it was necessary that Christ, who was the subject of this promise, should, according to the natural and direct construction of it, deduce his line from David, not only by a le-

gitimated, but by a natural and proper descent.

THERE is an argument which it may be here proper for me to take some notice of, which has been urg'd against the truth

even of Christ's legal extraction, as recorded by St. Matthew. This argument is drawn from a solemn commination of God, wherewith the prophet Jeremy was charg'd; namely, that he should write Jeconiah childless; a man that should not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed should prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah ‡. They infer from this intermination, that Jesus Christ, concerning whom it was declar'd by another prophet, that he should sit upon the throne of David, could not derive his descent from Jeconiah, nor consequently, in the order that evangelist deduces it, from David. For a solution of which difficulty, it is answer'd,

1. That this command to the prophet to write Jeconiah childless, respects the time before his captivity, and does not extend to

the children, which he might have after it *.

2. That the like interminations of God, as appears from the case of the Ninevites in particular, are interpreted to imply a secret condition of repentance, in consequence of which, God may be supposed, or may oblige himself by some secret determination of his will, to remit them. Lightfoot accordingly represents it as the opinion of the Rabbies, that this sentence against Jeconiah was reversed, by means of the repentance he exercised during the time of his being in prison.

3. It is concluded from the twenty eighth verse, that what is here render'd childless, cannot be understood, in the strictest sense, nor perhaps at all in the literal sense, of that word; for there Jeconiah is not only mention'd as cast out, but his seed. And therefore it is observable, that the septuagint, instead of childless, render the original † banish'd, or as one formally exterminated by

the voice of a cryer appointed to that end.

4. Tho' this answer should not be admitted; yet the intermination we are here considering may be accounted for; and the prophecy of Isaiah, which speaks of Christ's sitting on the throne of David, hold good, as that prophet speaks concerning the spiritual kingdom of Christ, and Jeremiah of a temporal kingdom; which Christ, tho' descended from David by the line of Jeconiah, disclaimed all pretensions to.

This may be sufficient to obviate one of the principal cavils against the genealogy of *Christ*, with respect to his legal descent, as recorded by St. *Matthew*. But it being thought necessary towards the accomplishment of what was foretold concerning the

[‡] Jer. 22. 30.

* St. Ambrose gives the same solution. Per illam auttoritatem propheticam, non negatur ex semine Jechoniæ posteros nascituros & ideo de semine ejus Christus est.

Messiah, that he should also be the son of David, in a proper and lineal descent, according to the flesh. It is equally necessary to conclude, whatever presumptions have been objected to the contrary, that St. Luke propos'd to deduce his genealogy in the male line; which, tho' Joseph is at the foot of, yet he is there mention'd in regard of his being the husband of Mary, and with a design, probably, to prevent all grounds of suspicion concerning her virtue or innocence; which those, who as yet perhaps did not know any thing of the manner how Christ was conceiv'd, might too easily entertain. Besides that, it was not usual among the Jews to mention the females in their genealogies, but a rule with them. as we observ'd before, that women, who were marry'd, should compute their descent in the line of their husbands. So that the words, in the conclusion of Christ's genealogy, according to St. Luke, may be thus interpreted, in order to shew the consistency of it with that of St. Matthew. Then Jesus himself began to be about thirty years old, who, in common opinion, was the son of Joseph; which Joseph was the son of Eli, not by natural descent, but in right of his spouse Mary, Eli's daughter; which Eli was, in a true and lineal descent, the son of Matthat.

I am sensible, many other difficulties have been thought to occur, in reconciling the two genealogies of Christ. But it does not consist with my design to enter into all the nice disquisitions, which every subject may give occasion to. I have satisfy'd my self with observing that difficulty in relation to my present subject, which has been look'd upon as one of the greatest, and considerable, above all others, in the nature of it; and therefore it was particularly urg'd by Julian the apostate, against the truth of the evangelical history, concerning Christ's descent; and upon this pretence, that it was impossible, in the reason of the thing, for one man to have two fathers; which yet Joseph (in his way of arguing) according to the different accounts of the two evangelists, must have had, one of them nam'd Jacob, the other of them Eli. But it appears from what has been said, in order to reconcile this seeming inconsistency, what is here objected, is so far from implying any impossibility, that it may be accounted for upon very good and probable grounds.

As to any other objections against the genealogy of Christ, recorded by the two evangelists, or by either of them, which may appear not to be altogether ill founded, what I am going to observe may indifferently, and in general, serve as an answer to them; namely, that both these genealogies were published at a time, when, if there had been any material error, much more any inconsistency in them, the Jews, as by having recourse to their

their publick records they easily might, so there is the highest probability that they would have observed and detected it. That since nothing of this appears, it is possible that the difficulties, which have been since observed, might arise from some change or omission of names, occasioned by the negligence of transcribers; or, if this ought not to be supposed, that such difficulties are not to be attributed to any real or intrinsick cause, but accidentally to the ignorance of interpreters; especially after the publick genealogies were lost; and there was no coming at the means of rectifying any mistakes by consulting them, or comparing them together.

II. Having observ'd what appear'd most proper, in relation to the name of the mother of Christ, I am; in the next place, to consider another character of her person, and which is indeed peculiar to her as a mother, that of a Virgin. That she was so at the time of her conception, neither is, nor can be question'd by those, who believe the scriptures. And that she should continue so till the time that holy thing she had conceiv'd should be born of her, it is pious to believe, were the scriptures silent on this head, in honour both to the manner of his conception, and the sacred-

ness of his person.

THERE have been, however, certain hereticks, who deny'd the virginity of the holy mother, not only before the birth of Christ, but at time of her conception. The Ebionites, with the followers of Cerinthus, who oppos'd his divinity, contended, and for that reason, that he was even generated and conceiv'd in the ordinary way; and that Joseph was his natural father; his father, in a true and proper sense. Why Joseph should be call'd his father, good reasons may indeed be assign'd, from his being espous'd to the holy Virgin; from his cohabiting with her, and by right of Christ's adoption; and who was, for that reason, among others, suppos'd the Jon of Joseph. Which right was still more evident, if Joseph were contracted to Mary, on account of proximity of blood; and according to the legal course of inheritance. For, on this supposition, the reasonableness whereof has been observ'd above, Christ was not the son of Joseph merely by virtue of a voluntary adoption, but of a strict hereditary right.

OTHERS have question'd, whether, after the birth of Christ, the holy Virgin still continued in a perfect state of virginity; they argue, when it is said, that Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son; the literal and most obvious sense of the words seems to import, that from this time he did know her, according to a chaste way of speaking in the Hebrew style, and probably

bably deriv'd from it to other languages *. But, to speak to the difficulty objected, when it is said, that Joseph did not know his wife, until she had brought forth her first-born son; according to the phraseology of the Hebrews, the words do not import, that he then knew her, but only what was proper to be observ'd, that during the time before the birth of Christ, he did not know her. Neither, on that occasion, was there any visible cause, why the evangelist should mention after what manner Joseph might cohabit with her from that time.

UNTIL, even in the common way of speaking, has not always relation to what may happen afterwards, but sometimes only relates to what happen'd antecedently to the time which it is apply'd to denote the period of. The inference would be altogether as just, as that which is pretended to be drawn from these words of St. Matthew; if it should be said, that because Michal had no children until the day of her death, therefore 'tis reasonable to suppose that she had children after her death; or that when Job says, till I die I will not remove my integrity from me, a good proof might be drawn from hence of a suture state, wherein he would forseit his integrity. Other testimonies might be cited to the purpose; but these are sufficient to shew, that the word until frequently denotes no more, than the expiration of a certain limited time, without regard to what may happen after it.

NEITHER can it, with more teason, be inferr'd, that because Christ is called the first-born son of Mary, that therefore she had any son or child afterwards; this expression only importing the denial of any former birth. It is indifferent, as to an ordinary signification of the word, and particularly in the holy scriptures, whether any other birth be consequent to it or not. When God smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, it cannot be supposed, upon any reasonable grounds, that there were among them no males, but who had brethren. Neither, when it is said, that all the first-born of the children of Israel should be sanctify'd to God, can it, with greater probability, be inferr'd, that there was not one family among them, but what had more children

THERE are other texts urg'd against the perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord, on occasion of mentioning his brethren, and those too as the sons of Mary. As to the former branch of

this

^{*} Plut. in Alex. Neque aliam cognoscebat mulierem. In Romul. Hic Laurentiam cognovit. Cæsar. Bell. Gall. 1. 6. Intra annum vigesimum sæminæ notitiam habuisse, in turpissemis babent rebus.

this objection, I need only observe, that it was customary among the Jews, to call their near relations, especially their cozen germans, brethren; which consideration supplies us still with a more still and distinct solution of what is objected in the second place, that Mary, the mother of James and Joses, our Lord's brethren *, was not the same Mary with the mother of our Lord, but another Mary, the wife of Cleophas, her sister; and therefore her children, according to the language of the Jews, might properly, by virtue of that relation, be styl'd his brethren.

And, if no arguments can be drawn from the holy scriptures to show, that the holy Virgin always continued in a state of virginity afterwards; certainly, if we examine the question relating to it by any light, which our own minds may afford, it will appear much more reasonable to conclude for the affirmative; and that, in regard to that high and peculiar glory, whereby she was distinguished in the conception of Christ, she would for ever inviolably maintain that state, wherein yet a farther miracle had been worked, at the birth of Christ, to preserve her. Which leads me to say something, as I proposed, first, concerning the manner; and, after that, concerning the time and place of Christ's birth.

SECT. II.

Of the manner, time, and place of Christ's birth.

HERE will be the less occasion to enlarge on the former of these particulars, on account of what has been said concerning the perpetual virginity of the holy mother: And from which it may be, and has been piously concluded, that, upon the birth of our Saviour, she continued in the same state, with respect to her person, as before; and which was, in all respects, proper to a Virgin. This conclusion seems to be the more reasonable, on account of that prophecy of Isaiah; Bebold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son. Where an extraordinary interposition of a divine power is equally foretold, both as to the conception, and birth of Christ. But if a Virgin had only conceived, and not brought forth a son, and in a state too proper to a Virgin, there had not, it is argu'd, been that necessity of a special divine interposition, in regard to his birth, which is here supposed.

THE objection against the possibility of the thing, has been commonly and well answer'd, from our Saviour's passing through the door, while it was shut, into the room where the apossiles were sitting. These two extraordinary sacts are sometimes, indeed, indifferently apply'd, to illustrate each other. And accordingly St. Augustin, by way of reverse to the present argument, proves the possibility of our Saviour's passing, after so miraculous a manner, through the door, from the manner and circumstances of his birth *.

THERE is another common enquiry under this head, tho' it does not seem so directly to serve any great end of religion or morality; whether the holy Virgin selt any pain, or was subject, in any kind, to the disorders incident, on the like occasion, to other women. But this enquiry is, in great measure, already obviated by the former supposition, of her continuing at the birth of Christ inviolably and entirely a Virgin; which, for an obvious reason, from the miraculous manner of it, removes the cause of those do-

lours, which other mothers feel in bearing children.

THAT commination to Eve, in forrow shalt thou bring forth children, has been commonly urg'd, in opposition to what is here infinuated, as respecting the whole female race under the same circumstances. To which it is answer'd, that this general commination to marry'd women, for so we now understand it, has a particular respect (as appears from the words immediately following those which are here cited) to their being marry'd women, and is founded in the relation which they bear to their husbands, as parents in common with them. But the the holy Virgin was espous'd to Joseph, and is in express terms call'd by the angel his wife; yet she not having that commerce with him, which this intermination supposes between husbands and wives; the reason of it did not extend, nor consequently the general effects of it, to her. Or it may be said, that God, by a speciall grace, in favour to the holy Virgin, or on account of her extraordinary piety, and on so extraordinary an occasion, might have dispens'd with the common or natural order of things. Those who are not satisfy'd with these considerations, may consult the answer of St. Augustin in the margin, to which I chuse to refer them ‡.

+ Non virginitatis ereptio, sed conjugis testissicatio, & nuptiarum celebratio declaratur.

^{*} Moli corporis, ubi divinitas erat, ostia clausa non obstiterunt; ille quippe non eis apertis intrare potuit. Quo nascente virginitas matris, inviolata permansit. In Joan.

Ambros. in Luc.

† Ab bac sententia excipitur virgo mater Dei: Que quia fine peccati colluvione, & sine virilis admixtionis detrimento Christum suscepit; sine dolore genuit; & sine integritatis violatione, pudore virginitatis integro permansit.

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II. Another considerable circumstance of our Saviour's birth, which I propos'd to speak to, relates to the time of it; and it is the more necessary we should examine this point with greater care, as one material argument, in order to ascertain the truth of the chri-

an religion, may be drawn from it.

Now there were three periods especially, when it was foretold by the prophets, that Christ the Messiah should come. The first period was to happen upon the accomplishment of that prophecy of Jacob; The scepter Shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come *. That is, the Jews, who were so denominated from Judah, shall not cease to be a political body, and to exercise a judicial power and authority, or have their government taken from them, till the time that Shiloh, or the Messiah, so the ancient Jews all along interpreted the word, shall appear. For the scepter, or rod, does not only denote royal power, but any judicial or legislative power, under what form of government And the Jews retain'd such a power, not only after the defection of the ten tribes, but during the several breaches and innovations which were made in their government till the time of Christ's appearance, and which we therefore look upon as a considerable circumstance to prove, that he was in truth that Christ, who should come into the world.

THE Jews, in answer to this, say, that by scepter, we are to understand the tyrannical government, which the enemies of Judab would exercise over that tribe till the coming of the Messiab. But how could the legislative power, which is here still presum'd to continue in Judah, consist with a tyranny, which must, at the same time, be supposed to destroy the exercise of it? What a strange form of government must that be, where the legislative power, and the scepter, or executive power, could be conceiv'd to subsist apart, or without any dependence on one another? Neither is it true, in fact, that the scepter in this sense, as it denotes oppression, did not depart from the family of Judah, which continued during a succession of several Princes deriving from it, in a flourishing state. And yet the Patriarch does not say, that there should be a constant uninterrupted succession of the Kings of Judah, till the period here determin'd; but only intends, that their civil polity, and the right of judicature, should not, before that period, depart from them, so as to be finally destroy'd. And yet from the time of David to the babylonish captivity, for the space of four hundred and seventy years, the scepter, with respect to all the proper rights of it, was continued in that tribe. During the

* Gen. 49. 10.

times

times of their captivity in the days of Jeconiah, and other Princes. they had still certain governors, who exercis'd a judicial authority As, from the babylonish captivity to Nehemiah; among them. first in Zerubbabel, for the space of a hundred and fifty five years: And afterwards in a succession of governors from him to Nebemidh, who, without being particularly nam'd, are mention'd in general by Nehemiah; as the former governors, that were before him *. From Nehemiah, who was of the tribe of Judah t, the government was continued among them after the same manner; and afterwards in the Maechabees, who, tho' they were of the tribe of Levi, yet had intermatry'd with that of Judah, and so deriv'd from it by the female line; tho, as the Jews indeed did not compure their families from the female, but from the male line t, this afiswer does not seem satisfactory. It should rather be said, that the remainder of the tribe of Levi, among that of Judah, was incorporated with it after the same manner as the tribe of ** Bemamin; and from thence was entitled to the same denomination, and to certain common rights of it. Of these governors, there were two forts; some presided over those, who still continued in exilé; others over such, who return'd into their own country.

2. The scepter might be said to continue in Judah, by reason of the great power and authority vested in the Sanhedrish: Which extended, as Helvicus eites proper authorities in proof of it, to capital cases; to a discretionary right of declaring war; and on which, in some measure, the royal power itself depended #1. This author, therefore, observes from Josephus, that when Hered was cited before the Sanhedrish to answer for himself, upon an accusation of blood, R. Sameas address'd himself to the members of it in these words ‡‡, Brethren of the Sanhedrish; and Kings. From which he observes, that the consistorial power was, at that time consider'd as superior to that of Hyrcanus, who was then King*.

The difficulty lies in proving, that the Sanhedrim properly confished of the tribe of Judah. But an easy solution may be given to this. The tribe of Judah was the principal, and most numerous tribe: Part of the other tribes, which return'd, or were intermix'd with it, were denominated from it. And tho' we grant there were governors among them of the tribe of Levi; yet as

Nebem. 5. 15. + Euseb. in Chronic. p. 156.

[‡] Familia matris, non vocatur familia. Helv.

*** Rediit Judas cum Benjamine, quæ tribus Benjamin Judæ fuit uccessio. Unde terru Judæa dista; gens Judæi. Grot.

^{††} Potestas regis quodam modò dependet à synedrio. Talinud Santi. cap 3. Dicit, bella suscepta sunt pro nutu atque arbitrio synedrii. Pol. in Loc. ab Helv. memb. 3.

^{‡‡} Ardees ouvedeoi na Baoides. * Ubi observandum quòd regem, tunc Hyrcanum, postponit senatoribus.

they held their authority from the tribe of Judah, and in it, the scepter, which was still radically and virtually in that tribe, could not be said to depart from it, any more than a kingdom can be said to be divested of its government, as such, by transferring it, in consequence of its own proper choice, on a foreign family.

It is still objected, that Herod, who was no Jew, but a foreigner, govern'd Judea before the coming of Christ; and that the scepter was therefore departed from Judah before that period. To this it is reply'd, that Herod was a pretender, who had no legal or proper right to the government; nor any power, but what was originally owing to force, and afterwards supported by it. Under the former part of his tyranny, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, to whom the right of the kingdom belong'd, were living. After they were slain, the Jews oppos'd Herad's administration, and asferted their legal rights and liberties, till weary'd by his many oppressions; or perhaps, intimidated by the many acts of cruelty he had committed, they made submission to him towards the latter end of his reign; a few months, two years at the most, before the birth of Christ. And it was not necessary that a period should have been put to the jewish government all at once; or that, upon the expiration of it, Shiloh should immediately, or at the very instant have appear'd. Mr. Mede was so far from being of opinion, there was any such necessity, that, according to his calculation, this prophecy was not fulfill'd, till under the reign of Titus. When there was a more general conversion, and gathering of the Gentiles, and before which time, some form of government, at least, remain'd among the Jews, sufficient to distinguish them as a people, or political society. Upon which principle, tho' it is only presum'd above, that Herod was not by nation a Jew; yet no great inconvenience would follow, upon our granting him to be a foreigner. And so the difficulties, wherewith learned men have perplex'd themselves and others, as to this critical point of history, might have been easily avoided, without the least inconvenience, as to the matter in question.

Some of the Jews, not knowing otherways how to answer the arguments which we draw from this prophecy, in order to prove, that Shiloh, or the Messiah, is already come, have pretended, what has no manner of appearance, or probability in fact, but is consuted by all history in the world, so far as we know any thing of history, that there is still some where a succession of Princes in the line of David, among the residue of the babylonish captives. Others, not knowing where, or in what part of the world, to find any dominion of those Princes, will have it, that the jewish state still subsists among the descendents of the ten tribes, beyond

the sabbatical river. But all we can infer from this imaginary place of their residence, is, that we are here directed for a proof, upon the credit of a story, too chimerical ever to be prov'd itself, and which, if it could be prov'd, would be here nothing to the purpose; because the present dispute does not, in the least, relate to the succession of the ten tribes, but only and entirely to the suc-

cession of the tribe of Judah.

2. It was foretold the birth of Christ should happen, while the fecond temple was yet standing. One remarkable prophecy to this purpose, is that of Haggai. The desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former *. To the same effect, and probably with a design to explain the meaning of this prophecy, Malachi declares + to the Jews, that he, whom they expected, should come into the temple. These two prophecies expressly limit the time of the Messiah's coming, to that of the second temple; which being now destroy'd, it will necessarily follow, either that the Messiah did come while it was standing, or that the prediction concerning this circumstance of his coming was never to receive its accomplishment, and cannot indeed now possibly re-If the Messiah really came while it stood, there could be no person in whom all the characters proper to the Messiah were so conspicuous, as in Jesus of Nazareth. There were indeed before the destruction of that temple many false Christs, as himself foretold; but they could produce no credentials of their mission; and were, on many other accounts, detected as impostors. However, their impious pretenfions had this good accidental effect, that they plainly discover'd the just grounds of a persuasion which then so generally obtain'd, that the period was at hand mention'd by the prophets, when those, who look'd for consolation in Israel, might expect the coming of the Messiah.

IF, on the other hand, this prophecy was never to receive its accomplishment, to what end worthy of the wisdom or goodness of God was it made? Or why were the circumstances of its being accomplish'd particularly specify'd? How is it possible, were we to say nothing of the wisdom or goodness, to reconcile it with the veracity of God, with that character of him given by the Holy Spirit? He is faithful who hath promised; that he should yet make promises to men, and raise in them well grounded and reasonable hopes, (hopes founded on no conditions on their part) of what

he never had any intention to perform.

THE Jews themselves are so sensible how injurious it is to the honour and perfections of the divine nature, to make any fuch supposition; or to question the veracity of God in relation to his promises, how far so ever he may, with the safety of this attribute, remit his threats; that they say, but they say it only for that reafon, and therefore without proof, or possibility of proof, that the prophecy of Haggai has been already accomplished. For there is no way of shewing the accomplishment of it, but by making it appear, how, and in what respects, the glory of the second temple was greater than that of the first temple. This could not be on the account of its magnificence, or any external beauty and lustre of In respect to which, it was so much inferior to the first temple, that the Priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers who were ancient men, and had seen the first house, when the soundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice *. And therefore Haggai, the better to prepare the Jews for receiving this prophecy in the true sense, by the command of God puts the question to them. Who is left among you, that saw this house in her first glory? And how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes, in comparison of it, as nothing †?

In respect to the symbols of God's more immediate presence, there were, in the former temple, the Urim and Thummim, the ark of the Covenant, the fire which descended to consume the facrifices, the Shechinah, and the spirit of prophecy; all which ceas'd in the second temple. And therefore since it was both on account of its structure, its external ornaments, and the special manifestations of the divine grace and power in it, so much inferior in glory to the first temple, and confessedly by that very prophet, who foretold it should exceed the first temple in glory; the reason of the preference given to it, in this respect, must, and can only arise from the personal appearance of the Son of God in it; the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. And the characters given by the prophets of the person who was to appear and come into it, the angel of the covenant, the delight of the Ifraelites, and the desire of all nations; as they might properly belong to Jesus Christ, and could not, on any pretence, belong to any other person, who appear'd at that time: It evidently follows, that he, and he alone, was, in truth, the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Another remarkable note of time when the Messiah should appear, was the expiration of seventy weeks, mention'd by the pro-

^{*} Ezra 3. 12. + Hagg. 2. 3.

phet Daniel. Within the compass of which time, several important events were to happen; God having, before the period, here assign'd, should commence, determin'd, that there should be a method apply'd to finish the transgression; to make an end of sins; to make reconciliation for iniquity; and to bring in everlasting righteousness: That, the Messiah, the Prince, should appear; and that he should be cut off, but not for himself: That a people of a Prince should come, and destroy the city and the sanctuary: And, that the sacrifice and oblation should cease, even until the con-

Summation.

If we believe that Jesus of Nazareth appear'd at the time, when we have all the evidence, which any fact, whereof we are not eyewitnesses, can have, to prove, that he did appear, the accomplishment of these several predictions is easily made out. As to such of them, which immediately concern his personal character, or fufferings, there never was any other person, to whom they can severally, or any of them, in this compass of time, (or indeed at any other time) be suppos'd applicable. It is not necessary, that I should critically examine of how many years each week, in the prophetical style, consisted. It is sufficient to our purpose, that these events happen'd in the time of our Saviour; that the Messiah was to come at that time; especially before the sacrifice and oblation should cease; that they are, in fact, now ceas'd; and yet no other time can be affign'd, when they first ceas'd; nor any other person, besides Christ, specify'd, on occasion of whose sacrifice. (which is here express'd by his being cut off, but not for himself) God would cause them to cease. It cannot now, indeed, so much be said, there is an intermission of them, as that they will be for ever discontinued, or until the consummation. It is not material, whether there be any truth in the history, tho' learned men have thought the credit of it supported on very good grounds, that all attempts of rebuilding the temple, and restoring sacrifice, have been frustrated by some special, or visible interposition of a divine power; it sufficiently answers our design, that shortly after that one facrifice and oblation, which Christ made, not for himself, but for the people; and, in order to bring everlasting righteousness, the temple was destroy'd, and that, in fact, the sacrifice did then too cease, with many other instituted rites and modes of worship proper to that place.

III. THE other considerable circumstance, which I propos'd to speak to, relating to the birth of Christ, is the place of it; which was Bethlehem, according to an express prediction of the * prophet

And tho' there is some variation of the words between this prophet and St. Matthew, as they are referr'd to by him, yet the difference, on this occasion, is not so great, but it may be eafily reconcil'd. The prophet speaks of Bethlehem, as a little city: the evangelist, as not the least among the princes or cities of Judab; which, according to a usual way of negation, a figure of speech common to all languages, denotes something more or greater, than the words seem literally to express. So that by representing it as not one of the least cities, the expression may be interpreted in direct opposition to what Micah says concerning it, that it was one of the greatest or most considerable cities. But no inconsistency can be inferr'd from what is here observ'd. This city might be little with respect to the extent of it, or to the number of its inhabitants, in Micah's sense; and yet the greatest, in the sense of St. Matthew, by being eminently so, in giving birth to the Saviour of the world, the Son of God. And it was the more considerable, on a like account, as several illustrious persons had been born in this city before him; Boaz, in particular, the husband of Ruth; King David; and the prophet Isaiah.

Another difficulty has been observed, with respect to our Savisour's birth, on occasion of his being call'd a Nazarene, but without any good foundation; it being usual for persons to take a character from the place of their ordinary habitation, as well as from that of their birth. But the ground indeed, upon which the difficulty principally arises, as to our Saviour's being call'd a Nazarene, is not in regard to the place of his birth, but from the reason which St. Matthew assigns of his being call'd a Nazarene; namely, that what was spoken by the prophets to that end, might be fulfill'd. For it no where appears from the prophets, nor from any one of them, that Jesus Christ was to be call'd by that name.

To this several things are reply'd; 1. That prophets, by a usual enallage of number in the holy scriptures †, may here be understood, as signifying no more than one prophet. 2. That, in referring to any prophetical passage, it is not necessary that the sacred penmen should repeat the very words wherein it is express'd, provided they keep to the proper sense and design of it. By this rule St. Matthew is justify'd in the application he makes of the prophecies to which he refers, in saying, Jesus should be call'd, of what in the Hebrew language imports the same thing, should be a Nazarene: For there it is said, that a rod shall come out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch, which, in the original, is the same with Nazarene, shall grow out of his roots *. St. Matthew there-

† John 6. 45. Matt. 23. 39. * Isaiah 11. 2.

fore intends no more, by citing the authority of the prophets, to slew that Jesus should be call'd a Nazarene, but that he is the true and very branch spoken of by the prophets; particularly by Isaiah

and Jeremiah *, under that distinguishing character.

OTHERS answer, that we are not here to understand prophets in the strict sense, as persons divinely inspir'd with the knowledge of things suture; but prophets improperly so term'd, or such as were call'd sons of the prophets, from their being interpreters of the prophetical writings. From the sense whereof, tho' no such express word was contain'd in them, they inferr'd, that Jesus should be denominated a Nazarene.

It is observed, in the last place, St. Matthew says, that it might be fulfill'd which was spoken by the prophets. From whence they argue, that, notwithstanding this name is not found expressly in the writings of any of the prophets, yet it might have been conveyed down by an authentic and known tradition, from several of them. A learned the author seems, upon all these considerations, to make too great and needless a concession to the adversaries of Christianity, when he says, that this passage, if any, seems to afford them a specious pretence of calumny and cavil against the christian revelation, and is very difficultly accounted for.

I shall only observe, before I conclude this article, that a special providence of God was visible, in the disposition made for the birth of Christ, in the very place where he was born. In consequence of a decree at that time, that all the world should be tax'd, Joseph and Mary his mother were obliged to go unto the city of David, call'd Bethlehem, to be tax'd there, as being of the house and lineage of David. While they remain'd there, the days were accomplish'd that Jesus should be born. Had it not been in obedience to this decree, it is highly improbable that Joseph and Mary would have taken such a journey, in the condition she was in. and at so unseasonable a time of the year. But God, who can effect his designs by what instruments he pleases, so order'd it. that, by the command of a heathen Prince, they should at that time repair to Bethlehem; to the end this circumstance of Christ's birth should render the accomplishment of what the prophets had foretold concerning the place of it, more conspicuous and remarkable. By this means too, it was provi-

dentially

[†] Hic locus si quisquam alius, in toto Novo Testamento, calumniæ & cavillis bostium opportunus videtur: Et dissicillimè vindicatur. Unde Judæi petulanter insurgunt, &c. Spanh. Dub. Evang.

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dentially design'd, which accordingly came to pass, that the birth of Christ was recorded in the publick acts of the Empire. For proof whereof, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian expressly appeal to them.



Of the CREED.

ARTICLE IV.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucify'd, dead, and buried.

CHAP. I.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate.

Y the sufferings of Christ under Pontius Pilate we are primarily to understand the pains and ignoming which he endur'd more immediately before and at the time of his death. Tho' it may not be improper to take occasion from the article to reflect a little of his state of humiliation, during the preceding course of his life. He was a man of forrows, and acquainted with grief, throughout the several periods of it. His sacrifice indeed was finish'd upon the cross, but it might properly be said to begin in his cradle, or rather in the very circumstances of his birth. For he was born of mean parents, in the meanest of places, where most things proper on the occasion, and every thing suitable to the dignity of his person, appear'd to be wanting. What he afterwards observ'd of himself, was justly applicable, and almost literally true in this respect; The sowls of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not whereon to lay his head. He was expos'd in his infancy to the inconveniences of a tedious and difficult jour-

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He pass'd his time, till he enter'd upon his proney into Egypt. phetical office, when he was thirty years old, in great obscurity; tho' he had all the wealth, all the power and glory of the world at command; yet he chose a life of poverty and self-denyal till that time, and as it has been suppos'd, of common labour, in it. For he was the reputed son of a carpenter, and, if we may credit Tertullian in particular, was said to have work'd at his father's trade. His conversation lay among persons in the lowest state and condition of life; and he chose for his disciples and followers a company of illiterate Galileans, and poor fishermen. The circumstances preceding his death were still greater arguments both of his sufferings and his resignation. He was derided and spit upon, and made the subject of all the calumny, than which there is nothing more irritating to a great and noble mind, which the wit or malice of his enemies could invent. He was arraign'd, condemn'd, and scourg'd, as if he had really been one of the greatest malefactors; and afterwards felt those dolours, and discover'd them in those visible effects and agonies, which no man had ever seen, or been sensible of before. Can we restect on so great humility of the Son of God, and think our selves capable, after that, of doing any thing that may deserve the name of a condescension? Or can we reflect on his sufferings, and, at the same time, complain of any hard or injurious treatment? Certainly these considerations, if we duly attend to them, must equally contribute to create in us a becoming indifference to all the visible glories and pleasures of this world. They should tend, at least, to rectify our taste of them in such a measure, that we should never think of our selves more highly than we ought to think, upon any imaginary or sensible advantage of possessing them. We should farther learn from them (for 'tis difficult not to moralize on such moving occasions) to raise our selves, at once, above the terrors and flatteries of this world; and, in a word, whenever we are call'd upon to follow so great and bright an example, to shew, so far as we are capable, the same resolution and constancy of mind, whether we are put to the tryal of enduring the cross, or of despising the shame. To return from these occasional, tho, I hope, not improper reflections; what has been said already, may serve to give us a general notion of the sufferings of Christ. But, in order to a more distinct explication of this branch of the article, I shall proceed a little farther upon these three enquiries.

I. Why our Saviour chose such a passive state and condition

of life.

II. How the divine nature, being personally united in him with the human, he could truly be said to suffer.

III. WHY

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III. WHY we here profess, in particular, to believe, that he suffered under *Pontius Pilate*.

I. THE resolution of the first enquiry, may be deduc'd from

these several considerations following.

It was necessary that Christ, to the end he might make a valuable atonement to God for the sins of men, and thereby reconcile sinners to him, should fulfil all righteousness; whereof the passive duties, in this present state, are a considerable, if not a more extensive part. He only that was, on all accounts, without sin, could be made sin for us, on any account, proper to appease

the wrath of an offended and Almighty God.

IT was necessary that Christ should have chosen a passive state of life, as he was design'd for the Christian pattern; and as the influence of his example hereby became of more general extent to all Christians. With this design, God gave him a body, as an excellent author observes, in a manner agreeable to that fine and noble spirit, which distinguishes him; tho' in terms too restrictive. The Word became sensible, only to render truth intelligible. became incarnate, to no other end, but to guide men to reason by their senses *. Without entring into a common place concerning the influence of great and good examples, I shall only cite another passage out of this author, and from the same chapter; where, in allusion to our Saviour's taking upon him human nature, and his appearing in a human body, he has these words, which may serve to give us a general idea of whatever has been, or can be said upon this subject. But this order, by which we ought to be govern'd, is a Form too abstracted to serve as a model for grosser spirits; I grant it: Let us then give it a body; let us make it sensible; let us cloath it in several dresses to render it agreeable to carnal men; let us, if I may so speak, incarnate it.

AGAIN, one design of Christ's sacrifice, was to represent to men the odious and detestable nature of sin; to shew, how repugnant it is to the holiness, and how provoking to the justice of God. This design was most visibly answer'd, by our Saviour's performing his sacrifice in the manner we have observ'd; and by his offering it up continually from the time of his birth, to that of his death. If a particular exception ought not to lie, on that extraordinary occasion of his being transfigur'd, when it was necessary towards fortifying his disciples against those impressions, which might be made on them, from the ignominious and painful circumstances preparatory to his death, and from the dangers which themselves might be afterwards expos'd to, and which he had foretold they

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^{*} Malb. Moral. Part 1. ch. 2.

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would be expos'd to; when it was so necessary, I say, upon these several accounts, that he should at that time have given them a sensible demonstration of his power hereaster of glorifying those bodies, which were subject to so many troubles and calamities here. This, the venerable Bede observes, was providentially design'd, that the disciples and followers of Christ, by contemplating that glory, which should never have an end, might more resolutely sustain the transient and momentary evils of this world *.

II. How the divine nature being personally united in Christ with

the human, he could truly be said to suffer.

It is the more necessary to make a right state of this question, because some have asserted, that, in consequence of such a union, it must be supposed the Godhead suffered. Others have argued, that if the divinity, to which the meritorious effects of Christ's sacrifice are attributed, did not suffer, it is difficult to apprehend, how it could properly contribute any thing towards the satisfaction

made by his sufferings, or the merit of them.

But we deny, in the first place, that the personal union of the two natures infers any necessity why Christ should have suffer'd inrespect to his divine nature. For they are united after such a manner, that they still retain, as we observ'd before, their proper cha-Though it was the same person racters, and distinct operations. therefore which suffer'd in the union of the divine and human nature; yet the passions and qualities of the human nature were not communicated to the divine, any more than the essential attributes of the divine nature to the human. And therefore the human nature being only capable of suffering, the divine altogether impaffible, tho' we attribute pain and forrow to Christ, as God and man in one person; yet we appropriate them to the human nature on-As in the union of that foul and body, which constitute the person of *Peter*, when we say he is tall or wise, we do not intend he is tall with respect to his mind, or wise in relation to his body; but as he is compos'd of two parts, what indifferently affects either of them, is properly apply'd to the whole person; whatever distinct and incommunicable properties those two parts may have leparately consider'd. I shall only take a hint from this distinction, towards obviating what is pretended, as to the present argument, by the Jews, from that passage in scripture, where it is faid, their fore-fathers crucify'd the Lord of glory: A character, which confessedly, in a more peculiar manner, belongs to the divine nature. It is sufficient to reply, that the Lord of glory was

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^{*} Pià provisione factum est, ut contemplatione semper manentis gaudii, ad breve tempus delibata sortius adversa tolerarent.

faid to be crucify'd, not as Lord of glory, or in respect to his divine nature, distinctly consider'd; but to the personal union of the two natures in him, by reason of which he was truly the Lord of glory, and styl'd so, tho' he could only suffer in his human nature.

To the other branch of the former objection, we answer, tho Christ, as God, could not suffer; yet the union of the divine nature with the human in the person of Christ, might give a value and merit to his sufferings, which on no other account could He who suffer'd was God and man, tho' be given to them. he suffer'd only as man. There is no more difficulty in conceiving how this may be, than how the Holy Spirit of God is present in some persons by the more special communications of his grace, than in other persons, without changing their nature, or rendring them impeccable. If we suppose the most intimate union possible between the Spirit of God, and the foul of man; tho' such a union must be allow'd to give a greater dignity to the person of such a man; yet the Holy Spirit will still leave him with all those distinct qualities and passions, which are proper to him as a man, without losing any thing of his own essential perfections. all which, we conclude, that as the Son of God, that is, the perfon who was the Son of God, might suffer, tho' he could not suffer in his divine nature; so by virtue of the personal union of his human nature with the divine, what he suffer'd as man, might have the merit properly ascrib'd to him, both as God and man; tho' the Godhead could not suffer. In this sense God is said to have purchas'd the church with his own blood *. A manner of expression, which cannot otherways be accounted for, but upon this principle; that the distinct characters and actions of the two natures of Christ, are indifferently ascrib'd to him as one person.

If this point need any farther illustration, it may be consider'd, that such actions and passions as are peculiar to the body, are yet attributed to the soul; and reciprocally the operations of the soul to the body. Thus a human soul is represented as touching an unclean thing, God is said to pour out his spirit upon all sless; and all sless to have corrupted its way. Tho', if the soul and body were supposed in a separate state, nothing could be more irrational than to say, that a soul touches, or that a body is capable, in a moral sense, of having any communication with the Spirit of God, or even of corrupting its own way. But as these two substances are personally united, and for that reason only, these and the like expressions have nothing inconsistent or improper in them.

* Als 20, 28.

III. WHY

III. WHY we profess, in particular, to believe, in saying, that

Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate.

By the sufferings of Christ, as referr'd to this mark of time, we are properly to understand those, which immediately preceded, or occasion'd his death. And that being one of the most considerable events relating to him, wherein we are interested, and to which our redemption is, in a more eminent and special manner, ascrib'd, it became necessary that the time of it should be more particularly ascertain'd. This time happen'd when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judæa, and it was very providentially appointed by

God, that it should happen at that time. For,

1. THE benefits of Christ's passion being design'd to extend to all mankind, and not to the Jews only, it was highly agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of God, that the history of it should be attested in the most publick and authentick manner. What could have been contriv'd more proper to this end, than that Christ, who was to suffer at Jerusalem, on account of his more immediate mission to the house of Israel, and a peculiar relation indeed which he had to that people, yet should suffer under a Roman governor; who was to give an account of the most remarkable events that might happen, during his administration, to the senate at Rome, at that time the mistress of all other cities, and the seat of Em-By this means, all men had a fair opportunity of examining the evidence of a fact, which it concern'd every man to know the truth and certainty of. For it was not only done in the most open and publick manner, but committed to the publick records of the Empire; which, it is very probable, were extant in the time of Tertullian. If they were not then extant, as he might eafily have been expos'd for afferting what was false in fact; so his enemies, no doubt, would have improv'd so favourable an advantage to his prejudice and discredit *.

2. THE sufferings of Christ under Pontius Pilate discover'd, that the scepter, according to the prophecy of Jacob, was at that time departed from Judah; the Jews having then no power of capital punishment, one of the sovereign and distinguishing rights of ci-

vil government †.

3. THERE was a considerable incident; and which might not have happen'd under any other judge, that render'd the innocence of *Christ*, by his suffering under *Pontius Pontius*, more clear and

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^{*} From these records, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that Tacitus, in his annals, might have transcrib'd the following passage. Austor nominis ejus Christus, qui Tiberio imperante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affestus est. Ann. lib. 13. † John 18. 31.

conspicuous. For this same judge declar'd he found, upon examination, no fault in him; and was farther confirm'd in his opinion of him, as innocent of the crimes laid to his charge, on occasion of a special message from his wife, who desir'd, in regard to a dream, wherewith she had been, after an extraordinary manner, affected, that he would have nothing to do with that just man. And tho' afterwards he did * condemn him; he did it, and visibly indeed appear'd to do it, rather to gratify the importunity of the Jews, than from any conviction in his own mind of what he ought to have done. Or perhaps he acted herein against his real judgment to prevent any infinuations which his enemies might take the advantage of, to render him suspected to his master at Rome; as if he had been wanting in a cause of treason, wherein his imperial majesty's honour, dignity, and interests, might have appear'd to be concern'd. But what had Tiberius to fear from the competition of a Prince, who renounc'd all secular power and dominion: A claim to a kingdom purely spiritual, so foreign to his views and designs, and which he had never, perhaps, heard or thought of before, could not be suppos'd to give him any great umbrage or uneasiness.

But what I would principally observe, is the wise disposition of providence, in appointing a Roman governor, upon our Saviour's arraignment, to be his judge. For had the power of judging him, by any shew of their own proper authority, remain'd among the Jews, who knows what crimes they would have charg'd him with, or upon what pretended evidence; the falshood or collusion whereof, it might have been otherways extremely difficult, if not impossible for his disciples and followers to have fully de-

tected.

^{*} It has been farther observ'd, as a special act of divine providence, with respect to the sufferings of Christ under Pontius Pilate; that, notwithstanding he had not by the nature of his office the power of life or death; this being in the governor of Syria, to whom he was subordinate; yet he was left with full authority by that governor, in capital cases; which was here the same thing, as to all the ends and purposes of his acting, as if he had really acted by his own proper authority.

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CHAP. II.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucify'd.

O the end the sufferings of Christ, which more immediately preceded his death, might be better ascertain'd, it was thought fit by the compilers of the creed to mention the particular time of them, with respect to the civil magistrate under whom he suffer'd. But there being an extraordinary circumstance relating to the manner of his sufferings, it was no less proper to the same end, that this too should be specify'd, and is accordingly here specify'd in our professing, that under Pontius Pilate Christ was crucify'd. And it might indeed have been mention'd, under the former head, as an additional argument of God's over-ruling providence, in the sufferings of Christ under that govenor, that Christ was to suffer after this manner; for it being foretold, that he should so suffer *, and crucifixion being a Roman punishment, and not at that time in use among the Jews, had they been left to their own method of putting our Saviour to death, this circumstance of his sufferings, previous to it, might not, it is probable, have corresponded with the prediction. Now tho' a power in the Jews, at that time of stoning malefactors, has been contended for by some learned men; yet they acknowledge a power of crucifying, a manner of putting malefactors to death, in particular remarkable for the cruelty and ignominy of it, was out of their Whatever judicial authority they still retain'd, or exercis'd, with respect to delinquents, as to other kinds of punishment; yet as to this kind, it must be allowed, that, according to their own confession, it was not lawful for them to put any one to death t. Some have thought, indeed, that when Pilate refers them to judge Christ according to their own law, he is to be understood as speaking ironically, by way of insulting them for the loss of that judicial power and anthority, wherewith, as a fovereign people, they were before invested. But others have been of opinion, that they had still a power, especially in cases which were nor capital, and even in some which were capital, of inflicting punishment. Upon

^{*} Zach. 12. 10. Pfal. 22. 17. Deut. 21. 23. To which may be added the typical representations of the wood, upon which Abraham prepar'd to a crifice Isaac. Of the brazen serpent, John 3. 14. And of the paschal lamb, Exod. 12. 46. † John 18. 31, 32.

any of the foregoing suppositions, it appears, that the scepter was then either wholly, or in great measure departed from Judah.

Ir we descend to assign the more particular reasons, why our

blessed Saviour suffer'd upon the cross; it may be said,

1. THAT in suffering this kind of punishment, he gave us the greatest example of fortitude and a patient submission to the will of God; and which was proper to animate us, not only against the fear of death in general, but of death under the most formidable and ignominious circumstances. It is in regard to the force of this example, that the apostle exhorts us to persevere with patience and resolution in all the duties of the christian life; directing us to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endur'd the cross, despising the Shame *.

2. If the sufferings of Christ were, as such, a meritorious cause of our redemption, we have still a stronger assurance of the merit and efficacy of them to that end, from his suffering after a manner, which was, at once, most insupportable to sense, and most shameful, according to the common notion men had every where of it. As in both respects it was a cursed death, it was most proper to denote, how Christ was made a curse for us †. was so reputed by the Jews, who, if any malefactors among them suffer'd another kind of death, were to be buried; whereas burial was not permitted to those, who had been crucify'd. pears both from a passage in the prophet Jeremy ‡, and one in Josephus **, that the Jews apprehended nothing more infamous or terrible, than the want of burial.

IF it be question'd, why this kind of death is reputed so very execrable, the answer is obvious, with respect to the nature of it, consider'd as a most cruel and painful death; but as to the general opinion ††, which obtain'd concerning it, as a most infamous death, we must seek, perhaps, for a reason, not so much in the nature of it, as in the fignification, which, on one account or other, had been by some common agreement appropriated to it: Which (tho' it is not necessary, nor possible, in all cases, to discover the origin of common opinion) might, perhaps arise from hence, that he who was condemn'd to the punishment of the cross, was expos'd

[†] Dout. 21. 22. ‡ For. 16. 4. * Heb. I2. 2. ** To which Bochart refers for the following observation. Sepultura carere apud Judeos babita est summa calamitas ; & com negare summa crudelitas.

^{††} Mortem hanc Homerus, Odyss. 10. (item Ph.) vocat μη καθαρου (impuram) & Eufathius μιαρου (fædam.) Crax erat servile supplicium, & mors turpissima dicitur. Tum, Sap. 2. 20. Tum in catalestis Virgilianis, in Seneca stipes infamis, Epist. 101. & à Livio, l. 14. Lignum infælix. Pol. E. Boch.

to a more open and publick, to which I may add, permanent view, or was thereby represented as deserving to be farther remov'd, than ordinary malefactors, from any * communication with the rest of mankind.

3. Upon all these accounts, Christ, in suffering the punishment of the cross, gave us the most sensible demonstration of God's hatred to sin. If when he appear'd in the person of a sinner, and in order to be a sacrifice for sin, no punishment was thought sufficient to appease the wrath of a just and avenging God, but, of all others, the most cruel, and the most shameful that could be inslicted; what hopes can there be to us of escaping the severest effects of divine justice, who have already so often, and so highly offended against it? If God spared not his own son, consider'd in the circumstances of a sinner, but suffer'd him to be cut off after so painful and ignominious a manner, what apprehensions of terror ought we not to be under, if we do not sincerely repent of our sins, and forsake them, lest be also spare not us?

THE apostle therefore improves this very consideration to shew, how necessary it is that we should mortify our sinful dispositions or habits, if we would really attain the ends for which Christ was crucify'd, or have any benefit by them: Who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, Should

live unto God.

YET we are not to attribute the pains which Christ suffer'd upon the cross wholly to his crucifixion; how cruel soever that kind of death was to them who suffer'd it. As those parts of the body, the hands and the feet, which are most nervous and sensible of pain, were pierc'd through with the nails that fastned them to the cros; yet not so as to occasion those violent convulsions, which might procure immediate death; for it was some time before they expir'd, under the agonies of them. Yet, it must be acknowledg'd, there were fundry kinds of death; which the primitive martyrs fuffer'd, consider'd in themselves, no less painful and terrible to human apprehension. We must seek, therefore, for some other cause of that inexpressible anguish our Saviour felt upon the cross, than barely from his suffering the death of the cross. should be granted, that not only the curious original formation, but the exquisite order and state of his body at that time, occafion'd by his leading a life perfectly innocent and regular, might have given him the greatest sense of pain, yet the principal rea-

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^{*} Ratio infamiæ hæc esse videtur. Quòd qui suspenditur ligno isto symbolo sublevationis in altum, quasi execrabilis mundo (& indignus qui terram pedibus premat) exturbetur & eliminetur. ibid.

fon, why no forrow was ever like unto his forrow, seems rather to have taken its rise from certain conslicts, which he felt more immediately in his mind, than from those he was only sensible of,

by occasion of his bodily sufferings.

In order to account for that horror, and those most grievous sensations, which he so visibly discover'd, even before his crucifixion; when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; when he sweat, as if it were drops of blood, and pray'd in such an earnest and vehement manner to God; Father, if it he possible, let this cup pass from me. And when afterwards his body was nail'd to the cross, he was under the agonies which occasion'd that passionate remonstrance to his Father; My God, my God! why hast thou sorsaken me? Some are of opinion, that the devil, at that time, collected all his force, in order to fill his mind with the most dismal terrifying scenes of horror, and, if that had been possible, of despair. And this opinion, indeed, appears to have some grounds in the words of our Saviour to his crucisiers, while he was upon the cross; This is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Others have thought (the both these opinions may very well consist) that the exquisite sense of pain, which our Lord selt both upon the cross, and in the garden, was occasion'd by the perfect and penetrating light, which then diffus'd itself in his mind, at once concerning the guilt and demerit of fin, and the wrath of an incens'd God: Of fin, for which he was at the instant atoneing; and of the divine wrath, to which he was then actually making an atonement. To which we may add, as a farther reason of his extraordinary anguish, a most sensible concern upon his soreseeing, that, notwithstanding both the merit and cruel manner of his death, it would not have the effect he design'd by it, on a great part of mankind; nay, that many who might believe in his name, would occasionally, by not complying with the terms, which alone could entitle them to the benefits of his death, thereby incur the greater damnation. This prospect, to one of so beneficent a disposition, of so great tenderness, humanity, and love to mankind, may very naturally be suppos'd to have excited in his mind, still a more pungent and sensible regret.

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CHAP. III.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucify'd, dead.

HO' the crucifixion of Christ did, in the design of it, and according to the common event of that kind of punishment in other cases, suppose the death of Christ; yet since his death was not necessarily consequent upon it; (for he might, as the Jews after so insulting a manner, call'd upon him to do, have come down from the cross, and sav'd himself) it was requisite, on this account, that his death should have been distinctly specify'd in the creed, and ought indeed, for several other reasons, to be consider'd under a separate head, from that of his crucifixion.

For the better explication of so important a point, and as our redemption is, in a more immediate and peculiar manner, attributed to the death of *Christ*, concerning which, we ought, for that reason, to have the most clear and explicit notions, whereof we are capable, I shall proceed according to the following me-

thod.

I. I shall shew, that as Christ, in fact, suffer'd the punishment of the cross; so, according to what we here farther profess, he did also, in a true and proper sense, die upon the cross.

II. I shall consider, how far, or in what respects the death of

Christ was necessary towards our redemption.

III. WHETHER his death were a proper sacrifice.

IV. WHETHER it was a sacrifice, whereby he may properly be said to have made satisfaction to the divine justice.

V. WHETHER the benefits of his death were design'd to be of

universal extent.

VI. WHAT were the effects of Christ's death, as having a more

immediate relation to his own person.

I. I am to shew, that as Christ, in fact, suffer'd the punishment of the cross; so, according to what we here profess, he did also, in a true and proper sense, die upon the cross. Concerning the truth of his death, we have all the evidence that any matter of fact is capable of.

DEATH consists in a dissolution of the principal parts, or organs of the body; so that neither they, nor any other less noble parts, in dependence on them, can any longer operate, or perform their respective functions. In consequence of which, according to the laws of union between the soul and the body, the soul can no longer inform the body, or maintain any communi-

cation

cation with it, or any part of it; but retires from it, and subsists somewhere; it is, in this place, of no importance to enquire

where, in a separate state.

That the pains which Christ suffer'd, were of an intenseness and force, sufficient to cause such a dissolution of the principal parts of his body, will not be disputed; whether we consider the manner of his death, or the extraordinary circumstances, which contributed to highten the pains of it; and which were, indeed, so great, that Pilate, who did not understand the true cause, marvell'd, that he was dead so soon. By which means, there providentially happen'd, an accomplishment of the prophecy, that a bone of him should not be broken; it appearing that he was dead, when they came to break the legs of the two malesactors, who were crucify'd with him.

They who wish'd and conspir'd his death, and were the instruments of procuring it, made no doubt of it; tho', for these reasons, there is all the probability in the world to suppose, they would take all requisite care possible to satisfy themselves, that he was truly dead; which this farther circumstance still remov'd all possible suspicion of, that the soldiers pierc'd his side, (tho' they did not break his legs) without the least appearance of life, or sensibility of pain in him. And tho' it may be justly inferr'd, in consequence of the natural laws of union between the soul and the body, that there was not only a cessation of the animal economy, but that his soul too was actually separated from his body; yet to give a farther consirmation to the truth of this point, it is said, that, having commended his spirit into the hands of his father, he

gave up the ghost *.

If Christ did not truly die, the end of his crucifixion had not been fully attain'd; for tho' we may consider this as one considerable part of his sacrifice; yet that which sinish'd it, that which answer'd the types concerning him, particularly that of the Passover, in conformity to which, the apostle says to the Corinthians, Christ, our Passover, is slain †. That which discover'd to us, the satisfaction due to the divine justice, and demanded by it, was paid; that, upon which the original institution, and continued observance of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, can be of any significancy, is, that Christ truly suffer'd death, or, in the prophetical language, was cut off out of the land of the living, and made his soul an offering for sin. Accordingly, to shew that Christ did suffer death, not in a fictitious or metaphorical, but in a true sense, the efficacy of his death, as the meritorious cause of our re-

^{*} Luke 23. 46.

demption, is so frequently insisted upon in the holy scriptures. I shall only cite two passages (referring to others in the margin *) out of the epistle to the Romans on this occasion, where St. Paul tells them; When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son †. And afterwards; that, To this end, Christ both dy'd, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord of the dead and the living ‡.

II. I am to consider how far, or in what respects Christ's death was necessary to our redemption. I do not here enquire, whether God, in his infinite wisdom, might not possibly have found out fome other method of redeeming mankind; or, whether he might not, by right of his sovereign prerogative, have pardon'd the fins of men, and remitted the punishment due to them, without any previous condition or means to that end? No, the necessity, which I here intend, was not absolute antecedently in the nature of it, but only in consequence of the will and determinate counsel of God to save men by this method, and of the several predictions contain'd in the holy scriptures to that end. will and determinate counsel of God was also, in the natural order of our ideas, consequential to God's foresight, that men left to their liberty, (and so far he might justly determine to leave them) would, at the time foretold, crucify and kill the Lord of glory; except we were to suppose, that God, in order to accomplish his designs, would put men, who were to be his instruments towards the accomplishment of them, under a necessity of sinning; from whence one argument may be drawn, why our blessed Saviour could not, confistently with his defign of coming into the world, to be a sacrifice for sin, and to die for us, have appeard in it to that end, either sooner or later. For it being necessary, as he was also to discharge the office of a prophet, that he should instruct mankind, not only by his example, but his precepts, and give the most full and unquestionable attestation of that character, by his working of miracles: It is probable, that in no other age, nor among any other people, but that of the Jews, when the measure of their iniquity seem'd to be fill'd up, there could have been found any persons so abandon'd to all sense both of gratitude and goodness, as to conspire and procure the death of one, who had approv'd himself among them, by the most unblameable life, and edifying conversation; by so many signs, and wonders, and miracles; wherein the effects of his power, and of his love to mankind, were all along equally conspicuous.

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^{*} Col. 1. 21. Heb. 2. 4. Phil. 2. 8, 9. Rom. 5. 8. + Rom. 5. 10. ‡ Ch. 14. 9.

THE difficulty lies in reconciling the necessity, on any supposition of Christ's dying for us, with the liberty of human will. For if men, which this liberty supposes they might not, had not, in fact, by their abuse of it, put Christ to death, then it was possible that the decree of God, and all the predictions in scripture concerning his death, might have been frustrated. Or if God certainly foresaw they would chuse the worse part, then their choice of it, which is said to argue an inconsistency in the nature of the thing, would, notwithstanding their supposed liberty, have been absolutely necessary.

Some have thought, there is no method of accounting for God's certain fore-knowledge of future events depending on the free determination of human will, and therefore have deny'd that they can be certainly foreknown. They farther object, that this is no more an argument to prove, that the knowledge of God is not therefore infinite; than it proves, that he is not omnipotent, because there may be some things suppos'd, which are not possible objects of power. Why then should it be thought any defect in his knowledge, if the object about which it is pretended to be conversant, be, in the nature of it, impossible to

be known?

But this way of arguing cannot, in the first place, be just; because it lies against a known and acknowledged fact, God having, by his fore-knowledge of them, absolutely foretold several events, which, at the time determined, accordingly came to pass. Had he foretold only such things, as depended on the good use men might make of their liberty, this might easily be solved, from God's over-ruling their choice, by such a strong impulse of his grace, as would certainly over-balance that of their own corrupt inclinations. But when sinful actions, committed with the most heinous and aggravating circumstances, are foretold, as they frequently are in the holy scriptures, there the prediction of them can only be resolved into the certainty of God's fore-knowing what way men would take, when left to the free exercise of their own liberty.

As to what is said concerning the omnipotence of God, to shew, that suture contingences are not possible objects of knowledge, or that no defect is imply'd in the divine knowledge, from God's being ignorant of them, we answer, that this illustration is not parallel or just. The reason why we say some things are not possible objects of the divine power, is, that it implies an express contradiction to suppose, that they should exist. But whatever difficulty there may be in conceiving, how God can certainly fore-know, what choice man, left to his liberty, will make; yet such a knowledge can-

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not, in the nature, or any necessary consequence of it, imply an impossibility; as it does, in direct terms, that the power of God should cause any thing to be, and not to be at the same time. If it should be said, indeed, that God may have a certain or determinate knowledge of an uncertain event, this, according to our natural way of conceiving things, would imply a plain inconsistency; as supposing the knowledge of what is not, or of no object. When we say therefore, God, by the plenitude of his knowledge, certainly fore-knows suture contingences, we intend that the event, as to him, who knows all the secret powers and springs of action, is certain; tho' it may depend, and, in that respect, is call'd contingent, antecedently on a free contingent cause. As our Saviour persectly foresaw Peter would deny him, knowing the disposition this apostle was in, and would continue in, tho' his denyal was an act of his own free choice.

OR it may be said, that certainty, or uncertainty, when apply'd to any event, does not absolutely relate to the nature of it, but only has respect, properly speaking, to the person who is said to be certain or uncertain concerning it. The certainty therefore, and the necessity of any event, may admit of a very distinct consideration. Necessity relates to the nature of things, absolutely consider'd; certainty, to the evidence of them, in relation to the person, to whose mind they are objected. In this latter case, it was evident to the mind of our Saviour, that Peter would deny him, tho' there was no antecedent necessity, in the reason of the thing,

why Peter should deny him.

THE ground of this distinction appears from hence, that the nature of things in themselves, absolutely consider'd, suffers no change from any accidental respect or denomination. For if there was an absolute previous cause of their existence, they are necesfary; if there was only a possibility of their existing, they are contingent; certainty then, and necessity, are two different things, and admit of very different confiderations; so that what is apply'd to one of them, cannot, without destroying the distinction of necessary and contingent, be apply'd to the other. What, in the nature of it, is necessary, admits of no change, on account of the different manner, according to which the mind apprehends it, but is equally necessary at all times. And yet the very same thing, according to the different light or evidence, wherein it appears to the minds of different persons, may be properly term'd certain, or uncertain, at the same time, and may indeed be so to the same person at several times. Nay, farther to shew the difference between the necessity and certainty of things, and that necessity respects the nature of them, absolutely consider'd, certainty,

the relation wherein they stand to the mind, even things necessary in their own nature, or depending on a series of natural causes. acting according to the establish'd order of things, may yet be uncertain, with respect to those who have only an indistinct, or less perfect knowledge of the manner how they shall come to pass. An eclipse, for instance of the sun or moon, will, at such a time, necessarily happen; at least, God, who does not design to interpose by a particular will, to prevent, in this case, the effects of a general law, foresees it will necessarily happen. Such an event, notwithstanding, may not only be call'd uncertain, in reference to those, who are not capable of making an exact calculation of the time when it should happen, but also to those, who being able to calculate the time exactly, yet cannot be certain of the event, because uncertain whether God, after all, may not possibly exert an over-ruling power to frustrate it. What seems therefore to perplex the minds of men upon this head, has been their confounding necessity and certainty, as if they convey'd the very same ideas to the mind, or indifferently imported the same thing: Whereas it appears that things are properly consider'd as certain, or uncertain, on account of the external relation they have to the understanding; as necessary or contingent, with respect to the nature of them, consider'd in themselves. Which occasions such a mighty difference, that things, in the nature of them necessary, may yet, in a proper sense, be term'd uncertain; as things, on the other hand, may be term'd certain, which are, in the nature of them, contingent, according to the different light wherein they appear to the mind.

It is not, then, a just way of arguing, that some things may be conceived impossible to the power of God; therefore other things, and, in particular, future contingencies, may, without supposing any thing injurious to the perfection of his nature, be thought impervious to his knowledge; because, when we speak of things as impossible to his power, we mean such things as are really so, and in no respect possible. But the pretence, upon which it is deny'd, that God can know future contingencies, is obviated, by our considering what is objected to the divine knowledge, in different respects. In one of which, as certainty is apply'd to the nature of things, absolutely consider d; we grant it impossible there should be a determinate knowledge of what, as to the event, is indeterminate. Yet it does not therefore follow, that such an event, tho', in the nature of it, contingent, (and which may therefore happen) cannot be objected, in so full and clear a light to the divine intellect, as may render it certainly fore-known to God, that, all circumstances consider'd, it will happen.

THERE

THERE is no necessity, then, of having recourse here to a solution, which some divines have thought necessary, that God decrees all future events depending on human will, and in his decree, foresees them. For, besides that prescience may consist with the freedom of human will, upon the principles already laid down, this principle renders the divine oconomy, by too evident and obvious a consequence, chargeable with the sins of men; as it supposes his decree to be directly influential on their conduct, and prior, in order of time, to his knowledge of what they would do. Whereas his fore-knowledge of things, is only to be consider'd as an act of simple intelligence, which no more affects the thing he fore-knows will happen, than his after-knowledge affects what has already happen'd; but rather supposes, in the order of our ideas, the good or ill use of human liberty, antecedent to his fore-Upon this hypothesis, the holiness of God is acquitknowledge. ted, whatever offences moral agents, his creatures, may perpetrate against him; as are his justice and goodness, in decreeing to punish them for such offences. But to say, that God antecedently decreed to over-rule the wills of men in such a manner, that they should invincibly sin against him, lest his decree might possibly, after all, not operate or be frustrated, is not only to make him the author of fin, but to represent him as laying a scheme for the punishment of sinners, which can no more be reconcil'd with the clearest ideas we have of his justice and goodness, than to say, he is the author of sin, can consist with his attribute of holiness. the two errors, it were perhaps less injurious to the honour of God, to affert the nature of human liberty to be such, that he cannot certainly fore-know what way men will take, than to resolve his fore-knowledge of it into such principles, as directly tend to destroy the perfections of his own nature; and, I may add, by putting men under a necessity of sinning, to destroy the very nature and grounds of all moral or religious actions.

It was therefore a true notion of Origen, and agreeable to the sentiments, if I mistake not, of all the fathers before and after him, till the time of St. Austin, who, in the heat of dispute with Pelagius, advanc'd many things inconsistent with his own former principles, that God's fore-knowledge of things suture, was not the cause of their existing; but their suture existence the cause of his fore-knowing them *. Fore-knowledge, indeed, is a relative term, and does not so much create, as suppose the object of it. And therefore an eminent satalist † is cited by his learned adversary ‡,

^{*} Ου τ΄ ωροέγνωσιν αιτίαν τ΄ γενομένων, τὸ τ΄ ἐσόμενον αιτίον, &c. Orig. Philoc. † Bramh. p. 665.

as ingenuously confessing, that it cannot be truly said the fore-knowledge of God is the cause of any thing. The reason whereof follows, and is the same, in other words, with that I have here assign'd. Fore-knowledge is knowledge; and knowledge depends on

the existence of things known, and not they on it.

In short, tho' God perfectly foresees all things suture, tho' of a contingent nature, he foresees them as contingent. Free actions are represented to his mind, as done freely; and necessary actions, as slowing from a necessary cause. Which notion of his prescience, instead of destroying it, as inconsistent with human liberty, directly tends to confirm and establish the consistency of prescience and human liberty. And there is no more difficulty, indeed, in conceiving how God should fore-know what will happen, without any influx or causality, on his part, upon the event, than how, without any such influx or causality, he should know, in the sequel, what has happen'd.

I shall but mention one other way of reconciling the certainty of God's prescience with human liberty, and that is upon a supposition, that God may suspend, in certain cases, the acts of his knowledge, as he does continually those of his power. For if it be no diminusion to his attribute of omnipotence, that he does not exert his power to the utmost force of it at all times, or do all things that he can possibly do, they think it no more tends to the injury of his omniscience to say, that he does not know all things, which yet, if he pleas'd to represent them to his own mind, he

might know.

But, in the first place, this argument is only advanc'd to obviate a consequence in relation to the influx, which the fore-knowledge of God may be suppos'd to have upon the event. Which consequence, it appears from what has been said, there is no necessity of admitting; and, for this reason, the argument it-self is unnecessary; neither is it just or pertinent, with respect to the manner wherein it is propos'd. The omniscience of God importing his actual knowledge of all things, his omnipotence extending to such things, which as yet are not actually the subjects of it, nor ever, perhaps, may have an actual existence: There cannot then, on occasion of this difference in the terms, be any true or parallel consequences drawn to the purpose here design'd, from a comparison of them.

I have infisted the longer upon this point, to shew, that as the death of Christ was necessary, in order to the accomplishment of those prophecies, whereby it was declar'd, that he should be put to death; so the sins of those, by whose wicked hands he was crucify'd and slain, are not chargeable, on any antecedent decree of

God over-ruling them, to commit so horrid a crime; tho' God foresaw, that, if left to themselves, and so far, I have observ'd, he might justly determine to leave them, they would commit it.

2. It was necessary that Christ should suffer, not only in consequence of the predictions in the holy scriptures to this end, but because it was necessary, in the nature of the thing, and antecedently to those predictions, or without any regard to them, that some valuable atonement for sin should be made to an offended God, before he could, consistently with the regard owing both to his holiness and majesty, admit sinners to any terms of pardon or reconciliation. Wise and good princes do sometimes, indeed, publish acts of grace and indemnity to their delinquent subjects, but are always careful to do it in such a manner, as may neither give any future encouragement to their misconduct or defection, nor lessen their own dignity; and therefore generally, at least, make one or other of them, who are most obnoxious, a sacrifice, and example of publick justice. The reason why God would not let the sinner go free, without some acknowledgment of the guilt and demerit of sin, (and none was so capable of making any acknowledgment suitable to his divine majesty, as his own Son, by becoming a sacrifice for sin) will appear afterwards. A question arises, by the way, which I shall take an occasion, in a few words, of speaking to; Whether the death of Christ was absolutely necessary, in the nature of it, to reconcile sinners to God, or only a wise method, appointed by the arbitrary will of God, to that end? It is pleaded for the necessity of it; that God is just, and that justice consists in rendring to every one his due. Punishment therefore, in the natural order of things, being due to sinners; it is necessary that God should punish them, if not in their own persons, yet in the person of him, who is willing to take the punishment due to them, upon himself. And death being the proper wages of sin, it is no less necessary that he should die, than that he should suffer, on any other account, in the finner's stead; especially if such a one can be found, who has power over his own life; for then no injury is done either to himself, to the rights of society, or the sovereign power of God; in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.

This notion of punitive justice, said to be founded in the natural reason of the thing, is, in the opinion of those who contend for it, supported by several authorities in the holy scriptures; particularly where it is said, * God will by no means clear

the guilty; and it is just with God, that they who do such things

(things finful and offensive to him) are worthy of death.

THEY argue farther for the necessity of a punitive justice in God, from his attribute of holiness: Which renders all sin, and all the workers of iniquity hateful to him. And hatred is a powerful motive, especially where it is strong, natural, and frequently provok'd, to punishment, and where the effects of it will discover themselves after a manner agreeable to the strict rules of justice. Now it is agreed on both sides, that God, as he hates sin, may also justly punish it. And what still gives the sinner greater reason to expect that he will punish, another passion, in the nature of it highly provoking, is by occasion of sin attributed to him, and asfign'd as the reason of his punishing; I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity *. He is a holy God, he is a jealous God, and therefore will not forgive transgression and sin +. But the force and natural effects of this passion, are no where more fully or elegantly describ'd, than by Nahum the Elkoshite; God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; - He will not at all acquit the wicked ‡.

For these reasons, some pious and learned men have been of opinion, that God punishes sin by a necessity of nature; and that he cannot, without acting contrary to his essential perfections, let the sinner go free. And that it was therefore absolutely necessary, in order to the redemption of mankind, that Christ should suffer, by taking the punishment due to them as sinners, upon himself; except some other method could have been contrived proper to appease God's justice, whether considered in its own nature, in relation to his holiness, or as instigated, in both respects, by his hatred

and jealousy against sin.

On the other hand, some will have it, that, in consequence of God's design to redeem mankind, the death of Christ was necessary, not in strict justice, but as it was the wisest method that could be propos'd or employ'd to the great ends that God had in redeeming them; which were to make them more holy and obedient, and to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. For hereby God gave the most evident demonstration, that could possibly be given, at once of his hatred to sin, and his love to sinners, and of the danger, if they should still continue in their sins, of their suffering the miserable consequences of them. All these were designs worthy of the divine wisdom in the death of Christ: And which it is thought, without any regard to the justice of God, might be sufficient to vindicate the scheme of his grace, in

^{*} Exod. 20. 5. + Josh. 24. 19. † Nahum 1. 2, 3. giving

giving up *Christ* to die for us. It may not, however, be here improper to consider a little the force of those arguments, which have been offer'd, on the other side, for the necessity of a punitive justice in God, and whether they be really so strong, that no good

or fatisfactory answer can be given to them.

fection natural and effential to him; and that the sinner may be justly punish'd: But still this only proves, that when God punishes, he punishes justly; but not that justice obliges him to punish. A Prince is just in executing the law upon delinquents; yet it is no imputation on his justice, in certain cases, to remit the punishment due to them. Nay, where the ends of government, or reasons of common interest and safety, do not oblige him to punish such delinquents; if he be a good Prince, he will not, he ought not to punish them, merely for the sake of punishing, or in order to gratify an arbitrary revenge.

Justice then, however natural to God, if we may argue from the clearest notions of justice, when apply'd to men, does not necessarily require that he should punish, but only supposes that he may punish. For a thing may be term'd natural, on two accounts; either with respect to the constant, uniform, and necessary operation of it; in which sense, it is natural for fire to burn; or as it is agreeable to the nature of its subject; according to which sense, it is natural for a man to laugh, to eat, drink, or sleep. All which actions may, notwithstanding, without destroy-

ing human nature, be omitted, on many occasions.

In the former respect, punitive justice does not appear natural to God, because he must then necessarily punish the sinner, and, at all times, so soon as he deserves punishment. In the latter respect, punitive justice, we say, is natural to God; as in punishing, he does what is highly agreeable to his nature; what is strictly just; but as to which, nevertheless, he was perfectly free, if we consider what is done properly as to the subject matter of justice, either to act, or not to act. Thus omnipotence is an essential perfection of God; but it is not therefore necessary, that he should actually exert it at all times, or perhaps to the utmost extent at any time; but only that when he does exert it, nothing can be conceived capable of opposing his action.

We must distinguish therefore between the attributes of God, which denote the immanent and internal perfections of his nature; and such as have reference to his operating externally; of which kind are his justice and mercy, the several acts whereof, he may either exert or sorbear at pleasure. Tho when he does act in re-

lation

lation to either of them, his action must always bear the character of the attribute from which it flows.

In consequence of this distinction, it is question'd, why the justice of God should be more essential to him than his mercy, in the respective operations of them. For mercy is allow'd to be one of his attributes; and if he be naturally merciful, and always oblig'd to act according to the tenour or motion of these two attributes, he will have two natural, and, if the contrary opinion hold true, necessary motions continually opposing one another; one which inclines him to punish a sinner, the other to pardon him. The consequence of which competition between these two attributes would be, that he could neither punish, nor pardon.

THERE seems to be no other way of removing this difficulty, but by saying, tho' both these attributes eminently belong to the divine nature; yet as to their external operations, they are not necessary, but entirely under the direction of the divine will. As to what was argued from the holiness of God, from his hatred and jealously, on occasion of the sins of men, it discovers, indeed, that sin is, in the nature of it, highly provoking to God; but it is an argument of a great and generous mind, rather to pardon a provocation, than to revenge it; especially where reasons of safety or prudence do not require it should be reveng'd.

Upon this principle then, to conclude what I have to say in relation to it, tho' Christ was punish'd for the sins of men, and after a manner which satisfy'd the full demands of divine justice; tho' it behoved him, in order to preserve the honour and authority of the laws of God, and for other wise ends of providence and grace, thus to suffer; yet, in the opinion of those, I have here endeavour'd to represent the sense of, justice, simply consider'd in itself,

did not absolutely require, that he should suffer.

III. WHETHER the death of Christ was a proper sacrifice.

Since no sinner can expiate for his own crimes, the notion of an expiatory sacrifice must consist, and was well known to the Jews to consist herein, that the sin of one or more persons is transferr'd upon the head of the party suffering; or if a beast suffer, upon his head; not ultimately, for it is impossible, as the apostle argues, that the blood of bulls, or of goats, should take away sin; but in regard to the sacrifice typically represented by it. This transferring of punishment was express'd by many different phrases in scripture, but which all, in effect, import the same thing. The sacrifice was call'd the sin-offering, the atonement, that whereby reconciliation was made; it was said to be for sin, instead of sin, to bear sin, that whereon iniquity was laid. All these sacrificatory expressions are repeated and us'd in the New Testament. From whence we

may certainly conclude, however the Socinians may endeavour to elude the natural force of them, that the death of Christ imply'd something more, than that he was to be an example of patience, or than a condition of his being glorify'd, in order to give confirmation to the truth and divinity of his doctrine. For they plainly import, that he suffer'd, in the strictest sense, for us; that by virtue, and in consideration of his sufferings, and his becoming obedient unto death, we are reconcil'd to God, who will no longer impute those trespasses, for which he suffer'd, and dy'd, to us. There can be no arguing from the most natural, obvious, and receiv'd signification of words, if it may not be certainly inferr'd from these expressions, that Christ, in dying for us, was a facrifice, in the most strict, and proper sense of the word.

THERE was this peculiar to the sacrifice of Christ, and herein one of his mediatorial offices chiefly consisted, that he was also our Priest; He offer'd himself, as our sacrifice, without spot to God*. He made his soul an offering for sin \(\tau\). He reconcil d us in the body of his slesh, through death \(\tau\). For every High Priest taken from among men, is ordain'd for men in things pertaining to God, that he

may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins **.

THERE was something no less peculiar in his qualifications for this office. He needed not, being perfectly innocent, to offer, as other High Priests, first for himself. The dignity of his person gave also a value to his atonement. We could no more have been redeem'd by the blood of a finful man, than by the blood of bulls, or of goats, or of any corruptible things, as of silver and gold; but only by the blood of one, who had not render'd himself obnoxious to the justice or displeasure of God, by any crime or de-This qualification could only be found in the merit of his own. person of Jesus Christ; by whose precious blood we were therefore redeem'd, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot #. And therefore when other facrifices and offerings God would not, as ineffectual of themselves to the great end for which sacrifice was instituted, then did Christ propose to offer up himself for us men, and for our salvation. Then, said he, lo I come to do thy will, O God ##.

IV. WHETHER the death of Christ was a sacrifice, whereby he might properly be said to have made satisfaction to the divine justice. In order to resolve this point after a more clear and distinct manner, it will be requisite that we should first consider the true

import

import of the word satisfaction, and then apply the proper notion of it to the sufferings of Christ.

SATISFACTION, as referring to the death of *Christ*, is a word that no where occurs in the holy scriptures; and being capable of different senses, some have contended against the use of it, as to this fundamental point, lest it might be the occasion of misleading

men into any false or dangerous notions concerning it.

But there is no such inconvenience in using the term satisfaction, when we explain our sense of it, and what all orthodox writers have understood by it, as these men seem to be apprehensive of. If we go to the most natural and obvious sense of the word, it imports something done, upon a just demand of any person, sufficient, or accepted by him as sufficient, to the end for which it is done. In order therefore to apply it to the sacrifice of Christ, we are only to consider, whether the end propos'd was not, in all re-

spects, attain'd by his sacrifice.

The end of Christ in dying for us, was to reconcile us to his Father, by making an atonement for the guilt of those sins, wherewith we stood personally charg'd. By this atonement, the full demands of God's justice were answer'd; who requir'd, that before he would admit finners to any terms of pardon, some valuable acknowledgment of their crimes should be made to his offended majesty. And since we could not in our own persons make any fuch acknowledgment, it was to be made in his facred person, as our surety, and to be accepted by God to all intents and purposes; as if we had really been capable of making it in our own persons. To this end, Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. God gave him a body, that he might perform all the actions proper to it, particularly, by shedding of blood, without which, by the divine appointment, there could be no remission. He gave him, moreover, a soul, a human foul, to be an offering for sin; and to render the actions both of his foul and body of greater value; he united the human nature in one person with the divine, which gave a dignity to his sufferings above what any other union, or any other scheme of grace could have given. This person was to bear our iniquities; to lay down his life a ransom for us; to suffer for us in the slesh; to redeem us; to bear our sins in his own body; to suffer for our sins, the just for the unjust; that he might bring us to God.

All these expressions plainly denote, tho' we have not the word satisfaction in scripture, yet what we intend by it, namely, that the sufferings of Christ in our stead were design'd in full payment of all the demands which the justice of God had upon sinners; and that God, in consideration of it, was pleas'd to remit the debt,

debt, they had personally incurr'd, not imputing their trespasses to them. But, lest we might still be under any misgiving apprehensions, that God was not satisfy'd with this kind of payment, he has expressly declar'd his satisfaction to this end. We are assur'd by the Holy Spirit of God, that we have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the remission of sins; that we are reconciled to the Father by his cross, and in the body of his sless, through death; that he hath born our sins in his own body; and, by his own blood entring once into the holy of holies, hath obtain'd eternal redem-

ption for us.

According to our common notion of satisfying the demands of any person upon us, or upon any friend undertaking for us, what expressions could have been more proper to denote that plenary satisfaction which was made to the justice of God by the death of Christ? And tho' we do not say, that justice absolutely requir'd, or antecedently to the will of God, that Christ should suffer for the fins of men; yet when God had determin'd, as justly he might do, upon this way of having an atonement made to his justice, it was properly a satisfaction to his justice, as if, in strictness of juctice, he had absolutely requir'd it. The greatest dissiculty, in relation to the word, as apply'd to the sacrifice of Christ, seems to lie here, that free and plenary satisfaction for a debt, imports, that there can be no farther demand upon the debtor. If Christ then hath fully satisfy'd for the sins of men, how can it consist with the justice of God, that sinners should still be punish'd, and that many of them shall be punish'd to all eternity.

To which it is answer'd, that it depending on the will of God, whether he would accept a vicarious punishment, he had power to prescribe what conditions he pleas'd towards entitling men to the benefits of it. When he might absolutely have refus'd to accept it, (for otherways, indeed, the redemption of mankind, on the part of God, had not been an act of grace, but of debt) he might certainly, at the same time, have propos'd such terms of accepting it, as himself thought sit; especially such as were, in the nature of them, reasonable, and apparently for the benefit of the party redeem'd; as all the evangelical stipulations confessedly are to the persons, for whose redemption, and in whose stead, the sufferings

of Christ were accepted.

If this answer do not satisfy, it may be said, that Christ, who, by his own free and proper choice, was the sponsor for mankind, might, as he saw cause, limit the benefits of his undertaking for them; provided it was still, upon the whole matter, really beneficial to them. It is sufficient to justify the term, satisfaction, that it was sully made to God, in the manner he was willing to accept

accept it; and in respect to all the ends, which he who volunta-

rily undertook for us, propos'd and intended by it.

Another question of affinity with this, is, whether Christ, by his death, could properly be said to merit for us? In a strict sense, if by merit we understand, that the sufferings of Christ were of that value, that God was oblig'd to accept them, as the condition of his pardoning the sins of men, without his consenting antecedently to accept them, there does not seem to be any such notion of merit in the holy scriptures, nor any foundation for it in reason. But if by merit we understand, that, in consequence of God's having agreed to accept the sacrifice of Christ in full satisfaction for what was justly due from the sinner, he did so accept it, then the sacrifice of Christ had all the merit in it, and in all the circumstances of it, which strictly entitled him to the promis'd reward.

V. WHETHER the benefits of Christ's death were design'd to be of universal extent? I shall first briefly consider how far it is a doctrine reasonable in itself to suppose the universal extent of Christ's death; and, secondly, what foundation this doctrine has in

scripture.

1. On supposition that Christ was to die to make reconciliation to God for the fins of men, it is reasonable to conclude from the nature of the thing, that the benefits of his death should extend to all men. As to the intrinsick value of it, both sides are agreed it was sufficient to this end. If then God limited the effects of it, this must have been done by virtue of some particular decree, or exception. But what could be the motive to such a limitation? The justice of God could not require it; for he might, with the safety of this attribute, equally have pardon'd the sins of all men, as the fins of any one man. Much less could his goodness require it; this being the great motive, so much celebrated in the scriptures, upon which he was induc'd to give his only begotten Son to die for us. And the more extensive the effects of his death were, they still tended the more to illustrate the glory of an attribute, which God, in his reveal'd will, so much delights to honour, Neither did the divine wisdom, so far as we can discover any thing concerning the measures of it, require that God should limit the benefits of Christ's death. For the Princes sometimes find it necesfary to make certain exceptions to their publick acts of grace; yet where their own, and the common safety will admit, the more general and comprehensive such acts are, the more they tend to advance both the Prince's honour and service, by recommending him to the greater love and esteem of his people. But the reasons of wisdom, with respect to the government of an Almighty and absolute power, are very different from those of a precarious, limited, and dependent power; and therefore, tho' God can never be induc'd to do any thing contrary to what he is inclin'd to do, through a defect of power; yet the greatest and the best of Princes are sometimes, upon that consideration, oblig'd in prudence to take measures repugnant to their most strong and natural inclinations to acts of clemency.

NEITHER could the holiness of God require him to limit the benefits of Christ's death, it being, in the design and proper influence of it, a most powerful motive to holiness, and every where

represented as such in the holy scriptures.

Now if neither the justice or goodness, the wisdom or holiness of God requir'd, that he should limit the benefits of Christ's death to a particular number of persons; but rather requir'd, if we may judge by the light afforded us, from our consulting these attributes, that he should not limit them; we have rational grounds to hope, were the scriptures silent as to this question, that he has not limited them; there being no other of his attributes, which we can suppose should be concern'd in the limitation of them. And as to his arbitrary decrees, whereby some persons have thought they might be limited, without any regard to his justice, his goodness, his wisdom, or holiness, as we suppose a God who possesses these attributes in the highest persection, incapable of acting by such arbitrary decrees, the doctrine sounded upon them, must necessarily stand upon the same precarious, or rather salse soundation with them.

2. But the authority of scripture is clear, as to this point, wherein it is said, that God would have all men to be sav'd; that Christ dy'd for all; even for those that perish; and that we may be the occasion of their perishing, for whom Christ dy'd. If these scriptures do not import the universality of Christ's death, with respect to the benefits of it, the scriptures can no longer be a rule of faith, nor any doctrine be establish'd from the most plain terms, or the clearest manner of expression in them. And tho' we grant there are other texts of scripture which speak of Christ as dying only for many, as giving his life a ransom for many, and shedding his blood for many, for the remission of sins; yet we say, that it is more proper to understand many, as including all, than to understand all, as excluding any. This, were we not otherways capable of answering what is objected, might be sufficient; but there is still another very reasonable solution, towards reconciling the words many and all, as oppos'd to one another. When we say, Christ dy'd for all, we speak of the proper design and intention of his death; when we say, he gave his life a ranfom for many,

we speak in regard to the special and proper effects consequent to his death.

VI. WHAT were the effects of Christ's death, as having a more

immediate relation to his own person?

DEATH consists in dissolving the organical construction of the body, and putting a period to those laws of communication, in virtue of which the soul and body of a man acted, or at least appear'd to act reciprocally upon one another. I shall add nothing to what has been already said concerning the verity of Christ's death; in either of these respects, considering him merely, or separately as man; but because the divine and human nature were personally united in him, there arise two questions, when we consider him in the state of the dead, peculiarly relating to him, which it may not be improper for me to say something towards the resolution of.

- I. WHETHER the union of the two natures in Christ was dissolv'd by his death?
- 2. WHETHER, during the separation of his body and human soul, the divine nature was still united, in any peculiar manner, to his body.
- 1. The necessity of afferting, that the two natures of Christ did still continue united after his death, appears from hence; that Christ, the same Christ, could not then have been said to remain in the state of the dead; but only Christ with respect to his human Whereas it is affirm'd both in the holy scriptures, and in the creed, concerning the same individual person, that he was crucify'd, dead, and bury'd. And yet, on supposition that after his death the two natures were separated, he would not have been the same person, but two different persons; not one Christ, but two Christs. And so his character of a mediator between God and man, the character, founded in his being God and man in one person, would, for the space at least of his lying in the grave, have been of no efficacy or consideration. It may be farther argued against this notion; that when the divine and human nature were afterwards united, Christ had not re-assum'd human nature, but a human person. And so there would have been a confusion of two proper and distinct persons in one person; to avoid the inconvenience of supposing which, the fathers and schoolmen have agreed in afferting, that the Son of God did not originally take upon him a particular human person, which ever had any separate or distinct subsistence, but only that he assum'd human nature; or, as it is express'd in the Athanasian creed, took the manhood into God.

2. THE

ther, during the separation of Christ's body, and his human soul, the divine nature was still united, in any peculiar manner, to his body? For as to such a general union of the divine nature with the creatures, as continually supports and conserves them in being, there is nothing, in this respect, more peculiar to the second, than to the first person of the deity. And as to the relation, which the second person had to the dead body of Christ, as having once assument, upon which to found any special union between his dead body, and his divine nature, than between his dead body, and his divine nature, than between his dead body dissolv'd.

WHEREIN then could this union of the divine nature with his body, while he was in the state of the dead, properly consist. They who contend it could not be dissolv'd, do not tell us this; but fatisfy themselves with producing certain reasons, why it could not be dissolv'd; in particular, because the person who was bury'd, and rose again, could not have been the same person who had been dead. But this argument *, tho' urg'd by some of the fathers, does not appear altogether conclusive; it being wholly founded upon a popular, and less strict way of speaking; as appears at large from the words of the father referr'd to in the margin, and another passage, much to the same effect †, cited by the great schoolman. But it might, with equal reason, be inferr'd, that we ought not to fay Peter is dead, because the body and soul of Peter are really separated by death. Yet no one objects against this manner of expression (tho' equivocal) as impertinent, because every one understands well enough what it is intended to signify. Now the reason why we affirm the body and soul of Peter to be separated, is, that there is no farther communication between them, that the foul does no longer inform or act upon the body, nor the body occasion certain sensations in the soul. But can it be faid by those, against whom I argue, that the divinity of Christ, while his body lay in the grave, had any vital communication with it;

go Christus erat etiam sine anima caro, quia non est sepulta nisi caro. In Joh. tract. 48. + Sicut ante mortem caro Christi unita fuit secundum personam & hypostasin verbo Dei. Ita & remansit unita post mortem. Ut scilicet non esset alia hypostasis verbi Dei, & carnis Christi post mortem. Damasc. Orth. Fid. lib. 3. c. 17.

^{*}Yet it is insisted on by Bishop Pearson, p. 213. and, to confirm his own opinion, he cites the following passage from St. Augustin. Credimus certè non in solum Deum Patrem, sed & in Jesum Christum Filium ejus unicum Dominum nostrum. Modò totum dixi, in Jesum Christum Filium ejus unicum Dominum nostrum. Totum ibi intellige, & verbum, & animam, & carnem. Sed utique consiteris etiam illud, quod babet eadem sides, in eum Christum te credere qui crucisixus est & sepultus. Ergo etiam sepultum Christum esse non negas, & tamen sola caro sepulta est. Si enim erat ibi anima, non erat mortuus. Si autem vera mois erat, & ejus vera sit resurrectio, sine anima suerat in sepulchro, & tamen sepultus est Christus. Ergo Christus erat etiam sine anima caro, quia non est sepulta nisi caro. In Joh. tract. 48.

upon which a union, like that between a living soul and body, or indeed any other proper union, could be sounded? To which may be added, that supposing the divinity united after a special indissoluble manner to the slesh of Christ, it must have been united after a manner more powerful, with respect to all the sunctions of life, than that whereby a human soul is united to a human body. And if it be the union of the soul that prevents the death of the body, much more would the death of it be prevented by any special union of the divine nature. Except we were to suppose such a union of it, as has no manner of effect or operation; which, as to all the purposes of maintaining the personality of Christ, during the space between his death and his resurrection, appears to be a union of no consequence.

CHAP. IV.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucify'd, dead, and buried.

FIER the death of Christ, who condescended in all things, sin only excepted, to be made like unto his brethren, his body, according to the usual manner of other dead bodies, was deposited in the grave. There being no difficulty in conceiving what it is for a dead body to be bury'd, and we having all the evidence of Christ's sepulture, that any matter of fact is capable of, I shall only, towards our explication of this head, enquire for what particular reasons we here profess to believe, that Christ was bury'd.

1. We profess in the creed to believe, that Christ was bury'd, as his burial gave the stronger confirmation, at once, concerning the truth of his death, and of his having assum'd a true, proper, and substantial body. For a body, which was not truly dead as

fuch, could not be bury'd as fuch.

2. THE burial of Christ gave confirmation to the prophecies concerning it, and even in reference to two considerable circumstances of it. It was prophetically spoken of him by Isaiah, that he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich, in his death *. The former part of what is here foretold, has been interpreted to

receive its accomplishment on occasion of that guard of soldiers, who were charg'd by Pilate with keeping the body of our Saviour after it was bury'd. For the such an interpretation cannot be justify'd from the nature of the military profession, which is in itself honourable; yet it may be justify'd upon a reasonable supposition, that the soldiers, or any of them, who, after his interment, had the charge of his body, were the persons by whom he was so groffly revil'd and infulted before his death. The latter part of the prediction, that he should make his grave with the rich in his death, was accomplished by means of the care which was taken of his burial by Joseph of Arimathea *, a rich man, an honourable counsellor; and by Nicodemus +, still superior to him, a ruler of the Jews, a master of Israel, a member of the great council of the Sanhedrim. The former went boldly to Pilate, and befought him, that he might take away the body of Jesus. Pilate granted his request, and there being in the place where Jesus was crucify'd, a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein never man was laid, which Joseph had bewn out of the rock for his own tomb. There laid they Jesus, and roll'd a great stone to the door of the se-Nicodemus, on his part, came, and brought, by way of preparation for his interment, a mixture of myrrhe and aloes, about an hundred pound weight; to say nothing of the care taken by the women to inter him after the most respectful and honorary manner. This explication appears much more reasonable, than what some learned men have given; in particular, Calvin; which yet Bishop Pearson seems to favour ‡, that we are to understand the word grave, as metaphorically signifying Christ's death. So that when it is said, he made his grave with the wicked, it is principally intended that he was crucify'd between two malefactors. As when it is said, he made his grave with the rich, in his death; by the rich, which is, according to the original, in the singular number, they understand Pontius Pilate, the governor, by whom he was condemn'd to death. And they observe, that the same word which here fignifies rich, is by Solomon, in his book of Ecclesiastes **, expressly render'd governor. Tho' the time Jonah was in the belly of the whale, cannot properly be call'd a prediction of our Saviour's lying for the same space of time in the grave; yet as it prefigur'd his burial, as it was design'd by the Spirit of God to do so, and is accordingly apply'd in the New Testament to that end, it did as effectually suppose and require, that he

^{*} Mat. 27. 57. ** Ch. 10. 20.

⁺ John 3. 10.

[‡] P. 222.

should be bury'd, as any prediction of his burial in express terms.

3. It is necessary we should, in particular, profess our belief of Christ's burial, as it affords us a stronger proof of his resurrection. His being deposited in the grave, is an argument, that he was dead, in the opinion of those who buried him; and his lying three days in the grave, that he was really dead. Both which facts might have been question'd, if either he had not been buried, or had rose out of his grave immediately after his burial; and consequently we could not then have had, in the proper sense of it, that full evidence, which we now have, of his resurrection.



Of the CREED.

ARTICLE V.

He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead.

CHAP. I.

He descended into hell.

HE former part of this article relating to the descent of Christ into hell, was not recited by any writer before Russin, who found it in the symbol of his church at Aquileia. But as there was no word in that symbol, which denoted the burial of Christ; so these words might be interpreted only to signify, and accordingly Russin understood them, that Christ was bury'd. But since they were afterwards inserted in the Roman creed, as we now receive it, and in contradistinction to the burial of Christ, they must necessarily import some different object

•

object of our belief from that of his burial. Yet what the true ground was, upon which they were originally receiv'd by the church, and what the true and determinate sense of them is at present, admits of some dispute. The sense of our own church about them is still controverted. They were once, indeed, expressly interpreted * to signify the same with that famous passage of St. Peter +, where he speaks of the soul of Christ, as preaching to the spirits which were in prison ‡. According to this explication, the sense of the article was not only determin'd, but the sense of that difficult text in St. Peter, in reference to which, the former determination was grounded. Yet it was afterwards thought requisite to leave out an explication, supported only by a controverted text, and which there is some difficulty in determining the true sense of. It is evident, nevertheless, that this exposition of the article is not oppos'd by the church; because, in the version of the psalms, which she allows to be sung in her publick assemblies, this sense is still express'd and retain'd **. But it is one thing for the church to require our belief of any point, as a condition of communicating with her, or as a fettled article of faith, and another thing to allow the profession of what may be of some use to help our devotious, provided there be nothing in it that appears contrary to found doctrine.

By this moderation of the church, we are left more at liberty, without being wanting in the regard which we owe to her decisions, to examine the several senses, according to which the words may be explain'd; and whether this, which is only allow'd by the church as a pious, but not impos'd as the determinative sense, be

not, after all, the true and proper sense. And,

1. Tho' the original words, both in the Greek and Latin church, may be thought to import no more than the burial of Christ, or the descent of his body into the grave; yet they being now added, as supposing a distinct object of our belief, and not as an explication of what we immediately before profess'd to believe concerning Christ's burial, (which, in a summary of faith, would not only have been an improper repetition, but an expression much more obscure and perplex'd, than that which it is design'd to il-

** Vid. the creed fet forth in metre, at the end of the psalms allowed to be sung in churches.

Iustrate)

^{† 1} Pet. 3. 19.

† Nam corpus usque ad resurrectionem in sepulchro jacuit; spiritus ab illo emissus cum spiritibus qui in carcere, sive in inferno detinebantur suit; illisque prædicavit; ut testatur Petri locus, &c. Art. Ann. 1552. Which place was also, as Bishop Pearson farther observes, made use of in the exposition of the creed, contain'd in the catechism set forth by the authority of King Edward, in the seventh year of his reign.

** Vid. the creed set forth in metre, at the end of the results.

lustrate) for this reason, we cannot but think there is a necessity that we should seek for some other sense of the article.

OTHERS have thought, we are to explain our Saviour's descent into hell only in a figurative sense, as denoting his sufferings upon the cross, the infernal pains due to sinners. But this interpretation cannot be admitted for several reasons. First, because his sufferings on the cross necessarily preceded his death and burial, and ought therefore, in order of our confession, to have been mention'd before, and not after his death and burial. Secondly, because figurative expressions should be particularly avoided in a plain declaration of our faith, and where all the other expressions are literally to be understood. Thirdly, because this interpretation is grounded on a false notion; our Saviour could not suffer the pains of the damn'd, the pains more peculiar to them, arising from despair and remorse of conscience; and therefore did not suffer them.

Some have faid, that, by our Saviour's descent into hell, we are to understand the descent of his soul into the place of the dead; yet not strictly, by way of a local motion, but virtually, by making an extraordinary manifestation concerning the truth and effects of his death to some persons, who were to receive the benefits of it, as well as to others, who, by their fins and impenitence, had excluded themselves from all capacity of being sav'd by For what could be more agreable to the goodness of God, than (after the great work of our redemption was finish'd) that those, to whom the benefits of it were to extend, should have what was done in their favour, in some particular manner, communicated to them; or to his justice, that others should know the miserable state they had brought themselves into, and that now nothing remain'd for them, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment. Bur, besides that this exposition is too subtle and figurative, and should not, for that reason, be here admitted; the prophecy concerning Christ, that God would not leave his foul in hell, according to the sense of which, this part of the creed ought to be explain'd, as being founded principally upon it, cannot be understood of a mere virtual descent of Christ into hell (for in that respect he may still, and ever be said to descend into hell) and must therefore be understood, of his soul's local descent into it.

Is we understand the descent of Christ into hell, not in respect to his soul, but his body, it seems not to be an improbable interpretation of the words, in order to account for the reasons of making his burial, and his descent into hell, distinct articles; that his descent into hell, is only intended to denote the particular manner of his burial; or to shew, that he was not interr'd after 6 Q the

the custom of the Romans, in having his body consum'd, or reduc'd to ashes by fire; for in that sense the prophecy could not be suffill'd, that he should not see corruption; but his body was put whole and entire into the grave, to be rais'd to life again in the same form, wherein it was there deposited. A reasonable account at least is hereby given of the addition made in the article; which, tho' it should be interpreted as referring to his burial, yet implies no unnecessary or impertinent repetition; but rather tends to shew more distinctly the accomplishment of a remarkable prophecy concerning Christ, and to discover, at the same time, an over-ruling providence of God, towards the accomplishment of it; in preserving to the Jews their common rites of sepulture, tho' they were at that time under the government of the Romans.

The interpretation, if I mistake not, now most commonly receiv'd, is, that while our Saviour's body lay in the grave, his soul went into the place or habitation, wherever that may be, of departed spirits, and there continued till it was re-united to his body. According to which sense, the prophecy, thou shalt not leave my soul in hell, is thus explain'd; tho' my soul, during the space that my body will lie in the grave, is to go into the regions of the dead, or the proper place of separated spirits; yet it shall not, with other spirits, be detain'd there; but will, in the space of three days, return again, to be united to my body, and afterwards ascend into heaven with it. This interpretation is thought the more reasonable, as the Greeks by bades, which we render hell, commonly understood, not the grave, or a state of death, but the place appointed (tho' they differ'd much as to the situation of it) for the reception of separate spirits, after death.

YET it may not be improper to examine a little, whether the determinate sense in the article, as it was explain'd in the time of

Edward the fixth, was not, after all, the true sense.

I shall therefore first enquire, what foundation that sense may have, either in scripture, or the reason of the thing; and, secondly, what are the most material objections, that appear to lie

against it.

I. What foundation this sense, I mean, as supported by the authority of St. Peter, in the passage referr'd to, may have in other parts of scripture. Now, it is argu'd, that the words, as cited and apply'd from that apostle, are very agreeable to the design of two passages in the prophets, and to the most natural construction of them. One great end of Christ's preaching, as express'd by the prophet Isaiah, was to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the prison doors to them that were bound. This could not be understood of any temporal deliverance of men, and

must therefore refer to some spiritual effects of Christ's preaching to them. To the same effect the prophet Zachary declares, that, by the blood of the covenant, the prisoners shall be sent forth out of the pit, wherein there is no water. These prophecies are thought to agree very well with the words of St. Peter, according to the sense wherein this church, as we have observed, once explained them. And, as to the reason of the thing, it does not appear at all incongruous, either to the divine wisdom or goodness, that those who had lived so as to entitle themselves to a share in Christ's death, should have those benefits declared and ascertained to them in some publick and authentic manner. And what method could, on this supposition, have been more proper, than for Christ to go down to make a declaration to that end, by his own appearance among them.

His descent was no less proper to convince the obdurate and impenitent, concerning the reasonableness of their being lest in that miserable condition, to which they had been justly condemn'd. There is nothing in what is here suppos'd, that appears to be injurious, either to the wisdom, the goodness, or the justice

of God.

II. I shall now consider two or three of the most material ob-

jections against this interpretation of the words.

1. It is said, these words of St. Peter do not speak of the state of mankind in general, whether living or dead, but only concerning those who were disobedient in the days of Noah. This is no objection against our Saviour's descent into the place appointed for the receptacle of departed spirits in general; whether in order to preach to them by way of conviction for their former fins and impieties, or by way of proposing, in virtue of his death, certain terms of salvation to them. The reason why those who were disobedient in the days of Noah, are particularly mention'd, may be; that their disobedience was punish'd after so very signal and remarkable a manner; it not being unusual, after the declaration of any sact, to exemplify what is declar'd by some special and extraordinary instance relating to it.

THERE is a passage in the epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians *, which is interpreted, on the other hand, to signify the local defcent of Christs foul into the place of separated spirits; and against which, we farther assert, that objections sounded only on probable conjectures, or less probable than the interpretation of that passage, ought not to lie. It is there said, that our Saviour, having spoiled principalities and powers, made a shew of them openly,

* Ch. 2. 11.

triumphing

triumphing over them. Which interpretation is thought more reasonable, as this triumph of Christ is represented immediately consequent to his sufferings, and as the reward of them. Here it is argued, Christ, in his own dominions, by his own appearance, made his superior power openly known and confess'd to the powers of darkness; accomplishing what was foretold by holy David, of his leading captivity captive. And tho' what was here foretold might be said, and perhaps in a more eminent sense, to be accomplished at his ascension; yet it may also be true, with respect to his victorious descent into the regions of the dead. That this sense, at least, ought not to be excluded, they infer from the following words. In that he ascended, what meaneth it, but that he descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things †. So that Christ, according to this exposition of the words, did not only make an open shew of his conquest over the devil and his angels, by his ascending in a glorious visible manner into heaven, but also by a local triumphant descent of his soul into hell, the place of those wicked and apostate spirits.

2. WHAT is farther objected against the application here made of the words of St. Peter, is taken from an expression there us'd, concerning our Saviour's being quickned by the spirit. Now his foul, by which alone, during the separation of it from the body, he could descend into hell, being, in its own nature, immortal, he could not, with respect to it, be said, in his descent, to be quickned by the spirit. The force of the argument lies here, that what is already alive, cannot, in a proper sense, be quickned. In regard to life, generally consider'd, we grant it; but there is no impropriety in saying, that it may, notwithstanding, have the powers of life, by some special action of the divine Spirit upon it, still invigorated to a higher degree of activity and perfection. Who doubts, but that the human nature of Christ, in consequence of its union with the divine, was more powerful and lively in its operations; or that even the faithful may here properly be said to be quickned and strengthned in the inward man, or human soul, by the Spirit of God dwelling in them. This objection, therefore, as lying, by necessary inference, against what we acknowledg'd to be true in other cases, can be of no force or significancy.

3. The most material difficulty is objected by a most excellent and learned expositor of the creed *; who observes, that " as the " patriarchs, prophets, and all the saints departed, were never " disobedient in the days of Noah, neither could they need the

⁺ Epbes. 4. 9, 10.

^{*} Bishop Pearson.

" publication of the gospel after the death of *Christ*, who, by " virtue of that death, were accepted in him while they liv'd, and, by that acceptation, had receiv'd a reward long before.

But it does not follow, that because the faithful, by virtue of the death of Christ, were accepted of him while they liv'd; that considering the distance of time wherein they liv'd before his appearance; that they saw him only asar off in types, and figures, and predictions; none of which were wholly free, before their accomplishment, from all obscurity; that therefore Christ might not out of his great goodness, and towards confirming their faith in him more fully, in a solemn, and publick manner, declare that acceptation, by a local descent of his soul among them. As to their receiving a reward long before, since it cannot be understood of their full and final reward, when the souls shall be united to their bodies, and in consequence of that re-union; why might not Christ think sit, for the same reasons of goodness, by his personal appearance among them, to animate their hopes, and assure their expectations of it the more, in God's due and appointed time?

THE words of St. Peter, tho' confess'd by Bellarmine himself to be very obscure, yet certainly have a less force put upon them by this interpretation; than by those, who would interpret them only to fignify, that Jesus Christ, after he was return'd to life again, by the Spirit of God, which he also communicated (with the same design) to his apostles, preach'd the gospel to the Gentiles, the spirits in prison, or shut up in idolatry, as in a prison. Supposing this sense should possibly prove true, we must, however, allow it to be much more harsh, strain'd, and foreign, as to the natural construction of the words, than the former sense; which having nothing in it contrary to found doctrine, but being still allow'd, and incorporated in our publick devotions, as a pious interpretation of the words, I cannot (without being too positive in so nice a point) but think it preferable to the former sense; and, indeed, certainly true, if there be a necessity of explaining the words in either sense.

We profess to believe, according to this interpretation, that Christ, by his spirit descended into the place of seperate spirits; whether denoting the receptacle of evil or good spirits; that he might, by a sensible demonstration of his power, convince the former of their impiety, and the justness of their sufferings; and strengthen the faith of the latter, by declaring the benefits and merits of his death, in a more express and particular manner to them; or if there were persons in any middle state between these two, to propose, in virtue of his death, certain conditions of grace and pardon to them.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead.

HE reason of inserting this article, concerning the resurrection of Christ, in the creed, is very obvious; there being no doctrine in scripture, upon which greater stress is laid, towards proving him to be Christ, the Messah, the Son of God. In order therefore to establish so essential an article of the christian faith, and upon which the proofs of Christianity in general, have, according to the sense of the holy scriptures, so immediate and visible a dependence,

I. I shall enquire, why it was necessary that our Saviour should

rise from the dead.

II. SHEW, that we have clear and incontestable evidence, that he did rise from the dead.

III. Consider the circumstance here mention'd, with respect to

the time of his rising from the dead.

IV. Examine one of the most specious objections against the truth of this resurrection, from his discovering that he was risen only to his friends and disciples, and not openly to the Jews.

V. Enquire, why such peculiar stress is laid, for the proof of

the christian religion in general, upon this article.

I. Why it was necessary that our Saviour should rise from the dead. Now, in answer to this enquiry, several reasons may be assign'd. Our Saviour rose from the dead, that he might more fully ascertain to us the merit of his death, towards the end he propos'd in suffering it. Had death continued, beyond the time prefix'd by himself, to have dominion over him in the grave, the grounds of believing that he had overcome death, and open'd to others the gate of everlasting life, had been entirely subverted. The Jews might then, with great appearance of reason, have said; He savd others, himself he cannot save. If he he the Son of God, let him rise from the dead, or come out of the grave, and we will believe Or David might very well have put the question prophetically in his name; What profit is there in my blood, when I go down into the pit? Shall the dust praise thee, shall it declare thy truth? That is, if after my death, I shall still be detain'd in the grave, where will the effects of my sufferings or death appear? Or how shall the world be convine'd of this important truth, that I

have deliver'd others from the power of death, who am not able to deliver my self? Tho' our redemption therefore is attributed, in a more especial manner, to the death of Christ; yet, to assure us that he had overcome death, and that the price of our redemption from it was fully paid, it is declar'd, that he rose again for our justification; or in order to convince us by a sensible evidence, that we are in fact justify'd through the merits of his death. occasion of which evidence, and to shew the necessity there was why it should be produc'd, we are told by the apostle; it is Christ that dy'd; yea rather that is risen again. And in another place; if Christ be not risen, then is our faith, in the merits of his death

vain; we are yet in our sins.

2. THE resurrection of Christ was necessary, at once to confirm the ancient prophecies concerning it, and to shew that he was a true prophet himself. In the second psalm, both his injurious treatment here upon earth, previous to his death, and his resurrection after it, are describ'd. In the former respect, it is said, the kings of the earth set themselves together, and take counsel against the Lord, and against his anointed. In the latter, God declares; yet I have set mine anointed upon my holy hill of Sion. I will declare the decree the Lord bath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And tho' it may be naturally inferr'd from these words, and argued from a proper application of them, that as David, after his sufferings and persecutions, should at length be establish'd in his kingdom; so Christ, after his death, should by a special and immediate power of God, be restor'd again to life; yet as the action of God to that end, is here only express'd by the metaphorical term begotten; upon which account the true sense of the prophecy may be more difficultly ascertain'd; therefore holy David speaks more expressly in another place concerning his resurrection, and after a manner, which serves to explain, how this text ought to be understood and apply'd; My flesh, says he, shall rest in bope; for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption. And accordingly St. Peter directly applies this prophecy, as referring to our Lord's resurrection *, and shews, in a way strictly argumentative, that these words could not, in a literal sense, be spoken of David, but were more especially to be explain'd as having relation to Christ. As for the patriarch David, he is both dead and bury'd; therefore being a prophet, &c. Spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell; neither his flesh did see corruption †.

He foretold his own refurrection, not only in express terms to his disciples *, but in terms, that were sufficiently plain and intelligible to the Jews, in the design, and most obvious construction of them. Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. So that, to say nothing concerning the types, whereby his resurrection from the dead was prefigur'd, it was necessary he should have been, in some convenient time, restor'd again to life, whether we consider him in his own person, as a prophet, or as the Messiah, long before prophetically spoken of by other persons.

3. The resurrection of Christ gives us the greater assurance, in God's appointed time, of our own resurrection; first, as hereby he gave a general confirmation to the truth of all those doctrines, and to every one of them, wherein he had before instructed his disciples and followers: Among the rest, he had particularly declar'd, that the dead should be rais'd to life again; that all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. condly, as hereby he shew'd, by a sensible demonstration in his own person, the possibility of the thing. If human reason, when we assert the doctrine of a resurrection from the dead, should now question; who hath believ'd our report; or to whom hath the arm of the Lord been reveal'd? We have, in the example of Christ, a ready, clear, and incontestable answer; who is therefore call'd the first-fruits of them that slept +; the first-begotten from the dead +; in allusion to that prophecy concerning him, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; and of whom it is farther said, that he should be the first who was to rise from the dead **. The truth of our own resurrection then, is, on either account, assur'd; whether we consider the resurrection of Christ, as an exemplary instance of what the power of God may, and can do; or as an evidential proof of what God has declar'd and promis'd in the holy scriptures, that he will do. For which reason, we are said to be begotten again to a lively hope, through the resurrection of Jesus ††; and to believe in God, who rais'd him from the dead; that our faith and hope, as to all the articles of the christian faith, and particularly as to this of the refurrection, may be in God ##. We have now a certain expectation, that he who rais'd up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal bodies *. And therefore it is a just and unanswerable argument, which the apostle puts

^{*} Matt. 16. 21.—20. 19. † 1 Cor. 15. 20. ‡ Rev. 1. 5. ** Atts 26. 22, 23. †† 1 Pet. 1. 3. ‡‡ \$.21. ** Rom. 8. 11.

by way of interrogation. If Christ then be preach'd, that he is rifen from the dead; how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?

For these several reasons, and others which might be mention'd, it was necessary that Christ should rise from the dead. I

shall shew in the next place,

II. We have full and undeniable evidence to prove, that he did rise from the dead. This will appear, if we consider the several witnesses, or what fort of people they were, whereby his resurrection was attested. This being a fact which gave so full and clear a confirmation to the doctrine of Christ, which is so often appeal'd to in scripture, in proof of his being the Christ; it was necessary to have it well ascertain'd, both with regard to the number, and the credibility of the witnesses. In the former respect, we have persons of both sexes attesting the truth of it; when Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, came with sweet spices to anoint him; they found the stone roll'd from the door of the sepulchre, and not Jesus lying, but an angel, in the form of a young man, sitting in it; who declar'd to them, that Jesus was risen, shew'd them the place where he had lain, and adds a farther circumstance to shew, that he was, in truth, risen, by charging them to tell his disciples, that he would go before them into Galilee, and there they should see him. The apostles afterwards convers'd frequently with him; he demonstrated the verity of his refurrection with a true and real body, by standing in the midst of them; by shewing them his hands and his sides; by breathing on them; and by eating and drinking with them. went and commun'd after a familiar manner with them, and shew'd them, in particular, the reasons of his resurrection *. He expounded the scriptures concerning himself, and this very article, to them. He appear'd to eleven of them as they sat at meat †. And, lest all these testimonies should not be sufficient, he was seen of five hundred brethren at once ‡.

This fact being attested by so many witnesses, all the question is, how far their evidence is to be admitted as credible? If they bore a false testimony, it must have been resolved into this; that they were not careful to inform themselves sufficiently concerning the fact, or else that they designedly misrepresented it. But there are no just or reasonable grounds to entertain the least suspicion, either of their care in the former, or of their fidelity in the latter respect. To shew that the apostles were far from being too credulous in their enquiries concerning the truth of Christ's resurre-

^{*} Luke 24. 26.

ction, we may observe, that they believ'd it not, on the testimony of Mary Magdalene, who had seen him. They mourn'd and wept, (which rather argued a distrust of what she reported) when the told them, he was alive, and had been seen of her *. They gave no more credit to the two disciples, with whom he had so familiar and long a conversation, in their way to Emmaus; when those disciples went, and told them what had pass'd, neither beliewed they them: One of them, in particular, was so incredulous, that he would not believe on any other testimony, but that of his own senses; neither would he wholly trust to his own eyes; but requir'd still farther satisfaction, by putting his finger into the print of the nails, which fasten'd our Lord's body to the cross, and thrusting his hand into his side. These were such precautions, as plainly discover the disciples of Christ were so far from being chargeable with too easy a belief of this article, that they were rather culpable, in demanding such proofs of it, as were more than necessary, or sufficient. Our Saviour, by reproving the incredulity of Thomas in the following words, intended also, that the other apostles should share, tho' more remotely, in the reproof; Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believ'd; blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believ'd †. For that the rest of them were rather too incredulous, than forward of belief, as to this fundamental article, notwithstanding our Lord had openly shew'd himself alive after his passion, by certain infallible proofs; the severe reprimand which the eleven receiv'd from our Saviour, as they sat at meat,. plainly discovers; when he upbraided them with their unbelief, and bardness of heart; because they believ'd not them, which had seen him, after he was risen.

NEITHER can we suppose, after the disciples of Christ had us'd all this caution not to be impos'd upon in an article, which it so much concern'd them to be perfectly satisfy'd concerning the truth of, that they would afterwards go about to misrepresent it. For what end could they have in making a report contrary to the truth of what had in fact happen'd, when it was so easy for their enemies to detect the falshood of it; especially when they appeal'd for the truth of it, to sive hundred witnesses at once? How naturally would the Jews, had there been no good soundation for such an appeal, have put them upon the trial of it? Or how is it likely, that, upon a strict examination, so many witnesses, tho' they had conspir'd to propagate a lye, should yet perfectly agree together?

* Mark 16. 10.

[†] John 20. 29.

It is not usual with impostors to refer to so many living witnesses at once. Two or three may possibly, out of such a number, give a consistent, tho' false testimony; but it is not credible, could they all be suborn'd to that end, they would all give the very same evidence, and with respect to the several circumstances of the fact which they attested.

NEITHER could the disciples of Christ propose any honour or advantage to themselves, by spreading a false report concerning his resurrection. For all honours were then in the disposal of their enemies, the enemies of that very doctrine, for the sake of which, they were more particularly evil spoken of and insulted. Neither could they, as to this article, by spreading a falshood, propose any advantage to themselves: Instead of that, by preaching a doctrine, which they so much, and so particularly insisted upon, to confirm the truth of the christian revelation in general, (and which is, both in its own nature, and the sense of the holy scriptures a most convincing proof to that end) they took a method, which tended so much the more to provoke the malice and cruelty of their enemies. What account then can be given, that the disciples of Christ, contrary to all the rules, whereby designing men conduct themselves in all other cases, should, without any vifible occasion, without any visible prospect here or hereafter, so needlesly have expos'd themselves to the most grievous sufferings and persecutions in this life, in confirmation of a doctrine, which they knew, or, upon the least examination, might easily have known, to be false? It is possible, that particular persons, from a motive of vanity, or perhaps out of a mistaken zeal, may suffer much, and even die to confirm a false persuasion; but it cannot be conceiv'd how, or upon what views, a great number of persons of both sexes, in every state and condition of life, should conspire to suffer the greatest miseries, for the sake of reporting a fact, which (if it had not been true) they could so readily have discover'd the falshood of. But it is still the more unaccountable, that many of them should be willing to engage in such a design upon the prospect of present death; whereby a period would not only be put to all their enjoyments in this life, but, upon their own principles, all their hopes would be terminated in regard to the next life; that very religion, for the truth of which they profess'd to die, condemning, under the severest penalties, all insincerity, lying, and falshood, upon any motive whatever.

It can only be said then, that the account, which is given in the holy scriptures, and the testimonies we produce from them in proof of *Christ*'s resurrection, were inserted several years after, in the books, which compose the canon of them. But the weakness

of

of this pretence appears from what has been observed before, concerning the impossibility of corrupting or adding to the scriptures, in any material article; especially as to a matter of fact, which the first Christians principally appealed to, in proof of Christ's being the Messiah, and which it so highly concerned the Jews,

had that been possible, to disprove.

IF it still be urg'd by unbelievers, that the witnesses of Christ's resurrection, hitherto produc'd, were his own friends and disciples. we answer: Tho' their testimony had been sufficient, for the reafons already mention'd, to prove it; yet we do not want the confession even of unbelievers and adversaries, to render the proof of it still more incontestable. For fear of the angel of the Lord, who descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, the keepers of it were surprized in such an extraordinary manner, that they became as dead men *. And some of them, upon a settled conviction of what they had seen, went into the city, and made a report of it, to the Chief Priests; who thereupon agreed to corrupt them with money, by that means to stifle their true testimony, upon a pretence that the disciples of Christ came by night, and stole the dead body of their master away; a ridiculous pretence, on all accounts; and which only shews the strong power, and, at the same time, the little arts of prejudice; when men are refolv'd either not to be convinc'd, or not to own their conviction to others. Had the disciples of Christ been in a condition to have made such an attempt, as they were not, against a Roman guard, consisting of sixty men; yet, is it reasonable to suppose, that, upon so strict a charge as was then given to the foldiers, and upon so extraordinary an occasion, there was not one centinel awake, nor awaken'd by the noise and disturbance, which his disciples, in stealing his body away, must of necessity have made. This is so poor, and unsoldier-like an account of a Roman guard, as there is no example of in history; and which cannot, on any tolerable supposition, be ad-

III. I am to consider the circumstance here mention'd, with respect to the time of our Saviour's rising from the dead; and that

was the third day after his interment.

THERE is no difficulty in relation to the time here specify'd, as it is express'd in the creed; tho', if we understand the space between our Lord's burial and his resurrection, as express'd in the holy scriptures, the words of them are not altogether so easily accounted for. Our Saviour speaks prophetically of his resurrection.

that, as Jones was three days and three nights in the whale's belly: so should the son of man be three days, and three nights in the heart of the earth. And yet, during the interval, his body remain'd in the grave, there were only two nights, and one entire day between them. How then could he be said to have lain in the grave either three days, or three nights. In the strictest sense of the words, we grant, he could not; but in a popular sense, according to the language both of the Greeks and Hebrews, as part * of the day or night is us'd to denote the whole day or night. a reasonable account may be given of them. And as it is so frequently said in scripture, that our Lord rose again the third day, three days and three nights are to be understood according to this manner of expression, and the third day not to be extended to fignify the whole day, with the night following, except according to an ordinary sense, wherein this way of speaking was at that time understood. I proceed,

IV. To examine one of the most specious objections against the truth of Christ's resurrection, from his appearing after he was risen only to his friends and disciples, and not openly to the Jews. is said, if the resurrection of Christ was so necessary to confirm the truth of the christian religion, or the divine mission of Christ, why was it not attested after such a manner, as to leave no possible room for doubt or scruple, concerning the certainty of it? Why did not our Saviour make an open and triumphant entry into Jerusalem, after he was risen; or, at least, go and shew himself to the High Priests? These, or any other like questions, may be easily resolv'd. It is sufficient to justify the wisdom and goodness of God, in this respect, that he afforded the Jews, in order to their conviction, that moral evidence, which, had it been attended to, was of a competent force towards convincing all unprejudic'd and well-disposed persons. God, in the dispensations of his grace, is no more obligid to afford men all the possible means of conviction, than continually to work miracles, or exert his power to the utmost extent of it, in the course of his providence. Neither is it necessary that he should afford all men equal means of conviction, any more than that he should place them, on every account, in

^{*} Synecdoche ergo qua pro toto pars ponitur. Mald. ex August. Hic nibil aliud signisicatur quam futurum Christum in sepulchro τελοί νυχθημέροις. Gui sensui implendo, sufficit eum sepultum suisse tempore eo, cujus partes ad tria νυχθήμερο pertingerent. Grot. Accordingly Bishop Pearson, which those, who would enter upon a more critical examination of this point, may consult, cites several authorities to prove, that we are to understand the words, three days, and three nights, according to a popular way of speaking, both by the Greeks and Hebrews; and particularly observes, in relation to the latter of them, that a night and a day in their language, not us'd to composition, is the same with the Greek τυχθήμερον, ΟΙ ήμερονύκτιον.

equal circumstances of life. If, in either respect, he afford men what is requisite, and especially, which is the true state of the case, more than is absolutely requisite to the end propos'd, certainly they

·can have no reason to complain.

By the same argument, which is here brought to disprove the resurrection of *Christ*, why did not our Saviour, after he was risen, openly appear before a full senate at *Rome?* Or why does he not now publickly appear in places of the greatest concourse, or to every unbeliever, in particular, towards convincing him of unbelief, and preventing the farther growth of infidelity in general.

IT may be farther reply'd, so far as this objection relates to the Jews, that there were particular reasons, from a consideration of their obstinacy and perverseness, why God should not have afforded them those extraordinary means of conviction, which are contended for; in particular, as those means would not, probably, have had the suppos'd effect upon them. For why should it be thought necessary, that those who were not convinc'd by so many figns and wonders, which our Saviour had done among them, would have been effectually persuaded, tho' he had visibly appear'd to them, after he rose from the dead? They had therefore at once render'd themselves more unworthy of so special a favour, and more incapable of benefiting by it. But whether they would have benefited by it or not, the conclusion will hold still good, that neither the wisdom, nor the goodness of God oblig'd him to employ extraordinary methods, where the ordinary were sufficient, and even to persons, in a good disposition to be convinc'd, more than sufficient.

VI. Why so great stress, in proof of the christian religion in general, is laid upon this article? The reason of this must be, that there was some peculiar evidence of a divine power in the resurrection of Christ, above what so plainly discover'd itself in his other miracles, and which afforded less scope to the cavils of prejudic'd, or incredulous men. With regard to this consideration, the Jews us'd all means, had that been possible, to prevent the resurrection of Christ; but when they could not do that, their next business was to hinder the report of it from spreading abroad. They pretended, that when he was alive, he wrought his miracles in virtue of the inessable name of God, which he had found means, when once he went into the temple, to discover the secret of, and take away with him; which some of the Jews have reported was guarded by two lions in the temple of Solomon, for above a * thousand

vears.

^{*} Judæorum nonnulli prodigia Jesu ascribunt nomini cuidam arcano; quod à Solomone in templo positum, duo leones per mille & amplius annos custodiverunt. Grot. de ver. rel. christ. p. 274. For which that excellent author handsomely exposes their folly and weakness.

years. But when Christ was dead, as they could no longer pretend that he was capable of applying this charm, or any other, towards restoring himself to life again, they had no other resuge, but to deny the truth of his resurrection; for that being granted, plainly declar'd him to be the Son of God by a power truly miraculous and divine, and the effects whereof could not otherways

possibly be accounted for.

The other pretence also of the Jews, concerning our Saviour's working miracles by the power of evil spirits, was also hereby more effectually obviated. For they did not believe, that the devil, whatever powers they attributed to him, had a power of raising the dead to life. They knew the key of the grave was only in the hands of God; and therefore, instead of the question, has it ever been known from the beginning of the world, that one who was born blind could receive his sight? This question might have been put the stronger, in proof of our Saviour's being rais'd by a true divine power; has it ever been known from the beginning of the world, that one who was dead could ever, without such a power, be restor'd again to life.

THERE are other circumstances that might be observed, in respect to the resurrection of Christ, as affording men, in general, the most convincing and unexceptionable proof of his being the Christ; but those I have mention'd are sufficient to shew what I intended, under this particular, why so great care was taken, both by our Lord, and his apostles, to establish the truth of this article; as being, in some peculiar manner, and in certain respects,

still more evidential of his divine mission and authority.



Of



Of the CREED.

ARTICLE VI.

He ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the Right Hand of God, the Father Almighty.

CHAP. I.

He ascended into beaven.

resurrection, by a visible appearance and conversation upon earth, for the space of forty days, from the time of it, he was translated, in a visible and glorious manner, to heaven. What it may be proper for us to observe, in reference to his ascension, I shall endeavour to reduce to the following particulars.

1. THE proofs of it, consider'd as matter of sact.

II. THE reasons of it.

III. THE circumstances which attend it, relating to the state of his human body and soul.

IV. THE place to which he ascended. And,

I. Tho' it was not necessary that there should have been so great a number of witnesses to attest the truth of our Lord's ascension, as that of his resurrection; that being the great article in dispute with the enemies of christianity, and principally insisted upon by the faithful, in confirmation of it. To which we may add, that his resurrection being once fully attested, it was even reasonable, in the nature of the thing, to suppose, that his ascension, as a farther reward of what he had done and suffer'd for us, would be,

one time or other, consequent to it. Yet we do not want sufficient evidence to prove, that, in sact, he did ascend, from those who were eye-witnesses to his ascension. For he being assembled together with the apostles; and having declar'd what power they should receive from the Holy Ghost, and what they were requir'd to do, by virtue, and in consequence of it *. While they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight †. And while they were looking, and casting their eyes forward upon his ascending body, to observe the gradual motion of it, two angels appear'd, standing by them, in white apparel, and declar'd to them; this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven ‡.

THE nature of this fact was such, that, allowing the apostles to have been persons of common understanding, they could not have been imposed upon by any false shew or appearance of it. And as to their evidence, in reporting it, the same reasons subsisting to induce our belief of their veracity, upon which I observed they could not be supposed to falsify, as to the article of the resurrection. I shall not here make an unnecessary repetition of them; but

proceed to consider,

II. In the next place, the reasons why our Lord ascended. Which will appear first, both from the prophetical predictions, and as having a near affinity with them, the typical representations of it. The words of the royal prophet are plainly to be referr'd, and are accordingly apply'd by St. Paul ** to this victorious act of our Saviour's power, pursuant to his resurrection. Thou hast ascended up on high; thou hast led captivity captive, and receiv'd gifts for men \tau. It is granted, these words may be explain'd concerning David's triumphant ascent upon the hill where the temple stood, after his conquest over the Philistines: But they are only to be explain'd so by way of accomodation, and in a secondary sense. Beza observes, that by the confession of the more moderate and unprejudic'd Jews, the application of the words of David, according to St. Paul, is so strictly just, that all other applications of them are to be look'd upon as figurative or improper ##. For the word on high, is an ordinary expression of holy David for heaven *. Besides that, the latter part plainly refers to the habitation, or residence of God; but of the Lord God, or Christ;

* Psalm 18. 17.—93. 4.—102. 20.—144. 7.

God,

^{*} Atts 1. 4, 8. † \$. 9. ‡ \$. 10. 11. ** Epbes. 4. 8.

^{††} Psalm 68. 18. ‡‡ Adeò propria est bæc Pauli explicatio ut aliæ omnes translatitiæ sint, fatentibus etiam Judæis æquioribus.

God, as having assum'd the human nature into a personal union with the divine; there to reign and dwell for ever with the saints, who shall improve his gifts, the distribution whereof, he receiv'd as a reward of his victories, to the ends for which they were distributed. According to this sense, if we consider Christ as the occasional cause, or means of grace, the trouble which some criticks have given themselves, towards reconciling the words of David with those of the apostle, might have been avoided; it being indifferent, upon this distinction, whether Christ be said to have re-

ceiv'd gifts for men, or to have given gifts to men.

THE ascension of Christ was also typically represented under the As the tabernacle was understood by the Jews to signify this world; and the holy of holies, the supreme heaven, the seat and habitation of God; so the High Priest passing through the rest of the tabernacle, and entring with the blood of the facrifice into the holy of holies, prefigur'd the passage of Christ through the several stages of life in this world; and more especially his translation after his death through the regions of the air, and the several intermediate heavens, to the heaven of heavens. cordingly the apostle applies this typical representation of our Lord's triumphant entry into heaven, in the following words. Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with bands; that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats or calves, but by his own blood, he enter'd in once, into the holy place, having obtain'd eternal redemption for us.

From which words, we may farther take occasion to observe, it was requisite, in the reason of the thing, that our Saviour should ascend into heaven, that he might more effectually apply the benefits of his sacrifice to us, and perform another proper and important act of the sacerdotal office, in making continual intercession for us; that so we might come more boldly, and with full assurance of faith, to the throne of grace *. The ground or reason of which considence, the apostle assigns more particularly in a following passage of the same epistle. For Christ is not enter'd into the boly places made with bands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God

for us t.

Another reason of our Lord's ascending into heaven, was, that hereby he still more effectually discover'd the merits of his death, than he could have done by the most evident proofs of his resurrection. For tho' his rising from the dead gave sufficient confirmation.

mation

^{*} Heb. 4. 16. † Ch. 9. 24.

mation to the truth of whatever he declar'd, as a prophet; yet we could not have had an affurance so adapted to the common weakness and capacities of men, who are, in general, most powerfully affected with sensible arguments, or matters of sact, that Christ had really merited heaven for us, if he had still continued upon earth, without being translated thither himself. As his resurrection from the dead was necessary to shew that he had overcome death; so was his ascension to ascertain us, in a more conspicuous manner, that he had open'd to us the gate of everlasting life, by his own personal entrance into it. To which we may add, that this being the greatest reward of what he perform'd for us, it gave us, in proportion, a stronger evidence as to the efficacy of his performance; and the acceptance of it with the Father, who therefore, in consideration of it, had so highly exalted him.

I shall not insist upon it, as a reason of his ascending, that he told his apostles before-hand whither, and upon what design he was going from them *. Because this only imported a consequential necessity of his ascension, particularly in virtue of that promise, I go to prepare a place for you, and will come again, and receive you unto my self; that where I am, there you may be also; and not antecedently, as the reasons I proposed to mention, in the

nature of the thing. I am to consider,

III. THE circumstances which attended our Lord's ascension, relating to the state of his human body and foul. Some have explain'd the ascension of Christ in a sense purely figurative, as if we were to understand no more thereby, than that, upon his resurrection, his body was sublimated and refin'd to a greater degree of purity, and render'd more active and powerful, as to all the operations proper to a body. But it is evident from his own words, that this sense cannot be admitted, and that his ascension is to be consider'd as importing his body to have been locally, and in a literal sense, translated from this earth, by a gradual motion into the air, and the upper regions of it. So that it was in a different place from what it was in before, and in one place, not in all places, or more places than one, at the same time. For on either of these two suppositions, however his body had been modify'd, of what particles foever of celestial matter it had been compos'd; yet still it would have lost the proper and essential qualities of body or matter in general, admitting the existence (in respect to its pretended ubiquity) of any other body or matter in the world. His words, which I refer to, are those which he spake to Mary,

touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father *. This being spoken confessedly after his resurrection, it is plain, that he had not yet ascended; and that his ascension therefore must denote something very different from his resurrection; something, whatever qualities we assign to his risen body, yet incidental to it, with respect to a local removal of it, in a proper sense, from earth to heaven.

THE body wherewith he ascended was the same numerical body wherein he suffer'd, and rose again, not another body, as the Manicheans, and fince the Socinians have afferted, compos'd of a celestial matter, wholly different from the former constituent parts of it. For tho' when the foul of man is united by a vital communication to any body, such a communication may properly denominate it his body; yet supposing his soul had only shifted the scene of its residence out of one body into another, he could not so properly be call'd the same man; if Christ then had not ascended with the same body, to which his human foul was before vitally united, it was not, in a true sense, the man Christ Jesus, who was born of the virgin Mary, and suffer'd under Pontius Pilate, that ascended; but, so far as a distinction of persons can be founded in the different parts of matter, whereof their bodies are compos'd, he would have been another, and quite different person, born or produc'd again after a quite different manner.

NEITHER is there the least necessity of supposing, from any inconvenience arising from the nature of the thing, that Christ, when he ascended, should assume a body compos'd of different parts of matter from those whereof it was compos'd before. For all matter, as such, being the same, God, by his power, can form the parts of it, after what manner, in what order, or according to what system he pleases. As he can reduce the particles of the most resin'd etherial matter to the most gross consistence; so he can sublimate the most gross parts of terrene matter, to a purity and defecation, to which may be added a capacity of motion; perhaps (if a particular exception ought not to be made, in regard to the glorify'd body of Christ) beyond what he has already given to any celestial matter whatever, or to any par-

ticular system of it.

WITH what peculiar qualities the body of Christ, which ascended, is now in its glorify'd state endow'd; whether it subsist by any accessory renovation of parts; after what manner any loss or accession of parts happens to it; or of what kind those parts may be, are questions, which, tho' concerning the faithful in a future state

of glory; yet not being of any necessary importance towards preparing them for it, I shall leave to the curiously learn'd to resolve, as well as they can.

WHAT it principally concerns us to know, in reference to our Lord's ascension, is, that his human soul, by a local and true translation, in union with his body, was conveyed from earth, through the regions of the air, and the superior intermediate heavens, (not resting, as some hereticks imagin'd, in the body of the sun) to the highest heaven, the seat and residence of the divine majesty. The belief of this is absolutely necessary, not only to assure us of the merits of Christ, which entitled him to so glorious a reward, but also concerning the truth of what is so much insisted upon in the epistle to the Hebrews, with reference to his office, as our High Priest in heaven, where he continually makes intercession for us. For, as in respect to his divine nature, he is every where present, and so could not properly be said to ascend, neither could he have been our intercessor, in so proper and powerful a manner, but only as God and man united in one person. And therefore some of the most moving arguments, which the apostle mentions to represent the great advantages of his intercession for us, are taken from the consideration of his being made like unto us; of his being touch'd with the sense of our infirmities; of his having compassion on us. These arguments could not have had that force the apostle attributes to them, towards confirming our faith, and assuring the success of our prayers, as they must now be necessarily supposed to have, when we look up to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, as now set down in our own nature, at the right hand of God.

IV. The place to which he ascended. He ascended into heaven. Tho' the intermediate regions between the holy place, the city of God, and this terraqueous globe, are frequently in scripture call'd heavens *; yet heaven, when spoken absolutely, properly denotes that place, where God has chosen to discover the immediate and glorious effects of his presence, the seat appointed by him for the residence of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. The gates were listed up, and the everlasting doors open'd to let the King of glory come into that place. There it was that our High Priest enter'd into that within the veil, even into heaven itself to appear in the presence of God for us; where he ever lives to discharge that part of his sacerdotal office, which consists in intercession; and where all his prayers and desires in our be-

half are always heard. There it was, where he went to prepare a place for us; and from whence he will come again, to the end he may receive us, and after an indisfoluble manner for ever, unto himself.

CHAP. II.

He ascended into heaven; and sitteth on the Right Hand of God.

Y the session of our Lord at the right hand of God, we are to understand the power and authority, wherewith he is now. invested in his mediatorial Kingdom; by way of figurative allusion, to a common ulage of secular princes, or magistrates, who give the right hand to those whom they design to honour by any peculiar marks of favour or distinction *. So that, indeed, this Tession of our Saviour does not only denote his sovereign power and dominion over his creatures †; but the glory wherewith the Father has glorify'd him in his own presence; and where even his human nature, with respect to his body and soul, is advanc'd to the highest perfection, whereof either of them is respectively capable. So that if it be ask'd, whether Christ may be said to sit on the right hand of God, with respect to both natures, it may be answer'd in the affirmative: According to his divine nature, not as if he receiv'd any new accession of glory, or power; but as there was, upon his ascension a new (which will ever be continued) external manifestation of that glory, which he had with the Father from the beginning, and before his incarnation. According to his human nature; which was then exalted above all principalities, and powers, and might and dominions, and with respect to which, the metaphor of his sitting at the right hand of God, is still more natural and easy, on account of the visible and glorious appearance of his human body, and of the actions proper to it.

† 1 Cor. 15. 25. Matt. 28. 18.

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^{* 1} Kings 2. 19. Psalm 45. 9. Psalm 110. 1.

What is objected * against the session of Christ at the right hand of God, from God's ubiquity, lying only against a figurative manner of expression, cannot be of any consequence when we leave the metaphor, or explain it according to the true and proper signification of the thing, which is to denote the sovereign power of Christ. In which sense it is said, that hereaster we shall see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power. And therefore, according to the different occasions of manifesting his power, he is indifferently represented standing, as well as sitting at the right hand of God; more generally sitting; this being a posture more proper to him, as our judge; as in the particular case of St. Stephen, where he appear'd as a protector, it was more agreeable, under that character, to shew himself standing.

Ir yet any one will contend for his sitting at the right hand of God in a more proper sense, it may be said, that God, tho' no where locally circumscrib'd, yet displays the more special and glorious essects of his presence, from the throne, on the right hand of which Christ is set down; and consequently his session at God's right hand, will still admit of a sense, which approaches

nearer to a literal construction.

But I shall take notice a little more particularly concerning an error, as to the session of Christ at the right hand of God; which has been advanc'd and espous'd by those, who generally go under the distinction of Lutherans; they pretend that the right hand of God, properly, and in our own sense, denoting his power; and God being every where present by his power, Christ, with respect to his human body, wherein he is fet down at the right hand of God, must, by necessary inference, be suppos'd every where present too. We do not deny that the right hand of God is a metaphor us'd in scripture to denote his power †; yet cannot discover or allow the consequence, that he who sits at the right hand of God, as it signifies the power of God, must therefore be co-extended, with regard to his corporeal presence, with the divine power. this is, in the nature of the thing, absolutely impossible, and supposes a penetration of bodies, or that two bodies, and by the same reason, any given number of bodies, may be in the very same place, and yet have a separate and distinct position in it, at the same

time:

^{*} Of the same nature is that old objection, that if Christ sit on the right hand of God, God, which would be incongruous to the ideas we have of his glory and majesty, would be plac'd on the lest hand of Christ, and the same answer will serve to it. Those who like St. Augustin's better, may find it in the following words. Si carnaliter acceperimus quòd Christus sedet ad dextram Patris ille erit ad sinistram. Dextra enim & sinistra eorum, que circumscribuntur sunt. Dextram autemPatris dicimus gloriam & honorem divinitatis.

† Isaiah 48. 13. Alts 11. 33.

time: Than which, if we argue from the nature of our ideas, and we have no other way of arguing but from them, there cannot be any thing propos'd more absurd, or unaccountable to human understanding. It is hereby farther suppos'd, that our Saviour's body, the body wherewith he rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, which was circumscrib'd as other human bodies are. and of a like dimension, is not now the same body, but a body of immense magnitude, not only of equal extent with all other bodies, but extending itself (for there too God is present by his power) beyond the bounds of all other corporeal beings whatever. If this notion, indeed, of the Lutherans had any good or solid foundation, an unanswerable argument might be drawn from it, upon a philosophical difficulty, to prove, that whatever incorporeal spaces there might possibly have been before our Lord's ascension into heaven, and his session at the right hand of God; yet, in consequence of them, there neither is, nor can be, in time future, what we call a vacuum, whether interspers'd, or beyond the confines of the world.

2. We say, that the right hand of God, not denoting place, or any local position of his being, the omnipresence, or ubiquity of Christ's body, which has relation to place, cannot, by any means, be inferr'd from it; and therefore, this argument owing all its force only to an impropriety of expression, cannot be of any proper or just effect to prove, what it is brought by the Luthe-

rans in proof of.

If it still be urg'd, that, according to our exposition, the right hand, or power of God, may be where Christ is not, and so there will be a divine power which Christ has not, we deny this consequence, and say, it is not any local site of Christ's body, whereon a communication of the divine power to him is founded, but his relation to the Father as his true and proper Son; and in consequence of the union of the two natures in him. It is sufficient to say, that Christ is no where, but at the right hand of God; or that, if he be any where at the right hand of God, he is at the right hand of him, and (according to the import of that phrase) has therefore all the power of him, who is every where. Tho it is neither necessary, nor indeed possible, for the reasons already mention'd, that he should be every where, with respect to his human body, of an infinite extent, or, in other words, of the same extent, with the power of God.

IT answers all the ends of Christ's session at God's right hand, to say, that, in the union of the two natures, as he is both God and man, all power in heaven and in earth, is now committed to him; that in him the sulness of the Godhead dwells bodily; tho' his body

body still retain all the proper qualities, and affections essential to a body.

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CHAP. III.

He ascended into Heaven; and sitteth on the Right Hand of God, the Father Almighty.

THE words, which I am now to consider, are, the Father Almighty, which have been already explain'd in the first article of the creed, and as to the word Father, as it was in the same sense, according to which we are here to understand it. But the word which in the present article is render'd Almighty *, being, in the original, different from that which is render'd Almighty † in the first article; it may not be improper to enquire, what the different sense of it here is; and for what particular reason we are requir'd to profess our belief of God's Almighty power, in that sense. Almighty, in the former article, denotes that fovereign power and dominion, which God exercises over his creatures, more especially as such, and in right both of his creating them, and his preserving them in being ‡. Accordingly God declares by the prophet, in virtue of this right; I have made the earth, and created man upon it. I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. He is on this account styl'd, Lord of hosts; Lord of heaven; Lord of the whole earth; Lord of heaven and earth. In the latter sense, we are to understand his absolute and irresistible power of effecting whatever he designs, or is a possible object of power; without any relation to his authority, as he is the supreme Lord and governor of the But having, in a proper place, already enlarg'd concerning the extent of the divine power, in this respect, I shall not now resume the same argument, but only observe why we are here requir'd to profess our belief in God the Father Almighty, under this notion of omnipotence.

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^{*} Πανδοδυνάμεν. † Πανδοκεάτως. ‡ And therefore the word is render'd, as Bishop Pearson observes, Omnitenens, by Tertullian and St. Augustin; and Πανδοκεάτοςας, by the former of these fathers, Mundipotentes.

1. THE session of Christ at the right hand of God, properly denoting the power whereby he is now invested, it was convenient. in the clause of the article, to specify the Almighty power of God. as the object of our faith, to shew, that Christ, nevertheless, does not exercise this power independently, much less exclusively of the Father, but in concurrence, and according to the most perfect agreement with him. God still retains all the power he ever had. tho' he has, till the restitution of all things, when Christ shall have deliver'd up the kingdom to him, given the execution of it into his This, we say, must still be understood with a reserve to that power which is effentially inherent in him as God, and therefore absolutely inseparable from him. And indeed, a session at the right hand is far from importing, according to the common design of men, in giving others that mark of distinction, such a communication of their power or authority, whereby they can be interpreted to divest themselves of it; but, at the most, only implies a participation of the same power and authority radically vested (by whomsoever it may be executed) in them. Sometimes, indeed, it is only defign'd as a mark of honour or favour, without supposing those who are so plac'd, as assessors, in any proper or judicial act of authority. As when Solomon caus'd a feat to be fet for the King's mother *; and plac'd her at his right hand, next to the throne; he did not design her any participation of the royal power, much less to transfer it in such a manner, as to disclaim his own right to it; but only intended thereby to shew the regard which he ow'd to her as his mother, and to distinguish her. as the King's mother, after the most honorary manner.

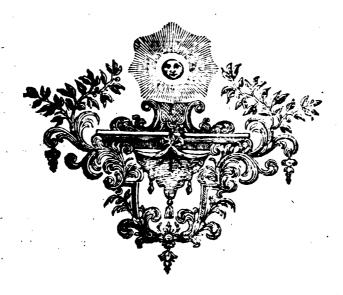
ANOTHER reason, why God the Father Almighty is here propos'd as the object of our faith, may be to give us still a greater and more distinct idea of the power of Christ. For if his session at the right hand of God denote a communication of the divine power to him, or a proper participation of it, then by professing that God's power is Almighty; we profess, by necessary implication, that the power of Christ too is Almighty; that every word is possible to him; that in his hand there is power and might; so that none is able to withstand him; and that he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of

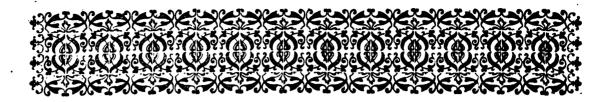
the earth.

WHATEVER then the Father doth, is, in the nature of it, possible to the Son. As the Father is Almighty, so is the Son Almighty; and yet, with respect to the divine nature or essence,

and setting aside the personal relation between them, they are not two Almighties, but one Almighty. The Father is Almighty, because he is God. For the same reason, we say the Son is Almighty, as having the same foundation, in the Godhead, of omnipotency with the Father; and is therefore, as to all the proper acts and effects of a power truly divine, equally omnipotent as the Father.

The words explain'd in this sense, have, at once, a visible and direct tendency to animate our hopes in the grace of Christ, and to excite our sears of his avenging justice. If nothing be impossible to him that is possible to God; if he has an equal power with God to save, and to destroy; then we have the same grounds, as on one hand, to live under the most awful apprehensions of his majesty; so, on the other hand, if we render our selves proper objects of them, to be assur'd of all the happy effects of his love and mercy; and, to conclude, on all accounts, to pay that homage and obedience to him, which could have been due to a just, merciful, and Almighty God.





Of the CREED.

ARTICLE VII.

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

CHAP. I.

From thence he shall come to judge.

N this article, we have one very important act of that power and authority specify'd, which we profess'd a belief of our Lord's being invested with in the former article. This act will consist, when all mankind are summon'd before the tribunal of God, in his sitting, and executing

the office of a judge, upon them.

THERE is no great necessity of making a particular enquiry concerning the place from whence he shall come to declare his commission, and affert his power, to this end; that, the connection of this article with the former, plainly discovers to be heaven, the place to which he ascended, and where he now sits at the right hand of God; that is the place which must contain him until his second coming, when he will immediately repair from thence, to seat himself in a visible and glorious throne, attended with myriads of holy angels, to pass a final, irreversible sentence of happiness or misery upon men, according to their good or evil actions in this life.

THE two things principally to be consider'd, and after a more distinct manner, in this branch of the article, are,

1. THE

I. THE certainty of a future judgment. And,

II. THE person who is to be our judge.

I. THE certainty, according to what we here profess to believe, of a future judgment. We have now a divine authority to settle our faith upon, concerning the truth of this fundamental article; and than which, there is no article either of natural or reveal'd religion, that has generally a greater influence on the minds, or morals of men. We have now a fure word of prophecy to convince us, beyond all possibility of doubt, that God has appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world; that he will bring every work into judgment; that the Lord cometh, with thousands of his faints, to execute judgment upon all. A divine authority is decifive: and in that respect better adapted to the common apprehensions and capacities of men. It is of more force to establish the truth of any one proposition, that God has said it, than all the fine sayings, or arguments, how specious soever, which the wit or reafon of all mankind can produce upon it. This method of ascertaining any truth by a divine revelation, is also more agreeable to the temper of the generality of men, who, if they should have strength of mind to go through a long and nice examination of any doctrine, yet would not have sufficient liberty of mind to examine it impartially. For whatever byass may be cast upon our judgment in the search we make, or pretend to make, after truth, (from a particular regard to the opinions or writings of other men, or out of any personal prejudice, vanity, or interest of our own) that may tend to hinder us from discovering the truth, in more intricate controversies, or perhaps in reference to such of them, as were very plain in themselves, before the interests of this world mingled with them, and till, either through weakness or design, they were involv'd, by one writer or other, in the utmost obscurity; however, I say, men may be diverted, upon any of these accounts, from opening their eyes to the light of truth, or from following it; yet there can be no resisting the evidence of an express revelation from God (and which we profess to believe so) concerning a plain matter of fact.

Should it be granted then, that the common arguments are in themselves conclusive, in proof of a judgment to come; from the natural presages in the minds of men; of the most wicked, and, at certain intervals, the most atheistical men; and the expectations of all men in general concerning it; or by reason of the apprehensions we are under from the terrors of an unseen vengeance upon the commission of sin, especially of certain more heinous sins, how secret so ever; or on occasion of those joyful reports, which are made in our own minds, when we resect on the good

and pious actions done by, us, tho' these too were done in secret, and without regard to any visible interest or reward. again, when we argue from the natural desires after a state of happiness, wherewith all men find themselves invincibly posfess'd, which state, we are convinc'd from the experience of those, who have all the advantages and pleasures of this world at command, and use all the arts they can to improve their taste of them, is not attainable in this life; and therefore it is highly agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of God, to suppose, there is another life, wherein it may be attain'd. For to what wife or good end has God implanted in the minds of men such strong, such uninterrupted, and general inclinations; if, after all, there be no true or reasonable foundation for them? When all other creatures, so far as we can observe, have agreeable entertainment provided for all their natural appetites and affections, shall man, the lord of the creation, the noblest work in this visible world, be the only creature, with respect to whom, the common laws of creation, and methods of providence, do not here take place? Or shall he alone be acted with those delusory hopes and desires, which he, who continually impresses them, has for ever excluded him from all possibility of gratifying? Yet this argument, we allow, rather concludes for the reasonableness of believing a future state, than directly in proof of a future judgment. And because, as I have on a former occasion observ'd, it may be pretended that there is no absolute necessity that these two articles should be connected, the proof here urg'd for a future judgment, is only to be consider'd so far of any force, as there may be (and that certainly there are) very probable reasons, if not necessarily conclusive, on supposition of a future state, for the credibility of a future judgment. lastly, should it be argued, and this has indeed been in all ages the most general and prevailing argument in proof of a future judgment, that it is necessary to suppose it, in order to vindicate the justice of divine providence in this world, which so promiscuously distributes the blessings and evils of life to wicked and good men. Should it be farther observ'd, that indeed the bleffings and evils of this life do not appear so much to be dispens'd with an indiscriminating hand, as frequently, to all appearance, in favour of wicked men *, who flow in wealth and luxury, who are posses'd

^{*} It must be acknowledg'd, that the main difficulty, which, in the question concerning these promiscuous events, so much perplex'd the minds of men, rather respected the prosperity of the wicked, than the sufferings of the good; there being no man so good, but his own conscience will inform him, he deserves what he suffers, and that he suffers even less than his iniquities deserve. It was therefore the prosperous state of wicked men, (tho' the difficulty arising from the consideration of it, is fully solv'd by the doctrine of a future

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of the powers, the honours, and all the other visible glories of the world, sometimes as the very rewards or known effects of their fins and impieties; whilst good men are not only exposed to the greatest miseries and calamities of life; but sometimes, in consequence of their acting as becomes good men, and upon a principle of strict virtue and religion. Should it be inferr'd from either, or from both of these considerations, that there is a time coming, wherein a just God will vindicate the seeming inequalities of such providential events here, from all imputations injurious to his justice, by making a visible and final distinction between wicked and good men, and separating them eternally from one another, as a man separates the wheat from the tares, which were suffer'd for some time to grow up promiscuously together; whatever force, I say, there may be in any of these arguments separately, or in all of them together, to convince us that there is a judgment to come; yet it must be acknowledg'd a mighty advantage that we have a divine authority, and that committed to a standing revelation, to assure us, God has appointed a day wherein he will judge the world. This is a plain declaration; not depending on a long series of proofs, to which some men may not be in a disposition to attend, while others are less able to discover the connection of them; but which is obvious, and accommodated to every capacity. Let us then, how clear or strong soever the natural proofs of a judgment to come may appear, yet ultimately confide, as in a more sure anchor of hope, in this faithful saying, and accept it with all thankfulness to God.

SECT. II.

Concerning the person, who is to judge the world.

HAT Christ is the person, who, according to the present confession of our faith, is to come to judge the world, will not be disputed: But this is not what I here intend to bestow a distinct section upon, tho' in few words as possible. My design

future judgment) which appear'd so difficultly reconcileable with the justice of a divine providence, that it was sometimes made use of as matter of question, whether there was, in truth, any providence.

Τολμώ καταπάν μήποτ έκ άσιν Θεοί, Κακοί β δίτυχενίες ἐπιπλήτίεσί με.

Aristoph.

here,

here, is to consider, how our Lord, in respect to his character as God and man in one person, is peculiarly qualify'd to be our

judge.

When we consider him as man, as sensible of the common passions and frailties of human nature, as knowing experimentally whereof we are made, and as being touch'd with a feeling of our condition, we have the strongest grounds to hope, that the judicial proceedings at the last day will be temper'd with all the equity, that the nature or circumstances of our crimes will admit. If Christ, abstracting from his human nature, should appear in all the glory and majesty of the divine, or discover those terrible effects of them, which he did in the delivery of the law on mount Sinai, who would be able to abide his coming, or to endure when he appeareth? How could the best and most holy of his servants so much as bear the thoughts of standing in judgment before him?

"IT might, perhaps, have been thought more suitable to the awful solemnity of the last day, and the dignity and glory wherein Christ will then appear, if he had been describ'd under the character of our judge, as the Son of God, the bright-ness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person; or in those other magnificent terms, wherein he is so often spoken of in the prophetical writings. But still it is more suitable to the state and condition of mankind, and his tender compassion towards them, that when he speaks of coming to judge the word, he should rather give us an idea of his human, than of his divine nature.

" For, indeed, when we consider the infinite perfections of " the divine nature, and at what an infinite distance our sins have " separated us from it; had the eternal God himself, without the "interpolal of a mediator, thought fit to convene the world in "judgment before him; alas! the best of men would have been " so oppress'd with the glory of his majesty, and the sense of their " own demerits, that they must of necessity, under the best grounded " hopes, have funk into great despondency of mind. But, on the other hand, when we consider that our judge has taken upon him our human nature; that he will appear in it, and knows the infirmi-"ties of it; this is matter of unspeakable consolation to penitent " sinners, under the apprehensions of all the sins, with which they " stand charg'd; and cannot fail to give them greater boldness " of access to their judge, by preventing every anxious thought, "which might arise from a consciousness of their own frailties, " or from any suppos'd rigour in his proceedings. He that as-" sum'd our nature, and has done and suffer'd so much for us in "it, will certainly shew all the lenity and tenderness to it, which can consist with the terms of evangelical obedience. For what the apostle speaks of Jesus Christ, as our High Priest, may, with equal propriety, be apply'd to him, as executing this office of his judiciary and regal power. We have not a judge, who cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our infirmities; but who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore go boldly unto the throne of grace, that we obtain mercy, and find grace and help in time of need.

"How is it possible for the best man living, without fear or trembling, to consider, that he must one day stand in judgment before a just, omniscient, and all-powerful God, in order to be sentenc'd to an eternity of happiness or misery, according to the good or evil he has done in this life? But if any thing can allay the terror of such a consideration, it must be this; that our judge is the Saviour of the world, the one mediator be-

" tween God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

" And therefore, it is observable, that our Lord himself assigns " his taking our human nature, with the infirmities of it, upon " him, as one reason, in particular, why God hath constituted " him to be the judge of the world. The Father, says he, bath " given bim authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of " man *. And accordingly, in the twentieth chapter of St. Mat-" thew's gospel, where he more particularly describes the solemn " and awful process of the last judgment, tho' he speaks of it in " very high and lofty terms, and represents himself surrounded "with myriads of angels, sitting upon the throne of his glory; " yet, to moderate that dread and astonishment, which would arise " in the minds of his most faithful and true disciples, from a sense of his divine presence and majesty, he is pleas'd, even in the " midst of his triumphs, and all the glorious appearances, wherein "his divinity will then shine forth, to style himself the Son of "man. It is probably for the same reason, that the apostle, " speaking by direction of the Holy Spirit of God, concerning " the last judgment, tells us, it will be executed, by the man, " whom God hath ordain'd t.

OF affinity with the foregoing consideration, is that of Christ's being, as man, head of the church, and exercising, in this capacity, a judicial power over mankind. God having design'd to destroy the infernal Babylen, the powers of darkness, and to erect to himself a new and holy city, in the privileges whereof, all mankind, who would comply with the conditions of them, might partake;

^{*} John 5. 27.

it was highly agreeable to the divine wildom, that a human person should be plac'd at the head of this society, to prescribe the rules, and exemplify the duties of it; to inform and govern the members which should compose it, and according to those rules, and their neglect or performance of those duties, finally to pass sentence upon them: And not only so, but to punish the refractory and contumelious, who should refuse to come into this society, or the proper design of it, by a more strict, holy, and regular course of life. But what I here observe, more peculiarly relates to us, as profess'd and incorporated members of this society; and the inference I would draw from it, is, that the relation, wherein we stand to Christ, as the head of it, gives us that assurance of his favour, and his tender compassion towards us, when we shall be conven'd in judgment before him, which no other relation, that we are capable of conceiving, could have given. And accordingly, tho' I have accounted for those words, the Father hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man, upon the former principle; yet St. Augustin (and they are capable of being explain'd in both senses) resolves the reason of Christ's judicial power into his character *, as head of the church, tho' there was no necessity for his excluding the other sense.

2. It was necessary, notwithstanding, that the Lord, by whom we are to be judg'd, should be God; that when he comes to execute judgment, mercy and truth might meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. The wisest, the best of men, and of the most penetrating minds, are liable, in judging of what comes before them, to make wrong judgments, from want of evidence, of a perfect knowledge, as to the motives, or other circumstances of the fact to be enquir'd into, or the ends for which it was done. All which confiderations tend very much to alter the quality of any action, whether good or evil, and to render it respectively more or less criminal, or in a like proportion commendable. And yet the deceitfulness of human virtue is such, that the conduct of men, even as to the brightest part of their character, is often made up of little more than external appearances; but those so artfully disguis'd, that they inevitably missead little and weak minds, and sometimes persons of the greatest penetration, into wrong judgments. So that they call good evil, and evil good; put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter: Applauding such actions as are done upon the most vile and dishonourable motives, and with the most infamous views. Nay, there are certain actions of de-

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^{*} Non quidem propter conditionem natura.—Sed bot pertinet ad gratiam capitis, quam Christus in humana natura accepit. Tract. in Joan.

signing men that not only draw the eyes of the world upon them, but recommend them to favour and esteem; which yet are most abominable in the sight of him, whose infinite knowledge peculiarly qualifies him to judge not according to appearance, but to

judge righteous judgment.

This consideration, that the judgment is God's, not in the original sense of these words *, which only denoted that the judges among the Israelites deriv'd their commission from God; but as it signifies God's immediate determination concerning the matter, or person to be judg'd, removes all possibility of doubt, as to the truth or rectitude of his judgment. And, indeed, if God governs the world, and is to judge it in righteousness, the same reason, upon which we suppose he will judge it, supposes him, at the same time, omniscient. It were better, upon the question concerning the happiness or misery of men, to all eternity, that there should be no final judgment, than that he who is to be our judge, and from whose sentence there lies no appeal, should be capable of

making a wrong judgment.

As we are betray'd, by outward shew and appearance, to judge falfly, both concerning other persons and things, we are also very apt to be impos'd upon in the judgment we make of our own actions: Vanity, interest, prejudice, or inclination, give such false colours to them, that it is sometimes very difficult for us to discover the grounds of them, in a true light. So that it happens, on certain occasions, even while we imagine we are doing our duty, or deserve applause for what we do, God, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, and who perfectly sees the secret springs that put us in motion, is highly displeas'd and offended with us. Let us take the best care we can, our hearts will still be deceitful, and apt to impose upon us. God only, who is greater than our hearts. and knoweth all things, can infallibly judge concerning the merits of our intentions and behaviour, when he sits in judgment upon We may have reasonable and well-grounded hopes of our own fincerity, according to the present disposition of mind, which we are in: But we may not be so perfectly assur'd, whether any previous, finister cause, which may now have escap'd our memory; did not concur towards the good we do, or the particular manner of doing it.

As the judgments of God therefore are true and righteous altogether, and his judgments only, he appropriates to himself the right of bringing every work into judgment, with every secret thing †: For the darkness hideth not from him ‡. He knoweth the hearts of

^{*} Deut. 1. 17.

all men *; and understandeth all the imaginations of their thoughts †.

He knoweth the things that come into our mind, every one of them ‡;

and no thought can be witholden from him **. There is not a word

in our tongues, but he knoweth it altogether ††.

It is our duty, nevertheless, to examine, with all the care we can, our own consciences; and we may, upon a strict examination of them, have, if not absolutely an infallible, yet a moral and well-grounded assurance, sufficient for our comfort and satisfaction. that the reports they make to us concerning our good or evil actions are honest and true. At the last day too, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, they are represented as accus'd, or else excus'd, by their own consciences. But, it is reafonable to suppose, the minds of men will then be open'd to the light and reflections of conscience, after a different manner from what they are at present. Who knows whether they will not, to prevent too great a delay of the judicial process, be so illuminated, as to have a clear and perfect view, if not perhaps a full view, at once, of all the actions, and all the circumstances of them, which they did in this life; immediately upon God's producing the book of remembrance concerning them, which was written before him ##? Then will be presented to their minds several things, which they had wholly, or in too slight a manner, pass'd over their accounts of in this life: And those crimes, which give them here no great pain or uneasiness of mind, and which they charg'd upon inadvertency or surprize, upon weakness, or their considering them, as the mere common effects of human frailty, will be resolv'd into their true principles, and appear to carry in them a far more malignant guilt than they apprehend. As, on the other hand, in the light wherein we shall discover our good actions, all the impure mixtures of self-love, which enter'd into the composition of them, (which are now often conceal'd from us, and industriously by our own fault) will then appear, to divest us of that merit, which we were willing to arrogate to our selves in them. So that, in many respects, while we imagin'd we were doing our duty, we shall plainly perceive, that we were, in truth, only following our inclination, or perhaps gratifying our vanity. Who can tell what the force and activity of a pure spirit may be, when disengaged from the corruptible body, and the laws of union with it, which now presses it down, and, by virtue of that union, obstructs or retards the proper motions of it?

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What is here suppos'd may be thought more probable, if we do but consider the light, which sometimes appears to diffuse itself in the minds of dying finners, and occasions that quick comprehent sive view of their sins, and, in consequence, that pungent sense of them, which till then they were never sensible of. Some persons, who have been recover'd, by a special mercy of God, out of the very jaws of death, and when the ligaments, which now tie the body and soul together, were in part, or in great measure, broken, and so the soul left more at liberty, to act according to the natural force of it, may possibly have experienc'd some degree of that light, the kind whereof I here mention; a light, like the word of God, quick and powerful; and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even unto the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and whereby the whole series of their past sins and offences was represented to them with their more aggravavating circumstances, after a manner, and with a force unknown before.

I do not at all doubt but there are persons now living, who can attest the truth of what is here observed, from their own experience. The greatest wonder is, (but what account can be given of the infatuation we are under in this body of sin and death) that they, who have been once thus enlightned, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come. should be able so far to deface the strong and deep impressions then made on them, as in any suture time of temptation, or under the most violent circumstances of it, to fall away.

This may serve to give us some account, how the souls of the most stupid and relentless sinners in this life, when the veil under which they now see their guilt so very imperfectly, shall be remov'd, will, in a future life, discover the folly, the ridiculousness, and deformity of their sins by an inward light more insupportable to them, in the reslections it causes them to make, than the external stames of hell itself.

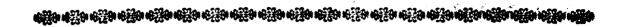
However, as we are capable, when most of all enlightned, of making wrong judgments, and we are to be judg'd by the secret intents of the heart, which God alone perfectly knows the motions and true state of, in order to our having a true, infallible, and since any pass'd upon us in the day of judgment, it was necessary, that he, who knows all things, and all men, and needs not that any should testify of man, and who knows what is in man *, should be our judge. This argument, indeed, why he should be so, is

* Col. 2. 3. John 2. 24, 25.

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plainly

plainly infinuated in the following exhortation of the apostle. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart, and then shall every man, as he truly deserves, have praise of God*.



CHAP. II.

From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

In the former part of the article, we profess to believe a suture judgment, and by whom we are to be judg'd. We are here to consider the subjects of judgment more especially in regard to mankind; and those are all men, comprehended, as to all other distinctions, under this one distinction, of the quick and the dead. Those who never tasted death, shall be judg'd, as those who shall

be rais'd to life again, for that end, from the dead.

This doctrine is founded upon plain testimonies of scripture. Christ was ordain'd of God to be the judge of quick and dead †. He shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom t. He is ready to judge the quick and the dead **. There is no way of evading the argument we draw from these words, to prove, that at the day of judgment those who are alive shall be judged, as well as those who had been really in the state of the dead, but by faying, that the words dead and alive, are not to be understood in these passages as literally spoken, but only in a figurative and metaphorical sense; as when men are term'd dead in trespasses and sins; when they are exhorted to be dead unto sin. but alive unto God. There is a passage to the former purpose in the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians; about which, interpreters have been long and very much perplex'd. The apostle there puts the question; What shall they do who are baptiz'd for the dead; if the dead rife not at all, why are they then baptiz'd for the dead? That is, to what end do we expose our selves to the greatest sufferings and persecutions of this world, in preaching the gospel for the sake and benefit of infidels, who, with respect to the life and power of the true religion, I here, according

^{* 1} Cor. 4. 5. + Acts 10. 42. ‡ 2 Tim. 4. 1. ** 1 Pet. 4. 5.

to a usual metaphor, term dead; if there be no resurrection, or future state, why do we endeavour their conversion at the hazard of every thing that is dear, or valuable to us in this life? As the whole text, in a manner, is made up of figurative expressions, and the sense we severally put upon them, is justify'd by the like expression in other places of scripture, and by the reasonableness of putting the like construction upon them here, it does not seem improbable that this, after all, may be the true sense. That to do any thing for another person signifies what is done to be design'd in favour, or for the benefit of that person, is evident from so many passages in the New Testament, that this sense of the expression will not be disputed. That to be baptized may justly be interpreted to signify the being expos'd to sufferings and persecutions, is evident from these words of our Saviour, speaking of his passion; I have a baptism to be baptized with. And indeed the whole context, if regard be had to it, requires, that the words should be explain'd in this sense; particularly the verse immediately following, wherein the same thread of argument is pursued, and which seems to be design'd as explanatory of it: And why fand we, while we are thus endeavouring to convert the heather world, in jeopardy every hour *. There will be no dispute as to the word dead; it is (and upon that occasion I have gone a little out of my way to explain this text) confessedly a figurative expression, to signify men in a sinful or unregenerate state; or men of this world not professing the true faith, or not living in the true fear of God. In this sense it is us'd by our blessed Saviour himself; Suffer the dead to go and bury the dead. Which passage therefore obviates another difficulty, which may be rais'd against the explication that has been given of these words, from the use of the word dead in the same sentence, both in a literal and metaphorical sense. For if such a use of it was here made, as we must necessarily acknowledge it was, by our Saviour, why might it not also, after his example, be made by the apostle? But tho' the term dead is sometimes taken in an improper sense, where the context or reason of the thing obliges us to consider and explain it in that sense; yet the literal acceptation of words should always be kept to, where there is no such visible occasion of departing from it. Now the manner of Christ's coming to judgment, as reprefented in scripture, when men shall be eating and drinking, as in the days of Noah; as marrying and giving in marriage supposes that they shall be judg'd at the same time with the dead, and im-

mediately upon their discovering these real and proper actions of life; or else that they shall be reserved for a separate and distinct time of judgment. But there is no appearance in scripture, that our Saviour will fit separately in judgment upon the dead and the living. All nations shall then be gathered before him. He shall fend his angels with a great sound of the trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. And when they are thus gathered together, they shall be plac'd on his right hand, and the wicked on his left, and the final sentence be there respectively pronounc'd upon them. Upon the elect; Come, ye bleffed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. Upon the wicked; Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. This is the scripture account of the general and last judgment; there are no grounds from them, or in reason, to believe, there will be two judgments. And if but one judgment, and all mankind are to be judg'd, then those who are alive at the coming of our Lord must of necessity be judg'd, and at the same time, with those who shall be rais'd to life again to that end. There is but one thing which has the least shew of an objection, that lies against what is here afferted. It is faid; that those, who, at our Saviour's first appearance, are alive, shall immediately die, and after death revive again, to be judg'd together with those, who are rais'd out of their graves. objection has no other ground but those passages in scripture, wherein it is declar'd, that all men shall die; particularly, where the Holy Spirit declares, it is appointed for all men once to die, and after this the judgment. But there is no necessity of interpreting these words concerning every particular person, in the strictest sense, (for then no one person could ever have been translated) but only concerning the state and condition of mankind in general. There are, on the other hand, two or three plain texts of scripture, which directly prove, that those, who are alive at the appearing of Christ shall not die, in a strict sense; but only suffer such a change in their bodies, as may be proper to qualify them for an entrance into that future state, to which they shall be confign'd. We, says the apostle *, which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, Shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ Shall rise first. Then we which are alive,

^{* 1} Thess. 4. 15, 16, 16.

and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord. To this effect the apostle argues in another place. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be chang'd*. And in the following verse, the dead shall be rais'd incorruptible, and we shall be chang'd. It plainly appears from the former passage, that those who are alive when our Saviour comes to judge the world, shall not pass through a state of death in order to be rais'd again to judgment. And from the two latter texts, we have the reason infinuated why there is no necessity for their passing through a state of death to that end; because they shall suffer a change proper to the state, to which they shall be judg'd; tho' it is not now necessary for us distinctly to know, wherein that change is to conssist, or after what manner it will be effected.



Of the CREED.

ARTICLE VIII.

I believe in the Holy Ghost.

CHAP. I.

I believe in.

Believe, which stands at the head of the creed, but is to be understood as presix'd to all the subsequent articles, and to every branch of them in it, is here, upon the confession we make of our faith in the Holy Ghost, ex-

pressly repeated. Tho' this repetition, indeed, was not made in

* 1 Cor. 15. 51. 7 C

feveral

feveral of the ancient creeds, which only connected the other articles with it, and as they are connected with one another, by a conjunction. Tho' in some creeds this profession of our faith was also particularly specify'd before the second article, relating to the person and character of the Son: And the reason why it is now there omitted, yet repeated in this article, may be, that the divinity of the Holy Ghost, to which I may add his personality, have been more disputed, than either the divine nature, or personal subsistence of the Son, in the unity of the Godhead. Tho' we have. if not so great variety of proofs, yet equally clear and satisfactory proofs, in both respects, when the Holy Ghost, as when the Son is propos'd as the object of our faith. Upon this account, it is probable, that the repetition here made, notwithstanding it was omitted in the ancient creeds, yet was thought proper to be retain'd in the Roman creed; as hereby we are not only suppos'd to confess that we believe the Holy Ghost to be, in a true and proper sense, a person, but to be also, in truth a divine person; the object of our love and hope, of our trust and adoration; equal to the other two persons, with respect to his Godhead, tho' consider'd as inferior, with respect to the order, according to which he subsists in it; and the foundation whereof, we express by his proceeding from them both.

In this article therefore, we do not barely profess that there is a Holy Ghost, but to believe that he is truly and essentially God; and that we ought therefore to pay him the duties of love and assume, of dependence and worship, as God; the same duties which are supposed incumbent on us when, in the first article, we profess to believe in God the Father. What is here said, is perfectly agreeable to the doctrine of the fifth article of our church; whereby it is declared, that, the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

But because the principal arguments against the doctrine of the Trinity have been already consider'd, and do not, in point of reason, particularly lie against the divinity of the Holy Ghost, but against the doctrine of a plurality of divine persons in general; (for it is equally reconcileable to all our ideas of the divine nature, that there should be three, as that there should be two persons in the unity of it:) Therefore I shall not have occasion to add any thing farther concerning the Holy Ghost, as, strictly speaking, the third person of the ever-blessed Trinity, but confine my self, under the next head, to shew, that he is, in a proper sense, a person; a person truly divine; and having done this, to consider, what we are to conceive, as to his procession, and

what are, or have been his offices, extraordinary and ordinary, in relation to us, or to the church of God.



CHAP. II.

I believe in the Holy Ghost.

Am to shew, in the first place, under this head, according to the method propos'd, that the Holy Ghost is properly a person, and not, as the Sabellians maintain'd, a mere quality, power, or operation of the divine being. Which herefy, so soon as it began to spread itself, was universally condemn'd by the orthodox *. Yet we do not deny, that, according to a usual metonymy in scripture, and profane authors, of the effect for the cause, the graces of the Holy Spirit influencing the minds or hearts of men, are call'd by the name of the Holy Spirit. In this sense it is urg'd, that God declares he will pour out bis Spirit upon all flesh; that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; that the Holy Ghost dwelleth in us; and that God will give his Spirit to every one that asks it. But how does it follow, if the Holy Ghost be sometimes us'd in a figurative sense, therefore it is never us'd in the holy scriptures in a proper sense, or as denoting him a true personal agent; especially where such actions are attributed to him, as cannot, with any propriety, be attributed either to the person of the Father, or of the Son. If we can really shew, that the scriptures do speak of certain actions belonging, in so peculiar a sense, to him, then all the arguments from other figurative expressions of scripture, whether particularly respecting his operations, or of

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^{*} Dr. Cudworth particularly observes, that the orthodox Anti-arian fathers did all of them zealously condemn Sabellianism; the doctrine whereof is no other than this, that there was but one hypostasis, or singular individual essence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and consequently, that they were indeed but three several names, or notions, or modes of one and the self-same thing. From whence such absurdities as these would follow, that the Father's begetting the Son, was nothing but one name, notion, or mode of the deity's begetting another; or else the same deity under one notion, begetting itself under another notion: And when, again, the Son, or Word, is said to have been incarnate, and to have suffer'd death for us upon the cross; that it was nothing but a mere logical mode of the deity, that was incarnate and suffer'd, or else the whole deity under one particular notion or mode only. Intell. Sist. p. 605. So that what Justin Maretyr observes, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, that the Son, or the Ady was not divorable prevention of personal subsistence, is equally applicable, and, in the sense of all the orthodox fathers, to the Holy Ghost.

a like kind, where personal actions are ascrib'd to mere qualities; (as when it is said, Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not; Charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly.) These arguments, we say, will conclude nothing against the personal subsistence of the Holy Spirit in the divine nature, and that it might, with equal appearance of reason, be argued, these personal actions being attributed to charity, therefore the man, in or by whom charity thus operates, is not a personal actions.

fonal agent.

Now, to confirm what we here affert, concerning the personality of the Holy Ghost, certain actions are really attributed to him in the same sense, and according to as full and significant a manner of expression, as they could have been attributed to him, on supposition of his having been really a person. He promises his apostles, upon his departure from them, to send the Comforter that he may abide with them for ever *. He speaks of him, as he would have done of a true and real person. The world cannot receive him, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him t. tells them, if he go not away, the Comforter will not come to them; but if he go away, he will fend him unto them \pm. these expressions have reference to so many distinct personal actions, and so visibly, that had our Saviour really design'd to describe the Holy Ghost as, in a proper sense, a person, there could have been no occasion for describing him in more strong or proper terms. But, to shew yet farther, that, by the character of the Holy Ghost, we are to understand something more than the bare effusion, or power of divine grace; he is join'd in the tenour of the same commission, which the apostles receiv'd to preach and baptize, with the Father, and the Son. But to authorize them to preach, as that commission runs, in the name of a quality, power, or operation, was a way of speaking, especially upon an occasion when all equivocal expressions were to be avoided, no less inconvenient than unusual. It was also, could it in any case be admitted, yet in that place very improper, as being altogether redundant and unneces-All the power of God, and of Christ, which was requisite to render their commission authentick, and to support them in the discharge of it, being already granted in their names.

But St. Paul, in speaking concerning the different distributions of divine grace by the Holy Spirit, still puts the question relating to his personality more out of all doubt. For those different distributions plainly import, so far as we can argue from the most proper and natural signification of words, a difference between the

^{*} John 14. 16.

gift or operation, and the principle from which it flows: That principle is expressly term'd the Holy Ghost. If therefore there be any difference between the cause and the effect, the Holy Spirit must be understood as a principle distinct from his gifts: And that principle not being God the Father, or the Son, but mention'd as a distinct principle, and by a distinct name from them, and as having personal actions really attributed to him, must of necessity constitute a distinct person from them.

THERE is one action, in particular, which supposes an impropriety, that cannot be accounted for, in making the Holy Spirit no more than a divine power or quality; however by a more harsh metaphor, God may be said to send a power or a quality, or to speak of that power in terms, which might be properly apply'd to denote a person; yet to say, that the power sent by him, tho' it has no personal subsistence, intercedes to him, as the Holy Spirit is confessed to do, would be, in other words, since we cannot distinguish the power of God from his essence, to say, that he in-

tercedes to himself.

But, indeed, the greatest, and most distinguishing character of any personal agent, is, and this brings the personality of the Holy Ghost still nearer to our common way of conceiving things, that he is a voluntary and free agent. Now the felf-same Spirit is not only represented by the apostle as working very different effects upon men, but as dividing to every man severally as he will.

Should it then be granted farther, and contrary to what we have been arguing, that a quality may be said, after a manner not altogether improper, to be sent, to come, to go, or to abide with men, and even to intercede to the person by whom it is commission'd; yet no forms of speech can justify our ascribing to a qua-

lity a distinct, proper, and arbitrary power of choice.

II. If the Holy Ghost be a person, there will be little occasion to insist upon the proofs of his being a divine person; seeing those very arguments which conclude for his personality, would certainly, had we no other, conclude very strongly in proof of his divinity. His being equally join'd in granting the same commission with the Father and the Son, which supposes an equal power: His mission to guide men into all truth, which supposes him omnission: His being said to dwell in our bodies, as in his own temple, which yet are call'd the temple of God, and the members of Christ, supposes that our prayers and adorations, and all other acts of divine worship, ought equally to be address'd to him. All these arguments, we infer, prove him, by direct implication, to be really and truly God. For it is not to be imagin'd, that the supreme being, should distinguish any person or being, who

is not truly God, not only by attributing to him his proper and effential perfections, but by permitting him to share in common all the honours of divine worship, and every act of homage and adoration, proper to it; to be join'd with the Father and the Son in the form of baptism, in the doxologies, in the apostolical benedictions, some of which, in the natural sense of them, imply an invocation to him. What possible grounds can we have to believe, that God, who is so jealous of his honour, who has so expressly declar'd, that he will not give his glory to another, and who cannot, consistently with the perfections of his nature, give it to another, should yet admit any person, who is not truly God, to an equal participation with him, in the most solemn rites, acts, and expressions of divine worship.

Besides these characters of divine authority and omniscience attributed to the Holy Spirit, and his partaking with the Father and the Son in the acts of divine worship, the grace of sanctification, his peculiar work, the power of justifying us*, the nature of the offences committed against him, which are, in some respects, more unpardonable than those committed against the Son, or even against the Father himself †, necessarily suppose him, if he be a person, to be a divine person; these being powers and characters proper only to the divine being, and which cannot belong to any

creature.

IT is farther urg'd for the divinity of the Holy Ghost, that he is call'd God, not in a metaphorical, but in a proper sense. Why, faith St. Peter to Ananias, hath Satan fill'd thy heart to bye unto the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lyed unto men, but unto God. The same action whereby the Holy Ghost was affronted, is said, in other words, to be lying to God; and therefore, according to the most natural construction of them, must be interpreted to ter-When it is said again, that all scriminate on the same object. pture is given by inspiration of God; and yet that the prophets spake, as they were mov'd by the Spirit of God ‡; the same effect being attributed to the Holy Ghost and to God, and on the same occasion, does imply, that the name of God, tho' not directly apply'd, yet is, in the reason of the thing, communicable to the Holy Ghost. We draw the same inference from the words of the apostle, where the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the temple of God, are indifferently us'd to fignify and express the same tem-

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^{* 1} Cor. 6. 11. + Matt. 12. 31, 32. ‡ 2 Tim. 3. 16. 2 Pet. 21. ** 1 Cor. 3. 16. 6. 19. 3. 17.

Should it be said, that the Holy Ghost is only call'd or suppos'd God, in these passages, according to an improper way of speaking; as Moses was said to be a God unto Pharaoh, or as civil magistrates are call'd Gods, in right of their acting by an authority deriv'd from God; besides that there are some considerable circumstances in the texts, which will not admit of that evasion, the reasons already mention'd, upon which the perfections, powers, and worship of the true God, are attributed to the Holy Ghost, cannot admit of it; but evidently imply, that tho' there are, who are call'd gods many; yet to us there is but one God; one that ought to be call'd so, in a strict and absolute sense, tho' the revelation he has made to us, obliges to assert three persons in the unity of the Godhead. I am to enquire,

III. How we are to conceive, that the Holy Ghost, whom we have prov'd to be a person, and a divine person, derives his origin as such? The manner whereof we express, by his proceeding from the Father and the Son. An expression design'd to signify, fo far as we are able to form any idea of an act, for which we are forc'd to use a borrow'd term, what the relation of the Holy Ghost in the ever-blessed Trinity is founded upon; but which we are justify'd in the use of by authority of the holy scriptures. And, indeed, in so difficult a point, it is the safest way for us to be wise unto sobriety, and to keep, as near as we can, to the light, which the scripture language gives us into it; and not to amuse our selves with nice and curious enquiries, how the Holy Ghost proceeded, or after what manner his procession is to be consider'd, as distinct from the generation of the Son. If, in some cases, we are oblig'd by our adversaries to explain our selves after a more distinct manner, than the very terms and expressions in scripture will allow, we should endeavour, at least, only to make use of such forms of speech, as most naturally arise out of them. Now so far the reafon of distinguishing between the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Ghost, does appear not to be ill founded; that the second person being styl'd the son, it is more agreeable to that relation, and our common way of conceiving the foundation of it, that he should be said to be generated; as the Holy Ghost, being repreferred to us under the name and character of a Spirit, it is more agreeable to our conceiving the manner of his subsisting in the Godhead, by way of procession or spiration. And as he is the third person, it is also more reasonable for us to suppose, that he should derive from both the other persons; and that the Son, being the second person, should derive from the Father only. There have been warm disputes, upon this point, in the church, and which contributed very much to disturb the peace of it. In

the council of Constantinople it was only declar'd, that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father. And the council of Ephesus determin'd, that no addition should be made to the Constantinopolitan creed. The Latins afterwards, contrary to the determination of that council, asserting, that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and the Son, were condemn'd by the Greeks for adding to the faith. The Greeks, in their turn, were condemn'd by those of the Western church, as injurious to the dignity of the Son, and detracting from what ought to be attributed to him in the procession of the Holy Ghost.

WITHOUT confidering the arguments for the different decisions of the Greeks and Latins in this controversy, it appears, upon a general view of it, more reasonable to follow the doctrine of the Western church, and to believe, that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and the Son. For tho' it is only said in scripture, that the Spirit proceedeth from the Father *; yet that these words are not exclusive of the Son, appears from the former part of the verse, where Christ tells his apostles, he will send the Comforter unto them from the Father; as in the preceding chapter he had told them, the Father would fend the Spirit in his name. pressions denoting an equal power and authority in the Father and the Son, with respect to the mission of the Holy Ghost, there is reason to conclude, that power was founded in his proceeding equally from both. This must be granted, at least, that there being in the unity of the divine essence three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which subsist according to a certain order in it, there is nothing unreasonable in supposing, if we argue from the nature of the thing, and were the scriptures wholly filent as to the point in question, that the third person derives both from the Father and the Son.

IV. I propos'd to consider, in the last place, under this head, the more peculiar offices of the Holy Ghost, in relation to the

church of God, whether extraordinary, or ordinary.

The extraordinary effects of his operation, when Christ was conceiv'd; of his appearance, when he visibly descended at the baptism of Christ, like a dove; or after the manner, not, as the words are commonly understood, in the shape of a dove, and which has given occasion to a superstitious practice, to say no worse, of painting the Holy Spirit in that shape. The dispossession of devils, by his power **; his guiding the apostles into all truth; his teaching them all things; his bringing all things to their

^{*} John 15. 26. + Mat. 1. 21. ‡ Ch. 3. 16. ** Ch. 12. 28.

remembrance, whatever Christ had said unto them, and his shewing them things to come *. The gifts of healing, working of miracles; of prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues †; these, we say, and other extraordinary graces and effects of the Holy Spirit, being now ceas'd, with the occasions of them, the reason and necessity of continuing them, is of consequence ceas'd also.

MIRACLES are God's strange work, which sometimes he operates for the conviction of unbelievers; or perhaps in order to the conversion of sinners; where the special reasons of his grace and providence may require, that he should aftert the truth or power of religion in a more remarkable and awakening manner; to the end men may know, that he is the Lord, who exerciseth judgment and loving-kindness in the earth. But when the means of attaining this end have been once thus eminently afforded; when unbelievers have all the moral evidence, that can reasonably be desir'd, to convince them of the truth; and sinners all the rational and proper motives, which should persuade them to the practice of religion: And when all men, in general, may be affur'd, not only from the light of natural reason, but by arguments drawn from the most authentick, and best attested facts, that there is a God, who judgeth in the earth; a law-giver, who is able to save and to destroy; it is not then so agreeable to the simplicity of the divine action or conduct, that God should continually interpose by a series of miracles, or by any extraordinary events, towards accomplishing the same end. If men are in a disposition to be convinc'd, or to grow better, they have already the requisite means of conviction, and a more holy life; but if they are not in that disposition, neither would they, in either respect, be persuaded by any new miracle, or any number of miracles whatever; but still see them, like the Jews, with a veil over their eyes.

But the reasons of the ordinary offices of the Holy Ghost, which consist, as he is our guide, in enlightning the eyes of our understanding ‡, that we may know what is the hope of the calling of God; in enabling us to hold fast the form of sound words, which we have heard; and to keep that which has been committed unto us **, with a more immediate regard to his office, as the Comforter, which consists in causing us to abound in hope, and to be fill'd with all joy and peace in believing, and in his shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts ‡‡. And again, with a special respect to his office, as our Sanctifier, which consists in his purifying our

^{*} John 16. 13. 14. 26. 16. 3. + 1 Cor. 12. 8, 9, 10, 11. ‡ Ephef. 1. 17, 18. ** 2 Tim. 1. 13, 14. † Rom. 15. 13. 5. 5.

fouls in obeying the truth; and strengthning us by his might in the inner man; and healing our insirmities *. Or, lastly, if we consider him in the absence of Christ, as presiding in his church; with regard to which character, it is his office to feed it; to appoint overseers in it; to save us by the washing of regeneration; and to haptize us into one body †. In a word, to give that benediction and efficacy to every institution of God, which it has of itself no natural power or propriety to operate. The reason, we say, of these several offices of the Holy Ghost still subsisting, upon which he was originally sent to exercise them, we have all the grounds that can be supposed, to believe, had we no special promise or revelation to that end, that this Holy Spirit is now with us, and will for ever abide with us in the exercise of them, to the end of the world.



Of the CREED.

ARTICLE IX.

The Holy Catholick Church, the Communion of Saints.

Chap. I. The Holy Catholick Church.

cerning the import of the word holy in this article. The design of our professing to believe, that the church of Christ is a holy church, implies our belief of it, as a church erected for holy and religious ends, and govern'd by holy.

^{*} Ephes. 3. 16, 17. Rom. 8. 26, 27. † Atts 20. 28. Titus 3. 5. 1 Cor. 12. 13. laws:

laws: Which ends cannot be attain'd, but by a life of strict virtue and piety, in obedience to those laws. This obedience is requir'd of all its members without distinction; yet it is visible they do not all of them actually comply with the terms of it. whereas the grace of God hath appear'd unto all men, teaching them, that denying themselves and all worldly lusts, they should live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world; there are confessedly great numbers of them who neither practise, as they ought, the duties of justice, temperance, or piety. church, however, is here denominated, and it is reasonable it should be so, not from the behaviour of its members contrary to the known and stated rules of it, but from the proper and natural effects which it was originally design'd to produce. As when we speak of any civil society, we intend that it is incumbent on every one of its members, in the capacity or relation proper to him, to behave himself agreeably to the laws of it, by a regular, civil, and inoffensive conduct; tho' there are great numbers of men, whose conduct will not bear to be examin'd by all these characters, or perhaps by any of them.

THE main question lies concerning the catholicism, or extent of the church of Christ: As whether all persons professing them-felves Christians, are entitled to the special benefits and privileges of it; or only a certain number of them incorporated by certain

laws into a distinct, regular, and visible society.

That the church is a distinct society, not only exclusive of unbelievers, but of certain persons professing christianity, is evident from the facrament pre-required to their admission into it; without which, it is expressly declared, that a man cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; whether considered as the kingdom of Christ here upon earth, or as a suture state of happiness in the eternal fruition of God. It is contrary, indeed, to our notion, and to the practice of any well-established society, that a person barely by confessing himself ready to be governed by the rules of it, and which constitute it such, should thereby be entitled to the privileges of it, without being received into it according to the forms prescribed to that end.

THAT the church is a regular society, whose members are, or ought to be govern'd, by certain, known, and stated rules: I do not only mean in respect to a holy life and conversation in general, but such rules as relate to it, consider'd strictly as a society; Rules of decency, of order, and edification, as evident from those rules, which are, in fact, laid down in the holy scriptures to this end. To which we may add, that as the action of God always bears the character of his attributes, and particularly of his wisdom.

dom, in all his institutions, to suppose, that he has instituted a society, which is not, in the nature of it, a regular society, is to suppose him, not what he is represented in scripture, and what he really is, according to the common idea of him, the author of peace and order, but of confusion in the holy city, which he has founded.

THE reasons from decency, order, and edification, which prove the church a regular society, prove it, at the same time, a visible society. Except it should be said, contrary to the plain intention of those rules, which were design'd to regulate the external behaviour of men, particularly in the worship of God, that they relate, notwithstanding, wholly to what passes within their own hearts or consciences: Which is to render the signification of all words useless, towards expressing a distinction between such actions as are visible, and such inward operations of the mind as are invisible.

IF it be allow'd for these, or any like reasons, that the church is a distinct, regular, and visible society; but men should contend that it is, nevertheless, a mere voluntary society, which people enter into, or go out of again, at discretion, and without the least obligation to any antecedent terms of communion with it, but what they were willing to impose upon themselves; what they may at any time depart from, still reserving to themselves a liberty of uniting in any, or occasionally in every communion of Christians, without disturbing the peace, or acting contrary to any law of the Christian church in general: This, we say again, is a notion of a society, unworthy of the institution of God, and altogether irreconcileable with the character of his wisdom: A society, which has no example, in any wife or wellregulated government in the world; and which, if it could be supposed to subsist regularly for any short time, yet would soon have a period put to the regularity of it, and run out into the utmost confusion and disorder. Such a society is also contrary to a known fact, and to certain instituted means of religion; which either bring men under an obligation to observe them, or else must suppose a divine positive command, which does not oblige men to obedience, by virtue of its being enjoin'd, but only in consequence of their chusing to obey it.

THESE considerations may be sufficient to shew in general, that the church is not only a distinct, regular, and visible society, but a stated society, in virtue of God's appointment; and that all mankind are not therefore comprehended within the pale of it, nor even all men professing christianity, but those only who enter into it, and continue in it, according to those rules which constitute, and are necessary to preserve it, as a society, But because

the sense of this article has been much controverted, I shall add something more particularly, towards the explication of it *.

The church of Christ, in a true and large sense, may take in the whole number of men, who, since the fall of the first man, have been in covenant with God. How different soever the terms of this covenant have been represented at different times, all the terms of commerce, in virtue of it, between God and man, were always founded on the mediation of Christ. His blood did not then first atone for the sins of men, when it flow'd out from his sacred body upon the cross; but the expiation of it was as early, as the necessity of applying it for the benefit of mankind. He

was the lamb flain from the foundation of the world.

For several ages, his kingdom was principally confin'd to one people. He shew'd his word unto Jacob, his statutes and ordinances unto Israel; but did not deal so with any other nation, neither had the heathen knowledge of his laws. Yet as the design of erecting his kingdom, was to destroy the universal empire, which the devil had in a manner usurp'd in the world, and to extend the terms of peace and reconciliation with God to as wide a compass as the guilt of Adam extended, he did in these last days personally appear both to enlarge the bounds of his dominion, and to propose the last conditions of life and happiness to mankind. There is now no regard to the distinction, whether of Jew, Greek, or Barbarian. The partition-wall between them is taken away, and God has given his Son the heathen for his inheritance, the utmost parts of the earth for his possession.

The apostles were left by him with commission and full powers to preach the gospel to every creature, to go and teach all nations; baptizing them in his name. The church of Christ therefore, may in general be said to consist of those persons, in what nation or kingdom soever dispers'd, who have been initiated into it by baptism. But whether the whole body of baptiz'd Christians be a regular society; whether there be in it any necessary indispensable rules of order or economy; how the persons in this society stand related to one another; whether some have authority to preside, whilst others are oblig'd to obey; whether the church of Christ be only a confus'd medley of separate and incoherent parts, like a heap of sand or of stones, that are united together by no com-

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^{*} I am oblig'd for most of the materials, which compose the following exposition of this article, in respect to both branches of it, to my very good and ingenious friend Mr. Law; who has merited so highly by his late excellent and learned vindication of the facerdotal office, and of the evangelical institutions in general.

mon tye or cement, has been much controverted. I shall shew therefore, that the church is a regular society, the members whereof are united to one another by such bands, and terms of communion, as could have been thought proper to the most re-

gular society.

Now that the church is a society so united, may be fully prov'd from the characters and representations that are given in the holy scriptures concerning it. It is call'd the kingdom of beaven, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ. What is the plain and proper signification of these words? Do not they evidently describe to us a number of people under such rules of life and obedience, as are proper to constitute a kingdom? There can be no other reason of their being call'd a kingdom, but because the state they are in, is a state of such order, discipline, and economy, as is necessary to the being of a kingdom.

But if the congregation of *Christ*'s flock be a loose, disunited number of people, that have no dependence on one another; if his church be a state of no order, no discipline, or economy, then to call it a kingdom, is equally to pervert the natural signification of words, as to put darkness for light, and light for darkness.

ST. Paul borrows the following illustration from the mutual dependence we have upon one another under Christ the head. we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another *. Again, speaking of Christ, he says, God gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body †. Many texts to this purpose might be cited from the holy scriptures; but these are sufficient to shew, what kind of body, or fociety, the Christian church is. For no one can deny the church, thus describ'd, to be a regular society, but for one of these reasons: Either that the comparison of it to a natural body, does not at all prove, that it has, in truth, any refemblance to a body; or if it have, that it may, notwithstanding, consist of separate and independent members. Either of which absurdities, tho' necessarily following, from the principles of some men; yet certainly are too gross to be directly asserted, or maintain'd by them.

The nature of this church, as a regular society, appears farther from the institution of that sacrament, which the sounder of it has appointed, as the means of our entring into it. And as by one spirit we are baptis'd into one body ‡; so by virtue of that one bread, whereof we in common participate, we, being many, are one body **. And can this character belong to us, as persons

^{*} Rom. 2. 4. + Ephof. 4. 12. ‡ 1 Cor. 12. 10. *** 1 Cor. 10. 17. wholly

wholly independent, or having no visible or proper communication with one another, as members of the same body? Is it the nature and intent of these sacraments, to make us one body under one head, and to entitle us all to the same privileges of it, and upon the same terms? And are we, nevertheless, a society erected on no regular grounds, and subsisting upon no regular laws of communication.

THAT the church is a regular society, appears farther from the scripture account of schism. We are assured, that there is such a sin as schism; and that it consists in withdrawing our selves from the communion of the catholick church, or that part which is established where we live upon catholick principles. But now where there is no law, there can be no transgression. If we are not obliged by any laws or terms of union, our separation would not be, contrary to what the scripture supposes it, a sin, but an act of pure arbitrary choice; and it would not be any more criminal in us not to communicate with any Christians at present, than that we did not communicate with the Christians of the first century.

That our Saviour sent some persons into the world, and with authority to send others, by communicating certain powers, wherewith themselves were invested; and that they really did exercise this authority, is evident to any one that reads the holy scriptures. What the particular distinct powers of these church-officers were, (which, by the way, too supposes the church a distinct society) will appear in the sequel. At present, I am only to observe, that some government was authorized by our Saviour, and transmitted, according to his institution, by the apostles; from whence it will follow, that the congregation of Christ's people, is a body of men, among whom there are distinctions of order, and different degrees of power, that some are commissioned for the performance of such and such offices; others obliged to certain duties, corresponding to those offices.

That the church is a visible society, appears from that one branch of church authority, which consists in the power of excommunication. That such a power is lodg'd in the church, is clear from several express passages in scripture. He that beareth not the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican *. A man that is an heretick, after the first and second admonition, reject †. Which rule, plainly supposes a power in the church, at once, of excommunicating obstinate hereticks, and of judging what is heresy. Again, Now, says the apostle St. Paul to the

* Matt. 18. 17.

† Tit. 3. 10.

Corin-

Corinthians, I have written unto you not to keep company with fornicators*. Nothing can be more plain, than that here is a
power; a power originally deriv'd from Christ and his apostles,
acting by direction of the Holy Spirit in the church, of excluding
some notorious and incorrigible offenders out of it. But they
cannot exclude such persons from an invisible society, therefore
the church is visible: They cannot expel them from a number
of people that are independent of one another, therefore the church
is a society; for it is impossible, in the nature of the thing, that
either there should be a member of a society, or that a member
should be expell'd out of a society, which is not.

Since then there is such a power of expelling certain of its members evidently granted to the church: Since this power cannot be exercis'd but in a visible manner, and with respect to the church, as a visible society, it follows by undeniable consequence, that the church is a visible society, from which men may be visi-

bly excluded.

THE next thing propos'd to be consider'd is, what form of government Christ instituted in this society, and by what persons it was to be successively govern'd till his second coming. When he left the world, he communicated the power of governing the church to the apostles in these words. As my Father bath sent me, so send I you. I appoint to you a kingdom, as my Father bath appointed to me a kingdom. Now if Christ had authority, because he was sent by God, and had a kingdom appointed him from God, then his apostles had truly an authority from him: Since he declares they were sent by him, and had a kingdom given them by him, as he was sent by his Father, and had a kingdom given him from his Father.

THAT there was an authority personally vested in the apostles, is evident from these, and other texts of holy scripture. But it is question'd whether this authority, or any part of it, was to descend to after-ages, and in what manner it was to descend. This question depending on a matter of fact, it is necessary to enquire, in order to come to a resolution about it, how the apostles delegated their authority to others, if, after all, they really did delegate it.

THAT they commission'd persons to exercise particular powers, and to bear rule over others, appears beyond all possibility of con-

tradiction from the epistles to Timothy and Titus.

Timothr was sent to Ephesus to ordain elders, and had this authority given him from the apostles by imposition of their hands. From which these two things necessarily follow; that the apostles

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did communicate such an authority to particular persons; and that such persons only, exclusive of others, were vested with that authority, as they had received it from the Apostles. It is also evident, from other powers committed to this Bishop, that persons employed in the service, or ministry of the church, were not all of them equally ordained to the same powers. For Timothy was not only commissioned to ordain elders, and where, it is highly probable, there were some elders already; but he was to exercise jurisdiction and authority over those elders.

This is a clear argument for the different orders of church-officers, and the different degrees of power to be exercis'd by them. The great question is, whether that order of persons, who are now call'd Bishops, be such, as supposes they have the supreme power of jurisdiction in the church, and particularly, the power

of ordaining the clergy, from the Apoliles.

That this power of jurisdiction, and of ordaining the clergy, could belong to none but those, who received it from the Apolles, is as certain, as that the Apostles were without any such authority themselves, till they received it from Christ. This power could no more descend without their commission, who were originally entrusted with it, than men could originally take it upon themselves.

There is no necessity that we descend here to give so express an account of the hierarchy established in scripture, as to state or describe exactly the difference betwixt Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. It is sufficient to our present purpose, that it appears from them there are different degrees of power in the evangelical ministry, and that even in those times of the extraordinary dispensations of God's grace, when almost every disciple was distinguished by one special gift or other; yet none of them were qualifyed to exercise any sacerdotal power, by virtue of any gifts, but only because they had received a particular commission to that end. It is only necessary for us to deduce from the holy scriptures, that there are different degrees of power in the ministry, and that such degrees are not owing to any personal gifts or endowments, but purely to the authority and extent of their commission.

Nothing is more certain from scripture, than that some particular persons only could ordain. This will no more admit of dispute, than whether Timothy was sent to Ephesus, or what was the reason of his going thither, which was to ordain elders, and is as fully specify'd, as that he was to go thither. Since the scriptures therefore teach us, that Timothy, by a special appointment, was sent to Ephesus to ordain elders, it is plain from the scriptures, that none can ordain but such as succeed Timothy, or some of his order, in

the same commission. For as it was the extent of Timothy's commission that qualify'd him to ordain; so the same extent is necessary to all others who pretend to ordain to the same functions after him.

THERE being some difficulty in determining this question, on account of the different acceptation wherein the word Bishop is said to be us'd in the holy scriptures, the most satisfactory way of coming to a resolution upon it, and to obviate the cavils of prejudic'd men, who yet, if they know any thing of their own principles, are under an equal obligation with us in general to affert the divine right of the episcopate, in what hands soever it be lodg'd; the satisfactory way to these ends, is to enquire, what historical authentick evidence we have concerning the distinction of the episcopal order, as we affert it, in opposition to that of presbyters, as afferted by those dissenters, who have been formerly, upon whatever views they are now silent in the controversy, some of the most strenuous afferters of a divine right of succession in the clergy, and of the powers peculiar to them.

THE question then, as to the fact, is, whether it appear from any authentick monuments of antiquity, that the Apostles, and those whom they ordain'd, Timothy, for instance, and Titus, to the order of Bishops, after they had design'd to form churches, really constituted a parity of church-ministers in them, or ordain'd in every church some one particular person to exercise the supreme jurisdiction, and with a sole power of ordaining others to

the ministry.

Now there seems to be no fact in the world better attested, which depends on historical evidence, than that since the apostolical age there has been in every church some one single person constituted its head and governor, with the sole power of ordaining the clergy *, and, I may add, of confirming the laity.

EXACT catalogues of these Bishops, according to the order of their succession in most of the churches, especially of greater note or extent, may be seen in the ecclesiastical writings of the first ages. One simus, for instance, is declar'd the successor of Timothy in the church of Ephesus †. Now if Timothy had there ordain'd all the elders to the same, or the highest degree in the ministry, and given them an equal power of jurisdiction, or of ordaining others, with that which was conferr'd on One simus,

† Euseb. 1. 3. c. 4.

where

^{*} Those who will consult that most excellent and learned treatise, The draught of the primitive church, will find this point establish'd after so clear and solid a manner, as the greatest adversaries of the episcopate, in the true sense of it, will never be able to gainiay, or resist.

where could be the reason or propriety (and the same argument holds with respect to the episcopal succession in all other churches) of calling Onesimus alone his successor, when they had all, and in every respect, the same power from Timothy with him. Again, Irenaus afferts, that we are able to produce the names of those who were apointed Bishops by the Apostles in the churches, with the names of their successors, down to our own times *. But how does this Father shew that they had such Bishops in a successive or-If all the clergy had been their successors, der from the Apostles. why were not catalogues produc'd, or appeal'd to; of all their names? Would it not have been faid, that the clergy, the prefbyters especially, if they had been the highest officers, had deriv'd their office and succession from the Apostles? Irenæus would not certainly have referr'd us to one presbyter, exclusive of all others, as deriving his succession from the Apostles in any church, if all the presbyters in it had equally succeeded to the same office. But this holy Father was so far from making the presbyters in common, or the clergy at large, successors to the Apostles in the episcopate, that he names one particular person, peculiarly ordain'd to this office by the Apostles themselves †; and so proceeds to specify the names of those, who fill'd the chair of this first apostolical Bishop, in a successive order, to his own times. Which is a plain proof, that, in the second age of the church, there were particular Bishops, fo far superior to the order of presbyters in the church, that they alone were reputed the successors of the Apostles, and were invested, in certain respects, with the same ecclesiastical powers in their age, that the apostles themselves were originally invested with. So that if ordinations to the sacred office had been unlawful, or invalid, either without the authority of the Apostles, or in opposition to it, they must be equally unlawful or invalid, when they are perform'd either without or against the authority of their successors. For fince but one person, exclusive of the other clergy, is declar'd to be the successor of the Apostles in any church, tho' in that church there are many presbyters; it is certain, that such a successor of the Apostles, is as superior to those presbyters in ecclesiastical authority, as if any Apostle, in the same capacity, presiding in it himself, would have been. For nothing can properly be meant by a successor of the Apostles, but one who succeeds them in certain apostolical powers. It would be needless to collect a particular evidence of the point under consideration from the anci-

† Fundantes Apostoli ecclesiam Lino, episcopatum administranda ecclesia tradiderunt.

^{*} Habemus annumerare eos, qui ab Apostolis instituti sunt Episcopi in ecclesiis & successorum usque ad nos.

ent writers; they all unanimously agree in this conclusion, that Bishops are an order superior to presbyters, to whom the supreme power of jurisdiction in the several churches belong'd, and who had the sole power of ordaining others; and that they did accordingly in sact succeed in the episcopate, and alone exercise that

power.

What has been said may be summarily thus reduc'd. It appears from scripture, that there are different degrees in the ministry; that all are not Apostles, nor elders; that no one can have any degree, but as he receives it successively from the apostolical hands; that particular persons, if any regard is to be had to the common consent of the primitive writers, were declar'd (in contradistinction to the rest of the clergy, whether priests or deacons) Bishops and successors of the Apostles. This is a full proof, both from scripture and antiquity, that such Bishops are to us, in respect to the 'episcopal authority, the same that the Apostles were to any church in their days. And those who deny the validity of this proof, will find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to produce any proof, which, in their way of reasoning, will conclude for the divine authority of the scriptures themselves.

THE objection against what has been said concerning the government of the church, if suppos'd only of apostolical institution, and admitting that our Saviour himself had not instituted it, is of no force. In every thing relating to the church, the Apostles acted by direction of the Holy Spirit. The promise, that Christ would be with them to the end of the world, not personally, but by the ministration of the Holy Spirit, must be supposed to have had a particular respect to the institutions that were to be made, if not already made, concerning the government of his church. it is the peculiar and highest act of sovereign power to appoint those soperior officers, by whom the government of any state is to be administered; on supposition that the Apostles had instituted an order of ecclesiastical officers, without direction from Christ, they had usurp'd an authority in his kingdom, by invading his prerogative, in the most tender and incommunicable branch of it. I speak this upon a concession, which there is no necessity for us to make, that Christ did not really institute the episcopal order himself, according to the sense, wherein we contend for it.

Is it be farther pretended, there are very strong presumptions that a succession of the episcopal order, whether instituted by Christ or his Apostles, has been interrupted; and consequently whatever powers Bishops were originally invested with, yet Bishops can have no divine right to the powers which they now claim; we answer, it is incumbent on those, who deny there has been a

valid succession of them (whatever irregularities may possibly have happen'd in it) to shew how, at what time, or upon what occasion it was interrupted.

THE uninterrupted succession of the church of Rome is granted by those, who have most endeavour'd to explode the notion of it. as groundless and unreasonable, with respect to other churches; but which concession does that church more service, than they who object the thing to us would be thought to design. And as to our own church in particular, there is all the evidence any matter of fact is capable of, that we derive our ordinations by episcopal hands in a successive order from the time of the Reformation. As to those who do not derive their ordinations in the same authentick manner, they are here out of the question; and when they are call'd upon to give an account by what authority they exercise the sacerdotal powers, or who gave them that authority, must be left to answer for themselves, as well as they can. We only contend for the necessity of a successive imposition of episcopal hands, wherever the facerdotal office can be either validly or regularly exercis'd. It is fufficient to our vindication, that it is so transmitted and exercis'd in the establish'd church of this kingdom; and that we have good grounds to believe, from the very reason upon which the Episcopate was originally instituted, that Christ would continue a succeshon of it to the end of the world uninterrupted. Those who asfert that it has been, in fact, interrupted, must bring proof, if they are able, for their affertion, and not put us upon a proof, as to the claim of a right, whereof we are, and believe our selves justly, in possession.

THE principal argument, such a one as it is, why it may be reasonable to believe, that the succession of the episcopal order has been interrupted, is taken from the uncertainty of historical evidence. But this way of arguing, if just, will prove more, than they, who on this particular occasion make use of it, will be willing in general to allow. It will follow from it, that we could not have had that full evidence, which we now have, either concerning the truth of any divine revelation, or of the books which compose the canon of the holy scriptures. Since the external proofs, as to both these articles, which are, without doubt, the most incontestable proofs, wholly depend on historical evidence. fides, it ought to be confider'd, which was indeed intimated before, that the reason of continuing the episcopal office still subsisting, upon which it was originally instituted, for the better order and government of the church, the reason why that office should be continued, subsists also, and will for ever subsist, till Christ, who can only repeal his own institutions, has made a declaration

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will repeal them, we ought to obviate any arguments which may be taken from the uncertainty of all human designs or events, to conclude that God, where there is occasion, will rather interpose by a special providence, to preserve his own institutions, than suffer an interruption, especially an entire interruption of them; even on supposition that Christ had not made any promise to his aposses of being with them (which, since they were mortal, could only be understood of his being with them, in successively transmitting the same powers, wherewith they were invested, to others) to the end of the world.

To argue a thing has certainly happen'd, and that it is absurd to imagine it has not happen'd, because it might possibly, or even very probably happen, is very illogical. But this way of arguing is altogether absurd, when not only a special providence from the reason of the thing, but a particular promise of God is urg'd towards preventing the common irregularities, which things, if lest to themselves, might otherways perhaps, tho not inevitably have fallen into.

THE reason why an uninterrupted succession is exposed as absurd, is from its being subject to so great uncertainty. And yet those very persons, who argue after this manner, own an uninterrupted succession in the church of Rome; upon what particular views, it is not easy to determine. If therefore they deny this succession in other churches, it cannot be so much from any absurdity in supposing the truth or possibility of the thing in those churches, as out of some particular prejudice to the constitution of them. But why that should be, in the nature of it, absurd and impossible in one. church, which is not so in another; why there should be a less certain conveyance of a divine institution in a more pure, than confessedly in a more corrupt church; why so great a distinction is shewn in favour to the church of Rome, and to the disgrace, the visible prejudice at least, of the church of England; are questions, which it only concerns those to answer, who have given occasion for them.

CHAP. II.

The Holy Catholick Church, the Communion of Saints.

E have prov'd the church of Christ to be catholick, as including the whole number of Christians, in what part of the world so ever dispers'd, who believe in Christ, and observe his institutions. We have farther prov'd it, for reasons which need not here be repeated, to be a distinct and regular, a visible and stated society. I shall take occasion, under this head of the communion of saints, observing, at the same time, the other senses wherein the words may be explain'd, to shew, that the church of Christ is one society, and upon what foundation the unity of it stands.

Now the members of *Christ*'s church compose one society, and herein the unity of it consists, and is preserved, by their observing all those rules and duties, which concern them as a society.

For since the church is not a natural or civil, but a religious society; it must be the observance of certain rules and duties peculiar to it, as such, which unite us as members of it. A society, the nature or constitution whereof is wholly owing to the pleasure of its founder, can only subsist according to the design, and in the full extent of it, by that obedience, which every member pays to such laws, as himself has prescrib'd for the regulation of it.

So that if we know, with respect to what rules and duties the church is a society, we may be certain that in the same respect it is one society; and consequently to depart from any one rule or duty, which relates to this number of people, and is essential to them, as a society, is a breach of that order, wherein the unity of it consists. The church being one, as it is a society, it must necessarily be one in all those respects, which constitute a society, and without which it cannot subsist as such.

This unity which ought to be maintain'd by the several members of the church, is what, I conceive, may be here principally intended by the communion of saints: Tho' it may also be interpreted to signify a mutual communication among Christians of all good and charitable offices. A noble and extraordinary instance whereof, we have in the first converts to Christianity. When they were all together, and had all things common; when they sold their posses.

possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need *. But the example of those early converts not being, in regard to the particular circumstances they were under, of general obligation to all succeding Christians, it is not now our duty, nor perhaps strictly lawful for us, on any present occasion, to follow it. The very reason upon which St. Paul argues for such an equal distribution, when he advises, that the abundance of some might supply the want of others; as, among the Israelites, he who bad gather'd much, had nothing over; and he that had gather'd little, bad no lack t. This very argument, if we consider the illustration of it, supposes, that, in distributing our charity, regard should be had to that particular state or condition of life, wherein we may be; or to any imminent danger of our being otherways depriv'd, and without any benefit to those, who have the nearest interest in

us, of what we possess.

IT may be farther objected, that the original word, which we render saints, will both in the Greek and Latin, bear the translation of holy things; and so may be pretended to signify only, that all Christians have, in common, a right to partake in the holy ordinances or institutions of Christ, tho' without any other obligation upon them to do it, than what flows from their own free and arbitrary choice. But since the church of Christ, as we have observ'd already, cannot be an institution worthy of him, if he have prescrib'd no rules for preserving the peace and unity of it; or if men are left at liberty to comply with, or transgress those rules at pleasure; therefore something more is certainly intended by the communion of saints, than our communicating with one another in certain holy rites of religion; something which supposes not an arbitrary choice to that end, but an antecedent obligation upon us to communicate in them, from the nature of the Christian church, consider'd as a society instituted by Christ; a society compos'd of a peculiar people, whom he has chosen to himself, and who are therefore call'd saints, separate from the rest of the world, and under a distinct government, not unto uncleaness, or the common state of impiety, wherein other men live, but unto holiness.

So that whether we consider Christians as communicating with one another in any civil offices, or religious rites, the communion of faints here mention'd, relating to them, as members of the catholick church, must suppose certain duties more peculiarly incumbent on them, by virtue of that relation, and such as pro-

perly arife out of it.

^{*} Acts 2. 44, 45.

For the like reason, whatever communication there may be between the faints that are on earth, and those departed this life, as members of the invisible church of Christ; yet as the article relates to his visible church in this world, under the government of visible pastors, even the saints in heaven are so far excluded from the communion of saints, and in the sense here primarily at least And tho' faints are in strictness only those, who live up to the holy rules of their profession; yet as persons are ordinarily denominated, not from a consequential practice, but from what the nature of their profession obliges them to; therefore by saints may be understood all persons in general professing christianity, and baptiz'd into the faith of it. The kingdom of beaven being like unto a field, wherein the wheat and the tares grow together: Like unto a net cast into the sea, which gathers of every kind: Like to a marriage-feast, whereof some that participate, have the wedding-garment, and others not *. All fuch persons, we say, living in the unity of the church, and communicating in its ordinances, are, in a large sense, to be look'd upon as here comprehended in the communion of saints. In this sense, the people of Israel, in their most corrupt state, might be said to be holy, as being distinguish'd by the rest of the world, by God's special designation of them to his more immediate worship and service; tho' it must not be dissembled that this branch of the article has a peculiar regard to those, who are sanctify'd in Christ Jesus; who are boly in all manner of conversation; careful, in every respect, to maintain good works; perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

A question here arises concerning the obligation of private Christians, with respect to the unity of the church, and the obligation of those who are vested with the supreme authority in it, and yet have no direct authority or jurisdiction, by any divine appointment, over one another. So far as the members of particular churches are concern'd in this question; as we have shewn they are severally under an episcopal government, the unity of them, as the unity of all other societies, must consist in their union among themselves, and especially with their head and governor; to separate from him, to disobey his orders, to erect any place, or institute any form of worship in opposition to him, provided he keep within the just bounds of his right and authority to govern them, is directly to involve themselves (if there be any such thing as schism) in the guilt of schism, and by as visible and necessary a consequence, as that persons living in any distinct part or province of a kingdom, when they disobey the lawful authority of those,

who preside in such a part or province, are chargeable with the

guilt of disobedience to the prince.

THERE can be no dispute then concerning the obligation of private Christians, in regard to the unity of the church. But it is not thought so easy a matter to determine wherein the unity of the church consists, or how it ought to be maintain'd in reference to particular distinct churches, especially in different nations and countries, which have no claim of power over one another, nor can so much as pretend any, but are only capable of maintaining communion, as members in general of the catholick church.

Towards a resolution of this point, it may not be improper to

observe the following particulars.

- 1. That it is necessary the instituted order of governors in the church of Christ should be strictly observed in every church; otherways the unity of the church in general must of necessity be broken. For if he who is ordained to the sacerdotal office, and has a right of exercising it in one communion, be reputed as a layman in another, such different communions can no more constitute one church, or one body of Christ, than the feet can be the head, or any one member be another member of the same body, at the same time. It is therefore necessary, in the first place, towards uniting Christians of particular communions, and making them one church, that they should keep strictly to the one instituted form of church-government; and that the clergy, whether of the highest, or of a lower order in one church, should be of the same order in every church.
- 2. That the governors of the church, tho' distant in place, and independent as to their respective jurisdictions, yet should agree in such fundamentals of worship and discipline, that they may safely communicate with one another, so often as occasion shall offer. The true union of the church consists in the communion which the members of it severally and reciprocally maintain, not with respect to their agreement in this or that particular doctrine, (for in one point or other we all agree with every distinction of Christians in the world) but in such things as denominate them a Christian society, and are essential to the Christian church under that notion.
- 3. That the church is a society founded for the performance of certain religious duties, and the observance of certain positive institutions of God. But these duties and institutions being the same in all churches, the members of every particular church, and especially those who preside in it, preserve the unity of the church in general, by taking the same care that they should be every where observed, and observing them not only within their

own districts themselves, but as they occasionally communicate with other churches.

THE church of *England* is one church, because there are the same sacraments, the same government, the same clergy, and the same terms of communion every where in it. Now the same conditions which are necessary to constitute any national church one particular church, are necessary to constitute all national churches one catholick church.

THE essential laws of this church are enacted by Christ himself, in the observance of which, all the members, and particularly all the pastors of it, are oblig'd to unite, and, however distant in place, to take care that no occasional laws, or local rules of discipline, which are not necessary to this society as such, be ever

made a plea for division, or any disorder in it.

When it is asked then, how Bishops of different nations are, or ought to be united, we may justly answer, by their agreement in such things, as make the church of Christ to be one church, or by their mutual observance of such laws and institutions of Christ, as are necessary to the being of his church, consider'd as one society. They have a right therefore to be receiv'd as Bishops, and to communicate with every part of the church, however different in mutable rules of discipline, so long as they adhere to the essential instituted terms of Christian communion. Again, Bishops are united to one another, not by any particular episcopal powers or contracts, but by such common terms and conditions, as unite the inferior clergy, or the laity to one another; which is nothing but their agreement in practising such rules or duties, as constitute the church one society.

How are the Bishops of London and Hereford united? Not by virtue of any powers merely episcopal belonging to them, but by such a mutual agreement in the fundamentals of christian communion, whereby other Christians, whether laity or clergy, are united to one another. And it is only in this respect, or by their agreement in such terms of communion, which are necessary to the being of a church, as a society, that it is incumbent on the Bishops of England to unite with those of any foreign

countrey.

This was the only unity which was thought necessary to be maintain'd in the first ages of the church, and when all the methods of corresponding by letters communicatory, pacificatory, commendatory, and synodical, imply'd no more, than that persons in communion with one church, ought to be receiv'd in all other churches: And those who are excluded from the communion of one church, should not be admitted to communicate in

any church. This is the proper union that ought to be maintain'd, whether among distant churches, or distant Bishops, who can indeed be no otherways one episcopate, than as distant churches

are one, by mutual communion.

As to the particular privileges of some Bishops, whether patriarchal or archiepiscopal, we ought to have a due regard to them. wherever they obtain or are establish'd by prescription and common consent. When the Apostle argues, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God; the tenor of his argument plainly implies, that ecclesiastical customs, whether in particular churches, or of a wider extent, ought, for the fake of peace and order, to be observ'd, provided there be nothing in them inconsistent with the fundamentals of Christianity. A respect to these good and desirable ends certainly obliges all the members of a national church. not only to live in constant communion with it, and occasionally with any part of it, but to conform to all the innocent rites and ceremonies enjoin'd by a competent authority in it, or which even have been introduc'd by common practice, under the regulation of it I have mention'd. And the reasons respecting peace and order of our conforming to the innocent rites and cultoms of particular churches, whereof we are members, being the same, if not in some respect stronger, for our conforming to the general rules and practice which every where obtain in the catholick church; they ought at least to have the same force towards obliging us to a compliance with them. This does not hinder but that private churches may have certain different rites and ceremonies, to which other churches are not oblig'd to conform; every national church, according to the twentieth article of our own church, having a power to decree rites and ceremonies; provided it ordain nothing contrary to God's word.

But I only mention these things incidentally; it is the duty of communicating with the catholick church, and with every sound part of it, in all those rules and institutions that constitute it a society, and are necessary to preserve it as such, which it is my principal intention to recommend and enforce. For men to imagine the church of Christ a wise institution, towards promoting the great ends of unity, peace, and order, and yet at the same time to infinuate that there is no regular or stated government in it, but that all Christians are at liberty to be of any communion, or of all communions, is a notion so far from agreeing with the characters of the christian church in scripture, as it is represented, by a house, a stock, a temple, a building, a building of living stones, (a metaphor which can only have an intelligible sense, as it supposes a vital and regular communication between the members of this society)

fociety, the nature whereof it is design'd to illustrate;) so far, we say, would the church of Christ be, on the foregoing supposition, such a society as is here represented, that it would be one of the most confus'd and irregular societies, if, after all, it could, in any reasonable sense, be term'd a society, upon the sace of the whole earth; so far from being, what it is represented in another place, a city which is at unity with itself, that to have call'd it a Babel, would have given us an idea much better corresponding to the nature and constitution of it. I am sensible many volumes have been written upon this subject, and that many warm contests have happen'd on occasion of controverting it; all which might, in my humble opinion, have been prevented, if men had seriously, or in the sincerity of their hearts, put this one question to themselves, whether God be really a God of order, or of consuston, in all the churches of the saints?

THESE reflections are sufficient to shew in general, what the reciprocal duties are of Bishops in the same, or in different nations; what powers they have, either jointly, or separately; and how they are to act in both capacities, towards the maintenance and preservation of that unity, which constitutes the christian church one society.

But, because it is of so great consequence to us, that our notions concerning this matter should be as clear and distinct as possible, I shall here take occasion to make two or three observations upon what has been said, which may still be of farther use to that end. And,

1. It follows, from the principles already laid down, that the catholick church is not distinguish'd, or to be known as such, by numbers. For as it is constituted a society by reason of certain positive institutions, and social duties, wherever those institutions are observ'd, or those duties practis'd, there is the church, whether its members are few or many in number.

2. That no moral virtues, no internal graces or qualities of the mind, can of themselves, or without regard to those duties, which properly relate to the church, as a society, preserve the unity of the church. So that devotion, charity, humility, or any other christian virtue, tho' absolutely necessary to the salvation of Christians, yet are not the infallible marks of church-membership. The church being a visible society, the unity of it must be preserved by the observance of its external visible institutions.

3. THAT neither is a strict agreement in the same articles of faith sufficient to preserve the unity of the church. For as faith may be consider'd, in relation to Christians, rather as an independent sect, than a regulated society; so the unity of faith may be preserv'd

preserv'd among Christians, at the same time the unity of the christian church, as a society, may be destroy'd. If therefore, as we have now, I hope, a right to take for granted, the church is one visible society, it is out of question, that an agreement in faith alone is not sufficient to keep up the unity of it, as that one visible society; seeing the most distant and divided societies, and even such as are invisible, may yet agree in assenting to the same articles of faith. This, we acknowledge, was the case of those old schismaticks, the Novatians, and Donatists. They profess'd the same fundamental articles of faith, which the catholicks profess'd, but were, notwithstanding, out of the communion of the christian church, as having openly violated those laws which constitute it a church *.

4. That charity, as it denotes tenderness and compassion towards persons of a different communion, is not that principle wherein the unity of the church properly consists. For as it is a society founded in relation to certain positive social duties, a general good-will towards people of all communions, can no more make them one society, than our praying for the conversion of Jews or Mahometans makes us one society with both, or either of them.

vernment is certainly necessary to it. Government being essential to society, the consequence is undeniable, that it is as necessary Christians should be united under one form of government, as that they should be members of one society. This is what St. Cyprian intends, when he says, the episcopate is one, tho' shar'd by several

persons in the exercise of it +.

I have principally consider'd this branch of the article, the communion of saints, in reference to the unity of the church, as a visible and regular society, erected for holy and religious ends: Tho' I would not be thought wholly to exclude that other sense, wherein it is ordinarily explain'd, with respect to the communication which there is, or may be, between the invisible members of Christ's church, and, as importing either any entercourse which we now have with the saints departed this life, or which those saints have with one another in heaven. According to this sense, the members of Christ, however at present divided, or plac'd in a different state or condition of life, yet may be properly said to maintain communion, as members of one society.

† Episcopatus est unus, cujus à singulis in solidum pars tenetur. Cyp. de unit. eccles.

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^{*} Nobiscum estis (Donatistæ) in baptismo, in symbolo, in cæteris dominicis sacramentis; in spiritu autem unitatis & vinculo pacis, in ipså denique catholicà ecclesià nobiscum non estis. August.

EVEN the holy angels, who are now employ'd in building up the spiritual temple of Christ, in ministring to those who shall be heirs of salvation, and who have the name of saints apply'd in the holy scriptures in common to them *, were very probably defign'd. by the compilers of the creed, to be comprehended in this confesfion of our faith, the communion of faints. If it be not true, that they are united to Christ, not only as Lord, in general, of all things, and as head over all things, above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is nam'd both in this world, and in that which is to come; but by virtue of their partaking after some some special manner in the salutary effects of his grace; not of his pardoning grace, as they had never sinn'd, there could be no occasion of applying that to them; but of such a measure of his preventing, or sanctifying grace, as might more effectually tend to confirm them in that state of favour with God. wherein they were originally created, and had, when so great a number of other angels revolted, faithfully preserv'd themselves.

Whatever ground there may be for this latter supposition, we may properly be said to have communion with the saints, whether denoting the spirits of holy men departed this life, or the holy angels, as we here partake with them in the same acts of homage, of praise and adoration to the Lord Christ, and shall hereafter enjoy, in common with them, the happiness of heaven to all eternity. On both which accounts, we are represented, as already free denizons of the new Jerusalem; as being come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God; and an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant †.

There is no ground then, in the reason of the thing, to suppose, and such a supposition is plainly repugnant to the express authority of scripture, that death dissolves the union, which was between the faithful in this life. This union being constituted by their relation to one another, as members of the church under Christ the head, the same reason for the continuance of it still subsists, whether they live or die; except, what will not be pretended, when good men cease to live, they cease to have any farther relation to Christ, as head of his church, or to have the same common interest, with the rest of his members, in the fellowship of

^{*} Μελα παίνων ταίνων αὐτε, Ι Thess. 3. 13. Παίνες δι αγιοι αγελοι, Matt. 25. 31. Ενώτουν ταίνων αγγέλων, Rev. 14. 10. Υπὸ αγγέλω αγίες Atts 10. 23. + Heb. 12. 22, 23.

which the saints maintain with one another here, and which they maintain with those departed this life, is, that we at present communicate with them, after a manner both visible and invisible, and when they are pass'd into another state, after a manner invisible only.



Of the CREED.

ARTICLE X.

The Forgiveness of Sins.

E profess, and can only profess, our belief of this article, as Christians. For, whatever hopes men could entertain from the goodness and benignity of the divine nature, that, upon the repentance of sinners, God might be inclin'd to pardon their sins, yet it will appear from the sequel, they could have no such assurance of his pardoning grace, upon that condition, as to make it, without a special revelation to that end, an article of their faith.

For the more full and distinct explication of these words, I shall proceed according to the following method.

- I. I shall enquire what we are to understand by the forgiveness of sins.
- II. WHETHER the doctrine concerning the forgiveness of sins be a doctrine peculiar to Christians.

III. WHETHER any conditions, besides those of faith and repentance, be pre-required in any case to the forgiveness of sins.

I. What we are to understand by the forgiveness of sins. I need not observe that sin, which is a transgression of the law, renders men, in the nature of it, liable to punishment. For wherever there

there is authority to enact any law, there must be authority in the legislator to give a penal sanction to it, and to punish those who contemn or disobey it; otherways it would be impossible for any government long to subsist, or maintain its authority. So that the same arguments which prove the necessity or reasons of government, prove it is reasonable and necessary, that he who governs, should be invested with a power of punishing delinquents.

In order therefore to the forgiveness or remission of any crime, the criminal is to be acquitted by the legislator from all obligation to punishment. This is the lowest sense that forgiveness of sins is capable of, and which is agreeable, not only to the sense of the holy scriptures in the Old and New Testament, but to the common notions of mankind. To this end expiatory sacrifices were appointed by the special command of God; and Christ, to whose perfect facrifice the efficacy of them all was referr'd, and wherein the power they had to absolve sinners from punishment alone terminated, is said to have redeem'd us with his blood; to have been made a curse for us; to have been wounded for our transgressions, and bruis'd for our iniquities; to have born our griefs, and carry'd our forrows. All which facrificatory expressions, as in the nature of them they antecedently suppose the sinner's obligation to punishment; so they evidently import, in consequence of the expiation made for them, that they are, from that time, absolved from all fuch obligation.

THERE can be no dispute as to this acceptance of the words: But the scripture notion concerning the forgiveness of sins, and especially in the New Testament, implies something more. God, in consideration of the death and obedience of Christ, is there represented, not only as being graciously pleas'd to remit the punishment due, and expressly threaten'd to sinners, but to re-instate them in his favour, and even to put them in a capacity of a far greater happiness, than that for which they appear to have been originally created. He is faid to have reconcild us to himself by Jesus Christ*: That is, to consider us, who were before in a state of enmity, and objects of his displeasure, as being now with him, not only upon terms of pardon, but of favour. So this apostle argues in another place; When we were enemies, we were reconcil'd to God by the death of his Son. In virtue of which reconciliation, heaven being promis'd, they, whose sins, according to the tenor of the new covenant, are forgiven, if they die in that state, are entitled to the promise of eternal life. This effect of our reconciliation to God, if it could not be inferr'd from the natural force of the words, is evident from many express declarations in holy scripture, particularly from that eminent one of our bleffed Lord himself; God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life *. This, without entring upon a nice and critical examination concerning the meaning of forgiveness of sins, or the different acceptations of it, as express'd in the original †, may serve, in general, to shew, what the evangelical notion, as to this phrase, is; and how, as Christians, we are especially interested in the present article. But this leads me to consider more

distinctly, in the next place,

II. WHETHER the doctrine concerning remission of sins be peculiar to Christians. As a doctrine of whose truth we can have any firm or settled persuasion, we answer, it is peculiar to them. Pardon of sin being an act of mere grace and favour, it cannot be certainly known, whether God will pardon the sinner, till he has declar'd his pleasure to that end; and if his promise of pardon be not absolute, which would not consist with his wisdom, or the ends of government, (if it might possibly with his justice) till he has declar'd the conditions of it. This promise is signify'd in very express terms in the New Testament. Our Lord himself declares, that remission of sins should be preach'd in his name ‡. His apo-Itles declare to the same effect, that through him is preach'd unto us the forgiveness of sins **; that in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace tt. The conditions upon which we shall be forgiven, are specify'd in terms no less clear and distinct; God bath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to declare his righteousness. for the remission of sins, which are pass'd ##. By him all that believe are justify'd *. Except ye repent, ye Shall all likewise perish t. Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out ‡. Repentance therefore was to be preach'd at the same time, and as a necessary previous condition of it, with remission of sins **. These declarations limit the remission of sins, so far as it is a do-Etrine founded in the divine promise to penitent sinners. What men therefore, living up, so far as they are able, to the principles of natural religion, and upon any failure in their duty, being heartily penitent, may do towards recommending themselves to the pardoning grace of God; or whether the benefits of Christ's death may not, by some secret determination of the divine will,

^{*} John 3. 16. † Αφεσις ἀμαςτιῶν. ‡ Luke 24. 47. ** Acts 13. 38. †† Ephef. 1. 7. ‡‡ Rom. 3. 28. * Acts 13. 30.. † Luke 13. 3. ‡ Acts 3. 17. ** Luke 24. 47.

extend to them; are questions wherein, as we have no immediate or special interest, neither can we come to any certain resolution about them.

But whatever the case may be, as to the state of the heathen world, all men must acknowledge, there is a mighty difference between an article of faith, and any conclusion drawn, at the best, from a mere probable conjecture; between a sæderal right to a promise, and an arbitrary uncovenanted act of divine grace.

This consideration might, one would think, be of itself sufficient to put to silence the ignorance of those foolish men, who think, that even on supposition the truth of christianity could be clearly made out, yet it is not necessary for them, provided they do but endeavour to lead, what they call good moral lives, to put themselves to the trouble of examining, in a serious and distinct manner, the proofs upon which we demonstrate it to be true; or if they do, and are fully convinc'd by those proofs, that they should conform themselves to the positive institutions of it. As if it were not equally a law flowing from the principles of natural religion or morality, and as obligatory, in the reason of the thing, that we should aftent to any truth God might think fit to reveal, or obey any politive command it might be his pleasure to enjoin, as that we should practise any duty, tho, in the nature of it, antecedently incumbent on us; or as if God had not indifferently a power of punishing our contempt of his laws and authority in both cases.

So obvious a reflection, and the reason of which is so evident from those words of our Saviour, speaking of unbelievers, to whom the proper means of conviction were propos'd, this is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, does really render it unaccountable, that men capable of reasoning, and of being reason'd with in other cases, after all the remonstrances made to them concerning the danger, whether of insidelity in general, or of their rejecting any particular doctrines or institutions of the gospel, should yet think it matter of so great indifference, whether they withhold their assenting any, or in all these respects.

But let us suppose men could have any rational assurance that God, upon their repentance, will so far pardon their sins, as to remit the punishment due to them, (which is all the deists can pretend to hope, and more than any deist will ever be able to prove) yet the forgiveness of sins, as taught in the gospel, and importing such a reconciliation to God, that he will not only absolve penitent sinners from punishment, but receive them to favour, and crown them with everlasting glory and happiness; this must be allow'd, at least, a doctrine peculiar to the christian re-

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ligion, and which must inevitably leave those who neglect so great salvation, under circumstances, that will render it still more difficult for them to escape. With a special regard to this promise of eternal life, the apostle St. Paul triumphs in recognizing the power, and peculiar excellency of the christian dispensation. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Jesus Christ came into the world, not merely to pardon, but, to

save sinners.

III. WHETHER any conditions, besides those of faith and repentance, be pre-requir'd to the forgiveness of sins. It will not be deny'd, that God may convey his pardoning grace to finners, upon what conditions, or by what means he pleases, and that his promises are always to be understood according to his own method of applying them. If therefore it appear, that, besides the general conditions of faith and repentance, in order to the pardon of fin, there be any divine institutions of God proper to apply or ascertain his pardoning grace; when administer'd by persons duly authoriz'd, and to persons duly qualify'd, then such institutions are as necessary to the forgiveness of sin, (I mean where they can and ought to be administer'd) as faith and repentance in general. This, I conceive, will not be disputed, with respect to the two sacraments. But it has been much controverted, whether our Saviour, having left a power to his church of remitting and retaining fins, a formal declaratory sentence of the church, is not, in certain cases, necessary to those ends.

This power of the church may be consider'd, in respect to it, under the notion of a society, or to the sacerdotal office, exercis'd

by particular members of it.

The church being a regular and visible society, the nature of it, as such, supposes there ought to be an inherent power lodg'd in it of receiving or retaining persons who are willing to conform to the rules of it, and of excluding other vicious and corrupt members, who openly transgress those rules; especially if they endeavour to subvert or destroy the fundamental rights, without which, as a society, the church cannot possibly subsist. This, we say, admitting the sounder of the christian church had any wise end in instituting it, or that it is not a society of the most precarious and irregular construction of any society in the whole world, seems to be a necessary and undeniable consequence. And this power of the church, as to the exclusion of notorious delinquents from the communion of it, is the power of what we call excommunication.

But, besides the natural reason of the thing, to shew that the church, as a society, ought to be vested with such a power, we have an authentick evidence, from the words of our blessed Sa-

viour

viour himself, that, in fact, the church is invested with it. occasion of any offence done to a private person, our Saviour directs him to expostulate the matter with the offending party, and with him alone; and, if he will not hearken to any reasonable demands of satisfaction, then to bring the case before two or three witnesses, and if they cannot adjust the difference, to tell it in the last issue to the church. If the offender neglect to hear, or has no regard to the determination of the church, then he is to be consider'd as a heathen or a publican *, a person excluded from the communion and privileges of it. And that the church has a power of excluding such a person, is as evident as words can make any thing, from the declaration of our Lord immediately following, and introduc'd with a form of speech denoting a more solemn affeveration of what he intends. Verily I fay unto you, what sever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven t. It must be acknowledg'd, our Saviour did not here prescribe a new method of reconciling penitent offenders, or punishing the obstinate. He had regard to the discipline and practice of the jewish assemblies, and did not decline, corrupt as they were in some of their institutions, to follow the model of what was good and well-founded How happy would it be for the christian church; how many occasions of dissension, and even of open schism among christians might be prevented, if they, who profess themselves so, had the same spirit of Christ, or would conduct themselves by the same rule.

As our Saviour committed such a power to his church, so she had not only a right of executing it, but was even represented as unfaithful to her trust for neglecting, when there was a proper opportunity to put it in execution. We have the authority of St. Paul to support what is here said. He reproves the Corinthians for not excommunicating, in his absence, a person, who had been guilty of a very scandalous practice among them ‡. And then, to repair that omission, he proceeds expressly to charge them, that they deliver such one unto Satan **. It is not necessary that we should here enquire what the determinate sense of this phrase is, or whether it imported a power peculiar to the church at that time; it is sufficient to our purpose, that the church of Corinth, as appears from the charge given to them in the clause of the

chapter,

^{*} Matt. 18. 15, 16. + \$. 19. 19. 19.

chapter, had a power of putting away from among themselves that

wicked person *.

However, if any good argument can possibly be drawn from the nature of the thing to shew, that the church cannot have such a power, we ought to submit to the force of it, and to interpret those passages of scripture, upon which it appears to be so expressly founded, in a different sense from that, according to which we explain'd them. Words, the sense whereof is more arbitrary, or which may be supposed to bear an equivalent signification, must always give place to the known and immutable reason of things.

Now it is pretended, that the church cannot have a power of remitting or retaining sins, because she does not know the true state which persons are in, upon whom she is said to exercise that power. This objection, we allow, would be unanswerable, if the church assumed an absolute independent power of remitting or retaining sins; but as it is here put, no body is distress'd, or in the

least affected with it.

When we say, that the church can remit or retain sins, we mean no more, than that God, who may employ what instruments he pleases in executing his will, makes use of the sentence pronounc'd by the church to that end, as a means of his retaining or remitting them. Thus, when it is said, baptism saves us, we do not intend that it does so, absolutely, or by any natural efficiency, but only in virtue of God's institution, and according to the terms whereunto the salutary power of it is annex'd: For otherways it would, without distinction, have the same effect on all baptiz'd persons whatever.

Tho' the church cannot infallibly judge concerning the spiritual state of her members, we say, nevertheless, her censures or absolutions are authoritative, because God, when they are truly apply'd, ratifies and confirms them; when they are misapply'd, they have no manner of operation in respect to the persons they are apply'd to, but leave them in the same state and condition, as to

the favour of God, wherein they were before.

^{*} The excellent author of The causes of the present corruption of christians, on occasion of his having cited a great part of this chapter, and referred to the rest, in proof of that right, with which the church is invested, of exercising discipline, and excommunicating publick offenders, has this pertinent and judicious respection. "I desire the force of this proof may be considered. It is not one single passage which I here produce, it is a whole chapter, it is a thread of arguments, and of express and reiterated injunctions. St. Paul describes those whom the church ought not to suffer in her bosom; he appoints what is to be done in reference to them; which is, that they ought to be cut off from the body of Christians, and that their company is to be avoided. He concludes, "There cannot be a clear and express law, if this is not so.

To say therefore the church assumes a power of damning or saving men, of opening the kingdom of heaven to them, or excluding them out of it at pleasure, is not to argue against any power which the church really claims, but to bring a reproach upon her, by occasion of a very unjust and most groundless charge.

NEITHER, indeed, is it of any consequence to the pardon of a sinner, whether it be declar'd by a fallible, or an infallible person, provided God ratisfies the sentence, or in order to qualify such a sinner for his pardoning mercy, has, by any positive act of his

will, render'd fuch a previous sentence necessary.

When the church then absolves or censures any sinner, there is a secret condition always imply'd of her making a right judgment; or, if she happen to be mistaken in her sentence, neither her censures nor absolutions are pretended to have any spiritual effects. But because a power may be sometimes misapply'd, in the exercise of it, by the church, has the church therefore no such power in any case? It might as justly be argued, that the sacraments ought not to be administer'd, because we do not infallibly know the qualifications of those who are to receive them; or that they are not means of grace to some persons, because they do not in fact or eventually prove so to all persons.

They who affert the sentence of the church is purely declaratory, indifferently entitle every member of the church to the same power. That God will forgive a finner upon his fincere repentance, is a truth of equal evidence and certainty, whoever declares it. Were this all that our Saviour intended by his granting a power to the church of remitting or retaining fins, he had only granted them a power as a body, which every member had separately in himself before. But where could be either the wisdom or favour of a grant, without any special privilege annex'd to it. On this supposition, there does not appear to be the least grounds for our Saviour's referring the offending party, in the last resort, to the sentence of the church; seeing the decision of the party offended would alone have had the same effect, as to all intents and purposes, with the judgment of the whole church; so far as concern'd what falls here properly under our confideration, the spiritual state of that offender, and in regard to which the grant of our Lord concerning this power of the church, to remit or retain sins, can only admit of a reasonable explication.

Where then can be the ingenuity of men, in objecting to the church the claim of a power, which she is known expressly to disclaim. The church of *England*, particularly, in all her absolutions, supposes a condition imply'd of true repentance in the party absolv'd. And that if she err in pronouncing any judicial sentence,

her error can be of no effect either in favour, or to the prejudice of the person upon whom it is pronounc'd. So far is she from making the salvation of men to depend upon her arbitrary will or decisions, that all her sentences, relating to the favour or displeasure of God, are conditional. But when the condition is observed, tho known only to God, they are not for that reason less authentick; for, notwithstanding, the judgment is God's; because so far she acts in his name, by a power deriv'd from him, and according to his will. He therefore who despises that power, despises not man, but God.

THEY who acknowledge the apostles of Christ had this power committed to them, but pretend, it does not therefore follow that their fuccessors (I speak of them here as a collective body) in the facred office, or the clergy at present, have any claim to such power, have, in this respect, a much greater appearance of reason on their side, than persons, who argue against the natural posfibility of the thing; as they give an intelligible account, at least, of our Saviour's declaration, when he originally committed that power to the apostles. But then they can by no means prove that it was not to be transmitted to those, who were to succeed the apostles in the administration of the church, to the end of the world. If this power, as is now confess'd, was given to the church in its infancy, in a state of its greatest purity, for the better order and government of it, certainly the reasons for the continuance of this power, instead of ceasing, in successive and more corrupt ages of the

church, should rather grow proportionably stronger.

THE sum of what has been said, is, that God has given authority to the church to bind and loofe finners; this authority is exercis'd by her declaring finners, under different circumstances, to be bound or loosed. If this declaration be ill founded, it is their own who make it, and not God's; who is not therefore oblig'd to confirm it, any more than he is oblig'd to confer grace, by means of the bread and wine in the holy sacrament, consider'd as bread: and wine; tho', confider'd as his own institution, he will confer that grace, by means of them, to persons duly qualify'd, which he would not otherways confer. For the like reason, the declarations of the church, whether with respect to delinquents or to the penitent, when well founded, are efficacious, tho' pronounc'd by fallible men, because they are, notwithstanding, the declarations of men, acting by virtue of God's institution, and, in this case, after a manner perfectly agreeable to the end and defign of it.

I have hitherto principally consider'd the power of the keys, as proper to the church, under the notion of a society, and as she is actually invested with that power by a positive grant from Christ.

But there are some who contend farther, that the power of absolving sinners (for with respect to that point the main controversy lies, and which I shall therefore confine my self to) was not only given to the church in general, as a society, but to every particular priest of it, upon such evidence as sinners, in common and ordinary cases, might give of their true repentance; especially on occasion of their confessing the sins they had been guilty of in a more distinct and particular manner. Yet they do not argue, from the nature of confession itself, that it is requisite the confessor should have a power formally of absolving a penitent; for then, as Christians are in general exhorted to confess their sins one to another *, every Christian would have the same power; yet a special commission being given by our Lord to Peter of binding and loofing finners, not by the acknowledgment of those against whom this argument is brought, as head of the church, but as a private pastor, and in common to the rest of the apostles; and confession of sin being a proper mark of that repentance, which is necessary towards the absolution of a sinner; it is ask'd, if, upon his confession, the priest has not a power of absolving such a sinner, to what end was the grant of it made to him in the person of Peter; or upon what other occasion can he so conveniently be supposed to ex-

In answer to this, it may be said, that the power here given to Peter, and the rest of the apostles, was temporary, and expir'd with them. But this is only saying what can never be prov'd. It is more reasonable to conclude, that this power being given to Peter, as a power proper to the sacerdotal office, the reason why it should be continued in the pastors of the church, will hold good, so long as that office itself shall continue.

What is here advanc'd would probably meet with much less opposition, were it not for a consequence, which is pretended to sollow too naturally from it; that if Christ have given Peter, and in him the whole order of the priesthood, a power of loosing sinners, particularly upon the consession which they make of their sins, then every sinner is oblig'd, to the end he may be absolv'd, to

confess his sins to the priest.

HERE we must distinguish between such duties, as are of absolute and standing obligation, and such as are only to be consider'd, under certain circumstances, as matter of expedience. It may be proper to confess our sins for the quiet and relief of our own minds, or for the removal of any doubt or scruple, to a person capable of directing us, and especially to our spiritual guide, to

whom the direction of our consciences is more immediately com-But the scriptures have no where made this a duty necesfarily incumbent on us. Repentance, indeed, is absolutely requir'd in order to the remission of sins, which we are to testify the fincerity of, by all the figns of a true and hearty contrition, before the priest can, or ought to absolve us. But a particular confession of our sins, with the several circumstances of them, is no where expressly required. It may be, in some cases, and to some persons, an act of piety, or prudence, to make such a confession: And dying penitents, under any great conflicts of mind, are particularly exhorted, and suppos'd by our own church to do it. But still Christ not having made it a necessary condition, that penitents should make confession of their secret sins, except to God only, (the case as to those sins, whereby they have injur'd others without making restitution, is different) there can be no absolute necessity why they should make such confession.

It is farther said, when we are requir'd to make confession of our sins, we are to understand such sins, as principally respecting publick scandals given to the world, or private injuries done to one another *. In other cases, this duty imports the acknowledgment we make of our offences, private or publick, to God, but

no where directly to the priest.

However, as confession is, under certain circumstances, a duty; as the priest is our proper spiritual guide; as all his administrations are supposed, for that reason, to be attended with a special benediction of God; as he is invested with a power, upon our repentance, of remitting sins; and, lastly, as a particular confession of sin is one good evidence of a true repentance, it seems, upon the whole matter, the safest and most comfortable method we can take, when we appear in the form of penitents, to make a particular confession of our sins to him, in order to our receiving the stronger assurances of their being, in truth, remitted to us.

But whether this be incumbent on us, in point of strict duty, or not; whether a particular confession of their sins be, in any case, necessary, in order to qualify sinners for the sacerdotal absolution; or whether other general testimonies of their repentance be sufficient to this end; it seems highly requisite, if not absolutely necessary, to all true penitents, where the sacerdotal absolution can be had, that, as it is a means God has appointed to declare the forgiveness of sins, it ought to be had. And that he therefore who dies without thinking himself oblig'd to have any regard to the sacerdotal office, in this respect, or in contempt of

^{*} Numb. 5. 6, 7. James 5. 16.

it, dies, to speak in the softest terms, in a very dangerous state; both as he resules God's pardon in his own way of applying it; and as he cannot be suppos'd, while he does so, to be really, in other respects, a true penitent.

I desire it may be observed, this is only spoken on supposition, that a dying sinner, who may have the benefit of the sacerdotal absolution, wilfully slights it as a vain, or insignificant ceremony. We do not say that a sinner, who dies without such absolution, dies, for that reason, impenitent, any more, than that he, who dies without receiving the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper, provided be do not contemptuously decline the reception of it; which, the generally requisite, yet is not absolutely necessary to salvation.

The objections, whether from the weakness or wickedness of those to whom this power is asserted, are altogether trisling. If a prince pardon or reprieve a malesactor, it is not necessary that he should in person declare him pardon'd or repriev'd; tho' this may be done by some subordinate, or, as it may possibly happen, by some very corrupt minister, it is not therefore less valid; and it is authentick, because the malesactor cannot be pardon'd or repriev'd without it; for he who has the power, in either respect, may execute it in his own way, either immediately, or by commission to others.

It is a popish doctrine, directly repugnant to the twenty sixth article of our church, that the efficacy of any religious ordinances depends on the personal qualifications of the administrator. The article being drawn up with great judgment, I shall recite the principal part of it. Altho' in the visible church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the word and sacraments; yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their ministry, both in hearing the word of God, and in the receiving of the sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness: Nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such, as by faith, and rightly do receive the sacraments ministred unto them; which be essential, because of Christ's institution and promise, altho' they be uninistred by evil men.

Which words were not only defign'd to obviate certain phanatical notions, which obtain'd at the beginning of the Reformation, and had been transmitted down by succeeding enthusiasts to the time, when the articles were compil'd; but they had particular respect to a most dangerous error taught in the church of Rome, that the intention of him who administers the sacraments is essentially

tial to the grace and efficacy of them. And so far, indeed, this doctrine seems to be founded on some reasonable ground, that if any qualification should be absolutely necessary to the administrator, to render a divine ordinance effectual, that, concerning his intention, has, in the reason of the thing, a superior and the fairest claim. But it is not unusual for men, even in the heat of their zeal against Popery, to advance such notions, as directly tend to support some of the worst and most pernicious doctrines of Popery.

But, to pursue the argument, what connexion is there between a supernatural or divine power, and any natural or human means? Or what have the personal qualifications of men to do with conferring any act of divine grace? Since the institutions of God only operate the effect proper to them, because they are his institutions; he can indifferently make wicked or good, fallible or infallible men, the occasional means of producing it. Bread and wine, as such, have no natural propriety in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, to convey grace to those who partake of them: Neither does it appear that the waters of Jordan had any peculiar virtue above that of other rivers, towards healing the leprosy; but if God will give and appropriate a supernatural efficacy to any means, exclusive of other means, what can oppose, or who shall dispute his will?

It is a groundless infinuation, and not the less so for being design'd as a popular one, that this doctrine concerning sacerdotal absolution subjects the laity to the clergy; it only subjects them to the institution of God. If God have given authority to any of the clergy of absolving sinners, to deny them that authority, from any consequences which may be thought inconvenient from their claiming it, is at once to withdraw our subjection from God, and to resect on his wisdom, as being the author of an inconvenient institution, and, for that reason, unworthy of him. And it might, with equal reason, be pretended, the command of Elisha to Naaman, to go and wash seven times in the river Jordan, render'd that Assyrian, by a necessary consequence, the propher's vassal.

I shall take notice but of one objection more, which appears to lie against what has been said. It may be pretended, that the doctrine, which makes particular confession of sin so highly requisite at least, if not in certain cases necessary, to the pardon of the sinner; is of very ill consequence, with respect to the peace and happiness of society; as this doctrine gives the clergy an opportunity, not only of discovering the secrets, wherein private persons, and private families, but sometimes wherein the whole community, and even whole nations, are concern'd; particularly, where wicked men are employ'd by direction of those, (as it has sometimes

sometimes happen'd) who are at the head of publick affairs, in designs, which can by no means bear to be examin'd by the strict rules of honour and justice, or which, if they should be known,

might bring an indelible infamy on the authors of them.

West this objection really attended with all the inconveniences, that are thought to follow from it, yet, I conceive, it ought not to be admitted against the reasons of a divine positive institution. The rule will still hold true, that we should hearken unto God, rather than unto men. But the inconveniences objected are merely accidental, and the danger of them less, from the infamy, to say nothing of any other punishment, which accompanies, and ought to accompany the discovery of any secret reveal'd in confession. An infamy to any one, who has the least regard to the sacredness or dignity of his office, more insupportable than death, or any kind of death, which the engines of this world can be employ'd to inslict.

As shame is one of the most powerful restraints in nature to a vicious inclination, and nothing secures our innocence more than the apprehension of what the world will think, or say, if such a design or action should once come to be discovered, the sear of doing, what sinners should be afterwards under a religious obligation to confess, would certainly have a powerful tendency, rather to promote the common good and happiness of mankind; by preventing that corruption, and those secret villanies, which occasion so much disorder in the world; and by obliging men to such a virtuous and regular conduct, as would render them, in their particular stations, more subservient to the common interests

of society.

As to that part of the objection relating to men, who are employ'd for reasons, or some pretended necessities of state, in the conduct or execution of such designs, as are not sit to be nam'd, it will be time enough to consider the force of it, when it can be prov'd that it is lawful, on any occasion whatever, to do evil that good may come of it; or that it is better to put considence in the wicked schemes of fallible and impotent men, than to trust in the Lard.





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ARTICLE XI.

The Resurrection of the Body.

HAT after death our souls and bodies shall be re-united, which is the doctrine we here profess to believe, is also an article of faith peculiar to the christian revelation. For it cannot be prov'd from any principles of human reason, either that the body of man has a natural power of raising

itself to life again, as the soul has of subsisting, in a future state; or that God is oblig'd, by any of his attributes, to exert a super-

natural power, in order to the resurrection of it.

THE heathen writers, indeed, sometimes mention the ghosts of departed men, and represent them, as appearing in a visible form, retaining in the shades below their former shape, and having all the actions which were proper to their bodies in this life: Yet these notions were rather consider'd as poetical amusements, than as having any certain, or even probable grounds, in the natural All we can infer from them, is, that the heareason of things. thens did believe, the soul, after this life, would shift the scene of its residence into some bodily vehicle, and even, perhaps, resembling a human body; but, withal, they conceiv'd, it immediately inform'd such a body, after its passing into another state, compos'd of certain particles of matter, altogether different from those, whereof it was compos'd here. They had no notion, that it could be design'd, at any time, to inform the same bodily numerical substance, to which it was united in this world.

THE resurrection, in this sense, appears to have been a new doctrine to many of the Jews themselves; by whom therefore St.



Paul declares, he was called in question*, because he taught and afferted it. From whence, it is highly reasonable to conclude, that, by his doctrine of the resurrection, we are to understand the identity of the rising body. For the Jews certainly had a notion, that the Patriarchs, with the rest of their fathers or friends deceas'd, had a distinct bodily subsistence in another life. Cur Saviour, in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, accommodates himself to this notion. It may rather admit of dispute, by the way, whether the Jews, generally speaking, believ'd, upon any true or solid grounds, the immateriality of a human soul.

If the apostle had only intended, that, after this life, men shall assume, or be united to one body or other, this doctrine could not have given occasion for so great offence or surprize, at that time, either to the Jews or Gentiles. The Athenians, in particular, instead of mocking at this apostle, or taking the resurrection according to his sense of it, for a God †, might have observed, there was nothing, in the nature of it, inconsistent with the principles of theology, then commonly received and established.

WITH respect to the Jews, indeed, it is altogether unaccountable, how the resurrection, in the apostle's sense of it, could be controverted, if we consider the express revelations that had been

made to them concerning this article ‡.

IT is confess'd one of the passages referr'd to in the margin from the book of Job, has been interpreted by the Jews, not as denoting Job's belief concerning the refurrection of the body, but his expectation of that state of happiness, which his piety and perseverance would entitle him to, through the merits of his redeemer, in another world. But that the words do really import the refurrection of the body, and are therefore apply'd by our church, in the burial office, to fignify it, appears not only from hence, that this is the most natural and obvious construction, and perfectly agreeable to the letter of them, but from the conclusion of this book, as render'd in the following manner, by the septuagint. So Job dy'd, being old, and full of days. But it is written, that he shall rife again with those, whom the Lord raises up. Which words imply, at least, that it is highly agreeable to an ancient tradition, if not a general notion among the Jews, that this passage of Job should be explain'd concerning the resurrection of the body, in a proper sense.

^{*} Alls 23. 6. † Alls 17. 18. Ezek. 37. to \$. 10. Dan. 12. 2. Job 19. 26.

IF any of the Jews therefore deny'd the resurrection of the body, according to St. Paul's doctrine, it was not because the scriptures were silent upon this article, but because, through their blindness or obstinacy at that time, they erred, not knowing the

scriptures, or the power of God.

THE text of Daniel, many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, is not capable of any other construction, but in respect to the identity of the rising body. As the foul cannot, with any propriety, be faid to fleep in the dust; as that only which was laid and fleeps in the dust, can rife or awake out of the dust; and as the bodies alone of men were reposited in the grave, the words must necessarily be explain'd, if we will keep to any known rules of interpretation, so as to signify that the very same numerical body, which was dead, shall be the body, which rises again; otherways, the bodies, which are said to have slept in the graves, could not be those bodies, which are said to awake, but other bodies, compos'd of quite different particles of matter, from those, whereof themselves were compos'd. The construction which the Socinians put upon this text, is altogether forc'd; they pretend that the words may be apply'd to fignify the deliverance of those, whom Antiochus had subdued from his power and tyran-But in what language, or part of the world, is sleeping in the dust of the earth an expression employ'd to signify a conquer'd enemy; or awaking out of the dust of the earth, to signify liberty restor'd or victory; could so harsh and unusual a metaphor, be allow'd; yet what proper relation has it to everlafting life, or everlasting confusion, in the following part of the verse.

We draw the like conclusion from the words of our blessed Saviour. All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the son of man; and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation *. Of the same import are those words of St. John, where, representing by a prophetical spirit the circumstances and process of the last judgment, he declares, the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell deliver'd up the dead which were in them †. No intelligible account can be given of these words, according to the plain and natural signification of them, if the same bodies which were in their graves, and in the sea, and which are said to be deliver'd up, should not really be deliver'd up, but some other bodies, compos'd of quite different parts

of matter, in the room of them.

The answer, which the Socinians give to the former of these texts, (and the sense they put upon the latter of them is no less forc'd) can by no means be admitted; especially from men, who pretend to so peculiar a strictness in their way of argumentation. They tell us, we are to understand by those who are in their graves, persons in a state of sin and impiety. Could this interpretation be allow'd agreeable, which it is not, to the phraseology of scripture; yet there can be no pretence for it in this place. The context plainly shews, that the words are to be explain'd in reference to the last judgment, and Christ's visible appearance to pass a final sentence of happiness or misery on men, according to their good or their evil actions in this life; previous to which sentence their bodies shall be rais'd to life again.

NEITHER is the principal passage apply'd by the Socinians, to justify their interpretation of these words, of any service to them: It is cited from the prophet Ezekiel, where God declares to his people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel*. But tho' death is sometimes us'd in an improper sense to represent men in a state of sin, yet they are never so represented by their lying in the grave, or as entring upon a new and more holy state of life, by their coming out of the grave. Besides, the place does not, by any arguments which can be drawn from the design of the prophet, refer to the spiritual deliverance of the Jews, from a state of sin; but only to their temporal deliverance from a state of ser-

vitude and captivity.

The following words, concerning the refurrection of some to life, of others to damnation, do also directly overthrow this comment of the Socinians; it is little less than a contradiction in terms, to say, that they who have done good should, as a reward or in consequence of their piety, rise to everlasting life, from a state

of spiritual death.

To argue, that the original word, which we render to rife again, does not necessarily import, when referr'd to the general resurrection, the rising again of those numerical bodies which dy'd; is, we say, to argue after a manner which concludes nothing. For tho' the natural or common signification of words is not always to be retain'd, or may be sometimes transferr'd to an improper sense, yet it ought to be retain'd, where the reasons of keeping to it are either evident and necessary, or there is no visible occasion of departing from it. It might as justly be argued, that there is no God, in the proper sense of the word, because the name of God is sometimes, in an improper sense, attributed to man; as that, because resurrection is, in one or more places, to be explain'd figuratively, therefore we can draw no certain argument from the import of the word, in its true or literal sense; not even where the context and scope of the argument oblige us to understand it in that sense, and admit of no other.

If the resurrection, after all, as importing the identity of the rising body, be, in the nature of the thing, impossible, we readily grant this doctrine cannot be true, and that there is a necessity of explaining the texts I have mention'd in a metaphorical sense. We have nothing therefore to do, but to prove the resurrection, according to the scripture doctrine of it, possible; and to examine the arguments which are brought, on the other side, to shew, that it is impossible.

The possibility of it appears from what has already happen'd in fact. Christ, and other persons who were actually dead, did rise to life again, with the same bodies. From the resurrection of Christ, the apostle particularly argues, and probably against those who deny'd this article, as supposing it, in the nature of the thing, impossible. If Christ be preach'd that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? The consequence, from what has happen'd, to the possibility, at least, of the like event in any time suture, is clear and undeniable.

IT will be of no fignificancy to pretend here a distinction between bodies that are corrupted, and such as, with respect to their principal parts, retaining their proper form and order, (thole, for instance, of Christ and Lazarus) only cease to have any communication with the soul, and to perform the functions of life proper to them: Because a divine power is equally necessary towards restoring a dead body to life, or to the union it had before with the foul, as towards disposing the several parts of such a body, however broken, or at whatever diltance separated, into their proper form and order again. Yet if, according to our way of apprehending things, a stronger energy of divine power should be requir'd on the latter account, still, as the refurrection is, and must be allow'd possible to the divine power in both cases, 'tis equally abfurd, whatever difficulties may arise from the disparity between them in other respects, to argue against the possibility of the relurrection in either case.

But, admitting there were any force in this argument, against the instances produc'd of the resurrection of Christ and Lazarus,

as being insufficient to prove the possibility of the resurrection in general; yet it cannot be pretended to have any weight against the instances we produce, from the many bodies of saints which arose, at our Saviour's death, and came out of their graves *; several of which, there is the highest probability, during the inter-

val of their lying there, had been corrupted.

THE argument, which appears to be attended with the greatest difficulty, in reference to the doctrine we are afferting, lies in the following question: When the bodies of men, that are devour'd by fish, or other animals, and afterwards converted into their proper substance, which affording nutriment to human bodies, are again incorporated with them, and become constituent or vital parts of them; how can such parts, at the resurrection, have re-Lation to one person, more than to another? So that, as the lews argued concerning the seven brethren, who successively married the same woman, whose wife shall she be at the resurrection? It may be question'd, which of the persons, with whom those flu-Etuating particles have severally been incorporated, shall, or can, at last, in propriety belong? Whether to him, who was originally devour'd by other animals, or perhaps by some of the same species, or to any of those, into whose slesh or substance his own was afterwards converted.

In answer to this, we fay,

r. It is not necessary to denominate the same body, that it should consist of every individual part, which has at any time composed it, or immediately before the change incident to it. For then no man could have the same numerical body, I do not say wherewith he was born, but which he had the last moment. It is sufficient to our purpose, in asserting the identity of the rising body, that it should consist of some considerable parts, at least, of the

body which dy'd.

2. It is only a small part of the human body devour'd by any animal, which is converted into the substance of that animal, and much less, in proportion, which is converted into the nutriment successively receiv'd from it. So that it may be said, there is nothing contributed by such a transmutation towards forming an organical part of another human body, or any part, to which it shall be vitally united. As to the case of canibals, where the conversion of that human sless they devour is more immediate, and in a greater quantity, if so little a share of what we eat (scarce one part, as some have observed, in a hundred) be digested into the substance of our bodies, it is probable, that hu-

man flesh, being so very unfit for nutriment, what is incorporated of it with the substance of those canibals, is still much less in

proportion.

3. It may be farther suppos'd, that in all animals there are certain constituent insensible principles, which contain in miniature the several parts of the whole body, and that the foreign. matter, taken in by way of nutriment, which fills and distends the bodies of men, and augments the members of it, is not strictly essential to it, but only convenient for him, as serving to many wise and good ends of providence, respecting his present state. So that while these particles of foreign matter are in a continual flux, the original or fundamental principle, which properly constitutes his body, and from which it ought to be denominated, through all the changes of life or death remains itself fix'd and unchang'd; without confusion of parts, or the least danger of incorporating with other bodies. The illustration which St. Paul uses, from an instance in the vegetable life, seems very much to favour this hypothesis. A grain of corn, after the other sensible parts of it are corrupted, gradually unfolds itself first into the stalk, then the blade, afterwards the ear, and at last into another grain of the same form. I have no occasion here to observe how this effect is produc'd from the same grain, in variety of instances. From hence it is sufficient for my purpose to observe, that, besides the parts which are corrupted, there is a seminal principle, which, by just degrees, is dilated after this curious surprizing manner, containing in it those several parts, which are visibly augmented, without suffering any corruption or foreign mixture itself.

4. The difficulty here objected, being principally founded on a supposition of what, in the natural course of things, may possibly happen, it cannot be argued against the possibility of what God has expressly declar'd shall happen. He will rather exert his power, (if, after all, there should be any occasion for his interposing to that end) towards preventing those effects, which would render his design impracticable, than suffer it to prove abortive

or ineffectual.

As to what is objected concerning the impossibility of the resurrection, on account of those particles of a human body, which are dispers'd in different elements, and very different parts of the world, there is still less appearance of difficulty or argument in it. This objection must be suppos'd to lie, either against the power or knowledge of God, or against both these attributes. Either he cannot distinguish those separate parts from other parts, wherewith they are afterwards united, so as to know what persons, or which members of the body they properly and originally belong'd to; or if this may be known, that he cannot remand, or, by an immediate act of his will, restore them to their former order and

respective functions.

So far as the argument relates to the knowledge of God, it is not founded in the nature of this attribute; for his omniscience is confess'd by all who believe a God; but it wholly arises from a a difficulty in our conceiving the extent of his knowledge: And it is contrary to all the rules of reasoning, in other cases, that any difficulty on one side, should be urg'd against a truth acknowledg'd on both sides.

THE like answer will here serve, in respect to the power of God. Besides, that it is easy for us to conceive how, by a bare act of his will, he can collect the scatter'd parts of our bodies, however broken or dispers'd, and remand them to their proper places, as how he originally form'd them according to this regular and wonderful system out of the duft, and that created out of nothing. Nay, it seems a matter of more easy conception, that an artist, when any curious system of work is taken in pieces, should be able to put them exactly together again, especially if it was of his own construction. and he knows readily to what part every piece belongs, and where to find and restore it, than that he should originally have compos'd fuch a work. All the difference in the illustration, is, that God, who needs no instruments or deliberation, can design or effect his work at once; whereas intense thought and application are previously necessary to men, both towards the production of any artificial curious work, and in order to rectify or repair it.

It was, upon all these considerations, equally an argument of the ignorance, and impotent malice of the heathens, to burn the bodies of the primitive martyrs, and then to scatter their ashes in the air, with a design of exposing thereby this doctrine more openly, and towards preventing the effects of it. For had they argued in the least upon the common notion of a Deity, as an omniscient and almighty being, they might easily, or rather, they must necessarily have form'd this conclusion, that as nothing can be conceal'd from infinite knowledge, so nothing, which is a possible object of power, can be render'd impracticable to infinite

power.

THE opposition this doctrine met with from the heathens, is the more unaccountable, because several of the ancient philosophers express'd themselves after a manner, which discover'd they were not altogether strangers to it. Grotius * observes this concerning the Stoicks in general; and that the purgation of the

^{*} De ver. rel. Christ. lib. 2. c. 10.

world, which they taught, from the commerce of wicked men by fire *, which supposes their resuscitation to that end, did not obscurely imply this doctrine. That learned † author farther cites Theopompus among the peripateticks, as afferting it a doctrine deliver'd by those, who were most esteem'd for wisdom and occult knowledge, that men should be restor'd to life again, and become immortal; and that there should be a revolution of all things in the same course, and according to the same laws of motion as before.

But might we not then, had the scriptures determin'd nothing concerning this article of the resurrection, have discover'd by the light of our own minds, if not absolutely conclusive, yet very probable arguments to induce our belief of it? If it has no foundation in the reason of the thing, how came the ancient philosophers, tho' in other words, to teach and affert it?

We may consider what is here proposed, as respecting either the union of the soul at a determinate period after death, to some body or other; or to the same numerical body, wherewith it was

united in this life.

In the former respect, it may be argued, that the body of man being a considerable, if not properly a constituent part of him, and which discovers the immediate work of God in his formation, it is not reasonable to believe, God design'd so admirable an essay of his power and wisdom to continue only during the short interval of this life, for a few years, a few days, and sometimes only for a few moments, and that he would then for ever put a period to it; but that he will, in some convenient time, as he sees proper, restore it to its former and original state.

For tho' it is granted, that the body is only an occasional means of conveying certain sensations to the soul, or of exciting them in it, and that God therefore can give us those sensations by a special and direct act of his will, or by occasion of any other means; whether we are in the body, or out of the body; yet he having once united the soul to the body, and establish'd those admirable laws of communication between them, whereby they act reciprocally upon one another; it is more agreeable to his wisdom, as all his ways are perfect, to suppose, that whatever disorder, in consequence of man's disobedience, may at present happen in his work, and cause, for a time, the dissolution of it; yet God will not suffer the ends, for which he first made it, to be for ever fru-

strated;

^{*} Τὴν ΔΙΦ πυρὸς Κάθαρσιν τ κακῶς βεδιωκότων, ἢν ΰςερον ἐκπύρωσιν ἐκάλεσαν ὁι Στοϊκοί καθ δν κὰ τ ἰδίως ποιὸν ἀνας ήσεθ αι δοίματίζεσι, τετ ἐκεῖνο τ ἀνάς ησιν περ. έπονλες. Clem. Strom. f. + In Loc.

strated; but will, one time or other, restore it according to its primitive construction, whether to suffer the pains, or to enjoy in-dissoluble in the heavens the pleasures awarded and proper to it.

So far as the question, which I am considering, relates to the identity of the rising body, some of the ancients, and they are follow'd by several modern theologers, have argu'd for the reasonableness of believing the resurrection in this sense; since the body (fay they) ought to be rewarded or punish'd according as it contributes, in the temper and appetites of it, to our good or evil actions in this life. But this is a way of arguing, which will not bear a philosophical or strict examination; for the body, properly speaking, can neither suffer or enjoy, be punish'd or rewarded. Whatever material and duly organiz'd parts the foul is united to, it will have the same sensations, as if united to the same numerical body, which it now informs. Except it should be said, that the very particles, which now compose the body, will hereafter have some peculiar energy in them, according to the laws of union which shall then take place, that no other particles of matter could have But this is not easy to be conceived; since all the particles of matter are equally dispos'd to receive any form, which the divine architect may think fit to impress upon them. And therefore, even in this life, they are not the particles of matter, as fuch, which compose our bodies, whereby our minds are so differently affected; but the different modifications of them.

Tho we affert therefore the identity of the rising body, our assertion is rather sounded on the the testimony of scripture; on the example of dead persons recorded in it, who were restored to life again; and on the promise of God, that those who are alive at the general resurrection shall not sleep, but be changed; than on any certain or incontestable proof, which we are able to produce

from the reason of the thing.

THE most probable and specious argument, whether of the refurrection in a larger sense, or as more strictly denoting the identity of the rising body, is taken from the notion of a radical principle that properly constitutes the body of man, and which death itself is not able to destroy: Whatever parts of a more pure, refin'd, or celestial matter may be added to it at the resurrection, there is reason to believe, that it should, as having still an aptitude and proper disposition to that end, be united again to the same soul. For tho' God can form a like system of other matter, and give it the same disposition; yet it is more agreeable to the simplicity of those laws, whereby he has determin'd to act, that he should not at any time employ an extraordinary power, where he can effect his design according to the natural course or establish'd order of things.

THERE

There can be no dispute as to the proper subjects of the resurrection; they are all mankind in general, the just, and the unjust; some shall be sentenced to the resurrection of life; others to the resurretion of damnation. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And, indeed, the process of the last judgment, to which the resurrection is previous, with respect both to wicked and good men, plainly supposes, as this distinction comprehends all men, the universality of the last judgment, without distinction.

THE great question, which has been long and much controverted in the church, is, whether, for a considerable period before the general resurrection, there will not be some persons, who had here given extraordinary proofs of their zeal and piety, whom our Saviour will particularly distinguish, by restoring them again to life, and to a state of life abounding with an assume of all the innocent pleasures and advantages, which this world can be sup-

pos'd to afford?

This notion, if we consider it merely as traditionary, was at first deriv'd from Papias *, a disciple of St. John, more distinguish'd, if we may credit Eusebius, by his piety and goodness, than by his penetration, or solidity of judgment. The principal text of scripture upon which it is founded, is that of the Apocabyps. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. And I saw the souls of them who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worship'd the beast, neither his image, neither had receiv'd his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands, and they lived and reign'd with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finish'd.—This is the first resurrestion †.

But to these words, as brought in proof of the visible reign of Christ with the saints upon earth, or the resurrection of any of them, for the space here mention'd, antecedently to the general

refurrection, several exceptions are made.

1. From the connection, that is all along observable in the holy scriptures, between the resurrection, and the last judgment ‡. Which being represented as universal, as commencing at the same time, and not till the end of the world **; it is argued, there is the same necessity of supposing a first and previous judgment of Christ, whereof the scriptures are perfectly silent, nay, to which they are directly repugnant; as of supposing, in a proper sense, a sirst resurrection.

^{*} Eccles. hist. lib. 3. c. 35, 39. † Rev. 20. 4, 5. † Matt. 25. 31. 1 Thess. 4. 16. Als 3. 21. 2 Tim. 4. 1. ** 1 Cor. 15. 24, 25, &c. 1 Thess. 4. T5, 16.

2. So far as a visible and triumphant reign of Christ is inferr'd from these words by the Chiliasts, it is, in particular, not only irreconcileable with that express declaration, that the heavens must receive him until the times of restitution of all things, but to the nature of his kingdom, and the reasons of his disclaiming all secular power and authority in the administration of it.

3. It is not said in the vision, that the apostle saw the bodies, but only the souls of them, who were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, &c. The words therefore are capable of being interpreted concerning that glory, with which the martyrs, as a reward of their constancy and fortitude, shall be crown'd, after some special and distinguishing manner in heaven, for the time here specify'd

before the general judgment.

4. This argument is drawn from a book of scripture abounding with allegories, and bold metaphorical expressions; and therefore, if any passage of it may admit of a figurative, tho' more forc'd sense, it should rather be interpreted according to that sense, than in opposition to other plain and evident testimonies of scripture, which cannot possibly consist with a literal construction of it. Now it will be granted, I suppose, there is not the same evidence, as to the meaning of the several expressions in this place, and those in the context, of laying hold on the old dragon, of binding him, of Gog and Magog, as there is of this proposition, that the holy scriptures, in a strict sense, speak but of one general resurrection, and one general judgment.

THE only particular that I farther propose to consider under this article, relates to the state of the body at the resurrection, and the qualities proper to it. Concerning which, I shall lay down the following truths, or what I am induc'd from reason and scri-

pture to believe so.

changes it may undergo, all the properties belonging to it, as consisting of material parts; such as extension, impenetrability, circumscription; so that it cannot possibly be in all places at any time, or in more places than one at the same time. This argument will hold, and for that reason I principally mention it, equally to shew, that it is impossible Christ should have a body divested of the properties essential to it, as that any of the saints should have such a body; since the essences of things are inseparable by any power from the things themselves, and every property that is essential to a body, is as necessary to the being of it as all the rest of its properties; to destroy any one property essential to it, is to destroy entirely, at the same time, the nature of it; to make it a body, and yet no body; to render the

subsistence of it inconceiveable, or rather, indeed, to anhilate it.

do not here question, if the bodies we shall then have will be immortal, by virtue of their natural construction; so that they shall neither be capable of any inward decay, or of suffering any external violence: It is the same thing, as to all the ends of immortality, whether such a construction of them be, in the nature of the thing, possible, or whether they shall be preserved for ever free from all disorders from within, and all injuries from without, by some positive act of God, and by some special interposition, when it may be requisite, of his providence. It is sufficient that we are assured from the holy scriptures, we shall then die no more, but be as the angels of God; that this body, which is sown in corruption, shall be rais'd in incorruption; in a word, that this mortal, shall put on immortality.

3. That our bodies, at the resurrection, shall be sublimated and resin'd to a degree of splendor and purity, the highest, perhaps, that matter is in itself capable of: Whereas they are now of a gross consistence, and subject to many seculent, and even putrid humours; they will then be all over bright and radiant, and in every part. They will be rais'd in glory; they will shine like so many suns in the kingdom of God; they will be fashion'd like the glorious body of Christ, according to the working whereby he is able

even to subdue all things to himself.

The part of our body, which may be suppos'd at present to bear the nearest resemblance to that splendor, wherein it will then appear, is the eye, which continually discovers a bright, or, shall I not say rather, a celestial slame glowing in it, which sometimes disfuses so strong and penetrating a light, as lets us in, without the help of language, or any other key, into the secret motions and intents of the heart. An organ, the lustre whereof no art can imitate; and no other object in the world, not any visible

glory of the sun himself, appears to equal.

This reflection may serve to give us some idea of the happiness, which will then consist in the mutual advantages of conversation and friendship, the greatest blessings whereof we are capable in this life, when we are so happy as to enjoy them in any competent degree of perfection; which, considering how much a great part of mankind govern themselves according to appearances, and how easily, by that means, they impose upon others, is not so very common a case, as might be hop'd, or rather expected from the dignity of human nature. It may be question'd, on the other hand, whether a greater number of persons have not been undone

by

by the infidelity, or the sinister infinuations of their pretended

friends, than by the malice of their profess'd enemies.

But yet, if we are in so great measure, if not perfectly able to discover the true designs of men, or the disposition they are really in towards us, from certain external signatures, and particularly of that admirable member I am considering; when the body is become all over visible and luminous; when we shall, perhaps, be able to discover all the secret springs of motion in it, with the certain effects of those laws, which will be established towards the communication between it and the soul, as every occasion of distrust or mutual suspicion will, by that means, be perfectly removed, we shall then love, and know that we love one another, with all the ardour and considence, from which the true and generous delights, whether of friendship, or any occasional commerce, can only arise.

4. THAT at the resurrection our bodies will be strong and active, and have a power of motion, beyond what it may be posfible for us to form any equal conception of here. We are expressly assur'd in the holy scriptures, that our bodies are fown in weakness, but rais'd in power; that they are sown a natural body, and rais'd a spiritual body: That is, a body approaching as near to certain qualities of a spirit, according to our impersect ideas of it, as it is possible for a body to do. Now one proper nature of a spirit, in contradistinction to body, is the activity, and stronger powers of life and motion belonging to it. In allusion to which, we call the parts of any body, which are most volatile, or operative, the spirits of it. By virtue of this quality proper to a spiritual body, we shall be able to follow the lamb wherever he goeth *. For they that wait upon the Lord Shall then renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings, as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint \tau.

There are very good arguments to be drawn from the reason of the thing, to prove the greatest celerity of motion in a spiritual body. If the intermediate orbs be many of them at such a vast inconceiveable distance from us, and from one another, of what an immense magnitude must the circle of heaven, the seat of the living God necessarily be? And yet it is highly reasonable to suppose, that as no part of the city of God will be uninhabited, so there will be a free and ready communication between all the inhabitants of it, at what distance soever separated, or employ'd in executing the divine will. And there is really, if we consider the divine power, no more difficulty in conceiving, how a spiritual body should pass

from one part of heaven to any part of it in a moment, or immediately, according to St. Austin's doctrine, in consequence of our willing it so to pass *, than how the rays of light from the sun should reach us in so short a time, at so great a distance, by the lowest computation, from him.

But there is a necessity of our believing, from what has already happen'd in fact, that the bodies wherewith we shall rise again will have the greatest celerity imaginable, in order to their being, immediately after the resurrection, translated into heaven. Otherways, indeed, it is, in the nature of the thing, impossible, that the body of *Enoch* could, as yet, have reach'd one of the fix'd stars, or that it can reach any of them for the space of several thousand years to come, supposing this present system of the world should so long continue.

How unable soever we are to comprehend a motion, whereby our bodies, when rais'd again to life, shall pass through all the intermediate spaces from one given point to another, almost as quick as thought; yet infinite power answers all objections against the possibility, and therefore where the nature of things require it, against our belief of a motion, which, let us suppose it perform'd in the least space of time we can possibly conceive, is, however, finite. He that gives motion to body, can give it in what de-

gree he pleases, that body is capable of.

I have here principally consider'd the qualities, which will belong to a human body, when glorify'd, upon the authority of holy scripture; tho' I have produc'd, at the same time, some natu-There are several other ral reasons for the credibility of them. questions relating to the state of the saints after the resurrection, (for to that I here confine my self) which, as they cannot be so certainly determin'd, either by the light of our own minds, or from any testimony of divine revelation, I cannot think it necesfary, that I should particularly descend to examine. As, whether, when we rise again, we shall all be of the same form or stature, and in all the bloom, beauty, and vigour of youth? Whether there will be then any difference of sexes among the saints, more than the angels of God, and to what ends that difference, if admitted, will serve? Whether we shall retain the same senses, and after what manner they will be affected with their respective objects? These are only questions of curiosity, which those who would be resolv'd in, may consult the schoolmen, or other learned authors, who have follow'd them in discussing matters of so great subtility. I satisfy my self with barely mentioning these

things,

^{*} Ubicunque erit voluntas, ibi erit statim corpus. De civ. Dei. lib. 22.

things, as it is by no means necessary for us, upon any terms of faving or evangelical faith, to know them; and as we may therefore, without any danger to our salvation, either wave the dicusfion, or be entirely ignorant of them.



Of the CREED.

ARTICLE XII.

And the life everlasting.

F by life everlasting we here only understand, in general, the immortality of the soul, we do not so much profess to believe a distinct doctrine, from what may possibly be deduc'd, in a human way of reasoning, as a more full, clear, and incontestable evidence of it.

For it is certain, that a great part of the world, if this principle has not been in a manner universal, have ever entertain'd some confus'd notion, at least, concerning the existence of the foul in a future state: And for the same reason, upon which they could suppose it would have a future existence, it was natural for them to conclude it would exist to all futurity; except God should interpose, by some special act of his will, to destroy or annihilate it: Which they could have no reasonable grounds to believe that

he would do, and which appears, indeed, derogatory to his wifdom and goodness, to presume that he should do.

For the principal reasons, upon which men could be induc'd to believe the soul immortal, must have been sounded either in the natural defires, wherewith they observ'd themselves invincibly, and all times possess'd, of continuing in being; or in the simplicity of immaterial substance, and consequently, the impossibility of its dissolution; without which, according to the common no-

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tion they had of death, they could not conceive it capable of dying. But, take which of these arguments we please, if it proves, that the soul will subsist after death, it proves, at the same time, and with the same force, that it will for ever subsist.

The reason why the soul should desire to continue in being, (provided it be not condemn'd to a state of misery, which is not the case under consideration) will never cease: Nay, the continuance it has had already in being, will, in proportion to the time of it, rather tend to fortify that desire, and render the thoughts of annihilation, after a longer taste of life, still more terrible and disquieting to it. Whatever the philosophers might dispute concerning the preference of a state, even in some degree miserable, to an utter extinction of being; it will not be disputed, that where the miseries of life are not greater, or, upon the whole matter, apprehended greater than the enjoyments of it, there the reasons of desiring a farther term of life, will still preponderate.

IF it be therefore an argument of the future life of the soul, that it is possess'd with such strong, such permanent and invincible desires of living, this argument will always equally hold, if not in

a stronger degree, to prove, why it should live for ever.

Again, if it be an argument, that the foul will not immediately, or for some determinate period, suffer an extinction of life after the death of the body, because it is a pure, simple, uncompounded essence, and cannot therefore admit a separation of parts, the same argument will hold against the extinction of its life at

any determinate period.

YET whatever force there may be in these reasons, and I am willing to allow them all the force whereof they are capable, to prove the natural immortality of the soul, they are far from establishing the truth of this doctrine, after so satisfactory a manner, as the authority of a divine revelation, to that end. Neither, were they in themselves strictly conclusive, are all men so capable, upon their being laid together, of discovering severally the connection of them, or the obligation they are under to affent to them, as they are of making this plain and undeniable inference, that whatever God expressly reveals, is to be affented to as true, for that reason. A divine revelation, at the same time it supersedes all human methods of arguing, prevents our being imposed upon, which is too ordinary a case, especially with persons of weak minds, by specious probabilities, instead of real truths.

This is an argument we discover the evidence of at once, and which cannot deceive us. If Christ has declar'd, that the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal; that all who believe in him shall not perish, but have ever-

lasting life; that they who kill the body are not able to kill the soul. Certainly such plain declarations are at once more proper to persuade the assent, and generally more adapted to the capacities of men, than a train of proofs concerning the immortality of the soul, with what perspicuity or just connection soever deduc'd; if, after all, the immortality of the soul, whatever it might have been, has ever been, in fact, so deduc'd, by any heathen writer.

Three of the most considerable names in antiquity, and from whom, as they have said so many excellent things upon the subject of morality and religion, it might be expected we should draw the greatest light in the present argument, are those of Plato, Tully, and Seneca. But none of them will be pretended to have given any demonstration of the point in question, or even to have argued upon it in a manner proper to persuade those, who are not otherways very well disposed to believe it. Why should it, indeed, be expected, that such reasons, whereby it appears they were not sully convinced themselves, should be more convincing to others? For, considering the common ambiguity of words, how careful soever we are to avoid it, a man must naturally be supposed to see the force or evidence of his own arguments in a better light, than that, wherein he can be supposed to represent them to others.

PLATO, to begin with him, introduces Socrates, and, upon that occasion, is interpreted to speak his own sentiments, as entertaining, in his last moments, some probable hopes of a suture life to good men, but has not the assurance to speak of it as a topick consolation to himself or his friends, who then assisted him, that could be really depended upon *. He adds afterwards, if it be an error to believe a suture life, it is at present a commodious and agreeable error, and which will afterwards do him no injury,

because it will die with him †.

CICERO speaks as if he had design'd to render the very words of Socrates: He professes himself willing to embrace the error, if it be really an error, concerning the soul's immortality; and that he would not be undeceiv'd in a point, wherein, if he should happen to be mistaken, he is so agreeably impos'd upon ‡.

SENECA

^{*} Παρ ανδρης τε εκπίζω αφίζεωται αγαθές, ε τέτο εθύ εκ αν κανυ διισχυρισαίμην. In Phæd.

^{† &#}x27;Αλλ' ολίγον υς εξον ἀπολείται.
† Quòd si in boc erro, quòd animos bominum immortales esse credo, libenter erro, nec mibi bunc errorem, quo delector extorqueri, &c. He expresses his dissidence, as to this article, in another place, rather in more strong terms. Expone igitur mibi, nisi molessum est, primum animos, si potes remanere post mortem; tum si id minus obtinebis (est enim arduum) docebis carere omni malo mortem. Tuscul. 1.

SENECA, in his way of reasoning upon the same subject, is not able to arrive at any greater certainty. The general consent of mankind, and the authority of certain great men before him, feem to have been the principal grounds upon which he believ'd the soul's immortality. He declares, that as to this doctrine, he thinks it proper to follow the publick opinion *; and that if peradventure, any regard be due to the sentiments of those, who had the greatest reputation for wisdom, they whom we imagine to be dead, have only shifted the scene of their residence, and gone before us †.

I do not speak this to detract from the natural proofs of the foul's immortality, which I allow, when well and methodically deduc'd, to be very strong; but to shew, that great men, without the benefit of divine revelation, have not always carry'd their difquisitions so far as they might have done, even upon subjects of the last consequence to themselves and all mankind. From which reflection, a good improvement may be made towards rendring us more sensible of the advantages of divine revelation, as with respect to religious truths in general, so with respect to the assurances given by it, of the foul's immortality. And therefore St. Paul takes a proper and just occasion to represent it as one peculiar advantage of the christian revelation, that whatever general or more imperfect notices men had before concerning a future state, yet Christ has now brought life and immortality to light through the gospel ‡.

But let us grant that the immortality of the foul could have been made out antecedently to any divine revelation, by clear and incontestable arguments drawn from the reason of the thing; and that the belief of it did not depend, as may be more reasonably presum'd, on some general tradition. For, indeed, those probable surmizes, we have mention'd, from some of the greatest men among the ancients, could not be suppos'd to lay a sufficient foundation for the universal idolatry of the pagan world; which, so far as it consisted in the worship of departed heroes, or other persons of distinguish'd character here, necessarily suppos'd the belief of this article. Upon a concession, I say, that for these, or any other reasons, the immortality of the soul had been a settled article of natural religion, yet, in the christian sense of it, and as it is express'd by everlasting life, no person, in a mere state of natural religion, had, or could have, any certain grounds for the belief of it.

^{*} Utor hâc persuasione publicâ.

[†] Et fortasse si modò sapientium vera fama est, recipitque nos locus aliquis, quem putemus perisse, præmissus est. ‡ 2 Tim. 1. 10.

ALL we can infer from the natural immortality of the soul, taking this doctrine for granted, is, that in a suture state the soul will be happy or miserable, according to the good or evil actions done in the body, which it here inform'd. That virtuous persons, in particular, who are the subject of our present enquiry, shall be in a state of ease, and tranquillity, or, in some measure, proportion'd to their different qualifications, of pleasure; this is as far as human reason could possibly carry its conjectures upon this argument. But whether the soul should immediately pass into such a state, or into some other previous and probationary state, and so successively on to an indefinite space of time, is what men could never resolve upon any principles of natural reason, and what, setting aside the authority of divine revelation, they are not still able to resolve, nor ever will be.

But what are these, or any like conjectures, to the notion of life everlasting, as express'd in the gospel, or to the assurances given us in it of our being translated after this life to the kingdom of God? Of our being made heirs with God, and joint heirs with Christ, the Son of God; of our seeing God as he is; of our being made like unto him, partakers of the divine nature; of our standing before the throne of God; our serving him day and night in his temple, with his holy angels, and the spirits of just men made persect; of our having even these vile bodies in the holy city, the new Jerusalem, sashion'd like the glorious body of Jesus Christ himself; and, with respect to the glorious state, whereof it seems to give us the lowest, tho', considering the present impressions which sensible objects are apt to make upon us, a very proper conception, that they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; that they shall be no longer sensible of pain or sorrow, or subject to the power of death.

THESE are some of the expressions in scripture, whereby that life, which Christians profess their belief of in a future state, is represented to them. And they give us an idea of what it is to live indeed; what it is to have human nature, in regard both to soul and body, advanc'd to all the perfection, and posses'd of all the happiness, whereof it is capable. But where do we meet with the like notions concerning a life after this, among the best or wisest of the heathen writers? If now and then they speak in a more sublime strain, concerning the happiness or purgation of the soul in another world, as their sentiments on this head are far from being so just or distinct, as those we meet with in the inspir'd writings; so they are rather perhaps to be attributed to some traditionary account, which might be deriv'd originally from Noah himself, or afterwards from the jewish writings, (the evidence whereof, as to a suture life, will be consider'd in a proper place) than from any

natural or solid principles, whereby men were able to prove the reasonableness or certainty of this doctrine: Which yet, I do not question, does, in the nature of it, admit of such proofs, as are very satisfactory. But it is one thing for a doctrine to be reasonable in itself; and another thing to demonstrate the truth of it antecedently to any divine revelation, upon reasons that are

clear and convincing.

When the fathers therefore, in certain passages, seem to deny the natural proofs of the foul's immortality, they are not to be explain'd. as if it was their delign to infinuate, that we cannot, by natural reasons, prove the soul to be immortal; but either that the proofs which had been commonly urg'd by philosophers to this end, were not sufficient; or that by immortality, they did not mean, nor had any notion of it, in the sense, according to which we Christians believe it, and as express'd by life everlasting in the holy scriptures: Neither, indeed, could they have any such notion. For our title to that life being founded in an arbitrary act of divine grace, and not in the merit of any thing we had done, or were capable of doing, in order to give us a right to it, there was no possible way of knowing, whether God, out of his infinite mercy, would really entitle us to it, till he had particularly declar'd his will to that end. The apostle accordingly argues, that eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*. And in the preceding part of the same discourse, he represents it as the peculiar privilege of Christians, to whom this promise is made, that they stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God \tau.

I have here taken it for granted, that life everlasting imports an endless and perpetual duration; and, one would think indeed, that a formal proof of this point might be altogether unnecessary. However, as some of those terms in scripture, which are apply'd to fignify the eternity of hell torments, are also apply'd to fignify the eternal joys of heaven; and yet it is pretended, (how unjustly, will afterwards appear) that those terms do not strictly import the torments of hell will never have a period put to them, it may, for the same reason, be question'd, whether, from those expressions, we can strictly conclude the perpetuity of our future happiness in heaven? Now, admitting we could not, yet this way of arguing will prove nothing against us; because there may be, and certainly are, other very strong expressions denoting the eternity. of the joys of heaven, besides those which we alledge in order to prove the eternity of hell torments; tho' pretended, on the other hand, not to prove them.

* Rom. 6. 31.

† Ch. 5. 2.

I shall

I shall only observe, by the way, that when men have once openly advanc'd any false hypothesis (either from a motive of vanity or interest, or perhaps out of a mistaken zeal) how easily they are sometimes induc'd, in favour of it, to sacrifice the most evident truths, and such as it would never have otherways enter'd into their thoughts to question or dispute. We are in all cases, indeed, too much inclin'd to justify our selves at any rate: But this inclination, which tends to gratify the pride of men, one of the most general and reigning passions of human nature, discovers its power on no occasion more, than in the difficulty we find towards bringing an author to repentance. Yet why should it be matter of greater astonishment to us, that vain writers, when they are put under that necessity of supporting their vanity, should seek to cover one error with another, than that vicious persons should so ordinarily make one crime an argument or apology for another.

Now if we examine those expressions in scripture, whereby life everlasting is describ'd to us, they are as full, in order to denote the eternity of it, in the strictest sense, as they could have been, supposing them really design'd by the Spirit of God to be taken in And where we have all the evidence for the truth of that sense. any doctrine, which we could have had, on supposition of its being really true, it will be very natural to suspect, that there are some other grounds for denying the truth of it, than those which are pretended from the terms whereby it is express'd. Besides, the sense of words in scripture is not to be determin'd from an occasional, or even perhaps common acceptation of them, but from the sense, which the context, of thread of the argument where they are employ'd, obliges us to put upon them; otherways it might strictly be inferr'd, that when it is said, Samuel should serve the Lord for ever, that the expression for ever, when us'd on any other occasion, can, at the most, be only apply'd to signify the utmost period of human life. This term therefore must be explain'd, as all other terms ought to be, according to the nature of the thing it is intended to fignify, and the circumstances of the place, wherein it stands. When it can only denote a temporary continuance of any thing, there is a necessity of limiting the sense to some determinate space of time. By this rule, the word everlasting, when apply'd to the jewish dispensation, or any particular positive ordinance of ie, could not possibly be understood, as signifying any duration beyond the period when the jewish economy was to cease, and the christian to take place. But when we speak concerning the joys of heaven, as eternal, there is no necessity, from the nature of the thing, to limit the sense of the word eternity: Nay, it seems rather repugnant to our ideas of the divine wisdom and goodness,

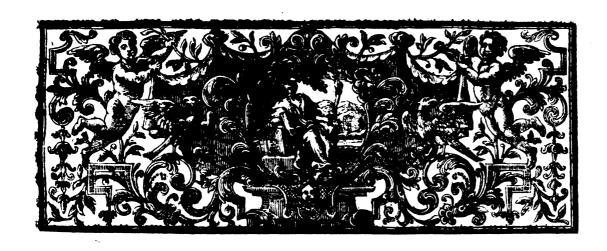
that the fense of it should be limited. For if a period will ever be put to the joys of heaven, either the soul will be annihilated. or reduc'd to a state less happy, than that which it enjoy'd be-It does not appear how annihilation can, in a human way of arguing, consist with the wisdom of God. For why should a wise agent, by any particular will, destroy his own work; a work capable of subsisting, in virtue of his general will, to all eternity? Or how, again, does it appear more reconcileable with the divine goodness, that when God has render'd men capable of being for ever happy; when he has impress'd on them continual and invincible desires to that end; when he has given them expectations of eternal happiness, so far as expectations can be grounded on the obvious and ordinary signification of words; and, lastly, when he has for many ages put them in the possession of a happiness, which nothing but his own arbitrary power can deprive them of, that he should, after all, put a period to it, either wholly, or in part?

But, indeed, the terms eternal, everlasting, and for ever, are not the only terms, from which we infer, that the joys of heaven will never have an end. The blessed inhabitants of it are pass'd from death unto life; to life, as oppos'd to death, and all suture or possible power of it. They have an express promise, that they shall never see death *; that there shall be no more death †. As these promises are inconsistent with the notion of their being, in any suture time, annihilated, or their ceasing to live; there are other promises, which secure to them the full and perpetual possession of all those pleasures of life, which they shall in heaven enjoy. They are said to have everlasting babitations ‡; a continuing city **; a building of God; a house not made with bands, eternal in the heavens ††; to have an eternal inheritance ‡‡; an inheritance uncorruptible, undefil'd, and that sadeth not away *. But, instead of expatiating in consutation of such salse and impi-

ous notions, it concerns us much rather to consider, and that is the best use we can make of our believing a future and everlasting life, what we shall do to enter into it; or how we may obtain the

salvation, which is in Jesus Christ, with eternal glory +.

^{*} John 8. 51. † Rev. 21. 4. ‡ Luke 16. 9. ** Heb. 13. 14. † 2 Cor. 5. 1. ‡ Heb. 9. 15. * 1 Pet. 1. 4. † 2 Tim. 2. 10.



SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

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Book V.

Of the Rewards and Punishments proposid in the Old and New Testament.

්වය දෙරුණ කුළුම්ව**රයින විය විද්යාවේ විවිදුවේ සිටින් වියවීම් විවිදුවේ සිටින් වියවීම් විවිදුවේ විදුවේ වියවීම්වීම්**

CHAP. I.

Of the rewards and punishments proposed in the Old Testament, respecting this life, and whether they respect this life only.



T will not be disputed, that God has a right to be, and that we may therefore piously conclude, from his attribute of goodness, he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him. But he has been pleas'd to confirm an inference, which might so justly be drawn

from this perfection of his nature (not to question how far his juflice may be concern'd in the present argument) by a special and express sanction.

THE

THE question is, of what nature the rewards propos'd to good men in the Old Testament were, respecting this life, or wherein

they principally confifted?

If we consider what promises were made to the Jews under the Mosaick dispensation, they chiefly consisted of temporal blessings and enjoyments; with regard to them as a people, in an affluence of all those advantages, which tend to exalt a nation, and make it happy; such as peace and plenty, and to this end, fruitful seasons; the former, and the latter rain; in a time of war, success and victory over their enemies. If we severally consider the persons who composed this community in a private station, the promises made to them, gave them particular grounds to hope for length of days; for riches and honours; for the blessing of God upon them in their going out and their coming in, in their slocks and their herds, in the fruit of their labours, and every thing they took in hand.

PROMISES of this kind were the more necessary to a people, who, notwithstanding they in general believ'd a future state; yet, according to the letter of the law, had no express revelation made to them concerning it; at least, the motives to obedience were

no where distinctly founded upon it.

AND it is much more probable this was the reason why the promiles of the law run so much on those temporal emoluments of life, than what has been frequently assign'd, that such a dispensation was more peculiarly adapted to the temper of the lews, as a people of gross, dull, and low apprehensions. There appears to have been from time to time among them persons of as great capacity and elevation of mind, as in any other nation under hea-Neither does their history, in general, represent them as a people of more narrow conceptions, or more stupid, than the rest of mankind. It may rather be reasonably concluded, this prejudice was originally entertain'd by the nations, out of envy to them; because God so visibly, on all occasions, appeard in their protection and favour; particularly, in going forth with their armies, in fighting their battels, and giving them the victory. Envy is a natural source of malice, as that is of calumny. And it is to this origin we are to ascribe that noted passage of Tacitus, where he speaks so disadvantageously of the jewish people, from a malicious report of the Ægyptians, from whose oppression God had, in so very signal and extraordinary a manner, deliver'd them. there be at present something of the temper imputed to them observable among the residue of the jewish nation, this may be attributed to a judicial blindness of mind they are under, in punishment of their infidelity; or to their condition, as a scatter'd and

dispers'd people; and, for that reason, under circumstances, which are naturally apt to contract and debase the minds of men.

But whatever might be the reason of God's encouraging the Jews so much to obedience, upon the prospect of temporal rewards, did the promises made to them wholly terminate in the blessings of this life? Or had they no expectations beyond it grounded on

any express authority of the reveal'd will of God?

This is a question, which, for the importance of it, deserves to be distinctly consider'd. If we take the letter of the covenant, which God was pleas'd to enter into with the Jews, it does not appear expressly from any article in it, that he was, by virtue of it, oblig'd to reward their obedience in a future state; that covenant, indeed, being made with them as a nation, a chosen people separated from the rest of the world, it was highly agreeable to the nature of it, that it should be founded, for that reason, on the promise of national and worldly blessings to them. Yet good men did suppose a spiritual sense contain'd in those promises, and, looking upon the blessings consign'd by them as shadows of good things to come, entertain'd strong and lively hopes from them of a suture state. These hopes were consirm'd to them both from the general principles of natural religion, and several circumstances peculiar to the dispensation they were under.

The covenant which God enter'd into with the Jews, as a peculiar people, did not destroy the natural proofs of the soul's immortality, which were common to them with the rest of the world. Neither did it hinder them from observing there was a necessity, according to the course of God's providence in this world, in order to the vindication of his justice, that rewards and punishments should be dispensed to wicked and good men in another life, after a different manner, than they are severally dispensed

to them in this life.

THERE were also particular reasons, from the authority of those divine oracles, which were committed to the Jews, and from the tenour of the religion they profess'd, to believe a future state of

reward to good men.

The account which Moses gives of the creation of man, into whose body, after it was form'd out of the dust of the earth, God breath'd a living soul, created after his own image, might give them reason to conclude, that what had so divine an original and resemblance, could not be, in the nature of it, mortal. They had, in the historical part of their inspir'd writings, a series of more remarkable and immediate interpositions of divine providence in this world, which tends to render a future state of retribution at least

least more credible, than any other nation, or rather, so far as we are able to judge in the case, than all the nations in the world besides. The translations of Enoch and Elias gave a sensible and peculiar evidence to them of this doctrine. God's declaring that he was a God of particular persons, of Abraham, for instance, of Isaac, and of Jacob, could not be interpreted in any other sense, than as importing a surre state wherein they surviv'd; for what can be inserr'd from these words, but that God, who had been their God, was, as he declares himself, still their God. But to be a God to any one is, both in the language of holy scripture, and in the reason of the thing, to be a preserver, a benefactor, and exceeding rich reward (for so the promise was made to Abraham) of such a person.

What is here said, is only design'd as a comment upon that strong, and incontestable affertion of our Saviour, which, tho brought in proof of the resurrection, appears still more forcible, towards proving the soul's immortality; God is not a God of the dead, but of the living. The promise made to the Jews of a mediator, who should reconcile them to God, and deliver them from the curse of the law, death, by which cannot be understood the separation of soul and body, for in this sense it was no where promis'd to the Jews, they should not die, but the guilt and miserable state of a sinner, with respect to his soul, whether in the bo-

dy here, or after the death of the body.

It is particularly upon this consideration, that our church rejects the doctrine of such men, who pretend the Jews had no expectations from any rewards proposed to them in the Old Testament, but what terminated in this life. The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: For both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offer d to mankind by Christ; who is the only mediator between God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises *.

The punishments threatned to the Jews did also, in the literal fignification of them, principally respect the sufferings of this present life, and, in general, for the same reasons, upon which temporal rewards were promised to them; to render them, whether in their national or private capacities, more obedient to God. We may observe therefore, from the events which occur in their history, they were generally happy or miserable, according to the good or corrupt state of religion among them. But a greater difficulty arises concerning the dispensations of providence, with respect to particular persons, under the Mosaick dispensation, who,

tho' entitled to the temporal bleffings of it, were miserable; tho' obnoxious to the temporal evils denounc'd against sinners, yet liv'd in great splendor and prosperity. Upon this occasion, it is ask'd, if good men had, by the letter of the law, a sæderal right to the advantages promis'd in it; and wicked men had, by the same rule, at once incurr'd the forseiture of them, and the punishment expressly threaten'd by the law, what account can be given of the frequent complaints in the inspir'd writings of the Old Testament concerning the promiscuous dispensation of the blessings or evils of this life to wicked and good men? How came it to pass that, contrary to the covenant under which they liv'd, it is represented, as if the wicked flourish'd; as if there was one event to the righteous and to the wicked; and all they were happy who dealt very treacherously.

To this it may be faid, that what is here observ'd concerning the events of providence, was not spoken particularly with respect to the Jews, but to mankind in general. If these passages, or any of them, refer to particular persons among the Jews, it may be farther reply'd, that the impunity of sinners, and the sufferings of good men, were only for a short period; that it is consistent with the goodness and justice of those, who have the power of rewarding or punishing in this life, for wife reasons; as, in some cases, to suspend punishment; so, in others, especially for the greater benefit of the party on whom they are to be conferr'd, to postpone rewards; that whatever appearance of wrong there may be in the latter case, there is no manner of pretence for it in the former; lastly, that it was sufficient, upon the whole matter, to instify the divine conduct, according to the tenour of the Mosaick covenant, if God so dispos'd the order of things, that in any vifible manner, wickedness should bring to a sinner punishment, and innocency to a good man, peace, at the last.

CHAP. II.

Of the rewards and punishments, respecting this life, propos'd in the New Testament.

OD had an original right to the obedience of man; and tho' he should never have enforc'd it by the sanction of rewards or punishments, nor so much indeed as requir'd it by 7 X any

any politive command. The reason of our homage and service to him, is evidently sounded on his sovereign authority and dominion over us. Yet because we do not always govern our selves by reason, or obey that law which he has caus'd to be written on the table of every man's heart, but there are other springs of action in us, particularly hope and fear, which strongly insuence our conduct, and sometimes determine even against reason, at other times oblige it to give sentence in favour of our irregularities; God has thought sit, in order to keep us within the bounds of our duty, and to encourage us more powerfully in well-doing, to direct those passions of fear and hope upon their right object; and to render them, in their respective operations, more subservient to reason, by setting happiness before us, as proper to animate and excite the former; and misery, as no less influential on the latter of them.

Some, I know, have entertain'd an opinion, that a sense of our duty to God, and the dignity of our own nature, as it is sufficient to that end, so alone ought to lay the soundation of our virtue and obedience, without any manner of regard to our interests, present or suture. If the heathens, say they, who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, were able to discover the truth of this maxim, virtue is its own reward, it should, one would think, operate with much greater force upon those, to whom God has declar'd the nature, and the conditions of that obedience, which he requires of them, at once in a clearer light, and by an express law. They suppose no other arguments can now be necessary to ingenuous minds, towards persuading them to the practice of their duty, but that they should certainly know, (and this no persons under the christian dispensation can pretend ignorance of) what is their duty.

I do not here dispute what force there may be in this principle to men in a state of perfection, or whether it may not have a considerable influence on certain persons of more noble and exalted minds, even in this imperfect state. I shall only observe, that the method God has taken to encourage our obedience, and prevent our apostasy or offences against him, will have the most powerful effect on the generality of men, if not in many cases upon those, who have naturally the best dispositions, or live under the most lively and powerful sense, both of their duty, and the dignity of human nature. Every man may examine himself, how great or strong soever his ideas are of virtue or religion, whether the sear of his being exposed to shame, or of his suffering on one account or other in his interests, or in the eye of the world, has not, on many occasions, restrain'd him from certain sinful actions,

actions, when probably all other restraints would have prov'd inessectual.

Self-love is not a passion criminal in itself, or when under due regulations; for then it could not be, as we experience it, necessary and invincible. There can be nothing therefore derogatory, either to the wisdom of God, in proposing such considerations, or to the reason of man, in complying with them, as may be proper to direct this principle, and cause it to operate the right way. Were it then, in the nature of the thing, repuguant to any principle of religion; the desire of happiness, the very desire of uniting our selves to God, and of enjoying him, would be also, what I conceive will not be pretended, in itself irregular, and offensive to God. What is, in the nature of it, and under any regulation whatever, sinful, is necessarily so, whatever the object of it be, at all times, and in all cases.

THE main force of the objection appears to lie against the sear of punishment, as a more servile ungenerous motive, and chiefly apt to work on little, or weak minds: And therefore it is observed, that hope of reward, or desire of happiness, has ever been one principal motive of obedience to the greatest and best of men. David encourages himself and others to the practice of God's commandments, upon this consideration, that in keeping of them, there is great reward. Moses bad respect to the recompence of reward. Our blessed Saviour himself, for the joy that was set before bim, endur'd the cross, despising the shame †.

But granting, for these reasons, the desire of happiness, particularly as importing a more intimate union with God, is a true religious motive to obedience; yet certainly we are not to understand it in opposition to the sear of punishment, as if that were an irregular or unjust motive to it. A duty so much enjoin'd and insisted upon throughout the holy scriptures, and particularly recommended by Solomon, as laying the very soundation of wisdom, or a religious life ‡; however love or hope might afterwards superstruct upon it. And accordingly holy David himself, in whose devotions we observe the most noble, generous, and exalted strains of piety; yet, from an apprehension lest he should at any time offend God, breaks out into this passionate address to him; My sless tremblets for fear of thee, and I am asraid of they judgments **.

WHATEVER difference there may be in these two passions of hope and sear, with respect to the object of them, they arise radically from the same cause. That very principle which carries us towards good, directs us to avoid such occasions, as may endanger

^{*} Heb. 11, 25. † Heb. 12. 2. ‡ Prov. 1. 7. ** Pfal. 119. 120.

the loss of it. And therefore, however a desire of being happy, or of not being miserable, may admit of a distinct consideration, the one being in order of our conception, an act of the mind, prior to the other, yet they are originally founded in one common subject. If it be said, the excellency of hope lies herein, that it has for its object the savour of God; it may be said, on the other hand, that fear has also a like advantage, as it prevents those impieties, which would exclude men from the savour of God. Now since both these passions are proper motives to the obedience of men, and, in their own nature, equally lawful, it was highly agreeable both to the wisdom and goodness of God, to put them respectively in motion, by proposing rewards or punishments to men, in consequence of their good or evil actions.

The great question is, whether, according to the terms of the evangelical dispensation, there be any special promises, relating to their temporal happiness, made to good men; or any temporal evils threaten'd to wicked men? The two principal passages, in proof of the assirantive, as to the former branch of the question, is that of our Saviour; where he tells his disciples, that if they sirst seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all the external supports of life, about which men appear so sollicitous, should be added unto them: And that of the apostle, where he declares, that godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.

To this it is answer'd in general, that we are to distinguish between promises made to good men, with respect to the necessary supports of life, and promises made to them of any special blesfing, as a stipulated reward of their obedience, or in consideration of it. Christians are members of this world, and therefore do not cease, by being Christians, to share in the ordinary and common effects of God's preserving and governing providence. neral laws of it will still take place, whether men profess Christianity or not. And as virtue or goodness have a natural tendency in them to recommend men to the favour of God, and entitle them, according to the ordinary course of things here, to many temporal bleffings, there is no reason why good men should be excluded the common advantages of piety, tho' spiritual rewards are propos'd as the only motives of obedience to them. What we fay therefore is, that whether Christians be unhappy, or in a prosperous condition, with regard to the life which now is; whether they want or abound, these different circumstances do not depend on any conditions of their christian obedience, specify'd in scripture, or belong to them properly as Christians, but are dispens'd for other wife and general reasons of providence; particularly, as God sees these

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these different states of life, most proper to promote their spiritual advantage, or, in the final issue, to entitle them to the future and glorious rewards of the gospel. It is by this rule that we are to judge, so far as we are capable of making any judgment in the case, by all that goes before us, concerning the favour of God towards It is not because any promise of that kind is made to them in the gospel, but because God sees prosperity most conducing to their spiritual good, the end to which, according to the tenor of the christian dispensation, all other designs are to give place. The blessings therefore or evils of this life, are not to be consider'd in a physical sense, according to the popular notion of them; but are indifferently, or alternately good or evil to Christians, under different circumstances, or in a different disposition, with respect to their spiritual state. So that, according to this doctrine, it is strictly true, that God will withold no good thing from them that lead a godly life: That is, nothing morally good, or really subservient to their great and true interests.

IF good Christians then are in a prosperous state, this does not arise from any sæderal right they have to the advantages of such a state, but from an accidental disposition they are in to improve the means of grace, under such circumstances, or to other reasons of providence, which either concern them in common with the rest of mankind, or if, as Christians, in regard to the occasional tendency they may have towards their spiritual improvement. Upon this consideration, the reasons are perfectly of equal force and evidence, that the brother of low degree should rejoice, in that he is

exalted; and the rich, in that he is made low *.

Ir we consider several passages in the gospel, they seem rather to imply, that Christianity is a state of suffering and poverty. The doctrines of the cross, of self-denyal, and mortification, in a manner peculiar to it, are inculcated as primary doctrines of it. There are many expressions, which seem to bear hard on rich men, and rather to determine in savour of a poor and afflicted state. If we consider the example of Christ himself, it rather tends to recommend such a state; if we consider what he did in savour of those disciples, who had left all to follow him, we do not find that he procur'd them any settlements, any posts of advantage or honour in this life, or gave them the least expectations that way; but he liv'd with them after a plain, homely, and simple manner; and when he dy'd, left them defenceless and expos'd in a world not much inclin'd to savour or encourage them. Yet we own there is a wide difference between the state of Christians at this time, when

Christianity is established by the laws of nations, from what it was in the infancy of it. But this difference is only accidental, and does not arise from the nature of the christian religion, but the different circumstances which Christians, by the good providence of God, are now in. The rules whereby Christians were then to conduct themselves, and which obliged them to prefer a passive state to all the advantages of this world, are still equally obligatory, should God think sit to permit the same persecution against the truth.

I shall but urge one argument more to shew, that there are no special temporal blessings promis'd to Christians in this life, and that is from the very nature and genius of the christian religion. It is faid expressly, Christ is the mediator of a better covenant, establish'd upon better promises *. Which words, if they do not exclude, in the reason of them, all temporal rewards to Christians, as a condition of this covenant, on God's part; yet so far at least they necessarily imply, that such promises, if there be really any relating to the present life, are to be understood with this restriction, that the accomplishment of them shall be subservient to the great and principal design of the covenant. And it being known only to God, whether that design would be better answer'd, by our being in a prosperous or an afflicted condition, he only can judge which of those conditions is more fit for us; and the promise is to take place, or be suspended, according to that judgment. But there are, indeed, other texts, which speak of the temporal bleffings of this life after a manner, that feems directly to exclude them, as any part of the condition God has oblig'd himself to. We are commanded to set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth;—Not to look for the the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen. Here the future rewards are set in direct opposition to the present advantages of life; which, according to the letter of the texts, are expressly excluded, but however import such a subordination to the great end of our calling, as renders them indifferently means or no means, in order to it, according to the good or ill use we make of them.

AFTER all, if we examine the two texts above cited distinctly, it does not appear from them, that there are any temporal promises made to Christians in this life. The words of our Saviour were not spoken to Christians in general, but to his disciples †; whom he therefore charges to take no thought what they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewith they should be cloathed; it was

necessary, in order to the discharge of their office, that they should have had a promise of a special and extraordinary support. promise which godliness is said to have of the life that now is, may refer to the inward supports of God's grace, or his special interpolition in favour of those who are employ'd by him in executing any great design of his providence: For therefore, adds the apostle, we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God *. From whence it follows, that except labour and reproach are to be number'd among the bleffings of life, by the promise of the life that now is, we are to understand the inward consolations of grace, or extraordinary supports of providence to good men, in extraordinary cases. Or if the apostle meant any temporal advantages in other respects, they are not such as arise from the nature and condition of the christian dispensation, but from the natural tendency of godliness and virtue to our present happinels, where they have their proper effect; which it is very consistent with the wildom and goodness of divine providence, to believe, they should have, on many occasions.

For these reasons, I cannot, with all due submission, (tho' several learned and pious men have taken this method) think it of any great service to Christianity, to insist so much on the temporal advantages of being religious. The design of Christianity is rather to draw off our thoughts and affections from this world; to remind us that we have now much greater things in expectation; that we are here strangers and pilgrims, looking for a better coun-Besides, it is not, perhaps, true in fact, that Christians are generally happy or miserable in this world, according to the different circumstances they are in, as to their spiritual state. ther shall we receive much better light into this argument, by appealing to experience whether we consider some of the most conspicuous examples of virtue, or of vice in the world. If men of a distinguish'd piety enjoy all the visible advantages of this life, men of the most profligate manners, who live without God in the world, are sometimes observ'd not to be inferior to them in that respect. The observation holds still true; As is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath +.

This doctrine has also ill effects; for good men being encourag'd with the promise of temporal blessings, and finding themselves, on the other hand, under great difficulties or distress, and sometimes for that very reason, because they act upon a principle of conscience, they are apt to conclude, either they are not sincerely good, or to suspect the faithfulness of God, who is repre-

fented as making promises, which they do not observe the accomplishment of; and in consequence, perhaps, are tempted to suspect the truth of Christianity in general. If men only intend that moral virtue has a natural tendency to promote the present happiness of life, they are certainly right: But if they would infinuate, that the practice of piety gives Christians any seederal or covenanted claim to temporal blessings, nothing can be more contrary to the express declarations of scripture, to the example of our Lord, to the nature of the new covenant, or to common observation.

THE reasons to shew, why no temporal punishments are threatned in the gospel to Christians, as such, will in general appear from what has been said relating to the temporal advantages of life. That God, in the course of his providence, does bring many temporal calamities upon wicked men; and that sometimes he makes himself here known, by the judgments which he executes on certain notorious offenders, may be allow'd; tho' there is nothing wherein we ought to be more cautious, than in interpreting his judgments, since we know so little, either concerning the defigns of providence, or the hearts of men; and are therefore commanded not to judge our brother; not to judge according to appearance, but to judge righteous judgment. This does not hinder but that the civil magistrate may proceed to punish delinquents in the state, or such as appear to be so; because the rule of his acting is the publick good; and therefore, tho' he does not infallibly know the hearts of men, he knows, whatever their intention was, that the faults for which he pronounces sentence against them, if they should be suffer'd to escape with impunity, must necessarily be attended with consequences pernicious to the state. But whether wicked men professing Christianity, suffer by the hands of the civil magistrate, or according to the ordinary and natural effects of their wickedness, they suffer as wicked men, as comprehended in the general scheme of providence, and not by virtue of any intermination peculiar to them as Christians. The judgment inflicted on the Corinthians for partaking after so profane a manner of the Lord's supper, was extraordinary, and whereof we do not now discover any like effects. But when we say, God has not made any express interminations of temporal evils in this life to Christians, we are far from saying he has excluded himself from interpoling, in particular cases, to inflict temporal evils on them, or in consequence of the general laws, whether of his grace or provi-Besides, that those judgments, except where death was inflicted, which God may inflict when, and by what methods he pleales,

pleases, were not properly punishments, but design'd as medicinal, and salutary chastisements *.

WHATEVER grounds there may be for believing temporal blessings promis'd, or temporal evils threaten'd to Christians in this life, there are some promises made to them in the gospel, which, tho', in a strict sense, they cannot be term'd temporal, yet may here not improperly be considered, as respecting their present The promise of an inward principle of grace, is very express in the christian revelation, and still concerning a greater measure of it to those, who make a due use or improvement of the talents already committed to them. But having before treated of the excellency of the new covenant in this respect, and as to the distinction of a common and special grace, I shall not here resume either of those subjects; it is sufficient to say in general, that there is a wide difference between a covenated right to a divine supernatural affistance, or to an express promise, that we shall never be tempted above what we are able; that God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it; and that to him who hath shall be given more in abundance. And the arguments which we form to shew the reasonableness of a sufficient common grace dispens'd to all men, which will leave them upon a failure in their duty without excuse. There are also punishments denounced in the gospel respecting this life, of a nature properly spiritual: I have mention'd the power of the keys to this end; but God does also interpose, by immediate acts of his will, in withdrawing the aids of his grace from wicked men, or in giving them up, after a long habitual obstinacy in fin or error, to a judicial blindness of mind, or hardness of heart. In the former respect, God is said to send men a spirit of Rumber, a spirit of delusion, that they should believe a lye +. the latter, that it is impossible for those, who were once enlightened. and had tasted of the beavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Hely Chost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance ‡. There is no difficulty in explaining this text, if we suppose there are some sins of so heinous a nature, among which it is reasonable to reckon apostasy, or a publick denial of the truth, that no penance ought to be appointed in the church towards reconciling those who are found guilty of them. But as this opinion appears to be too rigid; as it was never, on any occasion, admitted by the latin church; as pardon of sin is promis'd in the gospel to all true penitents, without distinction; and God only knows when a finner is fallen into such an incorrigible

^{* 1} Cor. 11. 31, 32. + 2 Theff. 1. 10. ‡ Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.

state, out of which there are no ordinary methods left for his recovery: It feems much more reasonable to explain the words, not as relating to any power or discipline of the church, but to the natural impossibility apostates were under of restoring themselves to the favour of God, or of exercifing any true act of repentance, without such an extraordinary measure of his grace, which, according to the tenor of the evangelical dispensation, they had no right to expect, but rather had great reason to fear would be withholden from them. For if neither the baptismal efficacy *, nor the sensible and strong operations of the Holy Spirit upon their minds, were sufficient to prevent their falling, how could it be posfible for them, that, when fallen, when they were justly depriv'd of those assistances, to restore themselves again to their former state. If we explain the words in this sense, there is no necessity of rendring the original word † impossible, by extremely difficult; for the words are true, with respect to the condition of fuch persons, in the most strict and literal sense. To the same effect, when the apostle exhorts the jewish converts to take care, lest any of them should be harden'd through the decentfulness of sin ‡; he plainly supposes that sinners may provoke God by degrees to give them up to an incorrigible obduracy of heart: Yet because, it is to be hop'd, this case, as to the judicial proceedings of God against sinners, does not ordinarily occur; because it is somewhat difficult for a finner to know when it is really his own case; because every desire of restoring himself to the favour of God, and every endeavour to this end, is one good evidence that this is not his own case; he ought not, while he finds any good dispositions in himself, to despond, but still to hope that God, of his great mercy, if he do what is incumbent on his part, will make a way for him to escape.

CHAP.

^{*} I refer here to a known explication of the original word outsidered, as signifying persons baptiz'd.

† 'Adviralor.

† Heb. 2. 12.

CHAP. III.

Whether the civil magistrate has a power of proposing rewards and punishments to men, on any other account, than as they are members of civil society?

HERE appears to be the greater difficulty in resolving this question, because the civil magistrate, at the same time he acts in that capacity, is supposed to have a zeal for the religion he professes, which will incline him to promote the growth of it, by all just and proper methods. And how can there be a more reasonable occasion of employing the power, or the interest which his station gives him, than in contributing to so good and desirable an end, and withal, so beneficial to the community, over

which he presides.

A civil magiltrate, when he becomes a christian, does not lose any right, which he had antecedently to his being a christian. If he were then invested with a right to reward or punish men for acting in conformity to, or against the principles of natural religion, he has still a power, and, for the same reason, of rewarding or punishing men for acting in conformity to, or against the principles of reveal'd religion. For what is it that authorizes the magistrate, as to the former case, to execute his office alternately in both these respects, but because it is necessary to the peace and happiness of society, that a sense of natural religion should be preserv'd, by all proper methods, in the minds of men. If it be found then necessary to the good of society, that the principles of reveal'd religion should be publickly profess'd, or men be oblig'd, in a solemn manner, to declare their assent to them, the civil magistrate may as lawfully require such assent to those principles, and under the same penalties, as he can require (what certainly on occasion he may do) the assent of men to the principles of natural religion. It is not merely because such principles are in themselves true, that gives him authority in the case, but because the common interests of society cannot be preserv'd, unless the truth of them be maintain'd, and his power, when it is requisite, employ'd to that end.

What is the reason, for instance, that the magistrate has authority to smite the scorner, but because, if religion be once expos'd with impunity to open contempt, whatever care is taken by penal

penal laws to suppress immorality, they will, in great measure, lose their effect; as men will naturally grow in proportion, as they are less influenc'd by the awe of a Deity, more profligate and corrupt in their manners. It is for this reason that the magistrate has a just and indisputable right of calling the scorner to account; and not merely because he professes a speculative error, however impidus in itself. For if the magistrate had a power of smiting him for his error, as such, and without any regard to the interests of society, he would equally have a power of smiting men for any error, whether the interests of society might be affected with it or not. And if the magistrare be fully convinc'd, that the profession of Christianity is necessary towards promoting all the good and beneficial ends of government, or that without obliging men to declare an explicit assent to certain christian doctrines, Christianity itself cannot be well preserv'd; he may smite the unbeliever in either case, with equal justice, as he smites the scorner, and for the same political reason.

It may, perhaps, be said, we ought to put a material difference between an unbeliever, and a scorner; that the principles of natural religion are in themselves more evident, as depending on the intrinsick nature and reason of things, than the principles of reveal'd religion, which are deduc'd from certain passages of scripture, the sense whereof may be, and has, perhaps, been much controverted; and that as the magistrate therefore may be more liable to be mistaken in the latter respect, it is not reasonable that he should have an equal power of giving the civil sanction to any

doctrine, as in the former respect.

All we can infer from hence, is, that the magistrate, where there is less evidence for the doctrine he would establish, ought to proceed with more caution, and to inform himself carefully, both in relation to the truth of it, and the subserviency it may have, when established towards promoting the common happiness. This is the rule, whereby the magistrate is to act in all his establishments, and in applying the temporal influences of this life, whether as to reward or punishment, towards enforcing them; without regard to the real scruples, or pretended scrupulous consciences of private men.

I shall here beg leave to transcribe what I have said on a former occasion, relating to this matter, and before I could have an

eye to the present state of the controversy about it.

"In all cases, how far men, upon a pretence of conscience, may be tolerated in a salse doctrine or worship, is not so much consideration of charity, or, to speak the common dialect, of moderation, as of wisdom and prudence. The magistrate is

" to preserve the peace and tranquillity of the state. If this can-" not be done without putting persons, who, upon good grounds, are "thought dangerous to the state, (as professing any dangerous " principles) under wholsome or convenient restraints; the magi-"Itrate is oblig'd, from the very nature and end of his office, to " lay such restraints upon them; because his principal care (and " to which all private regards must give place) is, that the com-" mon wealth may receive no harm. He ought, however, to " deal impartially with himself in the case, and not to make use " of any colours, or specious pretences of publick good, to au-" thorize violence and oppression; but proceed with great cauti-"tion and tenderness, and never disturb any person in his civil " or religious rights or liberties, where there are not very reason-" able and strong presumptions, that either in themselves, or in "their natural and ordinary consequences, they may tend to the disturbance of the state.

"I add in their natural and ordinary consequences; because the magistrate is not only to suppress present and open disorders,

" but to provide against probable or imminent dangers.

I observe afterwards, "that tho' perhaps the consequences "which we charge upon the principles or party zeal of men, may not necessarily flow from them; yet if they be such as, "from the natural tendency of things, may very probably flow from them, then the magistrate has good and sufficient cause

" to prevent any ill effects of them.

"As, for instance, when those principles which naturally lead " to subvert all order and government in the state, are openly " advanc'd and justify'd; or when the measures formerly taken " in pursuance of such principles, and which actually involv'd the " state in the utmost confusion and disorder, are not only ex-" cus'd, but publickly justify'd; not here and there by some known " and popular advocates of the cause, but by a numerous party; " and when their very number is made use of as an argument to " render them more formidable to the state; in this case, how " much soever the magistrate may be inclin'd to acts of goodness " and mercy; yet if he be a wife, or rather, if he be not a very " weak governor, he will think it convenient to guard with all " proper and convenient laws, against the principles or designs of " such men: And if he do not find it necessary, as he ought not, "where the necessity is not very visible and apparent to smite "them; yet it must be granted the most reasonable thing in the "world, that they should be ty'd so far up, as never to have the " same, or the like occasion again of smiting him.

" WHAT

"WHAT therefore is incumbent on the magistrate, is to judge, " (and to judge as he will answer it to his own conscience) whe-

"ther the umbrage that any body or fociety of men may give "the state, under a pretence for liberty of conscience, be really

" such as endangers it; and he is to proceed with the greater se-

" verity or indulgence accordingly *.

BUT with what caution and tenderness soever the magistrate may proceed; whether the doctrines of natural, or of reveal'd religion be more evident, or appear in a clearer light to him; yet, if he finds it necessary to the publick, that certain doctrines, in either respect, should be publickly profess'd or maintain'd, he is under an equal obligation, from the nature of his offices, to enforce the profession, or support the establishment of them by civil fanctions. The general reason of his authority is still the same, and does not depend on the different degrees of evidence, as to moral or reveal'd doctrines, but on the tendency of them to the peace or happiness of society, which may be sometimes greater in respect to doctrines less evident; but the evidence whereof may, notwithstanding, be sufficient to justify the establishment of them. I argue here upon a supposition, which ought not, perhaps, to be made, that the principles of natural religion are founded upon a more clear and incontestable evidence, than the doctrines or institutions of reveal'd religion.

WHERE the magistrate therefore has grounds to believe, that when men are publickly suffer'd to oppose such and such doctrines, or that, if they be not oblig'd, by virtue of some publick Test, to profess them, the peace of the state must necessarily be much endanger'd; or if it be found by experience, that such doctrines, as he thinks fit to suppress, have formerly prov'd destructive to the peace of it; that they are opposite to the genius of the people under his government; or tend, in their natural consequences, to embroil his administration, if not to subvert all government; certainly it is lawful for such a magistrate, if he will pursue the ends of the trust repos'd in him, to suppress such principles, as to suppress vice or immorality. The fins or errors of men being perfeetly indifferent to him, as acting in the capacity of a civil ma-

gistrate, setting aside the ends of civil government.

I desire it may be observ'd, that I here only suppose the magistrate invested with a power alternately of enforcing or suppressing any such doctrine, as has some visible and immediate relation to the good or prejudice of the state. As to speculative errors, the nature or tendency whereof cannot be presum'd to affect it, he is

^{*} Serm. vol. 2. p. 54, 55, 56.

not oblig'd to interpose his authority; all we contend for is, that the magistrate, from the nature of his office, ought to take cognizance of such doctrines, whether true or false, that directly, or

by necessary consequence, concern him as a magistrate.

It it be said, that the magistrate is not only fallible, but may sometimes profess a salse religion, and think it for the interest of the state that his subjects should do so too; by which means, if we allow him a right to encourage or suppress any speculative doctrines, the true religion may be in time extirpated. This, we say, is a consequence, which does not arise from the nature of the trust reposed in the magistrate, but from an accidental abuse of it: It cannot be argued, that because a power may be, in certain cases, misapply'd, it cannot therefore be justly claim'd or exercis'd

in any case.

Ir this way of arguing, from the fallibility of the magistrate, or the consequential effects of it, should hold good, we may conclude, for the same reason, that there ought to be no publick courts of human judicature, none, especially, where the last appeal in any cause ought to lie; or that the magistrate ought not, in any case, to interpose by his power, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well: Because it may happen that a false judgment may be given, even in the last resort of a judicial process; or that the magistrate may so far err, as to confound, in certain cases, the distinction of right and wrong; may call evil good, and good evil; put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. In this case, where the magistrate happens to err in the simplicity of his heart, there is no remedy; he must follow the light and dictates of his conscience, the erroneous. But, for the same reason, whatever inconveniences the people committed to his charge, may, by this means, be expos'd to on other accounts, they ought not to comply with any establishments in prejudice of the truth, against their consciences. Should it be pretended, that the ends of civil government absolutely require wicked men should be punish'd, and good men, at least, encourag'd; this very pretence implies a tacit-concession, that the fallibility of the magistrate ought not to be objected, against his having a power, in general, of rewarding or punishing men; but only in such cases, where the ends of government do not require, they should be rewarded or punish'd.

THE encouragement therefore which the sivil magistrate gives to men, who profess the established religion, and his excluding (if that may properly be called a punishment) persons, who oppose either the general truth, or particular doctrines of it, from cer-

tain common privileges or offices in the state, is founded in the same reason.

THE religion established in any nation by the laws, is supposed, at once, most agreeable, except where some violent or indirect methods have been taken for its establishment, to the sense of such a nation, and upon reasonable grounds, to supply a fit number of men of the best principles, and the greatest probity, for

the publick service.

Now it concerns the supreme magistrate in every government, to put the several powers, whereby it is to be administer'd, into the hands of persons, in whose integrity, upon all accounts, he may naturally repose the most considence: And to keep others out of posts, whether of profit or trust, whose principles render their sidelity more suspected, or are less consistent with the nature of the constitution, under which they live; especially where they have never fail'd, when they had the power in their hands, to abuse it. For it is necessary, in the reason of the thing, or else there can be no reasoning from the nature of any thing, that a government, where Christianity is profess'd and establish'd, should have a power of enacting laws, for the preservation of publick peace, both in church and state; and where there has been any former notorious abuse of power, to prevent the like mischiess for the suture *.

Where the state acts upon these, or the like considerations, there is no more ground to complain of persecution, than where she excludes men from civil offices on any other just account, or by reason of their incapacity, whether natural or political, to

serve her.

If men who declare against the truth of the established religion, or against any particular sundamental doctrines of it; who condemn the terms of her communion, as directly sinful; and, at the same time, can occasionally communicate with her, in compliance with those very terms; who deny those orders, or that discipline, without which there can be no true christian church, as having no true ministry, or true sacraments; who therefore act upon such schemes, as have a tendency, in the event, to explode the very profession itself of Christianity out of the world; if such men may be qualify'd for any offices of consequence in the state; either it must be said, that the state has not a right to take those methods, which are most proper for its own preservation and defence; or that it is of no importance to these ends, whether any particular doctrines of Christianity, whether Christianity itself, be preserv'd or abolish'd.

^{*} I refer here to the reasons specify'd in the preamble to the Corporation act.

We grant a due tenderness should be had to persons of scrupulous consciences; and that no man ought to suffer, or be persecuted merely upon that account: But there is a wide difference between persecuting men for their principles, and guarding, by wholsome laws and precautions, against the return of a persecution which themselves had formerly rais'd; and who, so long as they retain the same principles, must naturally be suppos'd, whenever they have any power to that end, to pursue the same measures.

It is not merely upon account of their differing from us, as to certain religious doctrines, that the penal laws against the Papists are enacted; the severity of them could never be justify'd, according to our own principles, upon that foot only; but it is because they profess doctrines inconsistent with the peace, with the safety and honour, with the very nature of the establish'd government, as a sovereign and independent government. If mere difference in religion would authorize us, and for that reason only, to put those who dissent from us under certain legal restraints, it would authorize us to do so in all cases, and in respect to all persons, whether Papilts or Protestants. The reason therefore of such legal restraints, is not founded in the different principles of religion, as such, which men profess, but in the tendency they have to disturb or unsettle rhe civil establishment. Where that tendency is observable, where the effects of it, if not timely prevented, will, in all probability, follow; the civil magistrate has the same authority in the case over all persons, from the nature of the thing, whatever names of distinction they give themselves, or affect to be call'd by.

But does not this power of the magistrate, which we contend for, destroy the natural and inalienable rights of mankind? Why, for instance, should the members of a society, the very design whereof is to assure to them all their just and reasonable claims, be excluded from sharing the common privileges of it? These are questions, however they may have an appearance of popularity, yet really in themselves very trisling and insignificant. For the nature of society supposes, that men, by entring into it, do, for that reason, recede from certain natural rights, which antecedently belong'd to them. In a state of nature, liberty and independency are rights of all mankind; but society, which supposes government, absolutely destroys, except in the person of a Prince, who is absolute, this latter right, and, in many respects, the former of them. Without a cession, indeed, of our natural rights, in many cases it is impossible to conceive, how any regular society should be founded; or how it can subsist, without a cession of them, in all cases, where the publick good or safety require it.

If society were dissolv'd, every man would have an equal right to the produce and fruits of the earth, or to any thing, which he could first lay his hands on; there could be no superior claim in such a state to power, to riches, or honour: But society being once form'd, the different circumstances of its members, in these respects, necessarily result from it, by virtue of certain positive laws, which are by common consent submitted to. And therefore, it is much more proper to say, men have a political, than a natural right to any privilege, or advantagious post in the state. How far, or with what limitations, men may be entitled to such a right, or be excluded from it, the state is solely to judge. It is upon this principle, that some men have a right to be elected representatives of the people, some to elect them, while others, according to the laws of the constitution, are disqualify'd from serving the publick, in both these respects.

AND if the state is to judge what persons are best qualify'd to serve it, in the judgment it makes, regard is not to be had so much to their natural, as their social qualifications. The most reasonable pretence, upon which a natural right of serving the state, in any superior post, can be claim'd, is that of a fine natural capacity; and yet where this is sound in persons, whose probity or zeal for the true interests of the state, if justly suspected, is so far from recommending them to the state for such a post, that it is a very good argument why they should not be entrusted with it.

IT is of no consequence to object here against any disqualifications, by authority of the state, relating to religious doctrines, that the church being a spiritual society, the members of it ought only to be govern'd by such laws or considerations, as are purely of a spiritual nature. We grant this true, in relation to the church, under the notion of a distinct society, invested with certain powers that are not deriv'd from the state; yet as the members of the church, are at the same time members of the state; as we cannot, in fact, separate the man from the christian, whatever we may do notionally, or in the abstract, the state has an unquestionable right to establish such principles by civil sanctions, as have a natural or necessary tendency to preserve the peace and promote the interests of it. It being admitted, for instance, that Christianity is the best and most beneficial institution in the world, with respect to all the ends of civil government, the state may very justly preclude all fuch persons, who would decry this institution, and introduce atheism or deism in the room of it, from having any Chare in the civil administration.

For the same reason, such particular doctrines of Christianity, as are essential to the being, or netessary to the preservation of it,

or which tend more effectually to establish the authority of the magistrate, and enforce the subject's obedience to him, ought to be guarded with the like precaution, whether in favour of those, who affert such doctrines, or to the exclusion of others, who oppose

and endeavour to explode them.

THE argument from the fallibility of the magistrate, would hold equally good, in both these cases. And if there be any weight in it, no man can possibly shew, that the civil magistrate has a better right (and this right, I conceive, will not be deny'd him) to prevent, by any penal law, the abolition of Christianity, than the abolition of such doctrines, as are either essential to the preservation of it, or, in the nature of them, subservient to the

real and primary interests of the state.

The pretence, that the hearts of men are known only to God, and that no man ought to suffer upon a principle of sincerity or conscience, is here of no force. The civil magistrate is to judge by the best evidence he can come at, whether the principles of men really tend to the prejudice of society, and he is to proceed in his penal sanctions accordingly. Whether men profess such principles from a secret or sincere conviction of their truth, is out of the question, as to him. Upon a supposition, that the true motives upon which men act, could certainly be known to him, he would be obliged to pursue the ends of his office, and consult the publick good; and therefore, his not knowing them, cannot be an argument against his taking such measures, as really tend to promote the publick good. The sincerity, or infincerity of men, is of no consequence, in this case, to the rule of his acting, but must be judged at another tribunal.

Upon the whole matter, in answer to the enquiry originally propos'd, we may form this resolution; that, tho' the civil magistrate has, and ought to have, a power of proposing rewards and punishments to men; yet this power is properly exercis'd with respect to them, as they are members of civil society; and

only indirectly, or by consequence, as they are Christians.

CHAP. IV.

Of the future rewards propos'd in the Gospel.

If the nature, or the duration of that happiness, which is prepar'd for good men in heaven; having, under the last article of the creed, life everlasting, said what may be sufficient for our general information upon both these heads. It may not, however, be improper in this place to consider a little, after a more particular manner, wherein the nature of those evangelical rewards, which are promis'd to the faithful after this life, will principally consist.

THE two great faculties of a human soul, when, for the sake of method or distinction, we reason separately upon them, are those of understanding and will. Now the happiness of every being consists in uniting itself to such objects, as are most agreeable to its nature, and perfective of it. This truth is so evident, that it needs not be prov'd; and the consequence is no less clear, that the happiness of man must therefore consist in his knowledge of those things, which are most worthy to be known, and in his union to such things, as are most worthy to be chosen. When he is posses'd of this happiness; when his mind is enlighten'd with a view of the most excellent truths, and his heart fill'd and enlarg'd with the enjoyment of the greatest good, then he will be as happy, as his utmost wishes and desires and capacities can make him.

The promise of a suture happiness, in both these respects, to Christians, is sounded upon an express and divine authority. We are assured, with respect to the former branch of it, that the faithful, after this life, shall see God as he is *: For we now see through a glass darkly, but then sace to sace; now we know in part, but then shall we know, even also as we are known †. There shall be no night in that luminous and blessed region of truth; it shall not be obscur'd by means of ignorance or error; neither need they any candle, any such poor helps of argumentation or discourse, towards improving their knowledge as men are forc'd to employ, and frequently to very little effect here; which yet are so discouraging to the generality of mankind, in their search after truth, that sew persons pursue her with that assiduity and application,

^{* 1} John 3. 2.

which are necessary to bring them to the place of her residence. But the Lord giveth them, the blessed above, light *; and at the same time opens and invigorates their minds to receive it.

Now if the discovery of some metaphysical, or perhaps less important truth in natural philosophy, or the mathematicks, is sometimes able, especially after a long and intense lucubration, to fill the mind of a man with so transporting a joy, and to raise him so much above himself, that he is insensible to all other impressions, and scarce knows, perhaps, whether he possess the object of his desire in the body, or out of the body; if the discovery of any one truth here, more or less important, is able to produce such strong and sensible effects; how happy and desirable must that state be, wherein the rays of truth shall spread themfelves over our minds, not by a flow and gradual motion, according to the advances we here make in knowledge, but by a direct and immediate effusion of divine light: A light, which, at the same time it discovers one truth, lets the mind into whatever truth it would attend to, or turn its meditations upon. So that we may be able, when, by the grace of God, we shall enter into that blessed state, to comprehend, in a manner at once, with all faints, what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and to be fill'd with all the fulness of God +.

For as our minds will then be united to God in perfect vision, so will our hearts and affections in perfect love; not only in that love which terminates upon him, but which is communicated to the foul, by a continual emanation of his goodness from him. Then shall the faithful be satisfy'd with his goodness ‡. For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people; they shall drink of those rivers of pleasure which flow at his right hand for evermore **. He that sitteth on his throne in heaven shall dwell among them \pm, shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; for the lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, Shall seed them, and Shall lead them into living fountains of waters ##. All these expressions import, indeed, not only that happiness which will result to the saints in heaven, from the contemplation and enjoyment of the most perfect being, but from an affluence of all the bleffings they can defire, and greater, than it can now enter into the heart of man to conceive.

But as man will, in this state of glory and happiness, consist of a body, as well as a soul, it is highly reasonable to suppose,

that he will then have agreeable entertainments for all the appetites and affections proper to the body; and particularly, that those powers of it, which we now call the senses, will be both invigorated to a degree, and affected with their proper objects, after a manner, far beyond what they are here capable of.

NAY, it may be question'd, if then we shall not have certain sensations, whether, by an immediate energy of the divine will, or an occasion of sensible objects acting upon us, altogether different from what we have here. To say, that we have no notion, or that we are not in the least able to form any, concerning more or other senses, than we now have, is an argument of no more force, than for a blind man to say, there is no such thing as sight or colour, because he has not, nor can ever have, while he continues blind, any manner of idea concerning them. If the power or wisdom of God can effect things beyond the capacity of men to conceive, and his goodness shall incline him to effect them in one case; why not in another; and in as great a variety of instances, as he thinks sit?

IT may not be improbable, that the soul at present is rather restrain'd, as to the proper operations of it, by reason of its union with a gross and corruptible body, which presseth it down; and that after it is disengag'd from this incumbrance, and render'd capable of acting with its sull force, a greater number of sensations will not so much be added to it, by the positive will of God, as result from the natural and genuine powers originally communi-

cated to it by God.

This reflection may be of some use to those, who, having seldom or never accustom'd themselves to meditate on abstract subjects, or perhaps on any thing but body, or the objects of sense that surround them, look upon death as a kind of annihilation; which, by dissolving the union between their souls and bodies, puts a final period to the sensible pleasures they now taste, and wherein they place all their delight and satisfaction. While they are therefore in the body, and have the use of these senses, they are resolv'd to make the most of them, and to gratify them so long, and as much as they can. For the same reason, they say with the libertines in the book of wisdom; Let us enjoy the good things that are present; let none of us go without his part of voluptuousness.

But this, to say nothing as to the impiety of it, is a very false and irregular way of reasoning, as being only sounded on a notion, that the sensations of the soul depend upon its union with the body; whereas there is great reason to suspect, that union rather obstructs obstructs, or limits the operations of the soul; and to believe, that when the soul is discharg'd from its present confinement, and united to a glorify'd body, it will not only have a greater number of sensations, but its taste of them will be much more ex-

quisite and affecting.

An objection here arises, which it may not be improper for me to take some notice of. It is ask'd, if the soul be united to God in a suture state of happiness after the intimate manner we have represented, it will be necessary, by way of preparation for such a union, that it should be perfectly freed from all impurity and disorder, that so it may be presented to Christ hely and undefil'd, without spot or blemish. It is farther question'd when, or how this purgation of the soul is made? Whether at the article of death, by some special grace of the Holy Spirit; or by its being put under some proper course of discipline, for a certain interval of time after death.

THOSE of the reform'd church generally hold, that after this life there is no future space either of probation or medicinal chaftisement; that God may therefore, by a special operation of his sanctifying grace, insuse a habit of charity or holiness into the soul of a dying person, whereby it shall be qualify'd to enter im-

mediately into heaven, and have communion with him.

It is argued, on the other hand, that, according to the natural course of things, which God generally leaves them to, without interposing, by a miraculous power, to prevent the ordinary effects of them, the repentance of a dying sinner, how servent so ever his charity or zeal may be, yet cannot, in all respects, alter the natural state of his soul, or any one habitual disposition of it. And the best christian being subject to one or other predominant passion, it is supposed he will naturally retain some remains at least of it when he dies, and carry them into the other world along with him. So that there will be a necessity, according to this way of reasoning, that, before the souls of men can be prepared to enter into heaven, they must pass through some intermediate and previous state of purgation.

If there were any weight in this argument, the doctrine of purgatory would, in a sense at least, have some reasonable foundation.

But there are several exceptions which lie against it.

1. It has no foundation in scripture; or, if it had, it would hold only for the purgation of the soul in a suture state, and not as it is afferted by the Papists, for a purgatorial or external sire. For what contact can there be between a soul, and any parts of matter, however agitated or subtile.

2. THO'

2. Tho' in this life God acts, in the dispensations of his grace, by virtue of certain general laws, and according to a certain order; yet even here he sometimes interposes by an extraordinary grace: But in case he did not, we cannot argue from the manner of his dealing with men through the whole course of their lives, and while they are confessedly in a state of probation, to what he will do when a period is put to this state.

3. THAT the scriptures represent good men, as passing imme-

diately after this life into a state of happiness *.

4. If this belief, that a future preparation of the soul for the heavenly state is necessary, should happen to be entertain'd; yet in case it be not abus'd to any superstitious purposes, or suppos'd to imply a state of punishment to the soul after this life, as it may be thought a doctrine, consider'd in itself, not altogether without some reasonable soundation, there appears to be still less danger or impiety in embracing it.



CHAP. V.

Of the future punishments threaten'd in the Gospel.

As the christian religion proposes the most powerful and engaging motives of obedience to men, so the nature and duration of the punishments, which it threatens to the disobedient, are such, as cannot fail of affecting all considerate persons, in the most sensible and awakening manner: They consist in the exclusion of wicked men, so long as they continue in being, from the presence and enjoyment of God, and in their suffering all the pains which a soul awaken'd into a lively sense of its guilt, and a body so temper'd, that it dwells in everlasting burnings without being consum'd, is capable of.

WHAT adds to these torments, both of loss and pain, is the rage of an endless and fruitless despair; a despair of ever seeing a period put to them, I do not say by a change of condition, but even by an utter extinction of being: That to a sinner, under the sentence of damnation, dreadful as the thoughts of annihilation must necessarily be in itself, would be a desirable way of losing his soul. But the eternity of hell torments, which leaves not so

much

^{*} Atts 24. 4. Phil. 1. 2, 3. Rom. 8. 18. Rev. 1. 13.

much as room to the damn'd for taking refuge in so miserable a comfort, is as plainly reveal'd in scripture as the nature of those

punishments.

I am sensible, divines, whose office it is to insist upon this doctrine, are sometimes charg'd with a design rather of terrifying people, especially weak or ignorant people, into a sense of their duty, than of persuading them to the practice of it upon calm and rational motives. And perhaps there may be some ground for this imputation, when they, whose office it is to instruct the people, wholly address themselves to their passions; or indistinctly collect and apply all the interminations they find in scripture concerning suture punishment, out of their proper place, or after a manner, which discovers rather an indiscreet or intemperate zeal, than a sound knowledge.

But this is no argument, why a doctrine, so expressly reveal'd and inculcated in the gospel, should not, on all proper occasions, be afferted; a doctrine of so great influence upon the minds and conduct of men, and which we are so much caution'd to avoid the effects of by him, who could not be suspected of imposing up-

on us by any groundless or false terrors.

However, since there have been certain objections rais'd, which are not thought altogether contemptible, both in reference to the nature and duration of hell torments, it may not here be impro-

per to consider, in a few words, the force of them.

It is argued, in the former respect, that the property of fire is to consume the body upon which it feeds, and to separate the parts of it; and yet the body of one, who is sentenc'd to the slames of hell, is supposed to be ever tormented in them, without consumption, or any separation of parts, or (which are here

only to be consider'd) the constituent parts of it.

We grant, our bodies, according to their present temper and construction, are liable to be dissolved by the particles of sire entring the pores of them. But why may not God render both the bodies of the wicked, and the fire wherein they shall be condemn'd to suffer, of a different kind or contexture from what they are here? Why may not the particles of their bodies be render'd so solid, that they shall not be capable of attrition; or the structure of their organs so compact, that the particles of sire shall not have sufficient power to break or divide them? Or why, indeed, is it necessary, that the fire, wherein the wicked are to suffer, should have any other qualities or effects like those, which we observe in culinary fires here; except such, as are proper to give us the like sensation of pain: Which God, if he pleases, may indifferently make water, or any other body, the instrument of.

The pains which we feel, not arising from the action of sensible objects upon us, but solely from the law which God has established, that such impressions from external objects, wherewith the body maintains any commerce, shall occasionally produce in

the foul such particular notices or modifications?

IF, in answer to what is here objected, we consult the authority of the holy scriptures, they are full and clear for the eternal duration of the bodies, as of the souls of the wicked in another life. They shall be turn'd into hell, where the worm dieth not; and the fire is not quench'd *. The fire is here represented, as of equal duration with the worm. But a foul, divested of a body, is not capable of suffering by fire; and if the words, as they evidently do, suppose the soul to suffer the pains of fire in any body, why not in the body rais'd to life again, the body proper to it? They shall be cast into the lake of fire t; and the smoak of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night \(\pmi\). Which words, if the bodies of the wicked were, immediately after the refurrection, to be destroy'd by fire, could not admit of any reasonable comment; because could the terms for ever and ever, contrary to the receiv'd signification of them in scripture, be wrested to favour this sense; yet without such a force upon the words, as cannot, by any rules of interpretation, be admitted, it would be impossible to reconcile it with a succession of days and nights, wherein the damn'd are said to have no rest. cording to the same expression, the permanent state of happiness in heaven is represented, when it is said, the saints rest not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy; and that they serve God day and night in his temple **. Should it then be granted, that the terms everlasting and eternal, when apply'd to the destruction of the body, do not in themselves necessarily imply any thing more, than that the body shall finally perish, or be consum'd in the flames of hell, tho' the same words, which are apply'd to signify the eternity of the joys of heaven, are us'd on the same occasion, and in the same place, to signify the eternity of hell torments #; yet since the sense of them is in other places directly restrain'd to fignify, that the bodies of the damn'd shall survive so long as their souls shall subsist in being; we are certainly oblig'd to explain them according to that determinate sense, and not according to the large acceptation, wherein they may be sometimes capable of being understood.

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^{*} Mark 9. 44. † Rev. 20. 15. † Ch. 14. 10, 11. ** Ch. 2. 11.—7. 13. †† Έις τὸ σῦς τὸ αἰώνιον, Matt. 25. 41. Έις κόλασιν αἰώνιον.— Εις ζωὴν αἰώνιον, \$. 46.

The great objection against the eternity of heil torments, whether the soul suffer them in the body, or out of the body, is thought to lie here; that it is difficult to reconcile them with the common ideas we have, and which the scriptures give us, of the divine justice. For what proportion is there between a momentary offence, and a punishment, an intense punishment, of infinite duration? Or what should provoke a just God, who knows whereof we are made, and what frail impotent creatures we are, to inslict such punishment upon us?

In answer to what is here objected, I shall satisfy my self with

laying down the following propositions.

1. That the argument from the proportion of time, between the space wherein any sin is committed, and wherein it is punish'd, must be acknowledg'd fallacious and inconclusive, even in the opinion of those who urge it. A common practice of mankind, wherein there is nothing thought criminal or unjust, is known to lie directly against it. When men are confin'd, imprison'd, or sequester'd for crimes, which have render'd them obnoxious to the state, it is not consider'd whether they committed them in a less or longer time, in order to adjust the duration of their punishment; but what the nature of their crimes is, and in what respect the state has been injur'd by them. Much less is there any force in this argument, upon the principles of the Origenists; for if it be a reason, that wicked men shall not suffer eternally for their fins, because eternity bears no proportion to the time of committing them; the same reason will hold against their suffering them, for that long period of time, which the Origenists suppose will intervene before their final deliverance. In a strict way of arguing upon this rule of proportion, if we pursue it in its obvious consequences, the sufferings of a sinner, after this life, for a thousand years, can no more be reconcil'd with the justice of God, in punishing him for that time, than if he were to be punish'd for ever.

2. That the degree or continuance of the punishment, which God may think fit to inflict on finners, does not depend so much on a consideration of strict justice, as of wisdom, and the reasons of his providence in governing the world. If God, as will appear in the sequel, may justly punish, and the reasons of his wisdom in punishing will eternally subsist; which reasons, tho' we do not know in what respects, or upon what considerations they are founded, are perfectly known to himself; then he will be equally justify'd in punishing to all suture time, as for any long or indefinite pe-

riod of time.

3. That God justly punishes sinners for ever, as well as for wise reasons respecting his government of the world, appears from hence,

hence; that his interminations of future and eternal punishments to them, can only take place in consequence of their own choice. Life and death, blessing and cursing, are set before them; and it is lest to their proper election, which of them they will prefer: Or rather, indeed, towards influencing them to chuse the better part, they are invited, they are mov'd to do it, both by an internal principle of grace, and the outward administration of the word and sacraments; if, after these express denunciations of the wrath to come against them, and all the wise methods of divine goodness to save them, they chuse the paths, and proceed in them with their eyes open, that lead to death; they have no ground of complaint for any injury done them. Their destruction is of themselves; and they must bear their own iniquity for ever and ever. I shall add,

4. That, supposing it on any account consistent with the juffice of God, to threaten eternal torments to impenitent sinners, there is one very wise reason, which we are able our selves to discover, for his threatning them. If now that men, who believe the terrors of the Lord, and in some measure live under an awful sense of them, are not yet, on many occasions, restrain'd by them from sinning against God; all other considerations towards laying a restraint upon sinners, must necessarily have been attended with less force and essicacy, and lest them more at liberty to walk in the ways of their bearts, and in the sight of their eyes. And if a wise governor has a right to keep his rebellious subjects in awe by any penalties absolutely necessary to that end, the justice of God will, for the same reason, be acquitted, in his threatning those punishments to sinners, without the intermination whereof, the ends of his government could not have been attain'd.

5. That God could have no wife or reasonable end in threatning, what he cannot justly execute. Because every man's reason, upon his consulting it, will inform him, that what God cannot do with the safety of his justice, the eternal rectitude and holiness of his nature will not permit him to do. If then, as is now taken for granted, God has really threaten'd eternal punishments to sinners; there is not a more clear or evident consequence in the world, than that he may justly, for that very reason, execute his threats

upon them.

I know it has been question'd, notwithstanding God has threaten'd to inslict eternal torments on sinners, and may therefore justly inslict them, whether he will, after all, certainly inslict them; because there is a wide difference betwixt what he may in justice do, and what strict justice obliges him to do.

I would

I would observe, in the first place, that this question, when propos'd (except in order to its being consuted) by any christian, is, in the nature and direct tendency of it, impious, as being plainly opposite to the design of God in his threatnings, and the

very reason of his enacting them.

God has threaten'd to inflict eternal punishments upon sinners; and yet men, who believe, or profess to believe, the revelation he has made to this purpose, pretend to question, whether, after all, he will inflict them. Is not this to suppose Christians under no obligation, strictly speaking, to believe a doctrine, which it is really the intention of God they should believe; so far as any words or forms of speech can be interpreted to signify his intention? Is it not to suppose, either that the God of truth has requir'd our assent to a false proposition, or that the sanctions given to his laws, wherein all ambiguity ought particularly to be avoided, are express'd in such terms, that only criticks, and men of nice speculation, are able to discover and ascertain the true meaning of them; and that Christians have in a manner universally, from the first plantation of the gospel to this time, interpreted them in a wrong sense? Whether in opposition to the opinion of Origen, that after a long space of time the damn'd will have a period put to their torments; or to a notion, which has been thought preferable by some moderns, that everlasting death and destruction do not imply even a temporary suffering of any continuance to the damn'd, but their utter and final extinction at once, especially of their bodies in hell fire. But if this be all that is intended by our Saviour in the gospel by hell fire, why is it call'd fire everlasting? Why, the fire that is not quench'd? Of what importance can it be to those, who shall be condemn'd to that fire, whether, after the entire destruction both of their souls and bodies, or of their bodies only, it will continue burning, or be immediately quench'd? What relation had it to our Saviour's argument, or how could it any ways tend to enforce it, that the fire wherein the wicked are to suffer an extinction of being for their sins, shall not at the same time be itself extinguish'd? It is much more reasonable to believe, that the scriptures being design'd for the instruction of mankind in general, the words of them are to be taken in their most natural and obvious fignification; and even where we only argue from the force of such words consider'd in themselves, without regard to the context, or other passages, which determine the particular sense wherein they are to be understood.

LET us proceed upon either of these suppositions, we cannot avoid one of the following inconveniences. To say, God has requir'd men to believe what is false, is to render his veracity suspected;

fuspected; to say, he has requir'd men to believe what is true, but express'd this truth in so ambiguous terms, and in a case too of the last consequence to them, that people of ordinary capacities will naturally mistake the sense of them, and persons of all capacities have hitherto in fact, almost without exception, mistaken the sense of them; this is to object what is no less injurious to his attributes of wisdom and goodness.

It can only be faid, in answer to the former inconvenience, that the legislator, is always supposed to retain a power of executing or remitting any threatened penalty, in his own hands; and that he may determine himself, as he sees cause, either way, without incurring the least censure for breach of faith. And, we know, it may sometimes very well consist with reasons of government to indemnify delinquents, by special acts of grace or pardon. This is the ground, and the only ground, upon which state criminals can hope to escape the legal penalties, which they have rendered themselves obnoxious to, and upon which, perhaps, the magisfrate can alone justify his veracity, in pardoning such criminals,

contrary to the express sanction of the law.

But because the nature of civil government requires there should be such a dispensing power reserv'd to the sovereign, (whether the sovereignty is lodg'd in one or more hands) and that it may therefore be justly executed by him; the case is very different, when we argue concerning the design of the supreme legislator to remit or execute his threats in another life; because, tho' we know, in particular cases, the reasons why the civil magistrate may be induc'd to pardon state criminals, and ought, perhaps, if he be a wise magistrate, to pardon them; yet we know nothing concerning the reasons of government, according to which God may think sit hereaster, and for ever to regulate his conduct; and which may always hold good for continuing the punishments he has threaten'd, and in all respects.

The methods therefore of proceeding by the civil magistrate against delinquents, from which the main argument has been drawn to shew, that God may, consistently with his justice and truth, not inslict what he has threaten'd, cannot give sinners any ground to hope, that God will one time or other put a period to their sufferings: His threatning the perpetuity of them, especially if he have us'd any solemn asseverations to that end, is rather an argument, that there are very wise and good reasons, why, according to the suture scheme of providence, they should be perpetual.

2. As this supposition, that possibly God may not, after all, inslict, what he has expressly threaten'd he will inslict, is injurious to his authority, as opposing the design of his threats; and to his

vera-

veracity or wisdom, as highly reflecting at least on one of these attributes. It may also be attended with very pernicious effects, towards encouraging wicked men in their sins and impieties: Not that there is any danger in it to those, who will give things a strict and impartial examination; but we have too frequent occasions of observing, how apt the corrupt part of mankind are to admit, without any due enquiry, such principles as directly or indirectly tend to favour corruption. Numbers of people sometimes espouse doctrines, at other times, the cause of men for advancing certain doctrines, concerning which, if they are required to explain themselves, their notions are, at the best, very indistinct and confused, and many of them appear to have no notion at all.

THEY, who expect the world should be govern'd by reason, are surprized to see how much force, inclination, or interest, have usurp'd upon the rights and authority of it. However, since men would still generally be thought to act like reasonable agents, where any ill design or practice is to be defended, as it is not capable of a defence from reason, people are willing to take up with any appearances of it, and to improve them as much as they can. When sinners are therefore told, especially when they are told by persons of any considerable character in the world for their parts or learning, or who have some eminent station in the church, that God may possibly, after all, not execute what he has threaten'd; the inclination of such a sinner to believe, what he now apprehends it his interest, should prove true, will naturally give a suggestion of this kind a greater force than it ought to have. The softest thing that can be said by any one, who affects to render himself more popular by fuch a method, or upon what view soever he acts, is, that he infinuates to the libertine, there may possibly be some hopes for him in reserve after this life, tho' the scriptures have not given the least infinuation of any such hope, or of any thing like it.

3. This argument, that possibly God may not do, what he has expressly declar'd he will do, in reference to the punishments of a suture life, if it prove any thing, proves too much. It may, with equal reason, be inferr'd from it, that possibly he may not hereaster inslict any punishments, he has threaten'd, as that he may not inslict the eternal punishments, he has threaten'd.

4. Upon a wrong supposition, that God may, with the safety of all his attributes, concern'd in this argument, remit the suture punishments, he has threaten'd to sinners wholly or in part; yet we are to make a distinction between his pardoning grace, as to external punishments to be inslicted on them, and such punishments, as are the natural or necessary effects of their guilt, or of the sinful habits which they have contracted. However, it may be suppos'd

660 Of Rewards and Punishments, &c. Book V.

supposed to affect the justice of God, that he should, by a positive act of his will, eternally inslict the grievous pains he has threatened; yet his justice is not at all concerned in this latter case, but only his goodness; the effects whereof being arbitrary and free, this general idea of it may serve to answer all the arguments against the eternity of hell torments, which have been, or are commonly found a large this attribute.

founded upon this attribute.

If there are any persons, who still make it a doubt, tho' there is no foundation for such a doubt either in reason or scripture, whether God may not, and whether he therefore will not, finally dispense with his own interminations of suture punishment, I cannot address my self to them in more proper and forcible words, than in those of the prophet Isaiah to the libertines and free-thinkers of his age. Hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men;—Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with hell, and with death are we at agreement; when the overslowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come to us; for we have made lies our resuge, and under salshood have we hid our selves.—Therefore thus saith the Lord, your covenant with death shall be disanulled, and your agreement with hell not stand*.

Upon the whole matter, God has threaten'd eternal punishments to impenitent sinners; it is therefore his intention that we should believe their punishments eternal. Instead of disputing, whether it may consist with his justice, his wisdom, or his goodness, to instict them; or whether he will instict them; it is much rather incumbent on us to consider, what we shall do to escape them; and at the same time, how we may secure our title to heaven and everlasting life; to that blessed and glorious state, where, according to the lowest representation made in the holy scriptures of it, there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain.

* Isaiah 28. 14, 15, 18.

$F \quad I \quad N \quad I \quad S.$



Nr. 15.16

Ausgang: 19. X. 1953

I. Schäden: a, b, e, k, l, m, n,o, p, qu, r,s, v,n, za, zee, zo

II. Behandlung: 34,5,8,8a,9,11,20,25,26,29,36,39,49,42

III. Besonderheiten:



