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THE
WORKS
OF
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MASTER OF MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
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AND
ARCHDEACON OF MIDDLESEX;
NOW FIRST COLLECTED AND ARRANGED.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
A REVIEW
OF THE
AUTHOR'S LIFE AND WRITINGS,
BY
WILLIAM VAN MILDERT, D. D.
LORD BISHOP OF LLANDAFF.

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THE
IMPORTANCE
OF THE
DOCTRINE
OF
THE HOLY TRINITY
ASSERTED, &c.



In necessariis, Unitas : in non-necessariis, Libertas : in omnibus, Prudentia et Charitas.

He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John iii. 18.

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THE INTRODUCTION.

THERE has appeared, very lately, a small pamphlet ^a of seventy-six pages, entitled, A Sober and Charitable Disquisition concerning the Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity; endeavouring to show, that “those in the “different schemes should bear with each other in their “different sentiments, *and should not separate communions.*” The treatise appears to be written in a good manner, and with a Christian spirit; on which account it deserves the more notice: and the question debated in it is undoubtedly important in every view, whether with regard to *peace* in this life, or *happiness* in the next. And as I have formerly spent some time and pains in discussing the *truth* of that high and holy doctrine, from *Scripture, reason, and antiquity*; so now I think it concerns me the more, to debate, in like manner, the *importance* of it: which I shall, by God’s assistance, endeavour to do, fully and fairly, with all due care and attention, and with all becoming reverence for the subject, as well as respect towards the reader.

Before I enter upon the main debate, it will be proper

^a Printed for John Gray, at the Cross Keys in the Poultry, near Cheapside, 1732.

N. B. There were several other pieces which preceded, or soon followed it, relating to the same cause.

1. Mr. Nation’s Sermon, preached Sept. 8, 1731.
2. A Letter to Mr. Nation, by P. C. 1732.
3. A Vindication of Mr. Nation’s Sermon: with a Letter from Mr. Nation.
4. A Letter to the Author of the Vindication: with a Second Letter to Mr. Nation, by P. C.
5. A Reply to Mr. P. C.’s Letter.
6. A Postscript, or a Third Letter to Mr. Nation, by P. C.

to clear the way by some preliminary observations concerning the several sorts of persons who *deny* the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, and their views in doing it; as also concerning the advocates, on the other side, who *assert* the *importance* of that sacred doctrine, and the *general* principles on which they proceed.

I. As to the persons who *deny* the *importance* of the doctrine, they are reducible to three kinds; being either such as *disbelieve* the doctrine itself, or such as are in some *suspense* about it; or, lastly, such as really *assent* to it as *true* doctrine. It is with this last sort only, that our present debate is properly concerned. But yet for the clearer apprehending those three *different* kinds of men, and their *different* views in joining together so far in the same cause, it will not be improper to say something severally and distinctly of each.

1. Those that *disbelieve* the doctrine itself, while they join with others in decrying the *importance* of it, are to be looked upon as a kind of artful men, who think it policy to carry on a scheme gently and leisurely, and to steal upon the unwary by soft and almost insensible degrees—a method which is indeed commonly *slower* in producing the effect, but is the *surer* for being so; as it is less shocking, and more insinuating. They are content therefore, at first, to make men *cool* and *indifferent* towards the doctrine; as thinking it a good point gained, and a promising advance made towards the laying it aside. With these views, both Socinians and Arians, who disbelieve the doctrine itself, may yet be content, for a time, to declare only against the *importance* of it. Deists also may join in the same thing, conceiving, that *indifference*, as to a *prime* article of Christianity, may in time draw on the same kind of indifference towards *Christianity* itself. They are *disbelievers* with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, and with respect also to all *revealed* religion: and they will of course favour and encourage the denial of any *part*, in order to bring on the subversion of the *whole*. However, our present concern

is not directly with Deists, nor with such as *deny* the doctrine of the Trinity: for our dispute now is, not about the certainty of *revealed* religion, (which is supposed in our present question,) nor about the *truth* of the doctrine of the Trinity, (which is also *supposed*,) but about the *importance, use, or value* of it.

2. A *second* sort of persons, before mentioned, are such as seriously believe Christianity in the general, and do not *disbelieve* the doctrine of the Trinity in particular, but *suspend* their belief of it, and are a kind of *sceptics* on that head. These men deny the *importance* of the doctrine, because they think it *doubtful* whether it be a doctrine of holy Scripture or no: and they judge very rightly in the general, that a stress ought not to be laid upon *uncertainties*, upon things *precarious* and *conjectural*, which cannot be *proved* to the satisfaction of the common reason of mankind. They are right in *thesi*, and wrong in *hypothesi*, as shall be shown in the sequel. Only I may hint, by the way, that our present debate is not directly with this kind of men: for they are rather to be referred to what has been written for the *truth* of the doctrine, than to what more immediately concerns the *importance* of it. Yet because the presumed *uncertainty* or *doubtfulness* of the doctrine, is by these men made the principal objection against the *importance* of it, and the author of the Sober and Charitable Disquisition seems to lay the main stress of the cause there, quite through his performance; it will be necessary to give that objection a place in this discourse, and to return an answer to it in the general, or so far as may be proper; not to draw the whole controversy about the *truth* of the doctrine into this other question concerning the *importance* of it.

While I am speaking of men *doubtful* in this article, I would be understood of serious and religious men, and not of such persons whose minds are purely *secular*, and who are *indifferent* to every thing but what concerns this world: such persons are of no consideration in our present question; neither are they men proper to be reasoned

4 THE INTRODUCTION.

with, as they have no relish at all for inquiries of this nature. But I proceed.

3. A third kind of men are those that believe the *truth* of the doctrine, but demur to the *importance* of it. And as Episcopus was, in a manner, their father or founder, and great leader, they have been frequently called after him, Episcopians. These are properly the persons whom we have here to dispute with: for they are the men who make the *truth* and the *importance* of the doctrine two distinct questions, admitting the one, and rejecting the other, or however demurring to it. The design of this *middle way* was to reconcile parties, if possible, and to favour the Socinians so far, as to condemn their *doctrines* only, without condemning the *men*. But this new and fruitless expedient was very much disliked by all that had any warm and hearty concern for the true and ancient faith. Such coldness and indifferency, with *regard* to a *prime* article of Christianity, appeared to many, to be nothing else but an artful, specious way of betraying it, and likely to do more mischief than an open denial of it. The ablest and soundest Divines, as well Lutheran^b as Reformed^c, have reclaimed strongly against it, detesting

^b For the Lutherans, I shall cite Buddens only, who is as mild and moderate in his censure of Episcopus, as any of them.

Nimio enim concordie, dissentientesque tolerandi studio, ea interdum ad fidem et salutem minime necessaria judicavit, quæ *vetus Ecclesia ipsa, Scripturæ* suffragio hac in re non destituta, adeo necessaria pronuntiavit, ut æternæ salutis spem non habeat qui ea negare aut impugnare ausus fuerit. *Buddei Isag.* p. 422.

^c The learned Witsius may speak for the Reformed.

Injurii in Deum *Remonstrantes* sunt, quando palpum obrusuri, quos plus justo amant, Socinianis, eos describunt quasi qui vitam suam ex Evangelii præscripto sic instituunt, ut *Patrem* in *Filio* ejus colant, et ab utroque *Spiritus Sancti* gratiam sanctis piisque precibus ambire studeant. Quid audiemus tandem? Illine vitam ex *Evangelii præscripto* instituunt, qui *satisfactionem* Christi negantes, *Evangelium* evertunt? Illine *Patrem* in *Filio* colunt, qui æternum Dei Filium $\psi\lambda\lambda\iota\ \delta\iota\delta\omega\sigma\iota$ esse calumniantur, quem uti talem adorantes convertunt in *idolum*? Illine *piis precibus* Spiritus Sancti gratiam ambiunt, qui Spiritum Dei *accidens*, et *creaturam*, vel saltem *medium* quid inter Deum et creaturam esse blasphemant? *Wits. in Symbol. Apostol.* p. 76.

the *neutrality* of the *remonstrant* brethren, as tending to undermine the Gospel of Christ. The Divines of our Church, however otherwise supposed to be against *Calvinism*, and to favour *Arminianism*, yet smartly condemned the *Remonstrants* in that article. Dr. Bull, particularly, appeared against them in a very accurate and learned treatise^d, in the year 1694. And it is worth observing, how Dr. Nicholls afterwards expresses himself, in the name of our whole body. “There is another Arminian doctrine, which we avoid as *deadly poison*, their assertion that there is *no necessity* of acknowledging three Persons in the divine nature, nor that Christ in particular is the *eternal Son* of God: this *heretical* notion our Church abominates and detests, as an *heinous impiety*, and what was never heard of in the writings of the primitive Christians^e.” Thus far he, in relation to our Divines of the Church of England.

As to the Divines of the *separation*, they are known to have been as zealous as any men could be, for the *necessity* of believing the doctrine of the Trinity, as the *sum* and *kernel* of the *Christian religion*, the *basis*, or *foundation* of the Christian faith. The testimonies of Mr. Baxter, Mr. Corbet, Dr. Manton, and Dr. Bates, to this purpose, may be seen at one view in a late writer^f: to those might be added Dr. Owen^g, and Mr. Lob^h, and perhaps

^d *Judicium Ecclesiæ Catholicæ de necessitate credendi, &c.*

^e Nicholls's Defence of the Church of England, part i. chap. 9. Mr. Scrivener, long before, (A. D. 1672.) had passed the like censure.

Hunc [Socinum] non minima ex parte secutus Episcopus, et ipse *antiquitatis* (quod norunt Docti) imperitus, *novam* credendi imo et philosophandi *licentiam*, *regulamque* affectavit: et—*mysteria* Christianæ fidei *summa*, tam singulari et inaudito acumine, vel crasso potius fastu, tractavit, ut non pertimescat *liberos* cuius fideli eos articulos de S. S. *Trinitate* permittere, absque quibus constans et fœderalis fides docuit, nullum ad vitam immortalis aditum patere Christianis. *Scrivener. Apolog. adv. Dallæum, in Præfat.*

^f Mr. Eveleigh's preface to a treatise entitled, The Deity of Christ proved fundamental.

^g Owen's *Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*, præf. p. 64.

^h *Growth of Error*, p. 3, 50, 69, 75, &c.

many more. In short, all parties and denominations of Christians, who appear to have had the *truth* of the doctrine at heart, or any good degree of zeal for it, have contended equally for the *necessity* of believing it, and have refused *communion* with the impugners of it.

II. I come next to observe something of the *general* principles upon which they build, who assert the *importance* of the doctrine of the Trinity, and who refuse communion with the open impugners of it.

I. They lay it down as a certain and indisputable principle, that there are some Scripture-doctrines of greater *importance* than others: and they generally make their estimate of that greater *importance*, by the relation or connection which any doctrine is conceived to have with Christian *practice* or *worship*, or with the whole economy of man's *salvation* by Christ¹; or by its being plainly, frequently, or strongly inculcated in holy Scripture. Doctrines of this character are commonly styled *necessaries*, *essentials*, *fundamentals*, *prime verities*, and the like. Not that I mightily like the word *necessary*, in this case, being a word of *equivocal* meaning, and great *ambiguity*, leading to mistakes, and furnishing much matter for cavils. For when we come to ask, necessary to *what*? or, necessary to *whom*? and in what *degree*? then arises perplexity; and there is need of a multitude of *distinctions* to set the matter clear, so as to serve all possible cases. A doctrine may be said to be *necessary* to the being of the *Church*, or to the *salvation* of *some* persons so and so qualified, or to the salvation of *all*: and many questions may arise about the precise *degree* of the necessity in every instance. But it is easily understood how one doctrine may be said to be more *important* than another; as more depends upon it, or as it more affects the *vitals* of Christianity, than doctrines of another kind: and we need look no further than to the nature and rea-

¹ See Dr. Sherlock's *Vindication of the Defences of Dr. Stillingfleet*, printed in 1682, ch. v. p. 256, &c.

son of things, and to the analogy of faith, to be able to distinguish what doctrines are thus *important* in the general, and what not. Yet there is no giving an exact catalogue of those *important* or *fundamental* doctrines; though it is for the most part easy to say of any particular doctrine which may be mentioned, what class it may be reasonably referred to; and whether, or how far, it may be worth contending for. We cannot give a complete catalogue of *virtues*, any more than of *articles of faith*, so as to be positive, that those *particular* virtues, and in such a particular *degree*, are necessary to all persons, or to any person that shall be named. The precise *quantity* of *virtue* (if I may so call it) absolutely necessary to salvation, is no more to be defined, than the precise quantity of *faith*. Yet we know, in the general, that *sincere* and *universal* obedience to what God commands (allowing for infirmities) is necessary to salvation: and in like manner, sincere and universal *assent* to what God reveals makes up the other *part* of the terms of acceptance; as *faith* and *obedience* together make up the *whole*.

2. They who assert the *importance* of the doctrine of the Trinity take it for granted, among Christians, that *faith* in the Gospel of Christ is necessary to the salvation of all men, who are blessed with Gospel light; and that men shall perish eternally for *unbelief*, for rejecting that Gospel-faith, once sufficiently propounded to them: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned^k."

3. They conceive farther, that as we are in duty bound to *receive* the Gospel-faith, so are we likewise obliged, and under pain of *damnation*, to preserve it *whole* and *entire*, so far as in us lies; and neither to *deprave* it ourselves, nor to take part with them that do. It is our bounden duty to "hold fast the form of sound words—

^k Mark xvi. 15, 16. compare John iii. 36. Revel. xxi. 8.

“in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus^l :” to be “sound in the faith^m :” to “speak things which become sound doctrineⁿ :” to “examine whether *we* be in the “faith^o ;” and in a word, to “contend earnestly for the “faith once delivered unto the saints^p .” So much for the obligations we lie under, to keep the faith of Christ *whole* and *undefiled*. Next, we are to observe how *dangerous* a thing it is to *corrupt* the true faith in any heinous degree, either by *adding* to it, or *taking away* from it. One of the earliest instances of gross corruption by *adding* to the faith of Christ appeared in the converted Jews, or Judaizing Christians, who taught the *necessity* of observing circumcision and the law of Moses together with Christianity. Against those false apostles, who taught such pernicious doctrine, St. Paul drew his pen, looking upon them as subverters of the Gospel of Christ^q. And he was so zealous in that matter, as to say, “Though “we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel “unto you than that which we have preached unto you, “let him be accursed^r .” Where by *another Gospel*, he does not mean another religion substituted in the room of Christianity ; (for those false teachers were *Christians* still, not *apostates* ;) but some *adulterous* mixtures, tending to evacuate the Gospel-law, and to *frustrate* the *grace* of God^s.

I shall give a *second* instance of gross corruption ; not in adding to, but in *taking from* the Christian doctrine, in an article of very great importance. There was in the days of the Apostles, and after, a sect of opiniators, who (whether being ashamed of the cross of Christ, or whether thinking it impossible for *God* to become *man*†)

^l 2 Tim. i. 13.

^m Tit. i. 13. ii. 2.

ⁿ Tit. ii. 1. 1 Tim. i. 10. 2 Tim. iv. 3.

^o 2 Cor. xiii. 5. compare Rev. xiv. 12.

^p Jude 3. compare 1 Tim. iv. 6.

^q Gal. i. 6, 7.

^r Gal. i. 8.

^s Gal. ii. 21. v. 2.

† Alii quoque hæretici usque adeo Christi manifestam amplexati sunt *divinitatem*, ut dixerint illum fuisse sine carne, et totum illi susceptum detraxe-

were pleased to deny that Christ Jesus had any *real* humanity, but that he was a kind of walking *phantom*, or *apparition*; had no human flesh, but imposed upon the eyes and other senses of the spectators. These men were afterwards called *Docetæ*, and *Phantasiastæ*; which one may well enough render *Visionists*, or *Visionaries*. We are next to take notice how St. John treated them, and what directions he gave to other Christians concerning them. He considered them as deluding teachers, that subverted foundations; and he gave them the name and title of antichrists. "Every spirit that confesseth "not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of "God. And this is that spirit of antichrist," &c. In another place, speaking of the same men, he says, "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess "not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: this is a de- "ceiver and an antichrist^x." It is manifest that he does not point his censure at the Jews, who denied that the Messiah was come; for he speaks of *new* men, that had then lately "entered into the world," whereas the Jews had been from the beginning: besides, that the Jews did not deny that Jesus (or the man called Christ Jesus) had come *in the flesh*. Therefore, I say, St. John levelled not this censure of his against the Jews, but against some Christian heretics of that time, and those particularly that denied our Lord's humanity; in opposition to whom, he exhorts the brethren to "abide in the doctrine of "Christy," and not to receive the gainsayers into their *houses*, nor to salute them with *God speed*, lest they should become thereby *partakers* of their *evil deeds*^z. By *evil deeds* I understand the overt acts of that *heresy*, the teaching, spreading, and inculcating it. Thus *heresies*, that is, the teaching or promoting of pernicious doctrines, are reckoned among the *works* of the flesh^a by St.

riant hominem, ne decoquerent in illo *divini* nominis potestatem, &c. *Novat.* c. xxiii. p. 87. edit. Welchman.

^x 1 John iv. 3.

^z 2 John 7.

^y 2 John 9.

^a 2 John 11.

^a Gal. v. 19, 20.

Paul: who also calls false teachers *deceitful workers*^b, and *evil workers*^c; because the promoting and encouraging of false and dangerous doctrines is a very ill *practice*, a wicked *employ*: which I hint, by the way, for the clearer explication of St. John's meaning in the phrase of *evil deeds*.

I shall mention a *third* Scripture instance of gross corruption in doctrine, which was the denial of a future *resurrection*; dangerous doctrine, subversive of Christianity. St. Paul very solemnly *admonished* the Corinthians^d, to prevent their giving ear to such pernicious suggestions: and he afterwards excommunicated Hymenæus, Philetus, and Alexander, for spreading and propagating them, delivering the men over to Satan, that *they might learn not to blaspheme*^e.

From the three instances now mentioned, it may sufficiently appear, that the corrupting or maiming Christianity in its *vitals*, by denying or destroying its prime articles, or fundamental doctrines, is a very *dangerous* thing; and that we are obliged, under pain of damnation, neither to do it ourselves, nor to abet, countenance, or encourage those that do, by communicating with them.

4. But it is farther to be observed, that in *slighter matters*, in things not nearly affecting the *vitals* of Christianity, the rule is for Christians to bear with one another; not to divide or separate, but to agree among themselves; so to disagree in harmless opinions, or indifferent rites, as to unite in faith and love, and in Christian fellowship^f. *Peace* is a very valuable thing, and ought not to be sacrificed even to *truth*; unless such truth be *important*, and much may depend upon it. A man is not obliged, in all cases, to declare all he knows; and if he does declare his sentiments, and knows them to be *true*, yet he need not insist upon them with rigour, if the point

^b 2 Cor. xi. 13.

^c Philip. iii. 2.

^d 1 Cor. xv.

^e Compare 1 Tim. i. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 18.

^f Rom. xiv. xv. Coloss. ii. 16, 17.

contested be of a slight nature or value, in comparison to the Church's *peace*. Let him enjoy his own *liberty* in that case; and let others have theirs too; and so all will be right. Let them *differ* so far, by consent, and yet live together in peace and charity. But then, as to *weightier* matters, it concerns us carefully to observe, that rules of *peace* are but secondary and subordinate to those of *piety* or *charity*, and must veil to them. *Peace* must be broken in this world, whenever it is necessary to do it for the securing *salvation* in the next for ourselves or others: and a breach of peace, in such instances, is obedience to the higher law of *charity*, is conforming to the primary and great commandments, the *love of God*, and the *love of our neighbour*. Therefore *peace*, in such cases, must be sacrificed to *truth* and *charity*, that is, to the honour of God, and the eternal interests of mankind.

These things premised, it remains now only to inquire what kind of a doctrine the doctrine of the *Trinity* is; whether it be of such a slight and indifferent nature as not to be worth the insisting upon at the expence of *peace*; or whether it be of such high value and importance, that it ought to be maintained as an *essential* of Christianity against all opposers. This is the great question now before us, and I shall endeavour to examine into it with due care and application.

The gentlemen who look upon it as a *non-fundamental*, have several things to urge, but such as may most of them be reduced to three heads, as follow. 1. That the received doctrine of the Trinity is not *clear* enough to be admitted for a fundamental. 2. That it is merely *speculative*, or however, not *practical* enough to be important. 3. That it is not sufficiently insisted upon in Scripture, as of *necessity* to salvation. Now, in return to these three considerations, I shall endeavour to show, in so many distinct chapters, that the doctrine is sufficiently *clear*, and also *practical*, and insisted upon likewise in *Scripture*, as much as the nature of the thing needs or requires.

THE
IMPORTANCE
OF THE
DOCTRINE
OF
THE HOLY TRINITY
ASSERTED, &c.

CHAP. I.

*Showing that the Doctrine of the Trinity is sufficiently
CLEAR to be admitted as a FUNDAMENTAL Article.*

CLEAR may be considered in two views, either with respect to the *matter* of the doctrine, or with respect to the *proofs* upon which it rests. Let us examine the thing both ways.

1. It may be suggested, that the doctrine is not *clear*, with regard to the *matter* of it: it is *mysterious* doctrine. Be it so: the tremendous *Deity* is all over *mysterious*, in his *nature* and in his *attributes*, in his *works* and *ways*. It is the property of the *divine* Being to be *unsearchable*: and if he were not so, he would not be *divine*. Must we therefore reject the most certain truths concerning the *Deity*, only because they are *incomprehensible*, when every thing almost belonging to him must be so of course? If

so, there is an end, not only of all *revealed* religion, but of *natural* religion too; and we must take our last refuge in downright *Atheism*. There are *mysteries* in the works of nature, as well as in the word of God; and it is as easy to believe both as one. We do not mean by *mysteries*, positions altogether unintelligible, or that carry no idea at all with them: we do not mean unsensed characters, or empty sounds: but we mean propositions contained in *general* terms, which convey as *general* ideas, not descending to *particulars*. The ideas are *clear*, so far as they go; only they do not reach far enough to satisfy curiosity. They are ideas of *intellect*, for the most part; like the ideas which we form of our own *souls*: for *spiritual* substance, at least, (if any substance,) falls not under *imagination*, but must be *understood*, rather than *imagined*. The same is the case with many *abstract* verities, in *numbers* especially; which are not the less verities for being purely *intellectual*, and beyond all *imagery*. *Reason* contemplates them, and *clearly* too, though *fancy* can lay no hold of them, to draw their picture in the mind. Such, I say, are our ideas of the divine Being, and of a Trinity in Unity; ideas of *intellect*, and *general*; intelligible as far as the thing is revealed, and assented to so far as intelligible. We understand the *general* truths, concerning a *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*: we understand the general nature of an *union* and a *distinction*; and what we understand we believe. As to the minute particulars relating to the *manner* or *modus* of the thing, we understand them not: our *ideas* reach not to them, but stop short in the generals, as our *faith* also does. For our *faith* and our *ideas* keep pace with each other; and we *believe* nothing about *particulars* whereof nothing is *revealed*^a, neither expressly nor consequentially.

Such a *general* assent as I have mentioned is what we

^a See the subject of *mysteries* treated of more at large, either in my First Defence, Qu. xxi. vol. i. p. 218, &c. or in Norris's Account of Reason and Faith, p. 117, 118. or in Mr. Browne's Lecture Sermons for Lady Moyer, p. 257—262.

give to the truth of the divine perfections, *necessary existence, eternity, ubiquity, prescience*, and the like^b. Whatever obscurity or defect there is in our ideas of those divine attributes, we think it no good reason for denying either the *general* truths, or the *importance* of them. So then, no just objection can be made against the *importance* of any doctrine, from its *mysterious* nature. The most mysterious of all are in reality the most important; not because they are mysterious, but because they relate to things *divine*, which must of course be mysterious to weak mortals, and perhaps to all *creatures* whatever. But even mysterious doctrines have a *bright* side, as well as a *dark* one; and they are *clear* to look upon, though too deep to be *seen through*.

It has been sometimes objected, that however *clear* the doctrine may seem to be to men of parts and learning, yet certainly it cannot be so to *common* Christians. But why not to *common* Christians, as well as to others? It is as clear to them as most other high and divine things can be. It is as clear, for instance, as the divine *eternity* or *omnipresence*. Every *common* Christian professing Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be so distinct as not to be one the other, and so united as to be one God, has as clear an idea of what he says, as when he prays, "Our Father "which art in heaven;" or when he repeats after the Psalmist, "Thou art about my path, and about my bed, "and spiest out all my ways^c." And, I am persuaded, upon examination, he will be as able to give as good an account of the one, as he will of the other. The thing is *plain* and *intelligible* in either case, but in the *general* only, not as to the *particular* manner. Ask *how* three are one, and probably both catechumen and catechist will be perfectly at a nonplus: or ask, *how* God is in heaven, and *how* about our *path*, or our *bed*, and they

^b See my First Defence, Qu. xxi. vol. i. p. 216, &c. Second Defence, vol. ii. Qu. xxi. p. 391.

^c Psalm cxxxix. 2.

will both be equally confounded. But, by the way, let it be here considered, whether *common* Christians may not often have *clearer* ideas of those things, than the bolder and more inquisitive, because they are content to rest in *generals*, and to stop at what they *understand*, without *darkening* it afterwards by words without knowledge. The notion of *eternity*, for instance, is a clear notion enough to a *common* Christian: but to a person that perplexes himself with nice inquiries about *succession*, or *past* duration, that very first notion which in the general was clear, may become *obscure*, by his blending perplexities with it. The like may be said of *omnipresence*: the *general* notion of it is competently clear: but when a man has been perplexing his thoughts with curious inquiries about a *substantial* or a *virtual* presence, about *extension* or *non-extension*, and the like; I question whether at length he may come away with so clear or just ideas of the main thing as may be found in any *common* Christian. So again as to *divine foreknowledge* and *free-will*, they are both of them clearly understood, as far as they need be, by every plain Christian; while many a conceited scholar, by darkening the subject with too minute inquiries, almost loses the sight of it. In like manner, to apply these instances to our present purpose, *common* Christians may sometimes better preserve the true and right *general* notion of the doctrine of the Trinity, than the more learned inquirers: and it is observable, what Hilary of Poitiers, an honest and a knowing man of the fourth century, testifies, that the *populace* of that time, for the most part, kept the true and right faith in the Trinity^d, when their *ministers*, several of

^d Et hujus quidem usque adhuc impietatis fraude perficitur, ut jam sub Antichristi sacerdotibus *Christi populus* non occidat, dum hoc putant illi fidei esse quod vocis est. Audiunt *Deum* Christum; putant esse quod dicitur. Audiunt *Filium Dei*; putant in Dei nativitate inesse Dei veritatem. Audiunt *ante tempora*; putant id ipsum ante tempora esse quod *semper* est. Sauciores aures *plebis*, quam corda sunt sacerdotum. *Hilar. contr. Auxent.* 1266. edit. Bened.

them, by prying too far into it, had the misfortune to lose it.

While I am treating of the case of *common* Christians, I cannot omit the mentioning an artifice much made use of by those who would depreciate the doctrine of the Trinity, as not *clear* enough to be an *important* article: they first enter into all the niceties and perplexities which subtle disputants have ever clogged the subject with, and then they ask, whether *common* Christians can be supposed to see through them. No, certainly: neither need they trouble their heads about them. It is one thing to understand the *doctrine*, and quite another to be masters of the *controversy*. It is not fair dealing with us, to pretend it necessary for every common Christian, if he believes in the Trinity, to form just conceptions of it in every minute particular: for, by the same argument, it might as well be pleaded, that they are not obliged to believe in *God*, nor indeed in any thing. God is without *body, parts, or passions*, according to the first article of our Church. How many minute perplexing inquiries might there not be raised upon the three particulars now mentioned! And who can assure us that *common* Christians may not be liable to entertain some wrong conceptions in every one of them? Must we therefore say that the *general* doctrine of the existence of a Deity is not *clear* enough to be important doctrine, or that *common* Christians are not bound to receive it as a *necessary* article of their faith? See how far such objections would carry us. But since these objections ought to have no weight at all in other parallel cases, or nearly parallel, they ought certainly to be the less regarded in respect to the doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity. Let but this doctrine have as *fair usage* as other Christian and important doctrines are allowed to have, and then I am persuaded there will be no pretence left for saying, that it is not a *clear* doctrine, clear in the general, clear in the main thing, to any Christian whatever. It is horrible misrepresentation of the case, to pretend as if we taught, that

“ the eternal interest of every *plowman* or *mechanic* hangs
 “ on his adjusting the sense of the terms, *nature*, *person*,
 “ *essence*, *substance*, *subsistence*, *coequality*, *coessentiality*,
 “ and the like.” No; those are *technical* terms, most
 of them, proper to divines and scholars: and not only
plowmen and *mechanics*, but very great *scholars* too, lived
 and died in the conscientious belief of the doctrine of the
Trinity, long before any of those *terms* came in. They
 are of use indeed for settling the *controversy* with greater
 accuracy among Divines, who understand such terms:
 but the *doctrine* itself is *clear* without them, and does not
 want them, but stands firm and unshaken, independent of
 them. Any plain man may easily conceive, that Father,
 Son, and Holy Ghost are properly *divine*, are not one the
 other, and yet are *one God*, by an intimate union; and
 that the Son in particular, being God and man, is *one*
Christ. These prime verities, and whatsoever else is neces-
 sarily implied in them, may be conceived to be *right*;
 and whatsoever is contrary to them, or inconsistent with
 them, will of consequence be *wrong*. This is enough for
 any plain Christian to know or believe; and he is not
 ordinarily obliged to be more minute in his inquiries, or
 to understand *scholastic* terms. It is not to be expected
 that *common* Christians should be expert *disputants* in
 controversies of *faith*, any more than that they should be
 profound *casuists* in relation to *practice*: yet Christian
 practice is *necessary* to salvation, and so is Christian *faith*
 too; and the obligation to *obey* a *general* precept, or to
 believe a *general* truth, is not superseded or evacuated by
 a man's being unacquainted with terms of art, or by his
 being liable to mistake in some remote or minute circum-
 stances belonging to the doctrine itself.

To make the thing yet plainer, let us take some *general*
 rule of Christian practice; the rule, suppose, of *dealing*
with others as we would be dealt with: a rule of such
importance, that, by our Lord's account of it, it is the
 sum and substance of *the Law and the Prophets**. Surely

* Matt. vii. 12.

then, it is a rule designed for *common* Christians, and such as both deserves and requires their most careful notice. Next, let us view this rule under all its minutenesses or particularities; its distinctions, limitations, and explications, with which it is dressed out by knowing and able Divines^f. Observe thereupon, what an operose business is made of this so plain and familiar rule, what pains are taken to clear it of all seeming repugnancies, to make it *reasonable*, to make it *certain*, to make it *practicable*, and to guard it most effectually against the many *possible* ways, whereby it may be misconstrued, eluded, perverted, frustrated. Are *common* Christians equal to all those niceties, or are they able to grasp them? I conceive, not. And yet I dare be confident that a plain unlettered man, of tolerable sense, and who has not a mind to deceive himself, might be safely trusted with the naked rule, and would but seldom, if ever, either misunderstand it (so far as concerns his own case) or misapply it. He would keep the plain even road, and would scarce believe the man that should tell him that it was strewed with thorns, or that hundreds had been or might be either embarrassed in it, or bewildered by it. The same thing is true with respect to the *general* doctrine of the Trinity. For though there are many possible ways of mistaking it, or perverting it, (as there are many *crooked* lines to one *straight*;) and it concerns Divines to guard minutely against all; yet less may suffice for *common* Christians; ordinarily, I mean, at least. The *right faith* in the Trinity is short and plain; and whatever crosses upon it is *wrong*: *Index est rectum sui, et obliqui*: truth shows itself, and is for the most part to every honest mind a guard sufficient against the mazes of error.

I have dwelt the longer upon this article, because the objection about *common Christians* appears a popular and plausible one, and is often repeated in this cause, though

^f See particularly Archbishop Tillotson's Sermon on Matt. vii. 12. separately published in 1709. and Collier's Essay of Honesty, part iv. p. 56, &c.

there is really no weight in it. The author of the *Sober and Charitable Disquisition* need not be in pain for *common Christians*, lest they should not “have skill enough to “unite the two natures in Christ without confounding “them, or dividing the Person, in their apprehensions^ε.” They will as easily conceive that God and man is *one Christ*, as that soul and body is one man; and they need not look farther. Without troubling themselves at all with the names either of *natures* or *persons*, they may joyfully and thankfully remember, that he “who is over all “God blessed for ever^ε,” became a *man* for their sakes, and *died* for them, in order to bring them to God. What is there in all this that should either offend or perplex, or should not rather greatly edify *common Christians*? They may be “more accurate in their thoughts on this head, “than the great patriarch and abbot Nestorius and Eutyches^ι,” (for they were not both *patriarchs*, as this author styles them,) because they will indulge their fancies less, and rest in the *general* truth, without drawing a false *modus*, or any *modus* upon it, either to corrupt or to obscure it: they will abide in the true doctrine, without defiling it (as those great men did) with over officious and presumptuous speculations. It may be allowed, that “*common Christians* have but very little apprehension^κ” of some minute or remote considerations given in by way of answer to as minute and remote objections, in order to clear the doctrine in every punctilio: and in like manner, they have but *very little apprehension* of several such remote considerations thrown in by Divines, in their disputes with Atheists or Deists, in order to clear the doctrine of the *divine Being and attributes*, or of the *authority of Scripture*, and to make every thing at length conformable and consistent. But what then? Does it therefore follow, that *common Christians* may not believe in God, or in God’s word, or that such belief is not *important*?

^ε Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 22.

^ι Rom. ix. 5.

^ι See Sober and Charitable, &c. p. 22.

^κ Ibid. p. 23.

Common Christians believe enough, if they believe the main things under a *general* view, without branching them out into all the minute particulars which depend upon them, or belong to them. Let Divines see that every article of faith is clear and consistent throughout, when traversed as far as the acutest objector can carry it : but let *common Christians* be content with every article in its native simplicity, as laid down in Scripture for *edification* of the faithful, and not as it appears in controversial books, or confessions, with all its armour about it, for the conviction or confusion of gainsayers. But I am afraid I have exceeded on this head, and have overburdened the reader. Upon the whole, the doctrine of the Trinity must be allowed to be sufficiently *clear*, as to the *matter* of it.

2. The next consideration is, that it is *clear* also, as to the *proofs* upon which it rests : it may be *clearly proved*, as well as *clearly conceived*. Indeed, the truth of the doctrine ought to be *supposed* in our present question, as previously known and admitted. Accordingly, our *remonstrant brethren*, who first disputed the *importance* of our doctrine, made no scruple of allowing the *truth* of it, as I have before hinted. They allowed the Scripture proofs to be so far *clear*, as to oblige us to admit the doctrine for a certain truth¹. Neither are we much beholden to them for this seeming courtesy, since the proofs are so numerous and so cogent, that every ingenuous and sensible man must plainly see, that were *Scripture* alone to decide the question, and no false *philosophy* or *metaphysics* brought in to confound or perplex it, there could scarce be any room left for debate about it. I do not mean that many Scripture texts may not be speciously urged on the other side : but what I mean is, that upon the summing up of the evidence on both sides, and after balancing the whole account, the advantage is so plainly ours, accord-

¹ Hinc colligo, mirum videri non debere, si tribus hisce personis *una eademque natura* divina tribuatur, cum iis scriptura *divina*, istas perfectiones, quæ naturæ divinæ propriæ sunt, tam *exerte* attribuat. *Episcop. Institut* lib. iv. sect. 2. cap. 32. p. 333.

ing to all the approved rules of grammar or criticism, that there is nothing at all left on the other side, whereby to turn the scale, except it be some pretended *absurdity*, or absurdities, in point of *reason*, charged upon us, by the help of *dialectical* or *metaphysical* subtleties; which yet, after all, are mere fallacy and sophistry, and have no real strength in them. We must therefore insist upon it as certain fact, that our doctrine is *clear* enough, with respect to the Scripture evidences produced for it. *Scripture*, in its plain, natural, obvious, unforced meaning, says it, and *reason* does not gainsay it: upon these two pillars our cause rests. Upon this bottom Bishop Bull fixes it: "The Antitrinitarians can never produce a *demonstrative* reason to prove that it *cannot be*, and divine revelation assures us that so it is ^m." To the same purpose speaks Mr. Howe: "That there is a Trinity in the Godhead, of Father, Son, (or Word,) and Holy Ghost, is the plain obvious sense of so many Scriptures, that it apparently tends to frustrate the design of the whole Scripture revelation, and to make it useless, not to admit this Trinity, or otherwise to understand such Scriptures ⁿ." In like manner Dr. Burnet of the Charter-House, a noted man, and known to have had as little of a *bigot* in him as any one, says thus: "We are obliged, according to that light which God hath vouchsafed to us in the dispensation of the Gospel, to believe and profess that Jesus of Nazareth is the *Messiah*, and likewise *God*. If we mistake in this faith, the mistake is so far from being voluntary, that it is *inevitable*. For we follow, according to the best of our apprehension, the guides which God hath given us, St. John, and Paul the Apostle. To these sacred writers we assent and adhere, interpreting them according to the *genuine force* and *received use* of words: for neither Christ, nor the abovesaid writers have told us, that those sacred Oracles were

^m Bull, *Posth. Works*, vol. iii. p. 833.

ⁿ Howe's *Calm Discourse of the Trinity in the Godhead*, p. 136, 137.

“written in any other style, or that they were to be interpreted in any other manner^o.”

The late learned Professor Franck, of Hall in Saxony, speaking to the Antitrinitarians, expresses himself thus: “Though you allow the Scriptures of the New Testament, you nevertheless boldly and arrogantly contradict the truth, *clearly* shining before your eyes, and express testimonies proposed in such simple and plain words, that even a *child* may read and understand them^p.”

I cite these testimonies, not in the way of *authority*, but only to give the reader a clearer idea of what the Trinitarians go upon: for they are all, so far, in the same strain, and these testimonies are offered only as samples, whereby to judge of the rest. Any indifferent stander-by may easily perceive what, for the most part, has led the Christian world to contend earnestly for the doctrine of the Trinity; namely, a conscientious dread of dishonouring him whom God the Father has commanded them to honour even as himself, a profound reverence for sacred Writ, and an invincible persuasion that those Scriptures cannot, without the utmost *violence*, and most daring *presumption*, be interpreted otherwise than they interpret them. It would be tedious here to cite the particular texts which we ground our faith upon; and it would be highly improper to fetch in the whole dispute about the *truth* of the doctrine into this other debate, which concerns only the *importance* of it. Therefore referring the readers for the *truth* of the doctrine to other treatises lately printed, in great abundance, and well known, I shall content myself here with hinting two *general* arguments or considerations, such as may give the readers

^o Judgment of Dr. Thomas Burnet, p. 11, 12. printed for Roberts, 1732. See the original, de Fid. et Offic. cap. viii. p. 134. And compare my seventh Sermon, vol. ii. p. 166, 167, 168.

^p Franck's *Christus sacræ Scripturæ Nucleus*, p. 181, 182. translated out of German: printed by Downing, 1732.

some notion of the irresistible force of our Scripture proofs in this cause.

1. One is, that the proofs which we insist upon cannot be evaded by any approved rules of language or criticism, but the last resort of our opposers commonly is to some *philosophical* principle, some pretended reason, drawn from the supposed nature of the thing, rather than from the Scripture style, or from the force of Scripture expressions. I have observed elsewhere^q, that such has been the method of eluding John i. 1. and several other texts, which are full and express as possible, for the real and proper *divinity* of our Lord. They are eluded, I say, upon this principle, that *person* and *intelligent being* are equivalent and reciprocal; or that there can be *no medium between Tritheism and Sabellianism*, or by something else of like kind: which is running off from the question about the *Scriptural proof* of the doctrine, to the *natural possibility* of the thing; and is not submitting to the obvious and apparent sense of *sacred Writ*, but is tantamount to saying, that no Scriptures can prove it: an evasion which might equally serve for any texts whatever, were they ever so numerous, plain, and express. This kind of conduct on the opposite side, manifestly shows how hard they are pressed upon the foot of *Scripture*; when, in the last result, they remove the cause from *Scripture* to *philosophy*, from considerations of *language*, and *style*, and *propriety* of expression, to a foreign consideration, the *rationale* of the thing. This is a plain token that the *letter* is against them; only they take the *reason* of the *thing* to plead so much in their favour, that it ought to overrule any force of expression. So they lay the main stress upon *metaphysical* subtleties^r; that is to say, upon

^q Defence, Qu. xxii. vol. i. p. 231. Second Defence, Qu. xxii. vol. iii. p. 402, &c.

^r See my First Defence, vol. i. p. 232, &c. 340. Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 4, 64, 109, 397, 402, 403.

human conjectures about things naturally *unsearchable*, in opposition to the express declarations of the word of God: which, by the way, is first setting up a *false measure* of truth; and, next, is making a *new rule* of faith. It is a false measure of truth to make *human conception* the standard of it, since there may be a thousand or ten thousand verities, which we cannot account for, or explain the *manner* of: and it is making a *new rule* of faith, if we resolve to believe nothing but what we can *comprehend*; or if in cases where we can see no plain *contradiction* or *absurdity*, we choose to make the *letter* of Scripture bend to our own conceptions, rather than submit our wisdom to the wisdom of God. But this is not the point which I am now upon; and so it suffices to have briefly hinted it in passing. The use which I intended of the observation in this place, was to intimate the *strength* of our *Scripture proofs*, which drive the adversaries to such extremities.

2. Another yet more affecting and sensible argument of the same thing is, that our antagonists, in eluding the *Scripture proofs* of the divinity of *God the Son*, have scarce left themselves any for the divinity even of *God the Father*; indeed none but what by the same artificial way of eluding may be evaded and frustrated, as well as the other. This is a consideration of great weight, which has been pressed upon them over and over^s, and has never yet received a satisfactory answer. So it remains as a standing evidence of the glaring force of our Scripture proofs, and will ever remain so.

Upon the whole then, the doctrine of the Trinity must be acknowledged *clear* enough with respect to the Scripture proofs upon which it stands; provided always, that there is nothing plainly *repugnant* or *contradictory* in the notion. For, on the other hand, it must be allowed, that

^s Defence, vol. i. p. 82. Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 230, &c. Third Defence, vol. iv. p. 55, &c. Compare Abbadie on Christ's Divinity, p. 240.

were the thing plainly *absurd* or *impossible*, no Scriptures could prove it; but, in such a case, we should be obliged either to deny the authority of such Scriptures, (in whole, or in part,) or to have recourse to *trope* or *figure*, or any *possible* interpretation to solve the difficulty. This is not the case here: and therefore since the doctrine cannot be proved to be *impossible* in the nature of the thing, it is abundantly proved from Scripture to be both *possible* and *true*. Reason never has, never can demonstrate the thing to be impossible: after repeated trials, 1400 years upwards and more, and all to no purpose, that should now be looked upon as a ruled point^t. I conclude then, from what has been offered in this chapter, that the doctrine of the Trinity is *clear* enough to be *important*, both with respect to the *matter* of it, and the *Scripture proofs* upon which it stands: and therefore its pretended *obscurity*, or *uncertainty*, can be no sufficient reason for throwing it off as a slight or indifferent article, not worth contending for, or insisting upon, as an *essential* of faith, and a term of Christian *communion*.

CHAP. II.

Showing, that the same Doctrine is no SPECULATIVE or NOTIONAL thing, but strictly PRACTICAL, and closely interwoven with the Principles of the Christian Life.

A *RIGHT* knowledge of God, and a *practice* conformable to it, and both in order to a more complete and blissful *enjoyment*, are not *speculative* or *indifferent* matters, but matters properly practical, and of infinite concernment. If *religious* practice in any measure depends upon a previous *knowledge* of God, (as undoubtedly it does,) then certainly, for the like reason, the *perfection* of that practice depends upon the perfection of such knowledge. A general and confuse notion of God may produce as general

^t See the state of the question, as to the *possibility* of the doctrine, in Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 478. and in Mr. Browne's Animadversions on two Pieces, p. 5, 6, &c.

and confuse rules of demeanour towards him; while a more particular and explicit apprehension of the Deity will of course produce a more particular and explicit service. It is true, where God has not afforded such distinct knowledge, a less perfect service may and must suffice; but wherever much is given, much will be required, and from peculiar circumstances will arise peculiar obligations. If God be *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, the duties owing to God will be duties owing under that trine distinction; which must be paid accordingly: and whoever leaves out any of the three out of his idea of God, comes so far short of honouring God *perfectly*, and of serving him in proportion to the manifestations made of him. Supposing our doctrine *true*, (as we are now to suppose,) there will be duties proper to be paid to the Father as Father, and to the Son as Son, and to the Holy Ghost as the eternal Spirit of both; duties correspondent to their distinct offices and personalities, beside the duties common to all three, considered as one God. In short, the specification of our *worship*, and the right direction of it, are nearly concerned in this doctrine: and therefore, if *worship* be a *practical* matter, this doctrine also is *practical*, and not a point of mere speculation^u. That worship is a *practical* thing, I suppose no man of sense will dispute; or if any one does, it must be a dispute only about *words*, and not affecting the main thing: wherefore, it must be altogether wrong to imagine, that the doctrine of the Trinity is purely *notional*, or has no connection with *practice*^x. If the doc-

^u See Dr. Webster's introductory Discourses to Maimburg's History of Arianism, p. 43, &c.

^x Nihil falsius est ea Remonstrantium calumnia, qua articulum de S. S. Trinitate ullum ad *praxis* usum habere inficiantur. Omnis doctrina veritatis, *secundum pietatem est*. Tit. i. 1. Et hæc tam notabilis, tam fundamentalis, non esset? Imo totius fidei, totius veræ religionis scaturigo est.—Nulla etiam religio est, nisi quis verum Deum colat: non colit verum Deum, sed cerebri sui figmentum, qui non adorat in æquali divinitatis majestate, Patrem, Fillum, et Spiritum Sanctum. I nunc, et doctrinam eam ad *praxis* inutilem esse clama, sine qua nulla *fidei* aut *pietatis* Christianæ *praxis* esse potest. *Witsius in Symb. Apost.* p. 76.

trine be *true*, it is sacrilege, and great impiety, in every Christian to refuse to worship Father, Son, or Holy Ghost: but if the doctrine be *false*, it is *polytheism* and *idolatry* to pay religious worship to any person but the *Father* only. So much depends upon this single article.

The author of *Sober and Charitable Disquisition* labours this point extremely, for several pages together^γ, and has perhaps said as much and as well as the cause will admit of. He endeavours to clear the Arian worshippers of Christ from formal *polytheism*; and to retort the charge upon the *orthodox* worshippers; that so upon consideration that both parties may *mean well*, or in some respects may both *offend*, they may consent to bear with each other, and to unite in Christian fellowship together. But, in my humble opinion, the thought is wide, and the project impracticable. There is no patching up any lasting or rational agreement of that kind, while the parties cannot unite so much as in the object of *divine* worship. He allows, that the opposers of Christ's *Divinity*, (properly so called,) can pay him no more than *inferior* worship, such as if tendered to *God* would manifestly *dishonour* and *degrade* him, would directly *deny him to have divine perfections*, and, *instead of honouring him as God, would degrade him into somewhat that is not God*^z. Can those then who believe Christ to be *God*, and who honour him as such, ever think it *reasonable* or *pious*, to hold communion with men who, by what they call *inferior* worship, do thus *manifestly dishonour and degrade* their God and Saviour, denying his *divine* perfections, *degrading* him into somewhat that is *not God*? Can the Catholic believers ever suffer or connive at such affronts offered (as they must esteem them) to *God blessed for ever*? How can they ever justify either to God, or to the world, or to their own consciences, such a guilty *neutrality* in an affair of the highest consequence, in an article of the last importance? Mutual forbearance

^γ *Sober and Charitable Disquisition*, p. 4—23.

^z *Ibid.* p. 8, 9.

in doubtful points of speculative opinion, is very becoming fallible men, in consideration of our common frailty: but it is unreasonable, and morally impracticable, to come to any composition, where the parties differ so widely, and in so material a concern, as the object of divine *worship*. Religious men will be zealous for the honour of their *Lord God*, because they know that they ought to be so; neither will they nor can they countenance any *coldness* or *indifference* in so weighty a concern. *Excessive* heats perhaps may sometimes arise in such cases; for so long as religion is held in esteem, and believed to be *worth* the contending for, there must be contests about it, which may sometimes rise too high: but it is an error on the right hand, and much to be preferred to a cold *indifference*; as a strong athletic constitution, though subject sometimes to fevers, is yet vastly preferable to a constant *lethargy*. To return, the sum is, that the point of *divine* worship is a critical point, a difficulty which cannot be got over, while both sides retain their respective principles; one looking upon the *Son* and *Holy Ghost* as *creatures*, and the other esteeming them as *one God* with the Father. For supposing that both parties were to join in the same solemn acts of *outward* worship offered to Christ, (for that he ought to be *worshipped* both sides allow,) yet since the Catholic side conceive that those *religious* acts are on the other side defiled by an *irreligious* meaning, and amount rather to a solemn mockery of their God and Saviour, than to a respectful remembrance of him; and that they are in *reality*, though not intentionally, flat *polytheism* and *idolatry*; I say, while the Catholic believers are so persuaded, they cannot in prudence or in conscience, in piety to God or charity to men, consent to such known defilements of their solemn service; because it would be directly partaking in other men's sins. If it be said, that they need not judge all *creature-worship* to be *polytheism* and *idolatry*; I answer, they cannot avoid it, while they consider either Scripture itself, or the universal suffrage of antiquity in the best and purest ages.

If it be further said, that they need not however think so hardly of *creature-worshippers*, as to charge them with *guilt*, since they may intend well; I answer, that a *good intention* is not sufficient to warrant an *ill thing*: besides that, were they ever so *guiltless*, yet those of the contrary persuasion could not be so in countenancing by their own communion, what they cannot but look upon as great *impiety* and *profanation*. So, turn we this matter which way we will, the point of *worship* must be a parting point betwixt them, while they retain their opposite sentiments, with regard to the strict and proper *Divinity* of Christ.

I shall not here enter into the debate about *creature-worship*, having distinctly and fully considered it elsewhere^a: besides, that I may properly wave it, as it is wide and foreign to the cause now in hand. For whether such *creature-worship* be *right* or *wrong*, those that believe in Christ as a *divine* Person cannot join with those who worship him under the notion of a *creature*, and do not worship him as *divine*; because, it has been before intimated, such inferior worship, (whatever else we call it) is *dishonouring* and *degrading* him, and cannot but be rejected with abhorrence by all that seriously believe him to be really and strictly God.

As to what the author of *Sober and Charitable Disquisition* objects, that possibly some of our own people, who believe Christ to be *God*, may yet consider him merely as *Man*, or as *Mediator*^b, and not as *God*, in their acts of worship, it may be purely a surmise: but however the fact stands, there is no argument in it. We cannot answer for *vulgar* Christians, as to the notions they may possibly entertain even of *God the Father* in their worship of him;

^a Defence, vol. i. Qu. xvi. p. 163, &c. Second Defence, vol. iii. Qu. xvi. p. 346, &c. Compare Bull's *Primitiva et Apostol. Traditio*. c. vi. p. 386, &c. Bishop Smalbroke's *Idolatry charged on Arianism*. Mr. Abr. Taylor's *True Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 69, 448, &c. Dr. Bishop's *Sermons*, p. 271—281. Archbishop Tillotson's *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 547, &c. fol. edit.

^b *Sober and Charitable Disquisition*, p. 21, 22, 23.

neither can we be certain, whether sometimes they rise higher than those of an *Anthropomorphite*. But I presume, if any *vulgar* Christians ignorantly or innocently mistake, they are very willing to be set right by their more knowing guides, or by other sensible friends: which makes their case widely different from that of those who take upon them to justify *creature-worship* upon principle, and who separate Christ from the *one Godhead* in the worship of him, knowingly, and out of set purpose and design. We are not *involved in guilt*, merely by communicating with persons, whose errors (though perhaps *great*) we know nothing of, or who probably would correct them upon better instruction, or the first gentle admonition. *Guilt* is contracted by communicating with those who openly and resolutely corrupt the faith (knowingly or ignorantly) in very important articles. To join with such persons, is partaking in their *impiety*: it is not *charity*, but *men-pleasing*, and betraying a disregard for the *honour of God*. But this general question will come over again, and will be more fully debated in a proper place.

Enough has been said to show, that *Christian-worship* is very nearly concerned in the question about the Trinity; and therefore the doctrine is strictly *practical*, and has a close connection with the Christian life. I declined entering into the main debate about *creature-worship*, for the reasons above hinted. Yet because the author of *Sober and Charitable Disquisition* has advanced some things upon that article, which every reader may not know how to answer, I shall suggest a few considerations here by the way, to serve as hints or heads of solution to the difficulties objected. 1. If that gentleman means to say, that the outward acts of *civil* homage and *religious* worship are so equivocal and ambiguous, that there is no way left to distinguish them, it is disputing against *fact*, and amounts to telling us, that no one can distinguish in a case where no one can easily mistake, or ever has been mistaken. *Civil* homage is distinguishable

from *religious* worship, by the *circumstances* ^c always, and often by the *nature* of the *acts* themselves. That *burning incense* to Daniel ^d was merely *civil* respect, will not be easily proved: neither will the example of an *idolatrous* king, who would have done as much to an image, be sufficient to *justify* it; though the author speaks of it ^e, as if both these points were indisputable. 2. Those outward acts, so and so circumstantiated, as to become *religious* worship, are what God has *appropriated* to the *Jehovah*, to the *true God*, in the holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, as *exterior* and *visible* acknowledgments of the *divine* sovereignty over all creatures, and of the *dependence* which creatures have upon their Creator: for the *reasons* which God insists upon, why he, and he only, is to be *worshipped*, are such as exclude all *creatures* whatever, *viz.* his being *Jehovah*, Creator, Sustainer, Preserver of all things ^f. 3. To pay these *exterior* services, once so *appropriated* to God, to any *creature*, is *idolizing* the creature, or *deifying* the creature, and is both *idolatry* and *polytheism*. 4. Therefore the paying such *exterior* religious services to Christ, considered as a *creature*, must, according to the whole tenor of the Old Testament, be plain *idolatry* and *polytheism*. 5. The same rule for religious worship obtains under the New Testament, as before under the Old: which appears, as from several other places, so particularly from our Lord's answer to Satan ^g, and from the angel's admonitions to St. John in the Revelations ^h.

The author of *Sober and Charitable*, &c. asks, why the

^c See Stillingfleet's *Defence of the Discourse concerning Idolatry in Works*, vol. v. p. 344, 357.

^d Dan. ii. 46.

^e *Sober and Charitable Disquisition*, p. 6.

^f Isai. xl. xlv. 5, 6, 7. 2 Kings xix. 15. Jer. x. 10, 11, 12. Compare my *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 18, 19.

^g Matt. iv. 10.

^h Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 9. See those texts fully explained in Bishop Bull's *Primitiva et Apostolica Traditio*, c. vi. p. 388.

paying worship to an invisible Being must imply its having *divine* perfections, and therefore must be *divine* worshipⁱ? The reason is, because God has *appropriated* all such addresses, so and so circumstantiated, to the one Lord *Jehovah*; thereby making them (if they were not in their own nature before) a virtual recognition of *divine* perfections^k; and therefore they interpretatively amount to *divine* worship. He adds, that “this is proving the point, by taking it for granted, that none but God is to be worshipped.” No, but it is proving the point in the best manner, and by the strongest evidences, namely, express Scripture evidences, all the way from Genesis down to the Revelations, of such *appropriation* as hath been mentioned. In short then, God has so appropriated religious worship, as to exclude all *creatures* from any share in it: therefore all religious worship is *divine* worship; and therefore to worship Christ, under the notion of a *creature*, is *idolatry* and *polytheism*. So stands this matter, which I have but briefly hinted, to take off this author’s exceptions; referring the reader, as above, to other treatises, where the subject is considered at large. Now I return to the point I was upon, the *practical* nature of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Besides the influence which this doctrine has upon *worship*, it may be considered farther in a more general view, as tending to form within our minds *dispositions* proper for such state and circumstances as we are to expect hereafter. It is an allowed truth, that the good dispositions which men contract in this life are their qualifications for the happiness of the life to come; and that the more refined and raised such their good dispositions are, the more fitly qualified they are for the higher degrees of blessedness in heaven. Put the case then, that the three Persons of the Trinity are equally *divine*, and that a man has been trained up to esteem them accordingly, it cannot be doubted but

ⁱ Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 8.

^k See preface to my Sermons, vol. ii.

that he goes out of the world more fitly disposed, in that respect, to be taken into their friendship, and best qualified (other circumstances being equal) for the beatific enjoyment. Consequently, the belief of the doctrine of the Trinity (supposing it *true*) is no slight or insignificant theory, no barren notion or speculation; since it has a direct influence upon the *dispositions* of our minds here, and upon our *happiness* hereafter. I make not this an argument of the *truth* of the doctrine, (for that is not the point I am now upon,) but of the *importance* of it, after admitting it for a sacred truth: and I add, that if it may have such influence upon us, in creating proper *dispositions*, that comes to the same as to say, that it raises and improves our *virtues*, and all virtue is *practical*.

A further consideration of like kind may be drawn from the influence which the same doctrine has upon the *motives* to Christian practice. There are no two motives more affecting or more endearing, or more apt to work upon ingenuous minds, than the *love* of God the Father in sending his beloved Son to redeem us, and the *love* and *condescension* of our blessed Lord, in submitting to be so sent. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son¹," &c. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him^m." We see here what a stress and emphasis is laid, not merely upon this, that life, eternal life, is the benefit bestowed, but that it is conveyed in such a *manner*, and by such endearing *means*, by the *only begotten Son*. The Socinians, when pressed upon this article, do nothing but trifle and shuffle with us: they fall to magnifying the love of God, in giving us so high, so inestimable a blessing, as *life eternal*. Very true; but does not Scripture, besides that, lay a particular emphasis upon the *means* made use of in conveying the grant? And how is this emphasis made out upon their hypothesis, that Christ is a

¹ John iii. 16.

^m John iv. 9.

mere man? But suppose him a *creature*, and the very first and highest of all creatures, before he came down from heaven; yet neither does that supposition sufficiently answer the purpose. For, considering how honourable the service was, and how unconceivably vast and large the reward for it, it might more properly be said, that God *so loved his Son*, that he sent him into the world, in order to *prefer* him to a kind of rivalry with himself, to advance him to *divine* honours, to make the *whole creation* bow before him, and pay him homage and obeisance^a: and all this as the reward of his sufferings of a few years; great indeed, but not apparently greater than many of his disciples suffered after him, nor “worthy to be compared with the glory^o” that shall accrue to every good Christian, much less with that immense, that incredible glory which was to accrue to him P. Now to me it seems, that the supposing Christ a mere *creature*, is a thought which mightily lessens the force of the Scripture expressions representing God’s sending his Son as an act of stupendous love to man, upon account of the dignity of the *Person* by whom that salvation was to be wrought: so that the denying the *Divinity* of Christ robs us in part of one of the most endearing and affecting *motives* to the Christian life. Wherefore in this view also, the doctrine of the Trinity, if true, is both *important* and *practical*, as it raises the *motives* upon which Christian *practice* is built. I do not say, there would be no force in the motive considered in

^a Phil. ii. 10. Rev. v. 11, 12, 13. vii. 10.

^o Rom. viii. 18.

^p Equidem rem attentius perpendenti liquebit, ex hypothesi sive Sociniana, sive Ariana, Deum in hoc negotio amorem et dilectionem suam potius in *illum ipsum Filium*, quam erga nos homines ostendisse. Quid enim? Is qui Christus dicitur, ex mera Dei *videns* et beneplacito in eam gratiam electus est, ut post brevem hinc in terris Deo prestitam obedientiam, ex puro puro homine juxta Socinistas, sive ex mera et mutabili *creatura*, ut *Ario-manitas* dicant, *Deus* ipse fieret, ac *divinos* honores, non modo a nobis *hominibus*, sed etiam ab *ipsis angelis* atque *archangelis* sibi tribuendos assequeretur, adeoque in *allas creaturas* omnes dominium atque imperium obtineret. *Bull. Judic. Eccl. Cathol.* cap. v. p. 313.

an Arian view, and supposing Christ to have been a most excellent *creature*: but the force of it would be considerably less upon that supposition; and therefore, if the doctrine be a *truth*, it is a truth of some moment in a view to *practice*, as raising and enforcing the *motives* beyond what the other hypothesis does.

So again, the *love of Christ* towards mankind appears in a much clearer and stronger light upon the *Trinitarian* principles, than upon the *Antitrinitarian*. For if Christ was in the *form of God, equal with God, and very God*, it was then an act of infinite love and *condescension* in him to become man, and die for us: but if he was no more than a *creature*, it was no surprising condescension to embark in a work so glorious, such as being the Saviour of mankind, and such as would advance him to be *Lord and Judge* of the world, to be admired, revered, and adored both by men and angels, God himself also glorifying him, and sounding forth his praises through the utmost limits of the universe. Where is the *condescension* of a *creature's* submitting to be thus highly honoured? Or what *creature* could there be, that could *modestly* aspire to it, or might not think it much above his pretensions or highest *ambition*? In short, “to become man, to suffer
“and die for the redemption of the world, and to be made
“the Lord and Judge both of the quick and of the dead,
“can be an act of *condescending* love and goodness only
“in *God*. So that to deny the *Divinity* of Christ alters
“the very foundations of Christianity, and destroys all
“the powerful arguments of the love, humility, and con-
“descension of our Lord, which are the peculiar motives

† Addo, neque ipsius *Filii Dei* unigeniti *amorem* et *charitatem*, ergo nos homines (quæ etiam magnifice passim celebratur in S. Scripturis, ac maxime in loco illo Epistolæ ad Ephes. iii. 18, 19.) clare elucere, nisi concipiamus *Filium Dei* qui ante sæcula ex *Patre* genitus est, per quem omnia facta sunt, qui propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem, descendit de cœlis et incarnatus est, &c. At vero hoc modo—*Filii Dei eminentissima in Argumentum suum dilectio*—, clarissime conspicitur. *Bull. Judic. Eccl.* cap. v. p. 311.

“ of the Gospel^r.” If either the work of redemption was too big for a *creature* to engage in, or if the honours attending it were too high for a *creature* to aspire after^s, then certainly the very notion of *condescension* is sunk and lost, upon every hypothesis which does not make Christ truly and properly God, God eternal. I am very sensible, that while I am arguing for the *importance* of the doctrine, I may seem at the same time to be pleading for the *truth* of it, and so to run unawares into the other question. But the two questions are so nearly allied, that I know not sometimes how to avoid it. The same considerations generally which prove one, must of course obliquely glance at the other also : and every Scripture argument, which intimates the *use* and *importance* of the doctrine, must at least tacitly suppose and insinuate the *truth* of it, and so in effect prove both in one. If Scripture has laid down *motives* which are not naturally or reasonably accounted for, or understood, but upon the supposition of the truth of such a doctrine, then both the doctrine itself and the *practical* nature of it are at the same time insinuated : which I mention here once for all, to prevent confusion, and now proceed to what remains.

The *satisfaction* or *propitiation* for the sins of the world, made by Christ, is of great importance to the Christian life, and seems also to have a close connection with the doctrine of the Trinity. The *truth* of the satisfaction, and

^r Sherlock's Vindication of the Defence of Stillingfleet, chap. v. p. 268.

^s *Omnipotens*, quæ ipsi tribuitur, *Dei voluntas* necessario supponit, ipsamque omnino statuit. Quid enim? Messiam sive Christum prædicant sacræ nostræ literæ et credere nos profiteremur omnes, qui sit *animarum sospitator*, qui nobis sit *sapientia, justitia, sanctificatio, et redemptio*—, qui preces suorum, ubivis sacrosanctum ejus nomen invocantium, illico exaudiat—, qui Ecclesiæ suæ per universum terrarum orbem disseminate, semper præsto sit—, qui Deo Patri, *visibilis*, et in eadem sede collocatus sit—. Qui denique, in exitu mundi, immensa gloria et majestate refulgens, angelis ministris stipatus, veniet orbem judicaturus, non modo facta omnia, sed et cordis secreta omnium quotquot fuere hominum in lucem proditurus, &c. Hæcine omnia in purum *hominem*, aut *creaturam* aliquam competere? Fidenter dico, qui ita sentiat, non modo contra *fidem*, sed et *rationem* ipsam insanire. *Bull. Judic. Eccl. Cath.* cap. i. p. 291, 292.

the *necessity* there was for it, may be substantially proved *a posteriori* from Scripture itself^t, independent of the doctrine of the Trinity. But after proceeding so far, it will be difficult to clear and extricate that Scripture doctrine, without admitting this other also : because it is not reasonable to think that any *creature* could do more than was his bounden duty to do upon God's requiring it ; or that he could by any services or sufferings attain to such a degree of *merit*, as should atone for a world of sinners ; or that he should be intrusted with such an office (supposing him otherwise *equal* to it) as would of course draw after it the adoration and homage both of men and angels. The question properly here, is not, whether any thing less than God could pay an *infinite* satisfaction, but whether a *creature* could pay *any*, or could *merit* at all. If it be said, that God might *accept* it as he pleased, it may be said likewise, upon the same principle, that he might accept the *blood* of *bulls* or of *goats*. Yet the Apostle tells us, that " it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of " goats should take away sins " : " which words appear to resolve the *satisfaction* not merely into God's free acceptance, but into the *intrinsic* value of the sacrifice. And while we rest it upon that foot, I do not see why we may not say, that it is not possible for the blood of any *creature* to take away the sins of the world, since no *creature* can do more than his duty, nor can have any stock of *merit* to spare for other creatures. In this light, the Scripture doctrine of the *satisfaction* infers the *Divinity* of him that made it : and hence it is, that those who have denied our Lord's proper *Divinity* have commonly gone on to deny any proper *satisfaction* also ; or while they have admitted it in *words* or in *name*, (as they admit also Christ's *Divinity*,) they have denied the *thing*. Scripture itself seems to resolve the *satisfaction* into the *Divinity* of the Person

^t See a late rational and judicious discourse upon the subject, entitled, *Jesus Christ the Mediator between God and Man*, printed for J. Noon, 1732.

^u Hebrews x. 4.

suffering. It was *Jehovah* that was pierced^x. It was *God* that purchased the Church with *his own blood*: it was *ὁ ἄνωγος*, the *high Lord* that bought us^z: it was the *Lord of glory* that was crucified^a. And indeed it is unintelligible, how the blood of a *creature* should make any proper atonement or expiation for sin, as before intimated. This again is another of those arguments, or considerations, which at once insinuate both the *truth* of our doctrine and the *importance* of it. However, if Scripture otherwise testifies that Christ is properly *God*, and if the same Scriptures elsewhere, independently of our present argument, declare that Christ has atoned for us; then from these two propositions put together results this *third*, that a *divine* Person has satisfied for us: consequently, whosoever destroys the *Divinity* of Christ, justly so called, does at the same time destroy the true notion of the *satisfaction* made by him. Hence it appears, at the lowest, that the doctrine of the *Trinity* involves several other important doctrines of Christianity with it, and gives another kind of turn and *significancy* to them, than what they would have without it: and therefore, most undoubtedly, it is no barren *speculation*, no *indifferent* or slight matter, but a doctrine of the foundation, nearly affecting the very *vitals* of Christianity, and the Christian life.

The author of *Sober and Charitable Disquisition* has spent several pages^b, to invalidate the argument drawn from the common doctrine of the *satisfaction*; and so I must stop for a while to examine what he says. He thinks it cannot be proved, that “none but God could make such *satisfaction*”^c. But I conceive, it may be proved from the *nature of the thing*, that no *creature* could *merit*; and from Scripture, that he who made the satisfaction is *God*,

^x Zechar. xii. 10. compared with John xix. 37.

^z Acts xx. 28. For the reading, consult Mills in loc.

^a 2 Pet. ii. 1. See Taylor's True Scripture Doctrine, p. 391, &c.

^b 1 Cor. ii. 8.

^c Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 24—35.

^d Ibid. p. 24.

is *Jehovah*: and these two considerations taken together do amount to what we pretend to. He himself allows, the *truth* of our doctrine once proved, as to God's being sacrificed, the *consequence* to be indisputable, that it "was some way or other necessary^c." This indeed is not the *whole* of what we are able to prove, as may appear from what hath been said: but even this is sufficient to our present purpose; namely, that if our doctrine is *true*, it must be *important*, because of the other important doctrines which hang upon it. Therefore the doctrine of the *Trinity* is no *speculative* opinion of slight value or significance. If it be true, it is worth contending for, and *earnestly* too.

He asks, whether we are sure, "that no being inferior to God could make full amends to divine justice^d?" We conceive, with very good reason, that no *creature* could *merit* with God, or do works of *supererogation*. I pass over what he observes about *infinite* satisfaction^e, not affecting the question as here by me stated. He asks, how we can be sure, that God "cannot accept of the sacrifice of the best and most excellent of created beings?" I say not, what God *can* or *cannot* accept: I know nothing *a priori* about it. But Scripture, as before observed, rests not this matter upon the foot of divine *acceptance*, but upon the *intrinsic* value of the sacrifice: and when we consider the thing in that view, we say, that a *creature's* services or sufferings carry no proper intrinsic *merit* in them. And we add further, that God *has* accepted no sacrifice less than a *divine* sacrifice, because we prove from other topics, that Christ our passover was strictly *God*, and he was *sacrificed* for us. In short, the question is not what God might have *accepted*, if he had so pleased, but whether, when he has chosen the way of *expiation*, and the Scriptures lay a particular stress and emphasis upon it, as carrying *intrinsic merit* in it, both

^c Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 25.

^d *Ibid.* p. 25.

^e *Ibid.* p. 25, 26, 27.

real and great, whether this can be justly accounted for, on the supposition that our Lord was no more than a *creature* ^f.

The author goes on to raise difficulties, and to advance divers subtilties to perplex the notion of a *compound person*: most of them, I conceive, run beyond the mark, and might as soon prove that *soul* and *body* make not *one person*, or man, as that God and man make not the *one Person* of Christ. For example; he pleads that a person compounded of God and man “must be inferior in dignity to a Person wholly and only divine.” By the same argument, a man, being partly *spirit* and partly *body*, is inferior in dignity to the separate soul, which is *wholly and only spirit*: and if there be any force in the argument, I know not how far it may affect the doctrine of a *future resurrection*. Now, we say, that the divine nature loses nothing of its dignity by assuming the *human*; but retains all the dignity it before had; and therefore the whole Person becomes not *inferior*. He further pleads, that “it is not God that dies, but God-man.” Allowed; but still that Person, that Christ, who is *God*, dies: as when a man dies, that Person (who is *soul*, as well as *body*) dies. We never suppose that the *Godhead* dies, any more than we imagine that the *soul* dies. He says further, that “the Person which makes the satisfaction is not a divine Person ^h.” How so, when the Person is both *God* and *man* (as he had before allowed) in our scheme? Do we make *two Persons*? He argues next against the *humanity* becoming part of the *Person* of Christ. “Nothing can really be this *who*, but must be

^f Verbo dicam: nulli *creature*, licet excellentissima ea sit, excellentissimoque modo operetur, illud competat, ut vite æternæ præmium ei ex *stricto jure* debeat. Præterquam enim quod bonum æternæ vite sit absolutissimum, immensum, infinitum, atque adeo *omnia omnium creaturarum opera infinitis gradibus transcendens*; illud etiam Apostoli, ἰσόρροπον tale est, ut ei a nemine responderi possit: τίς ἀπέδωκεν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἀνταποδοθήσεται αὐτῷ; Rom. xi. 35. *Bull. Harmon. Apostol. Dissert. ii. c. 12. p. 490.*

^g Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 29.

^h Ibid. p. 30.

“the *what* this *who* is, at the same time.” He might as justly argue, that Peter’s body cannot be part of Peter, or of the *person* of Peter, together with his soul; because nothing can really be this *who* (Peter’s soul) but must be *what* this *who* is, at the same time. Now taking for granted that Peter’s *soul* is the *whole* person, the argument is good: and so it is likewise in the other case, taking it for granted, that the *Logos* in union is still the *whole* Person; but this is going upon false suppositions: and he might as soon prove that Peter’s body cannot be part of Peter, unless it be his *soul*, as that Christ’s *humanity* cannot be part of Christ, unless it be the *Logos*. I can hardly conjecture what the author means, when he says, “That human substance we call John, is really the “Person, and nothing elseⁱ.” I thought, that John, or John’s person, was made up of *two* substances, *spiritual* and *bodily*: and John, the person of John, dies, though one substance survives. In like manner, Christ the *God-man* dies, though the *Godhead* dies not. He adds, much like to what he had said before, that the “human nature “can never be really *he*, unless he be also the divine nature.” Does he mean by *he*, part of the person, or the whole person? If he means *part*, then it amounts to this; the *body* can never be really a part of Peter’s person, unless it be Peter’s *soul*: or if he means the *whole*, then it comes to this, that the body can never be the *whole person*, unless it be the *soul*. One of the propositions is manifestly against *truth*, and the other is not *sense*: so little can be effected in this way of reasoning. Indeed, all the confusion arises from the want of knowing or considering what the true notion of a *person*, simple or compound, is, of which I have elsewhere treated at large^k, and thither I take leave to refer the reader. In the mean while, I cannot but heartily lament and grieve, to find that serious and sensible men can give their minds to oppose a Scrip-

ⁱ Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 31.

^k Second Defence, Query xv. vol. iii. p. 338—341.

tural and venerable doctrine, which has stood the test of ages, by such fine-spun subtleties: Zeno's arguments against *motion* might appear weighty in comparison.

But we have more of the same kind still, which I shall reply to very briefly. "The dying humanity can have "no such dignity¹." True, but the dying *Christ* might, and that suffices. "The human nature should really and "truly be that divine Person." No: *part* of the Person is sufficient: the *human* nature constitutes one compound Person with the *divine* nature. "The Logos could not "really be man." Why? Was not the Word made flesh? that is, the Word became incarnate, assumed humanity. "Humanity could not be assumed into a real communion "of his Person, without being assumed into what that "Person is^m. He must mean, I presume, without being converted into *Godhead*. But why not, if *bodies* at the general resurrection may be assumed into a *personal* union with *souls*, without ceasing to be *bodies*, or being converted into *spirits*? "For the same thing (*Person*) to "be God and man at once, that is, really and truly so, is "surely as impossible as transubstantiationⁿ." And yet surely it is not more impossible than for the same *human being* (call him Peter or John) to be both *soul* and *body* at once, *really* and *truly* so; which a man may firmly believe as a certain truth, without admitting *transubstantiation*, a palpable absurdity. "That man should really and "strictly speaking be a divine Person, or a divine Person "man, to me seems utterly impossible^o." If he means, that the divine nature is not the human, nor the human divine, he says right, and has no opposer: but if he means, that *divine* substance and *human* substance together, may not make *one Person*, or *one Christ*, let him show why it is more impossible than for a *spiritual* substance and a *corporeal* substance to make *one person*, or *one man*. He adds, or repeats, that "the death of the

¹ Sober and Charitable, &c. p. 32.

ⁿ Ibid. p. 34.

^m Ibid. p. 33.

^o Id. *ibid*.

“man is not the death of God^o.” But it is the death of *Christ*, who is God and man. So the death of the *body* is not the death of the *soul*; but it is the death of the *man*, who is both soul and body. Such is the nature of a *personal* union, and such the manner of speaking of it; and it is so obvious and common a case, that none but *philosophers* would mistake it.

The author closes his discourse on this head with observing, that our opposers may carry the point of *satisfaction* as high as we do, and account as handsomely for it. As how? By supposing the Logos to be in as close an union with God, as we suppose Christ’s humanity to be with the Logos^p. Well then, it must be a *personal* union, so as to make the *Father* and the *Logos* one Person. How then? Then “the sufferings of the Logos “will be as much the sufferings of God, and as much an “atonement for sin, as the death of Christ’s human nature in *the other* scheme^q.” True: but then the sufferings of the *Logos* will be the sufferings of the *Father*, (which is the ancient heresy of the Patripassians,) and the same *Person* both pays and accepts the ransom, makes an atonement to *himself*; which is not consonant to *Scripture*, nor to common sense.

The author concludes his account of this matter with this inference, that the men whom he has been pleading for “do not seem so deeply culpable, nor so dangerously “mistaken^r,” as is commonly represented. To me it appears quite the contrary; and from this very representation of his, whereby he intended to favour them. They are deeply culpable, 1. For making God the Son a *creature*, against the whole tenor of *Scripture*. 2. For running into *Patripassianism*, to help out *Arianism*; heaping error upon error, heresy upon heresy. 3. For doing it upon the strength only of a few dialectical or metaphysical *subtilities*, scarce worthy to be offered, or so much

^o Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 34.

^p Ibid. p. 35.

^q Ibid. p. 34, 35.

^r Ibid. p. 35.

as named, in so momentous a cause as this is. 4. For making use of such topics against the personal union of *God* and *man*, as might with equal force be urged against the personal union of any *two substances* whatever, and prove (if they prove any thing) that an human person is not made up of *soul* and *body*. 5. For condemning their opposers as void of *charity*, only for their pious, faithful, and extremely *charitable* endeavours to preserve their flocks from being led aside after Satan, from imbibing sentiments subversive of the Gospel of Christ. But I shall have more to say upon the head of *charity* in another chapter. I hope my reader will excuse my digressing thus far (if it may be called a digression) upon the article of *satisfaction*, to attend the *author* who gave the occasion. Now I return.

I have been representing the *practical* nature and *important* uses of the doctrine of the *Trinity*, with respect to *worship*, in which all the *three* Persons are interested; and I have more particularly pressed the *importance* of the doctrine of our Lord's *Divinity*, from *special* considerations relating to the Gospel *motives*, and the nature of the *atonement* made for sins. I ought not here to omit the like *special* considerations concerning the *Holy Spirit*, and the necessity of believing his *Divinity* likewise. I shall choose here to express myself in the excellent words of a celebrated writer, whom I have before quoted more than once. "Our salvation by Christ does not only consist in the *expiation* of our sins, &c.—but in the *communication of divine grace* and power to renew and sanctify us: and this is every where in Scripture attributed to the *Holy Spirit*, as his peculiar office in the economy of man's salvation. And it must make a *fundamental change* in the doctrine of *divine grace* and assistance, to deny the *Divinity* of the *Holy Spirit*. "For can a *creature* be the *universal* spring and fountain of *divine grace* and life? Can a finite *creature* be a kind of *universal* soul to the whole Christian Church, and to every sincere member of it? Can a *creature* make such

“ close application to our minds, know our thoughts, set
 “ bounds to our passions, inspire us with new affections
 “ and desires, and be more intimate to us than we are to
 “ ourselves? If a *creature* be the only instrument and
 “ principle of *grace*, we shall soon be tempted, either to
 “ deny the *grace* of God, or to make it only an *external*
 “ thing, and entertain very mean conceits of it. All
 “ these *miraculous gifts*, which were bestowed on the
 “ Apostles and primitive Christians, for the edification of
 “ the Church, all the *graces of the Christian life*, are the
 “ fruits of the *Spirit*. The *divine Spirit* is the principle
 “ of *immortality* in us, which first gives life to our souls,
 “ and will at the last day raise our dead bodies out of the
 “ dust; works which sufficiently proclaim him to be *God*,
 “ and which we cannot heartily believe, in the *Gospel*
 “ *notion*, if he be not ^u.”

What this excellent writer has here said appears all to be very right and just; and his observation of the doctrine of divine *grace* being likely to suffer much by a denial of the *Divinity* of the Holy Spirit has been too sadly verified in the event. How jejune, how sparingly, have the abettors of the *new schemes*, insisted upon the doctrine of *grace*, and of the invisible workings of the *Holy Spirit*, though Scripture is full of the subject? So that, besides the danger of losing the salutary doctrine of a proper *satisfaction* and *expiation*, we are further in danger of losing the true Scripture notion of *grace*, by the opposition made to the doctrine of the Trinity. I believe I might appeal to the consciences of those gentlemen, whether their gratitude to *Christ*, for what he has done and suffered for us, be not in a manner lost, and swallowed up in their regards to the *Father* for *commanding* and *accepting* it; and whether the notion of the *grace* of the *Holy Spirit* be not entirely absorbed in the thought of the superior *assistance* of God. The effect is natural, and I judge in this case by what I should find in

^u Sherlock's Vindication of the Defence of Stillingfleet, p. 270, &c.

myself. Upon their hypothesis, "the grace of our Lord " Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion " of the Holy Ghost ^x," will amount only to the love of the *Father* thrice told ; which supersedes both the other. And when it is said, that the *Father* and *Son* will *make* their *abode with us* ^y, and in the same chapter, that the *Holy Ghost* also *will abide* with us *for ever* ^z, the two *creatures* superadded to the *Creator* will appear but as ciphers that add nothing to the sum, while in *one* we have all, and there is nothing but that *one* to be at all depended upon. His *presence* alone will supply every thing, and his lustre will so far eclipse both the other Persons, that it will be hard to say (upon the hypothesis I am mentioning) what occasion there would be for them, or what comfort in them. Such is the appearing *change* made in the very form and essence of Christianity by these *new* doctrines, that it seems to lose the very life and soul of it, and by degrees to degenerate into little else but a better kind of *Judaism*, retaining still the *name* of Christianity, but giving up the main things.

While we consider the doctrine of the *Trinity*, as interwoven with the very frame and texture of the Christian religion, it appears to me natural to conceive, that the whole scheme and economy of man's redemption was laid with a principal view to it, in order to bring mankind gradually into an acquaintance with the three divine Persons, one God blessed for ever. I would speak with all due modesty, caution, and reverence, as becomes us always in what concerns the unsearchable counsels of Heaven: but I say, there appears to me none so natural or so probable an account of the divine dispensations, from first to last, as what I have just mentioned ; namely, that such a *redemption* was provided, such an *expiation* for sins required, such a method of *sanctification* appointed, and then revealed, that so men might know that there are three *divine* Persons, might be apprised how infinitely the

^x 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

^y John xiv. 23.

^z John xiv. 16.

world is obliged to them, and might accordingly be both *instructed and incited* to love, honour, and adore them here, because that must be a considerable part of their employment and happiness hereafter. I urge not this as an argument of the *truth* of the doctrine, but as a consideration of great weight, supposing the doctrine *true*, for the recommending it to our affections, and for the raising our ideas of it. The divine dispensations appear both rational and amiable, considered in this light: and if it be not too bold to offer any *rationale* of them, I would humbly presume to say, that there is none so satisfactory as what I have now mentioned. I can see no probable reason why the Church of God should be, as it were, first put under the immediate conduct of the *Father*, then under the *Son*, and last of all, under the *Holy Ghost*; nor why the honour of *creating* should be principally ascribed to the *first*, and the honour of *redemption*, as considerable as creation, to the *second*, and the honour of *illumination*, *sanctification*, and *miraculous gifts*, as considerable as any thing before, to the *third*: I say, I can see no probable reason for these things (when the *Father*, as it should seem, might as well have had the *sole* honour of all) but upon the hypothesis which I have hinted ^a.

But however that be, or whatever other reasons divine wisdom, to us unsearchable, might proceed upon in every dispensation towards mankind, certain it is, that the doc-

^a Ac profecto admiranda mihi videtur divinarum Personarum in sacrosanctissima triade *sisseque*, qua unaquoque Persona distincto quasi titulo humanum imprimis genus imperio suo divino obstrinxerit, titulo illi respondente etiam distincta unius cujusque imperii patefactione. *Patrem* colimus sub titulo *Creatoris* hujus universi, qui et ab ipsa mundi *creatione* hominibus innotuerit: *Filium* adoramus sub titulo *Redemptoris ac Servatoris* nostri, cujus idcirco divina gloria atque imperium non nisi post peractum in terris humanæ *redemptionis ac salutis* negotium fuerit patefactum: *Spiritum* denique *sanctum* veneramus sub titulo *Paracleti, Illuminatoris, et Sanctificatoris* nostri, cujus adeo divina Majestas demum post descensum ejus in Apostolos primosque Christianos, donorum omne genus copiosissima largitione illustrissimum, clarius emicuerit. Nimirum tum demum Apostoli, idque ex Christi mandato, gentes baptizabant in *plenam atque adunatam Trinitatem*. *Bull. Primitiva Tradit.* c. vi. p. 399.

trine of the *Trinity*, if true, (as we here suppose,) runs through every part of Christian theology, and gives, as it were, a new force and spirit to it.

I have been proving, from several topics, that this doctrine is *important* and *practical*, no slight, no *speculative* opinion. I shall add but one consideration more, and that a *general* one, applicable to all other articles of faith, and proving them to be *practical* in a large sense of the word, but a *just sense* too, and well deserving our notice. As we are *commanded* to *believe* whatever God reveals, *belief* itself is an instance of *obedience*; and *unbelief*, much more *disbelief*, is *disobedience* to the commands of God. Consequently, unless obedience and disobedience are points of mere *speculation*, there is no room left for any pretence of that kind in the case now before us. Let the *matter* of the belief be otherwise ever so *speculative*, (though it is not the case here,) yet to believe Scripture verities, prime verities especially, is under *precept*, is express duty; and all duty is *practical* in a large sense, as it is paying *obedience* to God's commandments. St. Paul therefore, more than once, speaks of the *obedience of faith*^b, and with great propriety, since *believing* is *obeying* the will of God, and is entitled to a *reward*. It is true, *faith* and *obedience* (taking *obedience* in a more restrained sense) are often contradistinguished: but interpreting *obedience* in its fullest and most comprehensive meaning; *faith* is properly a *species* of it, another kind of obedience. Faith is a *virtue*, both a moral and a Christian virtue, as a very ingenious and acute writer observes. "As to the nature of *faith*, it is plain that it is a *moral* " *virtue*, as being that natural homage which the *understanding*, or *will*, (for I need not here dispute which^c,) " pays to God, in receiving and assenting to what he reveals, upon his bare word, or authority: it is an *humi-*

^b Rom. i. 5. xv. 18. xvi. 19, 26. Conf. Act. vi. 7. Vid. Wolfii Curæ Philolog. et Criticæ ad Rom. xvi. 19.

^c See that point fully discussed in Fiddes's Body of Divinity, vol. i. p. 333, &c.

“*liation* of ourselves, and a glorification of God. And as “it is a *moral*, so it is also a *Christian* virtue, as being a “*duty* commanded in the Gospel, and an act of Christian “*humility*.” If it be objected, that *faith* depends entirely upon *evidence*, and therefore is no matter of *choice*, and therefore is no virtue, nor can properly fall under *precept*; I deny that *faith* depends entirely upon *evidence*, though it ought to do so. There are *motives* to assent or dissent, as well as *rational grounds*; and those *motives* often bias and determine the judgment, either without *reason* or against it: not that men can *always* believe what they *will*, but inclination *frequently* has a great hand in their persuasions. Men can lean, and will lean to the side which they happen to favour, upon *motives* of education, habit, authority, or example; or of interest, vanity, pride, passion, resentment, and the like: and when they so lean to a side, they can be *partial* in examining, *rash* in judging, or *precipitate* in resolving; so that the *will* may much influence *belief*. And as to *unbelief*, or *disbelief*, the influence is still more apparent: for, excepting such glaring facts as force assent, by obtruding themselves upon the senses, all other things almost may be slighted, and set aside. A man may refuse to *attend* to the clearest *demonstration*, or may industriously perplex it, and never let in the *light* which might convince him of its truth: and what he may do in that case, he may much more easily do in others, where the evidence is not so bright, or strong, or comes not up to perfect demonstration. These things considered, it must be allowed, that *faith* has at least a great dependence upon the *will*, if it be not itself an act of the will, as appears most probable. *Diligence* in looking out for evidence, *patience* and *perseverance* in attending to it, *honesty* in considering, comparing, balancing, and then determining on the side of truth, these are all matters of *choice*, depending on the *will*; and therefore a right *faith* is a

⁴ Norris's *Christian Prudence*, p. 259.

submission of our *wills* in that instance to God. Seeing therefore that *faith* in general is *virtue* and *duty*, and therefore *practical*, it follows most evidently, that faith in the doctrine of the Trinity (supposing the doctrine *true*) is *practical* in its nature, is both moral and Christian *duty*.

Now to sum up briefly what has been done in this chapter; it has been shown, that the doctrine of the Trinity is of prime consideration for directing and determining our *worship*, and that it influences *Christian practice* many ways, as forming proper *dispositions*, as raising and strengthening the *Gospel motives*, and as enforcing the doctrines of *satisfaction* made by Christ, and of *illumination* and *sanctification* by the Holy Spirit; on all which accounts it appears to be strictly *practical*, and highly *important*: and it has been further intimated, that all duty is practical, and that *faith* is duty; and therefore *this faith*, as well as any other, and because of its important nature, more than many other. I conclude therefore from the premises laid down in this chapter, that the doctrine of the Trinity is *practical* enough to be a *fundamental* article of Christianity.

I must own, there is a narrow kind of sense, and very improper, of the word *practical*, which I have observed in some writers, according to which the doctrine of the Trinity would not be a *practical* doctrine: for they mean by *practical*, what concerns practice between *man* and *man*, and nothing else. Such persons would not scruple to say, that *worship* itself is no *practical* matter: and it must be allowed it is not in that sense; it is not a duty of the *second table*, but of the *first*. It may deserve considering, whether that narrow sense of the word *practical* might not first give rise to the objection, that the doctrine of the Trinity is not *practical*, but *speculative*; conceiving every thing to be *speculative*, excepting the common offices of life which we owe one towards another. Now indeed, according to such interpretation of the words *practical* and *speculative*, we should never affirm, that this doctrine

is *practical*, or deny that it is *speculative*: for the duties depending upon it are branches of the first and great commandment, the *love of God*, and not of the second, viz. the *love of our neighbour*. But what would all this amount to, more than to a dispute about *words* or *names*? For we should still insist upon it, that our doctrine is *practical*, as much as any duties of the *first table* are practical; which suffices: and so at length in a just and proper sense of the word, the doctrine of the Trinity is practical enough to be a *fundamental*, if the *love of God* may be justly called a *fundamental*.

But when we speak of the doctrine, we mean it of the *general* doctrine itself, not of the minute circumstances, or appendages of it, which are either of a doubtful nature, or of slighter consideration. For “ though it is *necessary* “ and *essential* to the Christian faith, to acknowledge Fa- “ ther, Son, and Holy Ghost to be one eternal God, yet “ there are a great many little subtilties started by over “ curious and busy heads, which are not *fundamental* doc- “ trines, and ought not to be thought so. God forbid “ that all the nice *distinctions* and *definitions* of the “ Schools, about *essence*, *subsistence*, *personality*, about “ *eternal generation* and *procession*, the difference between “ *filiation* and *spiration*, &c. should be reckoned among “ *fundamentals* of our faith. For though we understood “ nothing of these matters, (as indeed we do not, and it “ had been happy the Church had never heard of them,) “ yet if we believe the *Divinity* of each Person, we believe “ enough to understand the doctrine of *salvation*. And “ though that fatal dispute between the Greek and Latin “ Church, about the *Filioque*, be of more importance than “ such *scholastic subtilties*, yet I cannot see that it con- “ cerns the *foundation* of our faith. For the Greek Church “ did firmly believe the *Holy Spirit* to be *true God*, “ though they would not own that he proceeded from “ the Father *and the Son*, but from the *Father only*. And “ though we must acknowledge this to be a *mistake*, yet “ it is not a *fundamental* mistake: for the doctrine of sal-

“vation is secured by believing the *Holy Spirit* to be “*true God*, without defining the *manner* of his *procession*.” I may just take notice by the way, that the doctrine of the Trinity hath been but little *befriended* by the *Schoolmen*; rather hurt by them^f, though they did not design it. For, 1. By bringing up all the difficulties and perplexities they could themselves invent, or elsewhere meet with, they furnished out matter for the enemies of the faith to lay hold on; and it was from thence chiefly that the Socinians afterwards borrowed their materials to work with. 2. In the next place, by overlarding a plain doctrine with distinctions and subtilties in great abundance, they *disguised* and *obscured* it, that it was not easy to see through the mist they had raised. 3. Further, by thus perplexing and diluting it, they really *weakened* it: for it is much easier to oppose it as it stands tricked up in that scholastic form, than as it stands in *Scripture*, and in the *ancient Fathers*. 4. They brought a kind of scandal and disgrace upon the doctrine, as if it subsisted chiefly upon *scholastic subtilties*; an imputation which the adversaries to the Christian faith have eagerly laid hold on, and often invidiously charged upon the Trinitarians at large; though nothing can be more *false* or *injurious*. The truth is, the very distinguishing character of the *Trinitarians*, in the days of the *Fathers*, was their resting their cause wholly upon *Scripture* and *tradition*; as the distinguishing character of the *Antitrinitarians* was their building mostly upon *logical* or *metaphysical* quirks and subtilties^g. What a string of those wanton levities have we in Aëtius, preserved and answered by Epiphanius^h, enough to fright any common reader, or to nauseate any man of good sense. The like we have again in Eunomius, answered by Basil, and by Gregor. Nyssen.

^e Sherlock's Vindication of the Defence of Stillingfleet, p. 273, 274.

^f See Dr. Berriman's History of the Trin. Controversy, p. 378, &c.

^g See Socrat. E. H. lib. v. c. 10. Hieron. contr. Lucifer. tom. iv. par. 2. col. 296. ed. Bened.

^h Epiphani. Hæres. lxxvi. p. 924, &c.

The Catholics scarce ever ran out into *metaphysical* notions, or expressions, excepting in two cases, and both in the way of *self-defence*. One was, when they were attacked with *false* metaphysics, they then laboured to answer them with *true*, lest the adversaries should triumph on that head, and seduce the populace. The other was, when the scriptural and customary expressions, which were used to convey a *good sense*, and could justly bear no other, were perverted to a *bad one* by equivocation and wile; the Church could then have no so effectual security against false doctrines and false teachers creeping in among them, to corrupt the *faith*, and to beguile the *unwary*, as by adopting some new terms, and chosen expressions, for the supporting *old* truthsⁱ. This latter case is so naturally represented by a modern writer, that I shall take the freedom to borrow his words, for the sake of laying it in the most lively manner before the reader.

“ Let me suppose an Arian standing before you, and submitting himself to your examination, you ask him, whether he believes Christ to be *God*? He answers in the *affirmative*. You again inquire, what *kind of God* he supposes him to be? He replies, such a God as the Bible makes him. This, you will complain, is *collusive* language; however, you request him to satisfy you, whether he believes the Son to be *truly* and *properly* God? To this he saith, *Yes*, consistently enough with his *own* notion of God, though not with *yours*. But you farther ask, does he believe him to be *one with the Father*? To this he likewise replies in the *affirmative*. You then press him with another question, *How* is he one with the Father, is he of the *same essence* with the Father? To this the Arian answers, by asking you what you mean by *essence*? If you comply with his desire, and explain your notion of the term, you are *unavoidably* drawn into *metaphysical* points^k.” Thus we

ⁱ See Dr. Berriman's History of the Trinitarian Controversy, p. 174—179.

^k Reply to Mr. P. C.'s Letter, p. 11, 12.

see *metaphysical* terms may be sometimes used by the orthodox side, when it is *unavoidable*; that is, when it is necessary to guard against *equivocation* and *disguise*, for the preserving the *true faith*, and for the excluding such *ministers* as would corrupt the Gospel truths, and mislead the people committed to their care. But then it is wrong to blame those honest and conscientious guides for making use of the only remedy which is left them, and which nothing but the utmost necessity, brought upon them by the prevarication of others, would ever make them choose. It is plain by this and the like instances, that they are not fond of *metaphysics*, not so much as of the *terms*: nor would there be any occasion for new words, or any use of them, if many had not learned to undermine the *ancient* faith, by affixing *new* and *wrong* ideas to the *ancient* forms. The very nature of the thing speaks itself: and the like methods have been used in most other forms and tests, as daily experience has shown the necessity of it. Thus, to instance in the common case of *oaths* to a government, they are usually worded in as full and expressive terms as can be devised: and yet that sometimes is not thought sufficient, unless it be further added, *without any equivocation*, or *mental reservation*, or something of like kind. I ask my reader's pardon for digressing a while from the particular point I was upon: but these reflections came naturally in my way, and may perhaps be of use as to the main thing: and now I pass on to a new chapter.

CHAP. III.

Showing that the Doctrine of the Trinity is sufficiently insisted upon in Scripture to be deemed an Article of prime Importance.

OUR dispute must here be with the Dutch Remonstrants. The most celebrated men amongst them were Episcopius and Limborch. I shall consider them both with care; that it may be seen by the things wherein they agree, what is it that both aim at, and by the points

wherein they differ, how both of them were at a loss for any sound principle of reason to proceed upon : and the conclusion which perhaps may naturally result from all will be this ; that they had some *motives*, or specious *colours*, for the persuasion which they jointly entertained, but no *rational grounds* for it.

1. I begin with the learned Episcopius, as the principal man. The sum of what his sentiments on this head amount to is, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as to the main substance of it, is *certain* and *clear*, but yet not *necessary* to be believed in order to salvation, nor important enough to justify an *anathema* against the impugners of it, or for the rejecting their communion.

First, I say, he admits our main doctrine as *true* and *certain*, being plainly taught in *Scripture*: this appears from the Confession of the Remonstrants, where the doctrine is taught in full and strong terms¹, as likewise from other places in Episcopius's works^m. Next, I observe, that in his discussion of the question of the *perspicuity* of Scripture against Bellarmin, he declares the doctrine of the Trinity (such no doubt he must mean as the Remonstrant's Confession, and his own other writings contain) is *clear*, *perspicuous*, and *easy* to be understoodⁿ.

¹ Cæterum distincte ac relate consideratur Deus sub trina Hypostasi, sive tribus Personis.—Solutus Pater originis omnis expers—sed qui Deitatem tamen suam, tum *Filio unigenito*,—tum etiam *Spiritu Sancto*—*ab æterno* communicavit.—*Filius* ergo et *Spiritus Sanctus* ejusdem cum Patre Deitatis, seu divinæ essentiæ ac naturæ, absolute ac communiter consideratæ, consortes sunt: prout inter alia; maxime probatur ex *divinis* nominibus, seu titulis, item ex *divinis* proprietatibus, et operationibus, quæ utrique in sacris literis *aperte* passim tribuuntur. *Remonstrant. Confes. c. 3. apud Episcop. Op. vol. ii. p. 78.*

^m Certum est tribus hisce Personis *Divinitatem*, sive *divinas* perfectiones in Scriptura tribui. *Episcop. Instit. lib. iv. p. 333.*

Mirum non videri debere, si tribus hisce Personis *una eademque natura divina* tribuatur, cum iis Scriptura *divinas* istas perfectiones, quæ naturæ *divinæ* propriæ sunt, tam exerte attribuat. *Episcop. ibid.*

ⁿ Atqui, ait, Scriptura tradit summa *mysteria*. Quæ, inquam, illa? Primo, ait, de *divina Trinitate*. Atqui en, prout Scriptura tradit, nego *obscura*, nedum *obscurissima* esse. Addo, ea *clara*, *perspicua*, et *facilia intellectu*

Notwithstanding all this, the same Episcopus was pleased to deny the *necessity* of believing the *eternal generation* of the Son, (which with him appears to be the same with denying his *eternal existence*;) and consequently, the *necessity* of believing the received doctrine of the *Trinity*. And he denied the necessity of so believing, as for several other reasons, so principally for this, because the *Scripture* had neither directly nor indirectly declared the *necessity* of the doctrine, though it had taught the *truth* of it^o.

But then again I must observe of him, that he seems to me, not so properly to have denied the *necessity* of believing that doctrine, (in our sense of *necessity*;) as the *necessity* of pronouncing an *anathema* upon the impugners, which he conceived must follow upon the other, and which he interpreted to such a rigid sense, as to mean sentencing the men directly to *hell fire*, or to everlasting damnation. This last particular was what he chiefly, or solely hesitated upon, when he came to explain: or he would be thought, at least, to mean no more; as appears from his own words, in his answer to the Leyden Divines^p;

esse, prout et quatenus ea in Scriptura traduntur. *Episcop. Instit.* lib. iv. c. 18. p. 269.

^o Hactenus ergo de *veritate* articuli hujus agimus, restat, ut videamus de ejus *credendi necessitate*.—Argumenta pro parte negante mihi longe videntur præponderare. 1. Quia nusquam in Scriptura id *necessarium creditu* esse asseritur, nec per bonam nedum necessariam consequentiam ex ea elicitur. *Episcop. Instit.* lib. iv. c. 34. p. 338.

Certum est iis, qui sic errant, in Scripturis nusquam, nec diserte, neque in terminis, neque per manifestam consequentiam, *anathema* dici. Quod autem in Scripturis non est, etiamsi verissimum sit, necessarium tamen dogma non esse ipsi doctores in synopsi sua adferunt. *Episcop. Opp.* vol. ii. p. 295.

^p Author iste diserte et in terminis Socinianos inter eos collocat quibus salus abjudicanda non est. Id nusquam fecerunt Remonstrantes. At *anathema* illis non dicunt. Esto: sed nec negant *anathema* illis dicendum esse. Quid ergo? *Ἐπίχουρι*, neutrum dicunt.—Ne quid præcipitent, malunt relinquere tam severum ac grave iudicium Deo et tempori usque dum causas satis graves habebunt, ut in alteram partem cum certa animi fiducia descendant.—Ex altera parte occurrere vident diram ac funestam *anathematos* atque *eternæ condemnationis* sententiam: a qua tantopere se abhorrere profitentur, ut eam nisi plenissime persuasi ferre non audeant adeoque ferre illicitum sibi credant. *Episcop. Respons. ad Specim. Calumn.* p. 295.

as also from his manner of wording the question in his Institutions⁹, and elsewhere^r.

But that Episcopius did not deal fairly and uprightly in this matter may be made appear from several considerations; as, 1. Because he aggravated the business of an *anathema* beyond what he had reason for; which makes it look like pretence. 2. Because he was not consistent with himself, either in his doctrine or conduct. 3. Because he has laid down a very fallacious rule for judging of *necessaries*. 4. Because he has done the like in other instances also, and with as little reason, only to afford shelter for the Socinians.

1. I say, first, he has aggravated the matter of an *anathema* beyond what he had reason for. When St. Paul delivered over to *Satan*, the design of it was kind and salutary, that "the spirit might be saved in the day of "the Lord Jesus^s." If men must not have warning given them of their *evil ways*, all friendly reproof is at an end; and it will be unlawful to tell them, however just or necessary the occasion be, that they are in a dangerous state, and upon the verge of destruction. The declaring such a case publicly, if it be right and true, is an eminent act of charity both to them and to the world.

But further; every *anathema* upon a *doctrine* is not an *anathema*, in Episcopius's sense, upon the *persons*

⁹ *Utrum scilicet præcise ad salutem scitu et creditu necessarium sit, Jesum peculiari isto quem adstruximus modo Filium Dei esse, iisque qui id negant, aut in dubium vocant, ac proinde id confiteri non audent, anathema sit dicendum? Episcop. Institut. lib. iv. c. 34. p. 338.*

^r *Stabat jam animo Remonstrantium hæc sententia; nulli doctrinæ, nulli homini anathema dicere, nisi cui Deus ipse anathema dicit, vel expressis verbis, vel sic, ut per consequentiam omni exceptione majorem et cuivis obviam, id Deum dicere colligi possit. Deum non reperiunt anathema dicere, &c.—Absit a Remonstrantibus, ut tam promptam habeant spongiam qua ex albo vitæ æternæ infinitas animarum alioquin sanctissimarum myriadas expungant, ob ignorantiam earum rerum, quæ sufficiunt ad doctissimi cujusque industriam exercendam ut eas possint intelligere, aut si forte eas intelligant, adeo tennes ac subtiles sunt ut eas persuadere aliis pæne impossibile sit. Apolog. pro Confess. Remonstrant. p. 136.*

^s 1 Cor. v. 5.

teaching it^t. The doctrine may be censured as pernicious and detestable, and yet the patrons of it believed to be in a *salvable* state, on account of *invincible* ignorance, or prejudices, or some unhappy *warmth* of temper, or enthusiastic disorder of mind. It is no certain consequence, that we must therefore condemn the men to *hell fire*, or presume to erase them in our opinion out of the *Book of Life*, only because we pronounce their doctrines false, or wicked, or subversive of the Gospel^u.

Farther, merely renouncing, or refusing *communion* with some persons, may sometimes not amount to any *judicial* censure at all, but may be only taking due care of our own *salvation*, and conscientiously providing that we be not found partakers in other men's sins.

These things considered, it is plain that Episcopius's so tragical exclamations against denouncing an *anathema* upon the Socinian doctrines, or against *renouncing* communion with the men, were carried too far, and aggravated beyond reason. He might have condemned their doctrines as pernicious or dangerous; and he might have declared the doctrine of the *Trinity* highly *important*, or generally *necessary* to salvation, without passing any such *terrible* sentence upon particular men: which yet if he had, might reasonably have been construed as no more than a friendly warning, and a declaration of his sense.

2. I observe farther, that he was not very consistent with himself, either in his *doctrine* or his *conduct*, so far as concerns our present article. It appears from the public

^t Distinguendum judicium de *hominibus*, a judicio de *rebus ipsis*. De *hominibus*, præstat judicium cohibere, eosque Dei judicio relinquere, saltem nisi apertissimæ judicandi rationes adsint: de *rebus ipsis*, dogmatibus nempe, cultibus, regimine, ex Dei verbo judicare licet. *Alphons. Turretin. de Articulis Fundamentalibus*. p. 39.

^u Adest quippe, et in *vitiis*, atque *peccatis*, ita ut in *ignorantia* atque *erroribus*, duplex remedium: alterum ex parte nostra, nimirum *penitentia*, seu generalis seu particularis; alterum a parte Dei, puta ejus *misericordiu*; quorum ope ut *peccatis* gravissimis, ita et gravissimis *erroribus* venis locum dari posse, a nemine negari potest. *Alphons. Turretin. de Articulis Fundamentalibus*. p. 5.

Confession of himself and friends, and from what I have cited besides, that he held the doctrine of the Trinity, as commonly received, to be *true, certain, and clear*: and yet when he comes to justify himself in his refusing to condemn the Socinians, or their doctrines, there he falls to talking of the *obscurity* of those articles which the Socinians rejected, such as few besides the *learned* were able to *understand*, scarcely they, and fewer could believe*. Now one would be glad to know of what kind of things he is there speaking. If he intends his reflection upon the *appendages* to the main doctrine, or upon *scholastic subtilties*, (some true and some false,) those were not the things, or however not the *only* things, which any one could blame the Socinians for rejecting; so that this kind of excuse is entirely wide and foreign, and the making use of it is playing upon his readers: but if he means the *main doctrine* of the Trinity, for the rejecting whereof the Socinians highly deserve censure, why does he here represent it as *obscure*, or scarce credible, when at other times he admits it as a *clear* and a *certain* truth? I see no way of reconciling Episcopius to Episcopius in things so contradictory and inconsistent.

As to his *conduct*, there was a farther inconsistency in his condemning the *Calvinistical* doctrines of *absolute predestination* &c. as impiety and blasphemy, and that publicly, and yet refusing to do the like by the Socinian tenets, which certainly had no more claim to favour than the other. And how far was such a censure short of denouncing an *anathema* against the Calvinists for holding them; though at the same time he professed not to pronounce any *anathema* where God had not pronounced one? Where could he find any Scripture *anathema* against *absolute* predestination, (though I must own I dislike the doctrine as well as he,) or where could he find it said in *terms*, or by *plain consequence*, that it is *necessary* to salvation to believe it *conditional*, more than he might find

* See the last quotation from the Apology &c.

for the belief of the doctrine of the *Trinity* also, if he pleased? His *conduct* therefore appears, in that instance, to have been inconsistent, and not of a piece with itself. It was objected to the Remonstrants⁷, that they made *blasphemers* of the Calvinists, but easily passed over the Socinians without such censure: and all the excuse made for it was, that the *Calvinistical* doctrines were very *notorious*, and the Calvinists had been very severe, cruel, and inhuman in their way of supporting them². But surely the Socinian blasphemies were as *notorious* as any could be: and how could the *Calvinistical* doctrines (supposing them bad) be ever the worse, or amount to *blasphemy* or *impiety* ever the more, for the cruelty of their patrons and abettors? There is no just or consistent account to be given of this *unequal* conduct, except it be this; that blasphemies of *adversaries* (supposing them such) are real *blasphemies*, and deserve an *anathema*; but blasphemies of *friends*, or of brethren in affliction, are innocent, and deserve no *anathema* at all. When the Remonstrants have said all they can, they will not be able to persuade the Christian world that those *Calvinistical* doctrines (though I take them to be wrong) are worse than the Socinian;

⁷ Secundum membrum est, quod Remonstrantes, cum in declaratione sententiam suam de *prædestinatione* et articulis ei annexis declarent, doctrinam Ecclesiarum *Reformatarum* non modo *ut* *Arriana* rejiciant, sed eam quoque *impietatis* ac *blasphemie* condemnant; in hac tamen doctrina (sc. *Trinitatis*) *hæreticos* nullos, aut *hæretica* nulla dogmata improbant, damnant, aut *anathemate* percutiant. *Vid. Apolog. pro Confess. Remonstr.* p. 135.

² Nec enim mirum est Remonstrantes doctrinam istam Calvinisticam rejecisse passim in sua *declaratione*, et quæ ex ea consequuntur, *impietates* et *blasphemias* damnasse ex professo, a cæteris autem ex professo damnandis abstinuisse. Istud ut facerent, gravissimas causas habebant: nam sententia ista *hæretica* Calvini jam *nota* erat, vel pueris a furno et lacu redeuntibus: patroni ejus non damnaverant tantum *contrariam veritatem*, sed etiam *intolerabilem* ecclesiis suis judicaverant; professores exautoraverant &c.—Istam sententiam ut coloribus suis ad vivum depingerent (Remonstrantes) necessarium erat; idque eo magis quod eam, prout jacet, *pestem* credant, et *venenum* religionis omnis, cum qua forte *hæresis* nulla alia comparari mereatur; et tamen nihilominus eam, ut fundamentum et basin religionis pene totius Christianæ statui et propugnari videant. *Apolog. pro Confess.* p. 135. 136.

or that a charge of horrid *impiety, blasphemy, pest, poison, and heresy*, is justifiable in one case, and not in the other : so that upon the whole, it might be very easy to retort upon the Remonstrants their own tragical exclamations against denouncing an *anathema* : for let them but have the direction of it, and they discover no great aversion to it upon *weighty occasions*, as to them appear ; and in doctrines which they judge to be of great *importance*, they could be very smart and severe in their *censures*.

3. But the most material thing of all is, to examine Episcopius's rule for determining *necessaries*, which seems to be very fallacious. He would have a thing declared *necessary* in Scripture, either *expressly*, or by plain *consequence*. Here I know not what he would call a *plain consequence* : otherwise indeed, the rule may be very just. I take it, if the *truth* of a doctrine be fully and plainly taught in *Scripture*, and it appears from the nature and quality of the doctrine itself, that it is *important*, and that much depends upon it, that then Scripture has by *plain consequence* declared the *necessity* of believing such doctrine, by declaring its *truth*. If the rule be thus interpreted, then by the same rule the doctrine of the *Trinity* is important in a *Scripture view*, and ought to be reckoned among the *necessaries*. By Episcopius's own account of it, (as before observed,) it is *true*, it is *certain*, it is *clear*, as proved from Scripture ; and by many arguments recounted in the last chapter, it has been shown that it influences our *worship*, and bears a considerable part in what concerns the *Christian life* : therefore Scripture, in making known this doctrine, has by *plain consequence* taught us the *necessity* of believing it, and the *danger* of rejecting it. If men have the use of their rational faculties, and are able to argue and infer, they need not be *expressly* told that such a doctrine as that is, is *important* and *weighty*, and *worth* the contending for : let but Scripture once ascertain its *truth*, and every man's common sense will supply the rest.

When St. Paul was minded to convince the Corinthians

of the *necessity* of believing the *resurrection* of the dead, he thought it sufficient to show the connection which that doctrine had with *Christianity* itself; to intimate, that their other *faith was vain* without that, and all *preaching vain*^a; and that the denying that doctrine was, in effect, denying the whole Christian religion. Therefore that doctrine was *necessary* in the highest degree, as common sense must conclude: the very nature of the doctrine, and its connection with the whole frame and body of revealed religion declared it. The like I say of the doctrine of the Trinity; not that it is necessary in the same *degree* with the doctrine of the resurrection, but in *proportion*, while much depends upon it, though not so much as does upon the other. Indeed neither of them are so *necessary* but that *natural religion* might subsist without them, upon a belief of the *immortality* of the soul^b: but both are very highly necessary in a Christian light, and in a Scripture view, as both, in their several ways and degrees, support the fabric of Christianity, and the body of revealed religion. If a *right knowledge of God*, if *dispositions* suitable to the *heavenly state* we expect, if the regulation and specification of our *worship*, if the due and proper force of *Gospel motives*, if just ideas of the economy of man's *redemption and salvation*, and of the doctrine of *grace*; if these and other the like momentous concerns hang upon the true notion of the ever blessed Trinity, can we after that want any particular *text* or *texts*, to

^a 1 Cor. xv. 14, 17.

^b Some very learned men have been of opinion that the same persons who in that time denied the *resurrection*, denied also any future state; which they infer from some reasonings which St. Paul made use of against them. (Vitringa. Observ. Sacr. lib. iv. c. ix. p. 924. Buddeus, Eccl. Apostol. p. 299.) But I much question whether they argue justly on that head, or whether St. Paul reasoned upon their *hypothesis*, or upon some other principles. It seems to me, that all St. Paul's reasonings in that chapter may be accounted for upon this *postulatum*, that if there be no *resurrection*, the *separate soul*, being under the *sentence* and dominion of death, cannot emerge and rise up to life and happiness, but must inevitably *perish* under such state of *punishment*, having no deliverer. But I offer this only as a conjecture, appearing to me not improbable.

declare to us the *necessity* of our believing it? Not but that particular texts may be found which are explicit enough upon that head, as I may show hereafter: but in the mean while, I observe, that our cause does not need that additional strength, does not depend upon it.

Besides, I would remark by the way, that a distinction might be properly enough made between a necessity of *believing* a Scripture doctrine, and a necessity of *not denying*, or *not opposing* it: for certainly, a man may be under a stricter obligation *not to deny or oppose* a Scripture verity, than positively to *believe* it; and it is a greater sin, publicly to *deny* and *oppose* a sacred truth, than it is merely not to admit it. Yet the Socinians, whom Episcopus was inclined to screen, did not only forbear giving assent to the doctrine, but they *dissented*, and publicly *opposed* it with all possible vigour; nay, and with more wiles and artifices than became plain honest men. Now I take it, that though an explicit knowledge or belief of many *inferior* Scripture truths is not ordinarily required, yet it may be required, and strictly too, not to *deny* or *oppose* even them, supposing them *plain*; because it is, in effect, denying the *veracity* of God, or the *inspiration* of Scripture. I know of no dispensation there is for *denying* and *opposing* any one plain *Scripture truth*, contriving artificial elusions for it, any more than there is for *disobeying* a plain *precept*, in like manner eluding it; nor how a *partial faith*, in such a case, is at all more justifiable than a *partial obedience*: for indeed *disbelief* is *disobedience*, as I observed above. But the observation is much stronger when we find that the truth *denied* and *opposed* is a very *material* truth, one that has much depending upon it, one that lies near the *foundation*. How Episcopus could own it to be a truth, and yet think it no crime, or none deserving a public censure, to *deny* and *oppose* it, is unaccountable. We do not want to have it said in Scripture, that it was *necessary* in particular, explicitly to *know* and *believe* it: but certainly, if it be a *truth* revealed by God, as he allows, and not of the

slightest kind neither, it was *necessary* not to *deny* or *oppose* it, and the man would deserve the *public censure* of the Church, that should presume so to do. Therefore the learned Episcopus has, in this instance, imposed a *false* rule of judging upon us, and such as he himself did not allow of in other cases. For how could he attempt to charge *impiety, blasphemy, and the worst of heresies* (as he pretends) upon the Calvinists? Was it by citing any Scripture texts which declare the *necessity* of believing the distinguishing doctrines on his side? No; but he endeavoured to show that the *Calvinian* doctrine remotely concluded in *impiety, blasphemy, heresy*; and that consideration he supposed sufficient to found his severe charge against the Calvinists upon; though in points more *perplexed* and *obscure*, and less agreed in among Christians ancient and modern, than the doctrine of the *Trinity*. So natural is it for men of the greatest pretended *moderation* to confine it chiefly to their own friends, or party, and to exclude their adversaries from the benefit of it. Faults of this kind will often happen on both sides, while men are men: and the foundation of all is, that men will not agree about *necessaries*, while they agree that there ought to be *unity* so far, and no farther. Many reconcilers have thought of various expedients, and different *degrees* of *latitude*: the worst that could be invented is *indifference* to all religions; which is like giving up an *inheritance* and consenting to *starve*, for the saving of trouble and contest about it. But I pass on.

4. A further fault I observed in the learned Episcopus was, that he extended the same fallacious rule to other doctrines of moment, beside this of the *Trinity*; and, as it seems, in order to contrive a shelter for his favourite Socinians. He denied the *necessity* of believing the *divine prescience*, as to future contingents^c, though at the same

^c Superest ut inquiramus, an ad salutem æternam consequendam, scitu credituque necessarium sit Deo *præscientiam talem* competere, adeo ut qui Deo eam competere aut negat, aut affirmare non audeat, salute æterna propterea excidat? In genere, nos id ad salutem scitu credituque necessarium esse

time he admitted the *truth* of the doctrine, in consideration of the *Scripture prophecies*^d. Indeed, as to the question taken in the precise terms as he has stated it, “whether it be strictly necessary to salvation to know “and believe it,” and “whether a man shall forfeit his “salvation for not believing, or not knowing it;” I say, in this precise view, it is hard to know how to answer, since it seems to proceed upon a wrong supposition of a certain quantity of *faith*, or of *explicit knowledge*, as necessary to the salvation of every person; about which we can determine nothing. But put the question, whether the doctrine be not highly *important*, and richly *worth contending for*, or whether the *impugners* of it be not *very much to blame*, deserving *public censure* here, and punishment hereafter, for such *pernicious* doctrine; and then the answer is easy and certain: it is a very *important* doctrine, and the denial of it, especially if *open* and obstinate, highly *criminal*. Episcopus himself allows, that it is *necessary to salvation to believe and know* that God *foresees* whatever he has *determined* to bring to pass; because God himself strongly insists upon it, as a mark of distinction, whereby he will be proved to be the true God, in *opposition* to all rival deities^e. But, with submission, may there not be thousands of illiterate Christians, who have not the *explicit* knowledge of that matter, or may never consider it? Why then is this more *necessary to salvation* (in that strict sense of the phrase) than the other? In

negamus. 1. Quia nullum necessitatis indicium, aut vestigium ejus in Scriptura reperire est, sive indicium illud dicatur esse *clarus textus*, sive *consequentia* per se evidens.—Qui contra affirmat, ei incumbit probatio. *Episcop. Institut.* lib. iv. c. 18. p. 302.

^d *Episcop.* *ibid.* c. 17. p. 299, &c.

* Quænam ista sint quæ de divina scientia, *omnibus ac singulis scitis crediturque sunt necessaria*? Tenemur scire ac credere, Deum scire ea omnia quæ a divino aliquo decreto suo dependent.—Ratio est, quia hanc scientiæ perfectionem Deus sibi tanto cum zelo adtribuit, et adtribui vult, ut per eam, et propter eam, se *discernat, discernique* velit, ab omnibus *demonibus*, gentiumque *Diis* atque *idolis*, tanquam *verum unicumque Deum*, qui *solus* idcirco summo honore, cultu, et obsequio dignus sit, uti videre est ex Isa. xli. 23. *Episcop. Institut.* lib. iv. c. 18. p. 303.

truth, neither of them are so, in that rigorous sense : but both are highly *important*, and, I conceive, *equally* so ; because one implies the other, and they stand or fall together. God must *foreknow* future *contingents*, if he forms decrees long beforehand about them. If he *decreed* and *foretold* long before, that Judas should be permitted *voluntarily* to betray Christ ; he must have *foreseen* likewise that Judas would *voluntarily* do it, and *how* he would do it. There is no accounting for numerous prophecies, without the supposition of God's *foreknowing* future contingents ; and since God makes this the distinguishing character of the *true God* ; it is in effect disowning the *truth* of *Scripture*, and *denying* the *true God*, to deny the *divine* prescience. How then can the Socinians be excused in that matter, especially considering how *presumptuous* they are in it, going upon this *proud* principle, that they are able to *search the Almighty to perfection*, or that nothing is to be believed but what they can *comprehend* ? Let but the *modus* of the divine knowledge be admitted as *inscrutable* to weak mortals, and then all difficulties are over with us at once : the *infinite* perfections of the divine Mind ought in this case to silence all objections. But if men will think too *meanly* of *God*, and too *highly* of *themselves*, and from thence proceed to teach such doctrines as undermine the *Scripture prophecies*, and the *divine* perfections, and sap the foundations both of *natural* and *revealed* religion ; can there be any just excuse made for such a wanton abuse of liberty, and such unwarrantable conduct in affairs of the last consequence to the *salvation* of mankind ? But enough hath been said to show, that Episcopius's famed rule for judging of

† Mr. Lobb, in few words, well represents the case as follows : “ From this notion of theirs, *revealed* religion receives a wound : for if God doth not know *future contingents*, how can he *foretell* them ? And if he cannot *foretell* them, of what use is the *prophetical* part of the holy Scriptures ? And if they must be rejected as *useless*, will not the Deists be abundantly gratified ? Or if it be yielded that God doth not *foreknow* future contingents, it will necessarily follow, that his knowledge is not *infinite*, and he cannot be *God*.” *Growth of Error*, p. 188.

necessaries is fallacious and wrong, and such as he himself did not proceed by in condemning the Calvinists; though he was disposed to make use of it for favouring the Socinians. The *importance* of any doctrine is not to be judged of merely from the *declarations* of Scripture concerning its *necessity*, but from the nature and quality of the doctrine itself, and the relation it bears to the other parts of *revealed* religion, and from the *mischiefs* likely to follow upon *opposing* it.

II. From Episcopius, the chief leader, I pass on to his kinsman and follower, the learned Limborch; of whose principles in this cause I shall treat the more briefly, because they are the same in the main with what have been mentioned under the preceding article. His acknowledgment of the *truth* of the common doctrine of the *Trinity* may be inferred from his admitting the common Confession of the Remonstrants, and from what he has asserted in his own works^g: wherein he sufficiently expresses the main doctrine, (if we are to judge him an honest man,) and proves it too, though not to advantage. It is true, he afterwards drops a suspicious expression^h, which requires a *candid* interpretation to make it bear; and he meanly talks of Petavius's ingenuously *confessing*ⁱ that some of the Ante-Nicene Fathers disowned the *coeternity* and *coequality* of the Son. He did not understand the subtilty of the Jesuit, nor consider that pro-

^g Restat jam ut explicemus, quisnam ille sit *Deus* cui *divinam* hanc naturam competere sacræ literæ docent; *Pater* nimirum et *Filius* et *Spiritus Sanctus*. *Limborch. Theol. Christ.* lib. ii. c. xvii. p. 97. Tribus hæc tribuntur *divinæ* perfectiones: unde concludimus *Deitatem* tribus hæc esse communem. (*Ibid.* p. 98.) Ea de *Jesu Christo* Filio Dei enuntiantur, ex quibus liquet ipsum per veram, attamen arcanam et ineffabilem generationem, Filium Dei extitisse—ante omnia sæcula, et per eam naturæ *divinæ* consortem fuisse, p. 99. Ex hisce colligimus, *essentiam divinam* et Filio et Spiritui Sancto esse communem, p. 102.

^h Sed et est quædam supereminentia Patris respectu Filii, et Patris ac Filii respectu Spiritus Sancti, ratione *dignitatis* et *potestatis*: dignius aiquidem est generare quam generari, spirare quam spirari, p. 102.

ⁱ Sufficiat hic nobis ingenua Dionysii Petavii, doctoris inter Jesuitas celeberrimi ac doctissimi. *Confessio*, &c. p. 102.

bably it was not so much an *ingenuous confession* of that great man, as a *disingenuous misrepresentation* of his to serve the interest of the *modern Church of Rome*^k. His pretences have been abundantly confuted by Bishop Bull, and several other learned hands.

However, as I said, Limborch has sufficiently expressed the main doctrine, and asserted its *truth*: we are next to observe what he thought of the *necessity* of believing it, or of the *importance* of it. He begins with declaring his scruples against asserting the *necessity* of believing the *eternal filiation* and *Divinity* of God the Son^l, while he admits the *truth*. He conceives it not so necessary, as the owning *Jesus* to be the *Messiah*. Supposing it be not, yet it may be *necessary* notwithstanding. But if it can be proved that the *Messiah* predicted in the Old Testament, is there described under such characters as can belong only to *God*, (as certainly it may,) then it will be as necessary to believe him to be *God*, as to believe him to be the *Messiah*, because he cannot be the *Messiah*, unless he be also *God*^m. However, as I before said, admitting that one of these doctrines is more *necessary* or more *important* than the other, (though they are in just consequence inseparable,) yet both may be *fundamentals* notwithstanding. He goes on to speak of the *obscurity* of the doctrine, which is abusing it; because though the thing is *mysterious*, and the *manner* obscure, yet the main doctrine is as *clear* as can be desired, as clear as any doctrines concerning the *divine* nature or attributes; clear in the *general*, clear so far as we are bound to *believe*. See above. He was

^k See preface to my Second Defence, vol. iii. Bull. Proem. sect. viii. p. 6. Grab. Præfat. ad Bulli Opp. Nelson's Life of Bull, p. 287.

^l Credimus nos, alibi doceri Personam hanc esse Filium Dei respectu *naturæ divinæ* ac filiationis *eternæ*.—Quandiu nobis ea Scripturæ loca non occurrunt quibus *naturæ divinæ* cum humana unio perinde *fidei salutaris* objectum *necessarium* statuitur atque officium *Christi de Jesu* credendum est, nos, licet *veritatem* illam amplectamur, eam tamen ut *creditum ad salutem necessarium* definire non audemus. *Limborch*, lib. v. cap. 9. p. 413.

^m Vid. Bull. Judic. Eccl. Cathol. cap. vii. sect. 5. and Second Letter to Mr. Nation, by P. C. p. 9.

aware of this answer; and therefore he endeavours next to evade the force of it. He owns the plea, with respect to some other fundamental doctrines, that the *main substance* of them may be *clear*, while the *circumstantials* only are obscure: and he instances in that of the *resurrection of the dead*, which he says is *clear*, and *necessary* to be believed; but whether the bodies will be *numerically the same*, he thinks is not clear, nor a *necessary* article of faith. This is a point which I need not here debate; we may admit the instance for argument sake, and now let us apply it, and see how far the same reasoning will bear. We receive the doctrine of the resurrection, considered in a *general* undeterminate view; we define not the precise *manner*; and we admit the eternal *Divinity* of God the Son, and the union of all three in one Godhead, not defining the *manner* of the union or distinction: so far the cases appear parallel: only indeed the resurrection is a matter that falls under *imagination*, the other belongs only to pure *intellect*. But now comes on the stress of the question: he asserts, that the *obscurity* lies not in the *circumstantials* of the doctrine of the Trinity, but in the very *substance* of it. That we deny; and Episcopius himself denied it, (unless he greatly prevaricated) as observed above. And how will the assertion be proved? The Professor attempts it, by throwing our main doctrine into *scholastic terms*^a, that so it may instantly carry the face of *obscurity* in the very *words*: this is not dealing fairly with us. He does not choose to express it so himself in other places, where he admits the *verity* of the doctrine, and where he declares his own faith; neither did Episcopius, or the common Confession of the Remonstrants so express it. Why then must they choose one way of expression for declaring the

^a Alia vero est ratio eorum dogmatum quæ non in *circumstantiis* quibusdam, sed in *seipsis* suaque substantia, *obscuritatem* involvunt: quale est dogma de SS. Trinitate, quod tres distinctæ Personæ, una generans, altera genita, tertia spirata sint *unica numero essentia*——. Quod statim primo suo conceptu varias involvit difficultates quæ a dogmate ipso separari nullatenus possint. *Limborch*, lib. v. cap. 9. p. 414.

truth of the doctrine, and another for rejecting the *necessity* of it, except it be to serve a turn? The learned Professor, instead of saying *one Jehovah*, or *one God*, or *one Godhead*, here chooses the phrase of *one numerical essence*: which is a late scholastic phrase, and faulty more ways than one: first, because the terms themselves are *technical terms*, and no way necessary to the Christian faith; and next, because they carry an *equivocation* in them; and the proposition can neither be admitted nor rejected, till it be carefully *distinguished*. *Numerical essence* in a Sabellian sense is heresy: in another sense, it is a *truth* darkly expressed. That the Persons are *one God*, *one Jehovah*, is of the *substance* of the doctrine; but that they should be denominated *one numerical essence*, is not. For, first, it is a question, whether the divine Unity ought to be brought under our distinctions about *numerical* and *specific*, contrived for expressing things *finite*: and if it should, it is still another question, in what precise sense of the word *numerical* (which is an equivocal term) the proposition can be allowed. Both these questions are *circumstantial*, and furnishing matter for strife about *words* and *names*, not at all affecting the main thing^o: and the *obscurity* here complained of lies not in the doctrine itself, but in the *unfair* manner of expressing it, to give some colour for the complaint: if any person, instead of such a plain expression, as *God's presence every where*, should call it, *the infinite expansion or diffusion of the divine essence*, it would be unfair and wrong in two views; first, as the terms are *scholastic*, when plainer words would better serve the purposes of truth; and next, as it is running the reader into an obscure speculation about *expansion*, what it means, and in what sense it may be admitted. Any doctrines whatever may thus be involved in *obscurities*, by clothing them in dark and *equivocal* terms, or by so contriving them as to bring in something of the *modus* into the main doctrine, when it ought to be entirely left

^o See my Second Defence, vol. iii. Qu. xxiii. p. 411, &c.

out, either as unknown, or as not material^p. I am sensible that the phrase of *numerical essence* has long obtained in the Schools, and is capable of a good sense: but yet *essence of essence* (ever since that term came in) was always Catholic doctrine, as *God of God*; and *numerical essence*, a more modern phrase, must be so explained as to agree with the other, and to exclude a Sabellian sense. Otherwise it is no doctrine of ours, but an ancient *heresy*. But enough has been said to show, that the learned Limborch has used a little too much *art*, in representing our doctrine as *obscure*, only by the clouds raised from an *obscure* expression. The doctrine itself is otherwise *clear* enough, as I have before manifested at large: and every plain Christian will understand as clearly what he means when he says, the “three divine Persons are one God,” as when he says, there will be “a resurrection of the dead^q.” Both the expressions are large and indefinite, wrapped up in *generals*; not descending to the *minute* circumstances belonging to this and that, but abstracting from them, and leaving them undetermined.

I meet with nothing more in Limborch deserving any particular answer. He has indeed some additional considerations in the same place, but such as amount only to mere *assertions* without proofs, *viz.* that it is sufficient to believe in *Jesus* as the *Messiah*, and that our faith respects the *office*, not the *Person*; that it is enough to consider him as *Mediator*, and the like; all precarious assertions taking for granted the matter in question, not to mention that the ancient and true notion of Christ as *Mediator* implies his *Divinity*, and supposes him to be both truly *God*

^p Sæpe *res ipsa* fundamentalis esse potest, *modus* vero rei, et *circumstantiæ* minime fundamentales. Etenim cum *res ipsa* tantum in *genere* revelata est, et tanquam *necessaria* a Deo imposita, tunc certe *res ipsa* tantum pro fundamento habenda est, non vero *modus* et *circumstantiæ* quæ pari evidentia, aut cum simili necessitatis caractere revelata non sunt. Et re vera, paucissimæ sunt *res*, præsertim in *divinis*, quarum *modus* et *circumstantias* perfecte noscamus. *Alphons. Turret. de Fundament.* p. 20.

^q Lib. v. cap. 9. p. 414.

and truly *man*^r. Strange that a person of his great abilities could persuade himself, that the believing in Christ as to his several offices of *Prophet*, *Priest*, and *King*, should be necessary^s, and yet that believing in him as a *divine* Prophet, a *divine* Priest, and a *divine* King, (though the fact be *true* that he is so,) should be of little or no significance. One might as easily believe, that the *soul* is of no consideration to the body, as that our Lord's *Divinity*, which runs through all his offices, and must enliven and invigorate every part, should be of no consideration, or slight, to a *Christian's faith* in these offices. But this great man, as well as his greater predecessor, had his *prejudices*; and both of them had imbibed a very false notion of the ancient churches, as if they had not constantly insisted upon the *necessity* of believing the doctrine of the Trinity, or had not condemned the contrary opinions as *heretical*. That was Episcopius's firm persuasion, and he insisted much upon it^t, having taken up the opinion too hastily from misrepresentations made of the *Fathers*, by some moderns, not being himself acquainted, to any degree of perfection, with that kind of learning^u. And the like may be justly suspected of Limborch also, who trusted to Petavius in that matter, as I have already intimated. Had their surmise in that particular been just, I could not so much have blamed them for the rest. For to make any thing *necessary* at this time of day, which *anciently* was not so, or to conceive that the most pure and *primitive* churches failed in *necessaries*, is too bold and shocking a thought for any candid considerate man to entertain. But both Episcopius and his disciple were much *deceived* in that affair, as hath been 'abundantly shown by Bishop Bull; and as I shall endeavour also to make plain to the English

^r See my Second Defence, vol. iii. Qu. xvi. p. 347.

^s Cum itaque objectum fidei Christianæ proprie respiciat munera Christi, eorum fides ac professio etiam *necessaria est*. *Limb.* lib. v. cap. 9. p. 415.

^t Episcop. Inst. lib. iv. cap. 34. p. 339, 340. Respons. ad Specim. Calum. p. 295.

^u Vid. Bull. Præmonit. ad Lector. de necessitat. credend.

reader before I have done. And then it will the more easily be admitted, that the *necessity* of the doctrine is sufficiently inculcated in Scripture, when it appears that the ancient churches collected such *necessity* from the same Scripture.

I have not yet mentioned any particular texts declaring such *necessity*, nor do I think it needful, because the *truth* of *such* a doctrine infers its *necessity* to as many as the doctrine is revealed to. But yet I may observe, that the institution of baptism in the name of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, carries with it a very sensible and affecting argument of the *importance* of the doctrine. It is indeed, when considered in all its views, a strong proof of the *truth* of the doctrine, as might be shown at large, and often has been^x: but supposing the *truth* proved sufficiently from *other* texts, then there cannot be a more convincing argument of the *importance* of it than this; that our blessed Lord himself has recommended it as the prime and leading doctrine, without the explicit mention whereof a man cannot be made a Christian; that he has conveyed it to us in that solemn form, that most distinguished manner to every disciple of Christ, as the first thing proper for him to be acquainted with, deserving and requiring his most early thoughts and care, and also his constant and tenderest devotion ever after. On this foundation was the Church itself erected, and stands to this day. What stronger or more effectual method could have been devised to proclaim the *necessity* and high *importance* of this great article? A consideration which may receive yet farther *light* and *strength*, by looking into antiquity, and there observing what a stress was laid upon the *interrogatories* in baptism, and how this article made up the principal part, if not the *whole* of the first Creed, and what

^x See my Sermons at St. Paul's, Serm. viii. vol. ii. p. 173, &c. Bishop Stillingfleet's Vindication of the Trinity, p. 177, &c. 299, &c. Vitringa, Observat. Sacr. tom. ii. cap. 22. p. 813—826. Dr. Trapp's Lecture Sermon, p. 100—104. Mr. Abraham Taylor's True Script. Doct. p. 91, &c. to which may be added, Basil, de Spiritu Sancto, cap. ix.—xv. xxvii.

particular care was taken to instruct the candidates in this important doctrine previously to baptism: but what relates to *antiquity* will more properly come in under a distinct chapter designed for that purpose. I forbear likewise to insist upon another Scripture argument of great force, which St. John's writings afford me; because that also may more conveniently be reserved for another place in these papers.

I have now run through the three several heads of debate, which I undertook; showing in so many distinct chapters, that the received doctrine of the Trinity is both *clear* and *practical*, and sufficiently inculcated in Scripture to be esteemed an article of high *importance*, an *essential* of Christianity, a *fundamental* doctrine of the Gospel, diffusing itself through the whole of our religion, and being, as it were, the very life and spirit of it. It remains now to be inquired, how we ought to behave towards those who openly reject or impugn it, or take part with them that do.

CHAP. IV.

Showing, that Communion ought not to be held with men that openly reject the fundamental Doctrines of Christianity, and persist in so doing.

THIS may be argued two ways; first, from express Scripture texts; and next, from the very *nature* and *reason* of the thing considered upon Scripture principles.

1. I begin with Scripture texts. St. Paul's instructions to the Romans in such cases is: "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them: for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." The offenders here pointed at,

† Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

were most probably ^z the Judaizing false teachers, those that preach up circumcision and the observance of the law as *necessary* to salvation ; a doctrine subversive of the grace of the Gospel, as observed above. The Apostle therefore exhorts his Christian converts to *mark* them, that is, to *beware* of them, in order to *avoid* them, and to preserve themselves from the infection of their pernicious doctrine. And as he wrote by the *Spirit* of God, and had the gift of *discerning* the *spirits* of men, he could tell his converts, with a certain and well grounded assurance, the insides of the men ; that they were men of carnal minds and profligate consciences, using fair and plausible speeches to beguile others, for their *own* humour, or pleasure, or interest, or vanity. Such indeed is the *general* character of *heresiarchs* of all kinds : but yet without very clear and sufficient grounds appearing in overt acts, men ought not to take upon them the liberty of an Apostle, in pronouncing upon the *inward motives* which *heretics* are led by : it is sufficient to pass sentence upon the quality of the doctrine, and to condemn it as subversive of the Gospel, (if it really be so,) and to renounce *communion* with its open favourers and abettors ; so much at least is manifestly implied in the advice given to *avoid* them, or turn from them. Receive them not as *ministers of Christ*, nor own them as *brethren* : for they *serve not the Lord Jesus Christ* ; but their fair speeches and false colourings are fitted to *deceive* unwary souls. Therefore avoid them, shun them, discountenance them, and that *openly* : for so *they which are approved, will be made manifest*^a, and not otherwise.

The same Apostle pointing to the same *heretics* elsewhere says, “ There be some that trouble you, and would “ pervert [subvert] the Gospel of Christ. But though we, or “ an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you

^z See Grotius, and Whitby, and Wolfius, upon the place : and Vitringa, Observat. Sacr. lib. iv. cap. 9. Buddæi Eccles. Apostol. p. 121.

^a 1 Cor. xi. 19.

“than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed^b.” How strongly here does the Apostle guard against admitting *new* doctrines, (subversive of the old,) through a common weakness incident to mankind, having men’s *persons in admiration*, on account of their parts or learning, or their appearing goodness, sanctity, sobriety. Though “we or an angel from heaven” should presume to do any such wicked thing, “let him be accursed;” words very expressive and poignant, in order to correct the *weakness* before mentioned; and another also near akin to it, the natural fondness many have for *novelties*. And I may further observe, that in such cases we have no concern at all with the *virtues* or *good qualities* of false teachers, be they ever so *real* or *great*: if they *corrupt* the *faith* in any gross instance, that is reason sufficient for *refusing* communion with them, though they were otherwise bright as *angels*. A consideration worth the noting, for the obviating some popular pretences on this head. I need not here enter into the dispute, whether the words ἀνάθεμα ἔστω amount to a solemn *curse*, or are only a form of *excommunication*^c. If we take it in the first and most rigorous sense, it seems proper only to an *Apostle* or *Prophet*, thus solemnly to *curse* or *bless* in the name of the Lord. But as the Christian Church afterwards^d often used the same form in their *excommunications*, the milder sense appears most probable. However that be, this solemn sentence of the Apostle amounts at least to a strict injunction or warning to all Christians, that they should not communicate with persons who corrupt the *faith*, (either by adding to it, or taking from it,) in any gross manner, which may be justly interpreted a *subversion* of the Gospel of Christ. Such at-

^b Gal. i. 7, 8, 9.

^c See Buddæus, Eccles. Apostol. p. 808, 809.

^d See Suicer. Thesaurus in voc. ἀνάθεμα. Bingham’s Antiq. of the Christian Church, lib. xvi. cap. 2, 8, 16, 17.

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tempts are to be held in the utmost abhorrence, and the authors of them shunned as seducers and false Apostles. It cannot well be supposed, that less than this is implied in the words of the Apostle.

He goes on to say, speaking of the same persons in the same Epistle, "he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be ^e." "I would they were even cut off that trouble you ^f." Which last words, I understand, with many judicious interpreters, of *excommunication*; and it is confirmed by what is said in the same place, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump ^g;" intimating the reason why the Apostle wished to have those false teachers *cut off* from the communion of Christians, *viz.* to prevent the contagion spreading farther. I am aware, that some very learned men ^h dislike the interpretation I have mentioned, but upon a very slender reason, as to me appears. They think the Apostle would not have *wished* for it only, but would have *commanded* it in virtue of his *apostolical* authority. It is true, he might have done it: but who knows for how many, or for what *prudential* reasons, he might forbear for a time, and be content at that juncture only to throw out a wish, in order to prepare the Galatians for it, and to incline them by slow and gentle methods to concur the more readily with it, when it should be absolutely necessary. It is not to be presumed, that *excommunication*, or a formal renouncing of communion, are things to be precipitated at all adventures, or that there may not often be good reasons for delay, that so an affair of the highest consequence may be conducted with the utmost prudence. I am of opinion, that besides the mischievous nature of the heresy itself, several other circumstances of time, place, and persons, ought to have their weight in consultations relating to Church discipline upon offenders. But I pass on.

^e Gal. v. 10. ^f Gal. v. 12.

^g Gal. v. 9. compare 1 Cor. v. 6, 7.

^h Elsner in loc. p. 196. *Buddæus, Eccles. Apostol. p. 808. Wolfius, Curæ Philolog. et Crit. vol. ii. p. 772.*

St. Paul gives advice to Timothy, in the words here following; "These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, &c.—from such withdraw thyselfⁱ." Perhaps the rendering and the sense would run better thus: ^k*If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, if he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doating about questions, &c. from such withdraw thyself.* It is a disputable point, what particular sect or set of false teachers the Apostle here refers to, whether Judaizers or Gnostics, or others distinct from both. But one thing is plain, which is sufficient to our present purpose, that the Apostle exhorts Timothy to *withdraw* from them, and that in order either to discountenance their false doctrines, or to preserve himself and others from receiving contagion by them. To the same purpose is what the Apostle again says to Timothy:

"Shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some^l." The heads and patrons of the heresy here mentioned, the Apostle had *excommunicated* before, delivering them over unto *Satan*, to stop their blaspheming^m. They appear to have been persons who believed the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but misinterpreted them, *allegorizing* away the doctrine of the *resurrection*, resolving it all into figure and metaphorⁿ. The *delivering over unto Satan* seems to have been a form of ex-

ⁱ 1 Tim. vi. 2—5.

^k Vid. Vitringa, *Observat. Sacr.* tom. i. p. 220.

^l 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 18. ^m 1 Tim. i. 20.

ⁿ Vid. Vitringa, *Observ. Sacr.* lib. iv. cap. 9. p. 925. *Buddæus Eccles. Apostol.* p. 300.

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communication, declaring the person reduced to the state of an *heathen*: and in the *apostolical* age, it was accompanied with *supernatural* or miraculous effects upon the bodies of the persons so delivered^o: though it may be supposed that such effects might last beyond the apostolic age, because other *miraculous* gifts certainly did so. I am well aware of the disputes which have been among persons of the best learning^p, about the precise meaning of the phrase, whether it signified *excommunication*, or an appendage to it. I have chosen that interpretation which appears most probable^q. I must own, there is a notion which appears to run through the debates of several learned men on this head, and which I cannot well understand. They seem to take it for granted, that excommunication is a *punishment of the soul*. I easily conceive it to be a *spiritual* punishment, as not being a *corporal* one, and as inflicted by a *spiritual*, that is, ecclesiastical authority: but how it is properly a punishment of the *soul*, I apprehend not. Its design is *salutary*, and the effect also often *salutary*; so that it is rather *medicinal* than *penal*, with respect to the *soul*: but this by the way only. It would be too large a digression here, to consider that point in such a manner as it deserves to be considered.

I go on to other texts, and shall take one by the way, which though not precisely to the point I am upon, yet is not altogether foreign. “There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake—rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith^r.” We may here observe the ardent zeal of the Apostle against false teachers,

^o 1 Cor. v. 5. see commentators.

^p A summary account of them may be seen in Wolfius’s *Curæ Philolog. et Crit. ad 1 Cor. v. 5.* p. 367. or in Bingham’s *Eccles. Antiq. b. xvi. cap. 2. sect. 15.*

^q See Bishop Potter’s *Church Government*, p. 371, &c. Dr. Rogers’s *Review of a Discourse of the Visible* &c. p. 392.

^r Tit. i. 10, 11, 13.

who corrupted the *faith*, and how great a stress he lays upon being *sound* in principles. But he does not give orders for excommunicating those *deceivers* directly, but to *admonish* them first, and that with some sharpness, in order to shame them, and silence them, and bring them back to the true faith. From all which one may collect these following considerations, which may be of some use to us: 1. That religion is not a *personal* thing, which every man may new model or alter for himself, without *rebuke* from his fellow *Christians*, or from the governors of the Church. It is the joint patrimony of the whole community, and every man more or less is accountable to his neighbour for any *waste* made in it. It is the *common concern*, and every one in his station and degree must give a helping hand to preserve it in its native purity. 2. That the teaching and propagating of *false* doctrines may subvert *whole houses*, and do a great deal of mischief: so that *truth* is not always a gainer by unrestrained liberties of that kind. 3. That *sharp* rebukes are very proper in such cases, and are no breaches of charity, but the truest instances of brotherly affection and love. 4. That *admonitions* and *inrepatations* should first be tried, even in case of great corruption in doctrine, rather than come to extremities at once: a rule expressly taught us in what I am next going to cite.

“A man that is an heretic, after the first and second “admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is “subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” This text will deserve a more particular examination, containing much in it directly belonging to the point in hand. Wherefore I shall handle the several parts of it the more distinctly. 1. “A man that is an heretic.” Here the first question is, who, or what is an *heretic*? To which I answer in the general, not every one that mistakes in judgment, though in matters of great *importance*, in points *fundamental*, but he that openly *espouses* such fundamen-

* Tit. iii. 10, 11.

tal error. That I take to be the true and full notion of an *heretic*, according to the Scripture idea of it. Dr. Whitby adds to the definition, the espousing it “out of disgust, pride, envy, or some worldly principle^s,” and “against his conscience^t.” Indeed that may generally be the case; but that those several particulars are necessary to the definition of *heretic* is not to be allowed him by any means, for the reasons here following.

1. By that rule, there would be no certain knowing, in most cases, who is an *heretic*, or who not, since there is no looking into the *heart*: and how then could we at all observe the Scripture rule of *avoiding* or *rejecting* heretics?

2. There is as much *danger*, or *more*, when a blind *enthusiast*, or any person of *invincible* ignorance or prejudice, espouses *false* doctrines, and *corrupts* the faith, as when evil-minded men do the same thing out of *envy*, *pride*, &c. and *against* their own *consciences*: and what shall be done in such cases? The way certainly is, to censure the doctrine as *heresy*, and to do all that *prudence* and *charity* prescribes for the preventing such well meaning, but mad teachers, from seducing the flock of Christ. It is not possible for men accurately to distinguish one case from the other; and therefore one general rule must serve for both. God will distinguish at the last day. In the mean time, all proper care must be taken to guard against the threatening mischief. For the *poison* of the doctrine, by whomsoever spread, or upon whatsoever principle, is just the same; only, if it comes from a man otherwise honest, pious, sober, &c. it is likely to insinuate itself deeper, and spread the wider. I say then, *heresy* lies in *espousing pernicious doctrines*: that we can judge of, and by that rule, can understand how to proceed. The other way involves all in darkness, and leaves a matter of the greatest consequence to the utmost uncertainty. But let us examine what the learned author

^s Whitby on Gal. v. 19.

^t Whitby on Tit. iii. 10.

before mentioned had to plead in behalf of his notion. The strength of all lies chiefly in the word *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, *self-condemned*, here used by the *Apostle*; as if no man could be an *heretic* that is not *self-condemned*, or does not go against his own *judgment* and *conscience*. But I observe, that the *Apostle* directs *Titus* to admonish a *heretic* once and again. It is supposed, that *Titus* might know a *heretic*, viz. by his espousing some doctrine subversive of the *Gospel*: for how could it be certainly known, whether the man *believed himself*, or taught *contrary* to his own *judgment*? If after being twice *admonished* for teaching such pernicious doctrine, he should still persist, then he was to be looked upon as *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, *self-condemned*. It could no longer be pure *ignorance* or *thoughtlessness*, after two several warnings, but must now be looked upon as matter of his own choice or election^u, as mere *wilfulness* and *obstinacy* for him to persist in opposition to the *truth*. When I say against the *truth*, I suppose that to have been a clear case to the admonisher before the *first admonition*, otherwise there had not been room for admonition at all. Admonish a man that is an *heretic*; not a man that is really no heretic, which would be contumelious and injurious. And if he persists after two admonitions, then look upon him as *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, *self-condemned*, and *reject* him. It is plain enough from the whole tenor of this passage, that *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, whatever it means, does not belong to the definition of an *heretic* as such, but to that of an *admonished* and still *obstinate* heretic. He is supposed a *heretic* before, and therefore was to be *admonished* once; if need should be, again: and then, if he persisted, he was to be looked upon as *desperate* and incorrigible; and therefore to be *rejected* utterly^x. There is indeed something elliptical in

^u Ideo et sibi damnatum dixit *hæreticum*, quia et in quo damnatur sibi elegit. *Tertul. de Præscript. Hæret.* cap. 6.

^x Quare autem post primam et secundam correptionem *devitandus* sit, reddidit causas, dicens: quod *subversus est ejusmodi, et peccat, quum sit a semetipso damnatus*. Qui enim semel bisque correptus, audito errore suo,

the sentence : *knowing that he that is such* ; as much as to say, knowing that he who continues such *after two admonitions*, is now *without excuse* , and, as it were, passes sentence upon *himself*, either as voluntarily *cutting himself off* from the Church, by an open revolt ^z, or as rendering himself *incapable* of the privileges and blessings that belong to it, by renouncing its *faith* ; which, in a just construction, is *judging*, or declaring himself *unworthy* ^a of the blessings tendered. I have been the longer in explaining this text, because the real meaning and purport of it has been frequently misunderstood, or misrepresented. Now I return to Dr. Whitby.

He pleads, “ that the Apostle saith not to Titus, Do thou *convince* or inform him of his *error*, but, Do thou *admonish* him of his fault : which shows, that the crime lay not in his *head* or his *mistaken judgment*, (for that can never be corrected by *admonition*, but only by *instruction*,) but that it lay in the irregularity of his *affections*, and the perverseness of his will ^b.” But what if the fault lay in *heart* and *head* both, as indeed all *faults* do ? *Omnis peccans ignorat*, is a true maxim. There is some error always in *judgment*, before there is an error in *practice* ; for evil, *as evil*, cannot be chosen. The fault therefore of an *heretic*, really such, is, that some corrupt

non vult corrigi, errare existimat corrigentem : et e contrario se ad pugnas et jurgia verborum parans, cum vult *lucrifacere* a quo docetur. *Hieron.* in loc. vol. iv. p. 439.

^z Ἀνασφάλγητος. See Suicer. Thesaur. in ἀντροπαλίγητος.

^a Hic enim *reus sibi* erit, qui non ab Episcopo ejectus, sed sponte de Ecclesia profugus, et hæretica præsumptione a *semetipso* damnatus. *Cypr. Epis.* lxi. p. 182. edit. Oxon.

Propterea vero a *semetipso* dicitur esse *damnatus* ; quia fornicator, adulter, homicida, et cætera vitia per sacerdotes de Ecclesia propelluntur : *hæretici* autem in *semetipso*s sententiam ferunt, suo arbitrio de Ecclesia recedentes : quæ recessio, propriæ conscientiæ videtur esse damnatio. *Hieronym.* in loc. p. 439. Compare Hammond upon the text.

^a See Acts xiii. 46. so Irenæus—est a *semetipso* damnatus, resistens et repugnans salutis suæ quod faciunt omnes hæretici. *Iren. adver. Hæ.* lib. iii. c. 1. p. 174. Massuet.

^b Whitby on Tit. iii. 10.

affection (I except the case of *invincible* infirmity) misleads him first to pass a *rash* precipitate judgment; and next to *espouse* that judgment openly. And lastly, (if he proceeds so far,) to *persist* in it against all advices or admonitions to the contrary. The *heart* perverts the *head*; and both conspire in the same false judgment and conduct. The good Doctor pleads farther: "No man who acts according to his judgment, how erroneous soever it may be, is *self-condemned* in that action^c." Yes, if he made a *rash* judgment, and *might* have known or done *better*, he is *self-condemned*: for he condemns others who judge *rashly* and *wrongly*, when they might and ought to have judged better; and so of course he *condemns himself*, by the same sentence^d. There are two kinds of *self-condemnation*, one *direct* and *explicit*, the other *indirect*, *implicit*, *virtual*, *consequential*. As to *direct* self-condemnation, few fall into it: for men are so *partial* towards their own failings, that they seldom see their own *false* judgment, or *wrong* conduct, and as seldom *condemn themselves* for either. It is their fault that they do not: such *self-condemnation* would be commendable, and a good step towards recovery: it is not such *self-condemnation* as that, that the Apostle speaks of. There is too little of it every where; *presumption* and *self-applause* are the foibles of mankind. And they will easily take care in most cases not to be *self-condemned*, though condemned by all the world besides. It is not *self-condemnation* in this sense, that makes an ill man, or aggravates a fault, but the want of it^e. The other kind of *self-condemnation*, which I call *indirect*, is what the Apostle may point to as an aggravating circumstance of *heresy*, after two admonitions. The man *justifies* himself in opposition to *truth* and *good counsel*, does not *condemn* himself *directly*, when he ought to do it, and amend: but he condemns himself *indirectly*, as acting against the *law*

* Whitby on Tit. iii. 10.

^d See Rom. ii. 1.

* See Hammond upon the text.

of his mind, against that general law by which he condemns others, and justly, whenever they allow themselves in *wrong* things, and *ought* to know better. This is his condemnation, that he approves in a particular instance through *partiality*, what himself in the general condemns. All *sinner*s, in this sense, are *self-condemned*; and so are *heretics* also among the rest. Indeed, all that do not make a proper use of their *rational* faculties, when they may and ought to do it, are thus *self-condemned*: and their own awakened consciences will rise up against them at the last day, as men guilty of great prevarication and *self-repugnancy*, for allowing in *themselves* what they otherwise disallow and condemn. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant," will then be the sentence due to all, who having been *twice* admonished of *corrupting* the faith, repented not of it, but persevered in their errors both of *judgment* and *practice*, when they might have known better.

I defined *heresy*, not merely a *mistake of judgment*, (though in fundamentals,) but *espousing* such erroneous judgment, either teaching and disseminating it, or openly supporting and assisting those that do, siding with them in it. This I conceive to be the true Scripture notion of *heresy*^f. Nevertheless, an *erroneous judgment* in fundamentals has more commonly passed under the name of *heresy*, and is undoubtedly a *great fault*, whatever name we call it by. It is running counter to all those texts which recommend *zeal* and *earnestness* for the *true* faith: for how can a man, *consistently* with himself, be zealous for what he either *disbelieves* or assents not to? It is likewise running cross to all those texts which exhort to *sound faith*, or which command us to *hold fast what is good*, or forbid the being *tossed to and fro* with every *wind of doctrine*, and the like. Whether such fault shall be called *heresy* or no, is only disputing about a name: but that it is in itself (particular circumstances excepted) a

^f 1 Cor. xi. 19. Gal. v. 20. 2 Pet. ii. 1.

great offence against God, cannot be doubted; and it naturally leads to worse.

2. Having largely treated of the nature and notion of *heresy*, and what properly denominates any man a *heretic*, I am next to say something of what is meant by *rejecting* such persons. After all prudent and proper means have been used to *reclaim* them, or *silence* them, and they still persist in their *heresy*, either teaching or otherwise espousing false and pernicious doctrines; then the rule of the Apostle is to reject them, or cast them off, if they have not before cast off themselves. The text does not say, *excommunicate* them; for that would not be necessary, when they have excommunicated themselves: but it says, *shun* them, *avoid* them, *reject* them; which, in case they do not cast themselves out, implies and infers a command to *exclude* them: so that the text, by that *general* expression, seems to have provided for both the cases.

But I must here again take notice of Dr. Whitby's mistakes and false reasonings. He was sensible, that according to his loose definition of *heresy*, there would be no knowing, for the most part, who is guilty of it, or who ought to be condemned for it: he produces the objection himself, and afterwards endeavours lamely to answer it. "It is objected," says he, "that there be few who oppose the truth *willingly*, and they are only *known to God*, not to the Church; which therefore cannot *admonish*, *avoid*, or *excommunicate* them." An insuperable objection against his notion, showing that it terminates in a flat contradiction to *Scripture*, and to the plainest reason. Well, how does he reply to it? The sum of his answer is, "That Titus might have the *discerning of spirits*, a gift belonging to those times: and the Church that was in the days of the Apostles could easily know, whether the doctrines which others taught in opposition to them, were indeed doctrines received from

‡ Whitby on Tit. iii. 10.

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“ the Apostles or not : if they were not, they who taught
“ them must know, they received no such doctrine from
“ them, and so must be *self-condemned* in teaching it as
“ received from them, or as the faith once delivered to
“ the saints ^h.” Never was there a looser reply in so
momentous a cause. For, 1. this amounts to saying, that
all the precepts about *admonishing*, *avoiding*, or *excommu-
nicating* of heretics, and of consequence, all the other
precepts about preserving *sound* doctrine, or *contending*
earnestly for the faith, expired in a great measure as soon
as the miraculous gifts, or gift of *discerning spirits* ceased.
The precepts from that time forwards became impracti-
cable, because nobody now could know what was *heresy*,
or who *heretics*, since they could not see into men’s
hearts. Though heretics might *subvert whole houses*, (and
now more than ever, when there should be no *Apostle*
living to control them,) and though their *words might*
eat as doth a canker; yet the Church is left without reme-
dy: the pastors and guardians of it must not presume to
excommunicate, or *avoid*, or *admonish* persons as *heretics*,
unless they can first prove them *heretics*, or *ill-designing*
men: but if it be certain, that they are led by an *errone-
ous conscience*, they must not be *censured* at all, but treat-
ed as good men and fellow Christians. “ So that we are
“ commanded to *avoid* a *heretic*; but this *heretic* is such a
“ sort of a creature as nobody can ever find out, or dis-
“ tinguish from one he is to *treat as a brother*. But sup-
“ pose this *heretic* should tell us, that he *did not believe*
“ *what himself affirmed*, then indeed he would be *self-con-*
“ *demned*, and we might know it: but he must be a fool
“ of a *heretic* who would declare this, unless he intended
“ to *recant* and *renounce his errors*: and whenever he did
“ this, he would no longer be a *heretic*; no longer to be
“ *avoided*; and therefore being *self-condemned* in this
“ sense, would be so far from a reason why we should

^h Whithy on Tit. iii. 10.

“*avoid* him, that it would be a reason why we should “*not avoid* him: but *treat him as a brother*”¹” 2. From the same principles it will follow, that the whole *discipline* of the Church, after the time that the gift of *discerning of spirits* ceased, so far as concerned *heretics*, was rash and unwarrantable: which no wise man will presume to say or think. 3. It farther follows, that be *heresies* ever so rife, and the *faith* ever so much endangered, there is no remedy for it: we cannot *know* in these times (though the Scriptures are allowed to be *clear* and *perfect*) what the doctrines of the Apostles were, or “*whether* the doctrines which others teach in opposition to “*them* are indeed doctrines received from the Apostles “*or not* :” however, if we may know that, yet without knowing men’s *hearts* too, all our *zeal* for the ancient faith is fruitless and vain.

Such are the absurdities which the learned Doctor inevitably runs into, only for the sake of a false favourite notion he had unwarily imbibed. The truth of the whole matter is, we have nothing to do with the *inward* motives or views of heretics. The *mischief* lies in the *false doctrines* which they teach and propagate: and upon that account, and that only, they are to be *admonished, avoided, censured*, in order to prevent the *subverting whole houses*, and the like. Possibly such false teachers may *intend well*: of that God is Judge: but the *faith* of *Christ*, and the *salvation* of souls, must not be sacrificed even to the known *good intentions* of any man or men whatever; no, nor to the preaching even of an *angel from heaven*, were it a possible supposition. But it may be objected; what, must *innocent* men suffer for the sake of any good? Is that *justice* or *equity*? I answer, that they are *innocent* in this case, through an *erroneous conscience*, and *invincible ignorance*, is more than man knows or can know: of that God is Judge. But that *corrupting the faith* is not an *innocent* practice, (considered in itself,) but a very *ill thing*,

¹ Rogers’s Review of the Visible and Invisible Church, p. 409.

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every one knows, or ought to know; and that is the rule for *men* to go by in judging, because they can go by no other; and it is in the main both a safe and a certain rule. And if it may sometimes happen, that discerning and upright judges may condemn a man who is *innocent* in God's sight, (because of some *unconquerable* infirmity,) while *guilty* in the eyes of man, this cannot be remedied. The good proceeding from such *censures* vastly overbalances it. And what if, after all, *spiritual* censures (for of such only I am speaking) should happen to fall upon such a person, he may be in some measure hurt in his *reputation* by it, and that is all: and possibly hereupon his errors, before *invincible* through ignorance, may be removed by wholesome *instruction* and *admonitions*, and so he is befriended in it, and may now come to have a covenant right to happiness, who before stood only in *unconvenanted mercy*. For though God will *condemn* no man for what he could not help; yet he has *promised* no man a reward who ever so *ignorantly* corrupts the *faith* of the Gospel. But it is said of the unlearned and *unstable*, that when they *wrest* the *Scriptures*, it is to their own *destruction*. I have dwelt the longer upon this argument, because it appears to me to be a very weighty affair, and not so well considered by many as it ought to be. I now proceed in order to some other *texts*, relating to the *avoiding* heretics.

St. John's advice in that case, touched upon before, is, "If there come any one unto you, and bring not this doctrine," (the doctrine of Christ in a material article,) "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds ^k." The Apostle here forbids a Christian to *salute*^l a man that perverts the Gospel in such a certain article, being a *fundamental* one: what article he spoke of, I have intimated above. It is observed by interpreters, that denying a person the common forms of

^k 2 John 10, 11.

^l Χαίρει αὐτῷ μὴ λέγειν.

salutation was the same with looking upon him as *ex-communicate*^m. And so these words of the Apostle carry in them the force of an excommunication, with respect to the *heretics* there pointed to, and the force of a prohibition, with respect to other Christians, who are hereby forbidden to receive such *heretics* into their houses, or to pay them so much as common civilities. This precept of the Apostle may be further illustrated by his own practice, recorded by Irenæus, who had the information at second hand from Polycarp, a disciple of St. John's; that St. John once meeting with Cerinthus at the bath, retired instantly without bathing; for fear, said he, lest the bath should fall, by reason of Cerinthus's being there, the *enemy to truth*ⁿ. The like story is there also told of Polycarp himself, with regard to another such *heretic*, namely, Marcion. And Irenæus's just reflection upon the whole is very observable in these words: "So extremely cautious were the Apostles and their followers, to have no communication, no, not so much as in discourse, with any man that adulterated the truth^o." A conduct, which, as he remarks, was conformable to St. Paul's rule, Tit. iii. 10. The reader will take notice by the way, that though Cerinthus and Marcion might be otherwise ill men, and might perhaps act upon *bad motives*, yet the stress of the thing lay not there; but it was their being *enemies to truth*, and their *adulterating the truth*, (in points fundamental,) which made them so abhorred, and their company so detested by wise and holy men. No matter what their *motives* were, or their *morals*

^m See Hammond and Whitby.

ⁿ Καὶ οἰοῖν οἱ ἀκηκόητες αὐτοῦ, ὅτι Ἰωάννης, ὁ τοῦ Κυρίου μαθητῆς, ἐν τῇ Ἐφίῳ περιουσίᾳ λούεσθαι, καὶ ἰδὼν Ἰωὴν Κερίνθου, ἐξήλατο τοῦ βαλανίου μὴ λουᾶσθαι, ἀλλ' ἰσχυρῶς φύγωμιν, μὴ καὶ τὸ βαλανίον συμπίσῃ, ἵδου ὄντος Κερίνθου, τοῦ τῆς ἀληθείας ἰχθύου. *Iren. lib. iii. c. 3. p. 177. Bened. alias 204. Grab. Conf. Euseb. Eccl. H. lib. iii. c. 28. p. 123. Theodoret. Hæret. Fab. lib. ii. c. 3. p. 220.*

^o Τσαύτην οἱ Ἀπίστολοι καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτῶν ἴσχον εὐλάβειαν, πρὸς τὸ μὴδὲ μὲν λέγου κοινοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν παραχαρασσόντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὡς καὶ Παῦλος ἱερῶν αἰρετικῶν ἀνδραποῖ, κ. τ. λ. *Iren. ibid.*

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in other respects : they *corrupted* the *faith* of Christ, and in effect *subverted* the *Gospel* : that was enough to render them detestable in the eyes of all men who sincerely loved and valued *sound* faith.

The bishops of Pergamus and Thyatira are reproved by our Lord for *suffering*, that is, for not ejecting the Balaamites or Nicolaitans, who taught false doctrine, relating to the fundamentals of Christian *practice*: they taught the lawfulness of *fornication*, and of *eating things offered to idols*. That was a heresy in doctrinals, immediately affecting the *agenda* of Christianity, the *moral* commands of *Scripture*; which they very probably misinterpreted and perverted, much after the same manner as others perverted such texts as contain the *credenda*, matters of *faith* strictly so called. There is not much difference in the main between the two cases; excepting that one is more *gross* and *scandalous*, and shows itself in more *sensible* effects. There is the same presumptuous tampering with *Scripture*, the same kind of *artificial* elusions, the like wire-drawing of *texts* in both cases: and there is likewise the same kind of *unbelief* or *disbelief* of *God's* sacred word, only in different articles, and the like opposition to *Gospel truths*, only to different purposes. If any man through mere *weakness of judgment* should have imbibed the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, but resolving at the same time never to divulge it, nor practise upon it, I see not what harm a bare opinion, and owing only to infirmity, would do him, while dormant and without effect. But if any person, through the like weakness of judgment, should entertain low and degrading notions of his God and Saviour, though he should never divulge it, he would suffer some harm by it with respect to his *religious* services, which would be thereby rendered *less perfect*. For in that case, the *ill effect* so far is inseparable from the *false opinion*; though I doubt not but all merciful allowances would be made for it. But as the *criminal* part in the former case would lie chiefly in *practising* upon the persuasion, or in *divulging* it to the hurt of other persons,

so in this latter also, the most criminal circumstance would be the *espousing* and publicly *supporting* such false persuasion to the detriment of religion. For if he who shall break one of the *least moral commandments*, and shall *teach men so*, shall be called *least in the kingdom of heaven*, (Matt. v. 19.) it must be a very dangerous experiment for any man to presume to *teach* any thing contrary to the Gospel of Christ in the *main articles of faith or doctrine*, because the *Christian life* is nearly concerned in both, and the honour of God and religion are bound up with them. And the pastors or guardians of the Christian religion ought no more to *suffer* any notorious insults upon the *great credenda* of our most holy religion, than upon the *agenda*: since both rest upon the same foundation, have a close connection with each other, and are, for the most part, likely to stand or fall together.

II. I have now proved from direct Scripture-texts, that it is the duty of Christians to refuse communion with those who corrupt the faith of Christ in points *fundamental*, and persist in so doing, after proper cautions and admonitions given them. I am in the next place to enforce the doctrine yet farther, by considerations drawn from the very nature and reason of the thing, upon Scripture principles. *Piety* towards God, *charity* towards other men, and *justice* towards our own souls, all conspire to recommend and authorize such conduct.

I. I say, *piety towards God* requires such a conduct. For can it be thought, that when the high Lord and Governor of the universe vouchsafes to speak to us from heaven, and to reveal truths of *importance*, that good men ought patiently to bear the perverting of those sacred truths, or the adulterating of those heavenly instructions. Earthly governors would resent the putting *false constructions* upon their laws or edicts, or the *wresting* them to quite different purpose from what they were intended for, to deceive and mislead their people: how much more shall the God of heaven resent any indignities of that kind! It is the cause of God/and religion, to

rescue the word of God from perverse glosses and comments, and to preserve it in its native *purity* and perfection. To admit those who corrupt and deprave its sense in any gross manner, to the common honours and privileges of fellow Christians, would be the ready way to introduce all imaginable *confusion* in faith and worship, and to *deface* Christianity to such a degree, that common Christians at least could not know how or where to find it. For example: had the Cerinthians, Ebionites, Marcionites, Valentinians, Manichees, and other sects too numerous to mention, been all admitted as *fellow Christians*, Christianity must have been looked upon as the most uncertain, unconstant, inconsistent thing in the world: and both the religion itself, and the Scriptures which contain it, would very probably have been lost before now, or have come down to us so mangled, adulterated, disguised, that no one could know what to depend upon as true and sincere, either as to words or sense. The discriminating of heretics from faithful Christians, and therewith preserving the *unity* of the Church and the *purity* of doctrine, has been a principal means of fixing the Christian religion in its most material articles, and of supporting the *honour* of it against all its enemies without, whether Jews, Pagans, or mere infidels. So necessary was it to discountenance all attempts for subverting or perverting the truth as it was in Christ Jesus, and to separate the *clean* from the *unclean*, by rejecting heretics, as unworthy of Christian communion, or even of the name of Christians, except it were in a very large sense.

2. As *piety* towards God, and *reverence* towards his sacred word, required such conduct; so likewise did *charity* towards men; charity towards the *offenders*, and charity towards all mankind. It was a *charitable* office towards the corruptors of the faith of Christ, to reject and disown them, in order to make them *ashamed*^p, and to bring them to repentance, that so their souls “ might be saved

^p 2 Thess. iii. 14.

“in the day of the Lord Jesus⁹.” It is true, that it often failed of having this *salutary* effect, as the judgments of God also often fail, and where they do not cure, they irritate and harden, and render worse, which is no argument against the *salutary* nature of the remedy, but shows only the incurable disorder of the patient. Indeed St. Paul does distinguish his coming *with the rod* of excommunication, from his coming in “love and in the spirit “of meekness^r :” not as if such discipline were not an instance of *love*, or were not perfectly consistent with a *spirit of meekness*, but it was not love in every view, or in every sense of the word, like the love shown towards the *faithful* in all the outward expressions of approbation and friendliness; for the case did not admit of it. It was love mingled with *unwholesome severity*, the truer love for being so mingled, when the necessity of the case required it: *wounds* they were, but of a *friend* still, and in a case where the *kindest* of friends could not otherwise show themselves kinder than by so doing. *Meekness* it was not, under that precise formality, but consistent with all that could be called *Christian meekness*: for to forbear *sharpness* and severity, in such a case, is not *meekness*, but *tameness*, and a Laodicean lukewarmness. So that the exercise of proper discipline, in such instances, is in reality fervent *love* and *charity* towards the offenders themselves, in a *spiritual* view, but expressing itself in the harsher way, the only way left for it towards men in their circumstances. *Palliating* medicines would be *cruel* and *barbarous* applications, when *corrosives* are the only means left to recover the patient, and to effect the cure^s. Upon the whole therefore, *charity* towards the *offenders* themselves requires such a conduct as I have been mentioning.

There can be less appearance for any question, whether

⁹ 1 Cor. v. 5.

^r 1 Cor. iv. 21.

^s The objections made to the method, as *not proper*, are abundantly answered by a very learned Prelate, Potter on Church-Government, p. 399, &c.

it be not also *charity* towards all men besides. It is *charity* towards the *ignorant*, as carrying *instruction* along with it; *charity* towards the *unwary*, as giving them *warning* to stand off from infection; *charity* towards the *confirmed* Christians, as encouraging them still more, and preserving them from insults; *charity* towards the *whole Church*, as supporting both their *unity* and *purity*; *charity* towards *all mankind*, towards them that are *without*, as it is recommending pure religion to them in the most advantageous light, obviating their most plausible calumnies, and giving them less occasion to *blaspheme*.

3. I observe, in the third place, that *justice* to our own souls requires, that we use all prudent and proper endeavours to discountenance *heresies*, by refusing communion with their open favourers and abettors. For otherwise, as John speaks, we become *partakers of their evil doings*. To own them as fellow Christians, is to take their guilt upon ourselves, or greater; I say, *greater*, because supposing them so far innocent as honestly to follow their own judgment, yet while we are of a contrary judgment, it cannot but be *guilty* practice and conduct in us, and very *great* too, to smother our sentiments, or not to bear our testimony in such a way as Christ has appointed, against all notorious corruptions either of *faith*, or *worship*, or *doctrine*. It appears then sufficiently, both from Scripture directly, and from the very nature and reason of the thing, that it is our bounden duty to refuse communion with those that persist in *opposing the fundamental* articles of our most holy religion. I am aware that several objections have been made, and will be made to what Christ has ordered, and the Church has all along practised as concerning our conduct in this article: for what is there so just, so rational, or so commendable, that may not be objected to? However, in order to satisfy reasonable men at least, I design a distinct chapter for the further clearing up the question in hand.

CHAP. V.

Objections removed, and some vulgar Mistakes rectified.

HAVING laid down our principles, and the grounds upon which we go, our next concern is to remove or obviate whatever threatens to overturn them, or to lessen their force, lest any weak objections on one side, left unanswered, may prevail more with some persons than the strongest arguments on the other. I proceed then to the business.

I. It may have been sometimes invidiously suggested, that the insisting so strongly upon the *necessity* of believing, or however of not opposing this doctrine, is carrying matters to an *immoderate* height, and tends to provoke others to run into a contrary *extreme* out of a kind of indignation, and excessive renitence. The plea is smooth and specious, and appears to carry a fair show of *lenity* and *moderation* in it, which are virtues much to be admired; but in reality it contains little, as here applied, more than artful abuse, and such as is frequently played with in other the like cases. For the purpose: if any person is disposed to undermine the *inspiration* of sacred Writ, he begins commonly with complaints of the stiffness and dogmaticalness of common Divines, which prejudice men of freer thoughts, as is pretended, against Scripture itself, and almost force them into another extreme. So again, if any man has a mind to relax the strictness of the Gospel-rule, and to bring it down to his taste, he falls to declaiming against the excessive rigour of religionists, which frighten many sober persons, as is said, from embracing religion. Complaints of that kind may sometimes be just, but they are oftener mere artifice. It will be proper to examine, in the first place, what truth there is in the suggestions brought about our running into *extremes*. Without all question, *extremes* are carefully to be avoided in every thing: *extreme cold* may be as bad as *extreme heat*: and *extreme lenity* is a fault, as

much as *extreme severity*. But the thing to be proved is, that the insisting upon the doctrine of the Trinity, as an *essential* article, is an *extreme*, or that it is not in reality the true and *golden mean* between rigour on one hand and lukewariness on the other. It may be true, that the insisting upon this doctrine may have that *accidental effect*, to prejudice weak minds the more against it, or against religion itself. In like manner, the insisting upon the doctrine of the *cross*, the duty of *self-denial*, and the necessity of *universal* righteousness, may have prejudiced many against Christianity, and yet daily do so. But still if the doctrine be both *true* and *important*, it must be taught and inculcated: and the question is not in such cases, whether many may not be offended or scandalized at any doctrine, but whether the doctrine be such as ought to be insisted upon. For as a very judicious and learned Prelate[†] has appositely observed, “ St. Paul has
 “ plainly taught us how we ought to conduct ourselves
 “ in such cases. He knew very well, that Jew and Gen-
 “ tile took great offence at the doctrine of a *crucified Sa-
 “ viour*, and he could not but see that Christianity would
 “ be more favourably entertained by both, if that *offence*
 “ were removed, and the Gospel reduced to a scheme of
 “ *mere morality*, ratified by a person sent from God, and
 “ enforced by stronger assurances of rewards and punish-
 “ ments than had ever been given before. But, notwith-
 “ standing all this, *we*, says he, *preach Christ crucified,*
 “ *unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks*
 “ *fouliness*.” The reason is plain: for the ministers
 of Christ are under special direction, and must not dare
 to prevaricate in their sacred employment. They must
 never presume to betray the *truth* of the Gospel with any
 view to prevent *offence*: for such offence is *taken*, not
given, and is therefore of no moment. They only are to
 bear the blame, who are causelessly *offended* at what they

[†] Bishop of London, in his Charge of May 28, 1730, p. 28.

[‡] 1 Cor. i. 23.

ought to receive with the profoundest respect and veneration.

I may here also take notice, that when some persons of more warmth than wisdom have gone upon what they call *healing* measures, in order to reconcile many (as they supposed) to Christianity shortened and curtailed in its prime articles, they have been for the most part miserably disappointed. Their unwarrantable *concessions*, instead of making more Christians, (*half Christians* I should say,) have only made more *infidels*. And it was natural to think, that such would the result be. For when once the advocates for religion begin to recede beyond what they have warrant for, they give very great advantage to the enemy, who may then modestly expect to draw them on farther, upon the same motive, or principle, which had before carried them too far. For if they yield to *impurity*, rather than to *reason*, in one case, why not in another? Or if the first step taken out of the way could appear *rational*, why not a *second*, and a *third*, and so on, till there be no end of wandering? It is frequently the fate of those over-complying gentlemen, that while they stoop too low in hopes to fetch others up, they are themselves dragged down, and can never recover it. They are insensibly carried over to the party towards which they lean; and instead of preserving a balance, (which they lost in the first decline,) they are at length found to run in with the other extreme. The *Episcopian* neutrality seldom stays long, before it passes over into *Arianism* or *Socinianism*; and these again easily degenerate into *Deism* and *Atheism*. It is much to be questioned, whether *mysteries*, after all, are really the things which are most apt to offend the fashionable world: the *purity* of the Gospel precepts is the hardest of digestion; and one *Commandment*, very probably, may make greater difficulty than many *Creeds*. But the principal reason for striking at *mysteries* first is, because it is more *decent* to begin there; and after a *breach* once made in the main fabric, it is easy to go on to a total subversion. The Deists, in their

turn, take up the same topics of *moderation* and *lenity* : “ Let not the men of *faith* despise the men of *reason* ; “ and again, let not the men of *reason* despise the men of “ *faith*, so long as both agree in the *substantial* duties : ” this is the cant. And truly, if *moderation* is to stand for *yielding* and *complying*, be it right or wrong, and if that be all the rule we have to go by, I do not see that the men argue amiss. But surely we must stop somewhere : and where can we better stop, than at *necessaries*, at *truths*, and *important* truths ? For things of that value ought never to be sacrificed to any temporal considerations, or to any views of a false and short-lived peace.

From hence it may be inferred, that it is not owing to any *immoderate* rigours of the more cautious Divines, if *infidelity* happens to gain ground, but to the *immoderate* and *extravagant* concessions of those who are not so careful as they should be, to keep up the ancient faith in its first purity and perfection. Accordingly it may be observed, how the *unbelievers* caress and compliment those complying gentlemen who meet them half way, while they are perpetually inveighing against the stiff Divines, as they call them, whom they can make no advantage of. They know their friends from their foes : and it may be learned from them how the case stands : *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*.

To illustrate and confirm the general observations, let the reader reflect a little upon the unhappy conduct of Socinus, and the upshot of it. He had contrived a system for his friends to abide by, and he hoped they would rest there : but many of them, upon the same principles, whereby he had led them so far, resolved to go farther, throwing off the *worship* of *Christ*, in consequence of their mean opinion they had entertained of him. Socinus reclaimed, remonstrated, cried out aloud, hoping to stop their progress by his *earnestness*, (for he had yielded too much before to talk of reason now,) and to fetch them back ; but all to no purpose. He represented to them the dreadful consequences of discarding the *divine worship*

of Christ: "That it was rendering the whole Christian religion *weak* and *precarious*, was sapping the main foundation of their faith and hope, and grievously offending God the *Father*, and *Christ Jesus*^x: that he had never yet met with any man of true piety and godliness who durst venture upon it, but that he knew several of them who had thereupon turned Epicureans, or downright Atheistsy." All which was true: but why could not he have seen that *Atheism* hung at the end of the chain, till he came to the last link? Never did man more expose himself than Socinus did in that instance. For indeed the throwing off the *divine worship* of Christ was but the natural and inevitable consequence of his scheme, if one would act consistently: and the next consequence to that was *Deism* or *Atheism*, by his own account. So it was plainly telling the world, that he had drawn his disciples into a labyrinth, and knew not how to extricate them. To go back was a mortifying thought to vain men; to go forwards was to plunge into downright *Atheism*. Such generally is the fate of the self-opinionated, who will not listen to sober counsels in time, but precipitately strike off from the right way to follow they know not what, or to fix they know not where. I might mention those amongst us who began

^x Ipsius Christi universa religio in *dubium* revocetur, aut saltem *mutationi* et *fini* in hoc ipso seculo obnoxia redditur; summum et præstantissimum nostræ *spei* et *fidei* in Deum *fundamentum* nobis eripitur; ac denique, ne omnia hinc provenientia mala et incommoda, quæ innumerabilia sunt, enumerare hic nunc velle videar, in ipsum *Christum* et *Deum Patrem* gravissime peccatur. *Socin. ad Radec. Epist.* iii. p. 387.

^y Socinus. "Quotquot ego vidi adorationis Christi oppugnatores, omnes tandem in *Atheismum* sunt prolapsi; quod et tibi accidet, nisi sententiam mutaveris."

Non dixit Socinus, omnes quos ipse vidisset adorationis Christi oppugnatores tandem in *Atheismum* fuisse prolapsos; sed neminem se ex istorum numero adhuc novisse, qui Christiana pietate et vitæ sanctimonia esset præditus; imo nonnullos ex ipsis se vidisse aut scivisse Epicureos, et plane *Atheos* factos. Nec mirum esse, cum hæc ad *Epicurismum* et *Atheismum* homini Christi sacris initiato via compendiaria quædam foret. *Disput. inter F. S. et Christian. Franken.* p. 772, 773.

with Christianity not Mysterious^z, and in a few years after settled in *Pantheism*^a, little short of the broadest *Atheism*: and others might be named, who from finding fault with the Council of Nice, for *corrupting* Christianity^b, (as they fondly supposed,) have gradually, and in a course of years, come to reject Christianity itself, as *needless* and *useless*, and all revealed religion as mere *rubbish*^c. When once men break off from the *reverence* due to sacred Writ, and to the eminent lights of the best and purest ages, they roll downwards apace, and very rarely recover it. For if they were not strong enough to stand at first upon *plain* and *firm* ground, how shall they keep steady afterwards upon *declivity*? I say then, that the blame lies not upon those who abide unmovable in the old and well-tried doctrine of the Trinity, but upon those that are soon shaken in mind, and depart from it. To adhere firmly to it is not rigour, but constancy: and to forsake it, or to grow *indifferent* towards it, is not prudence or moderation, but unmanly levity and wantonness, or something worse.

II. It is sometimes pleaded, that a *wicked life is the worst heresy*, intimating as if breaches made in our most holy *faith* were of slight consideration, so long as a man lives a good *moral* life in other respects. I readily allow that a *wicked life* is the *worst* thing imaginable: but I conceive further, that the spreading and propagating of corrupt doctrines is leading a *wicked life*, in the strictest sense. I speak not of mere mistakes in judgment, but of *espousing* and *propagating* them; corrupting the faith in important articles, and diffusing such corruptions. A life so spent is a *wicked life*, if opposing divine truths, undermining the Gospel, and subverting souls be *wicked* attempts, as they undoubtedly are. It must be owned, that a *good life* is every thing to a Christian: but what does

^a A book published with that title, A. D. 1696.

^b The *Pantheisticon*, published A. D. 1720.

^c *Rights of the Christian Church*, p. 196, &c. published 1706.

^d *Christianity as old as the Creation*, p. 421. published 1730.

a *good* life consist of? Universal righteousness in *faith* and *manners*. Therefore to talk of a man's leading a *good life* while he is corrupting the faith and disseminating pernicious doctrines, is talking contradictions. As to the *sincerity* or *good meaning* of the men who do it, that shall be considered under another article: I speak now of the *nature* and *quality* of the thing, abstracted from the circumstances of the person: and I say, it is *wickedness* and a perfect contradiction to a *good life*. It is *evil in itself*, and the *iniquity* of it is fixed in the nature and reason of things.

Some have seemed to wonder ^d why commonly a warmer zeal should be shown against *heresies*, than against ordinary *immoralities*: the wonder will presently cease, if the case be but rightly stated. Ask, whether one that commits *fornication*, or one that *teaches* and inculcates it as lawful practice, is the *wickeder* man? Here the case is plain, that the *heretic* who takes pains to spread such dissolute doctrine, and to debauch the principles of the age, is incomparably a viler man than he that barely perpetrates the sin. So then it must be allowed, that an *heretic* in *morality* is infinitely a *greater* sinner than one who through his lusts and passions merely leads an *immoral* life.

So as to *faith*, ask, whether a man that perverts any material article, either carelessly or through some prejudice, but lets it go no farther, or one that does the same thing, and then takes upon him to *teach* and *inculcate* the erroneous doctrine to others; I say, ask which of the two is the *wickeder* man? The latter, undoubtedly. He is the *heretic* in teaching and patronizing a corruption of faith, while the other who corrupts it only for himself is

^d The author of the Defence of Scripture as the only Standard of Faith is one of those wonderers, (p. 40.) But he entirely mistakes the case, opposing *imperfection in knowledge*, which is his soft name for heresy, to *imperfection in practice*: whereas heresy is not barely imperfection in knowledge, but it is *evil practice*; for spreading pernicious doctrines is a fault in the *conduct of life*. Therefore the opposition lies between *one evil practice* and *another*, and the question is, which is worst.

no formal *heretic*, as I conceive, in strict propriety of speech^e, though not a good man. Thus, while we compare an *heretic* in *morality* with a man merely immoral; or an *heretic* in *faith* with a man that is merely a *misbeliever*; it is obvious to perceive, that there is much greater malignity in those that *teach* or *espouse* what they ought not, than in those that merely believe wrong, or do wrong: because the leaders and abettors of any ill thing diffuse the mischief all around; the other let it die with them. Thus far, I presume, is plain and clear.

After thus comparing kind with kind, let us next take them, as it were, across, and compare the *heretic* in *faith* with an *immoral* man, in the common sense of the word. We will allow, that an *heretic* in matters of mere *revelation* is not so bad a man, generally speaking, as an *heretic* in *morality*; but still he may be a much worse man, or, to speak plainer, may do a great deal more *mischief* by his *doctrine*, than the immoral man may do by his *example*. For besides his propagating *dangerous* errors, subverting souls, it is farther to be considered, that he sets himself up as a *rival* teacher, in opposition to the *faithful* ministers of Christ: he weakens their hands, frustrates their pious labours, perverts their flocks, lessens their esteem in the eyes of their people, gives the common enemy a handle to insult and blaspheme, raises a kind of flame and war in the Church, and remotely administers to all immorality and dissoluteness of manners, by taking off the influence of the best instructions of their more knowing and more edifying guides. These are no slight mischiefs, but great, and wide, and often of long continuance, and in several respects irreparable^f. Therefore let

^e Qui sententiam suam, quamvis falsam atque perversam, nulla pertinaci animositate defendunt, præsertim quam non audacia præsumptionis suæ pepererunt, sed a seductis atque in errorem lapsis parentibus acceperunt; quarunt autem cauta sollicitudine veritatem, corrigi parati cum invenerint, nequaquam sunt inter *hæreticos* deputandi. *Augustin. Epist. xliiii. p. 88. ed. Benedict.*

^f Mr. Bayle describes it thus: "I do not know where we can find out crimes which are not of a less heinous nature than that of rending the

it not be thought strange, if the most holy and excellent men have ever expressed the greatest detestation of all attempts of that kind. Scarcely is a man excusable for advancing even a *truth*, to the detriment of public *peace*, if it be of a slight nature, not worth the contending for, or such as might innocently be dropped : but to advance *falsehoods*, (and in points very *material*,) tending to create infinite disturbances here, as well as to betray many to perdition hereafter ; these are crimes *unpardonable*, if the authors see what they do ; and if they do not, yet their guilt remains, if they *might see*, and will not. However, the nature and quality of the thing is not altered by their seeing or not seeing : for *heresy* is still *heresy*, though a man intends well, as much as *persecution* is still *persecution*, though a person thinks and believes that he *does God service* in it. Let it not therefore be imagined, that *false teachers* are to be numbered among the *smaller* offenders, or that they are not, generally speaking, the greatest of sinners. Accordingly, we find our blessed Lord never showed a keener resentment against any men whatever, than against *false prophets*,^g or those who taught *false doctrines*^h in opposition to *divine* truths. I interpret *false prophets* so as to include *false teachers*, such at least as corrupt *sound* doctrine in any *fundamental* article : and so Grotius and Hammond interpret, like judicious and knowing men. But Dr. Whitby, disliking that construction, advances some odd speculations of his

“ mystical body of Jesus Christ, that spouse which he has redeemed with his
 “ blood, that mother which begets us to God, which nourishes us with the
 “ milk of that wisdom which is without guile, which leads us to everlasting
 “ bliss. What fouler crime can we think of, than rebelling against such a
 “ mother, than defaming her all the world over, endeavouring to stir up her
 “ children against her, tearing them from her bosom by millions, to drag
 “ them, as much as in us lies, into everlasting flames, them and their poste-
 “ rity from generation to generation ? Where can we find the first-rate high
 “ treason against the divine Majesty, unless in instances of this kind ?”
Supplem. to Philosop. Commentary, pref. p. 517.

^g Matt. viii. 15. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 22. Compare Acts xx. 29, 30. See Grotius and Hammond on Matt. vii. 15.

^h Matt. xv. 4—9.

own to pervert the true meaning of the texts. He pleads that *all false teachers*ⁱ, all that assert any thing wrong, are not included. Perhaps not: but yet *all* that manifestly pervert the *faith* in any great degree may be included notwithstanding; yea, and must be, by parity of reason. He pretends it to be *ridiculous*, to judge of *false* teachers by *false* doctrines. But how can we judge better of a *false* teacher, than by the *falsehood* of what he teaches? It is the very rule which St. John lays down^k, and so does St. Paul^l; which might have deterred any considering man from calling it *ridiculous*. Besides, in the very reason of the thing, what rule could be pitched upon either *surer* or *wiser*? False teachers would pretend extraordinary endowments of *learning* perhaps, or *sanctity*, or *piety*, and an affectionate concern for the happiness of those whom they should address themselves to: but they might be detected by *their fruits*^m. For if their *doctrine* should be found *contrary* to the doctrine of Christ, that is *conviction* at once, and all their glozing pretences are worth nothing. They are *false* prophets, because their doctrines are *false*: what can be a plainer proof of it? Neither is it any objection to this, that our Lord afterwards speaks of *doing the will of his Father*, and of *working iniquity*: for maintaining the *truth* is *doing God's will*; and corrupting or resisting it, is *working iniquity*. Therefore let this be *included* at least among other *bad fruits*, other works of iniquity; for it is properly such.

ⁱ Whitby on Matt. vii. 15.

^k 1 John iv. 2, 3. 2 John 9, 10, 11.

^l 1 Cor. xii. 3.

^m "Ἀπε γὰρ ἐν τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγινώσκουσιν αὐτούς. ἰκανὰ μὲν εἶναι καὶ αὐτὰ καὶ εἰς αὐτὰ τὰ δόγματα καὶ κερμίδια δόγματα τῶν εὐκρίτων ἐκιδύξαι παρῆρα· ἐν γὰρ τοῦ καρποῦ, φρεν, τὸ δίδωκεν γινώσκουσιν. Theodorit. Harret. Fab. lib. iii. p. 226.

Sed quid ait Salvator? *Ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos*, id est, cum ceperint divinas illas voces non jam proferre tantum, sed etiam exponere, nec adhuc jactare solum, sed etiam interpretari; tunc amaritudo illa, tunc acerbitas, tunc rabies intelligetur, tunc novitum virus exhalabitur, tunc prophanae novitates aperientur; tunc primum scindi sepe videas, tunc transferri patrum terminos, tunc catholicam fidem cædi, tunc ecclesiasticum dogma lacerari. *Vincent. Lirinens. Commonit. cap. 36.*

Dr. Whitby pretends further, that *false prophets* is not a name for *false teachers* at large, or for *heretics*: that appears to be his meaning. But yet certain it is from the New Testament, and from some of the texts which he himself produces, that it is. St. Peter makes the name of *false prophets* equivalent to that of *false teachers*, who should *bring in damnable heresies*^m. And St. John gives the name of *false prophets*ⁿ to the *heretics* of his time; namely, to the *Docetæ*, and *Cerinthians*, and others of like stamp, as I have partly observed already, and shall more fully show in a succeeding chapter. Therefore it is right to interpret the *false prophets* which our Lord speaks of, in such a sense as to include all *heretics*, all *false teachers*, who in any grievous manner, or degree, should pervert the Gospel of Christ. And so the primitive Fathers interpret our Lord's words^o.

As our Lord himself made use of a particular sharpness of expression against *false teachers*, or *heretics*, so also did his Apostles after him. St. Paul has done it very often against those *grievous wolves*, (as he calls them,) which may appear in some measure from what has been cited above: I shall only refer to some noted texts^p to avoid prolixity; but observing also in passing, that though St. Paul delivered an *immoral* man over to *Satan*^q for his incontinence, yet he did not use so strong an expression as *anathema*, or *accursed*, which he pronounced upon heretics^r. St. Peter is exceeding tart against some *false teachers* of his days^s, who "privily brought in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them." They also taught men to sit loose from all decent rule

^m 2 Pet. ii. 1.

ⁿ 1 John iv. 1.

^o Justin Martyr. Dialog. p. 100, 101, 249. edit. Jebb. alias 208, 316. Thirlby. Tertullian. Præscript. c. iv. xliv. Cyrill. Hierosol. Catech. iv. 1. Hieronym. in Matt. vii. 15. xxiv. 24. Athanas. ad Episc. Ægypti et Lib. p. 270, 272. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. l. iii. præf. p. 225.

^p Acts xx. 29, 30. Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Gal. i. 8, 9. v. 10, 12. 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. iv. 1, 2, 3. vi. 3, 4, 5. 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 18. 2 Tim. iii. 1—9. Tit. i. 10—16. iii. 10, 11.

^q 1 Cor. v. 5. ^r Gal. i. 8, 9. ^s 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3.

and order, and, under pretence of *Christian liberty*, to run riot in luxury and dissolute behaviour. They were *heretics* in *morality* as well as in *faith*, and of the worst kind: and therefore what is said of them is not applicable to other *false teachers* in the same *degree*, but in *proportion* to the malignity of their respective *heresy*. The Nicolaitans, I suppose, were the men whom St. Peter pointed to^t. I hinted that they were heretics in *faith*, because their doctrine, relating to God and *Christ*, was much the same with that of Cerinthus, as Irenæus testifies of them^u: and thus we may easily understand why St. Peter says of them, that they “denied the Lord that bought them.” St. Jude expresses himself with uncommon warmth against the same *false teachers*, whom St. Peter had before censured.^x St. John, who was all love, and meekness, and charity, yet severely lashes the *heretics* of his times, either such as denied Christ’s *humanity*, or such as impugned his *divinity*; which I shall show in due time and place. The names which he bestows upon them are as follows; *antichrists*^y, *liars*^z, *seducers*^a, *false prophets*^b, *deceivers*^c. He scrupled not to go wandering upon the mountains in quest of a wicked robber, a captain of a gang, in order to recover him to Christ; and he did recover him^d: but with the heretic Cerinthus, a corrupter of the *truth*, he would not stay under the same roof^e: by which it may appear, how much he detested *heresies* above common *immoralities*. His disciple Ignatius, an apostolical man, was exactly of the same sentiments. “For,” says he, (speaking of them that commit adultery, and the like,) “they that *corrupt* (debauch) families, *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*: therefore, if they who do such things accord-

^t Vid. Buddæus Eccles. Apostol. p. 600.

^u Iren. lib. iii. cap. 11. Conf. Buddæus Eccles. Apostol. p. 367, 383, 406.

^x Vid. Buddæus Eccles. Apostol. p. 594.

^y 1 John ii. 18, 22. iv. 3. 2 John 7. ^a 1 John ii. 22. ^b 1 John ii. 26. ^c 1 John iv. 1. ^d 2 John 7.

^d Euseb. E. H. lib. iii. c. 23. Clem. Alex. p. 959. ed. Ox.

^e See above, p. 91.

“ing to the flesh, perish; how much more he, who by
 “his pernicious doctrine corrupts that divine *faith*, for
 “the which *Jesus Christ* was crucified! Such a man so
 “*defiled* shall go into fire unquenchable; and so also
 “shall he that hearkens unto him^f.” See from hence
 how this holy Bishop, soon after a *martyr*, abominated
heresies beyond even great *immoralities*, as being of more
 diffusive and more lasting malignity, and not destroying
 men’s bodies, but subverting their souls. His scholar
 Polycarp, another eminent Bishop of those times, was a
 man of exemplary severity against all kinds of *sinner*s,
 but against none so much as against Marcion, a noted
 heretic, whom he calls the *first born of Satan*^g. I shall
 mention but one authority more, the very pious and holy
 St. Cyprian, of the third century. He argues the point
 at length, that a *heretic* is a much wickeder man than one
 that lapsed into *idolatry* under persecution. He states the
 comparison to this effect: “This is a worse crime than
 “that which the lapsers may seem to have committed,
 “who yet do a severe penance for their crime, and im-
 “plore the mercy of God by a long and plenary satisfac-
 “tion. The one seeks to the Church, and humbly en-
 “treats her favour, the other resists the Church, and
 “proclaims open war against her. The one has the ex-
 “cuse of *necessity*, the other is retained by his own wil-
 “fulness only. He that lapses only hurts *himself*; but
 “he that endeavours to make a heresy or schism, draws
 “*many* after him. Here is only the loss of *one soul*; but
 “there a multitude are endangered. The lapsers are sen-

^f Οἱ οἰκοδόμοι βασιλείαν Θεοῦ ἢ κληρονομήσουσι εἰ οὖν οἱ κατὰ σάρκα ταῦτα
 κτάνουσιν ἀσίδωτον, πόση μᾶλλον ἰδοῦν πίστιν Θεοῦ ἐν κατῇ διδασκαλίᾳ φθίσει, ὡς
 εἰς Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἰσαυρόθεν; ἰ τοῦτοις ἔμπροσθεν γινόμενοι, εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄβυσσον
 χωρήσου, ὁμοίως ἔκείων αὐτοῦ. *Ignat. ad Ephes. c. 16.*

^g Polycarpus Marcioni aliquando occurrenti sibi et dicenti, cognoscis nos?
 Respondit, cognosco te *primogenitum Satanae*. Tantum Apostoli et horum
 discipuli habuerunt timorem, ut nec verbo communicarent alicui eorum qui
 adulteraverant veritatem. *Iren. lib. iii. c. 3. Conf. Euseb. E. H. lib. iv. c. 14.*
 The like is observed of Justin and Irenæus, by Ittigius *Histor. Eccles. Sæc. ii.*
 p. 91.

“sible that he has done amiss, and therefore mourns and laments for it : but the other proudly swells in his crime, pleases himself in his misconduct, divides the children from their mother, draws away the sheep from the pastor, and disturbs the sacraments of God : and whereas a *lapsed* sins but once, the other sins daily^h.”

From the authorities I have given, it may abundantly appear that *Christ* and his Apostles, and their followers, have, in a very distinguishing manner, expressed their abhorrence of *false prophets, false apostles, false teachers* ; that is to say, of *heretics*, and their open favourers or abettors. It is true, there may be great difference between *heresy* and *heresy* ; and what is said of heresies in general is not applicable in the same measure or degree to every heresy in particular, but in *proportion* only : in the mean while however it is evident, that *heresy* is not a thing of slight moment, but a crime of the first magnitude, if understood to mean the *espousing of false doctrines*, tending to corrupt either *faith* or *morals* in any considerable instances. But I suppose, they who think lightly of it, mean only some ignorant or careless *mistake in judgment*, which a man keeps to himself, and disturbs not the world with : which indeed does not amount to *heresy*, (as I have more than once said,) does not make a *heretic*. Heresy lies not merely in the inward thought, but in the overt acts, either *teaching* pernicious doctrines, or supporting and encouraging them that do. Heresy so considered is *evil doing*ⁱ, and is condemned among the *works of the flesh*^k. So then, instead of saying, that a *wicked life is the worst heresy*, which is scarce *sense*, I should choose rather to say, what is both *sense* and *truth*, (generally speaking,) that a *life of heresy is a most wicked life* : it is joining with *Satan* and his emissaries, in a formed opposition to God and his Church, is complicated *impiety* and *immorality*.

^h Cyprian. de Unitat. Eccl. p. 117.

ⁱ 2 John 11.

^k Gal. v. 20.

III. But it will be pleaded further, that such as teach *false* doctrines may be very *sincere*; and their *sincerity* will be their protection before the awful tribunal, or however ought to screen them from censure here. But it behoves us to consider well of this so sovereign a preservative, that we may not trust too far to it; because if it should fail at last, there is nothing then left to depend on. *Sincerity*, I observe, is a very equivocal ambiguous term, used in more senses than one: and therefore, before I enter deeper into the subject, I would distinguish it into two kinds. 1. *Sincerity*, as opposed to *hypocrisy* and *pretence*. 2. *Sincerity*, as opposed to *prejudice* and *partiality*. There is no discoursing clearly upon the point, without attending carefully to this distinction. Next then let us examine how the present question about the *iniquity* of teaching false doctrines, or the *justice* of censuring them, is at all affected by what is pleaded of the *sincerity* of the teachers, taking sincerity either in this or in that sense.

1. Consider we, first, *sincerity*, as opposed to *hypocrisy* and *pretence*. Suppose the teachers of false doctrine to be *verily persuaded* in their minds and consciences, that such their doctrine is *true*, and their conduct *right*, and that they *ought* to teach it: this is bringing the matter to the case of an *erroneous* conscience, upon our present supposition, that their doctrine is *false*, and ours *true*. Well then, what does an *erroneous* conscience amount to? Will it justify men in *evil* practices? or is it sufficient to bear them out against censure from others? No, by no means. Time was, when many thought it their duty to *kill* Christ's disciples; they believed it to be *doing God service*¹: and yet nobody can doubt but those *sincere* men so far were guilty of *murder*, and no one can think it an hard censure upon them to declare so. St. Paul in particular, before his conversion, "verily thought with "himself, that *he* ought to do many things contrary to "the name of Jesus^m:" and yet how often did he after-

¹ John xvi. 2.^m Acts xxvi. 9.

wards condemn himself as a *sinner*; for doing those very things; because indeed he had done wickedly, in persecuting the *truth*, in persecuting the *Church of God*, when he might have been better informed. The like may be said, when men *sincerely* deny and oppose the important truths of the Gospel, and by their heresies give great disturbance, and do infinite mischief to God's Church. Their being verily *persuaded* that *truth* is on their side, or that they are doing *right*, if it may be somewhat of excuse as a mitigating circumstance, yet is no justification of their conduct, before God or man. They are impugnors of divine truths notwithstanding, and subverters of souls; and therefore condemned by God, and liable to all such *censures* from man, as Scripture ordains in case of *heresy*. So then, *sincerity*, in the first sense of the word, as opposed to *guile*, or *hypocrisy*, is of no avail in this matter. It changes not the nature of things, nor the rules of conduct: we are as much obliged to *admonish*, to *avoid*, to *reject* a man that thus *sincerely* corrupts the faith, and seduces common Christians, as the man that does it in *guile*, and against his own conscience: because indeed, though the *iniquity* may not be altogether so great, yet *iniquity* it is; and because the *mischief*, either way, is the same, and it is our bounden duty to guard against it. I must further add, that Scripture mentions a case of *God's* sending upon men "strong delusion," in the way of judicial infatuation, "that they should believe a "lieⁿ," and "that they all might be damned who believe "not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." Now, by the rule of *sincerity*, (in this first sense,) even such abandoned creatures as the Apostle there speaks of might plead *not guilty*, as teaching nothing but what they *really* believe, nothing which they *condemn themselves* for, or conceive to be *false*. They teach and propagate *lies*, but they *believe* them to be *true* all the while. There is no uncharitableness in judging^o, that all who

ⁿ 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.

^o John iii. 19. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Heb. x. 26—31. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22.

propagate *Deism* and *infidelity* in a Christian country (renouncing their *baptism*) are under such *judicial* blindness, if they *really* believe the *lies* which they are so industrious to spread: and their pretended *sincerity*, in that case, is no alleviation of their crime, but the worst symptom of it. Therefore *sincerity* in this sense, as signifying only *believing* what one *teaches*, can scarce amount to a tolerable plea by itself, since it is what may be found in men of a seared conscience and a reprobate mind.

2. Let us next consider the second sense of *sincerity*, as opposed to *prejudice* and *partiality*, and see whether, or how far, that alters the case, more than the other. But here a difficulty occurs at the first mention of it; how will it be *proved*? I do not say merely to other men, but how will it be proved to a man's self? If a man pleads his *sincerity* in this case, he ought to *know* that he has it, or he does but trifle with himself and others. He is to prove that he has no *prepossession*, no *bias*, no *leaning* to a side: he is to prove that he has used all due *diligence* in looking out for evidence; that neither *haste*, nor *sloth*, nor *impatience* has hindered: he is to prove, that he has used all proper *care* and *exactness* in *comparing* and *balancing* the reasons and arguments on both sides: in short, he is to prove, that he has neither *designedly* nor *carelessly* left out any thing in the account, nor at length made a conclusion upon any other view, or motive, but that *reason* and *truth* so required: for submitting to *reason*, without any bias, that is *sincerity*. When he has proved this, he has proved himself *sincere*, and then he is justified. But I humbly conceive, that the shorter and plainer way would be to say, that he has examined the question, weighed the reasons, and thereupon finds, that his judgment is *right* and *well-grounded*, and therefore he abides by it: for that is what the whole comes to; and so the proof of our *sincerity*, in this second sense of the word, resolves at length into the merits of the main cause. He that has *reason* on his side, (I except the case of unavoidable incapacity,) he is the *sincere* man: for if any person

jumps to a conclusion without premises, or lays more weight upon it than his *reasons* will support; it is plain that there is something besides *reason*, which sways him, and which determines him. Be it warmth of temper, be it weariness and impatience, be it partial fondness for novelty, be it what it will; if it is not *reason*, it is *prejudice* and *partiality*, (I except against unavoidable incapacity,) and the man is not *sincere* in the strict sense; which yet is the only sense that can be at all to the purpose. One might say then to such a person who pleads his *sincerity*, prove it, and we admit of it: *sincerity* without *reasons* to prove it is a *dead* sincerity. And we may here apply what St. James says in another case, with a very little change: "Show me thy *sincerity* without thy *reasons*, "and I will show thee my *sincerity* by my *reasons*." He that *proves* his point best proves his *sincerity*. There is no other way for it, unless a man will plead *ignorance* or *incapacity*; and then why is he confident? The sum therefore of all is, that the question about *sincerity* resolves at length into the main question in debate, and is to be decided by it. There might seem at first hearing to be something in the plea of *sincerity*; and indeed, taking it in the first sense, it might be certainly *known* to a man's self, if it could be of any service to him in the cause: but it is a point acknowledged on all hands, that a man's being thus *sincerely* a *sinner* does not make him a *saint*. As to *sincerity* in the latter sense, that would be of service to us, if it could be proved^p; but to *prove* it, is the same as to prove that *truth* and *reason* are on our side; that we are *clear* in the matter, and go upon *sure* grounds. So then, the pleading *sincerity*, in the present case, is only fetching a compass, to come round about again to the place where we set out. For all turns at last upon this; who has the *best reasons* to support his persuasion? If they who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity teach

^p See Rogers's Discourse of the Invisible Church, p. 22, 23. edit. 3d. Rogers's Review, p. 109.

false and *pernicious* doctrine, and it can be *proved* upon them, we are right in condemning them, and in refusing communion with them. We have no occasion to inquire into their *sincerity*; which, in whatever sense we take it, is an insignificant plea, and such as ought to be thrown out on both sides, serving only for amusement, diverting them from the business in hand.

It was upon these or the like considerations that I took occasion to say formerly: “We have nothing to inquire after your *sincerity*, of which God is Judge. Neither *civil* judicatures, nor *ecclesiastical* courts, ever proceed upon that bottom. Our business is, not to consider the *sincerity* of the men, but the *nature, quality, and tendency* of the doctrine. There have been sincere Photinians, sincere Samosatensians, sincere Sabellians, sincere Papists, sincere Jews and Mahometans. And indeed, what sects are there that have not *sincere* men amongst them?” To which I may now briefly add, that all sects have *many* who are *sincere* in the *first* sense of the word, and have *some*, probably, in the *second* sense also, but known to God only, who alone can judge how far their prejudices are *insuperable*, or their ignorance *unavoidable*. I was willing to repeat here what I had asserted in another place, because there is a gentleman to whom this plain doctrine has appeared *not a little surprising*¹. And thereupon he has been pleased to ask, “Is the Doctor willing to be responsible, at last, for the nature, quality, and tendency of all his notions?” To which I answer, willing or not willing, every man is *responsible*, at last, for the doctrines he teaches. And if they are *false* and *pernicious*, (unless the error were unavoidable,) they fall under the same condemnation with those *idle words*, of which *account* must be *given* at the *day of judgment*². But, that I also may ask a question in my turn, is that gentleman willing to be *responsible* for his *sincerity*, that is to say, for his

¹ Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 8.

² Reply to Mr. P. C.'s Letter, p. 52.

³ Matt. xii. 36.

impartiality in every view, free from all *biases* or *prejudices*? Or is he *sure* that he has no *culpable* neglects, no *precipitation* of judgment to charge himself with? When he can be able to say, he *knows* he has not, I presume I may as reasonably say, I *know* what the nature, quality, and tendency of a doctrine is: and I conceive, this is a much *surer* and *safer* rule to judge by, than what he proposes. A *well grounded* assurance must be had, either of our own strict *sincerity* and *unprejudiced* reason, or else of the *truth* and *justice* of what we espouse. Now, I conceive, in the general, it is much easier to come at the *latter*, than at the *former*, nay, and that the natural and regular process is to *prove* the *former* by the *latter*. The gentleman asks farther, “Is it impossible for him to be mistaken “in any of his inquiries into truth?” I know, it is very possible for frail and fallible men to be mistaken in what they *say*, though not in what they *prove*: and therefore one would take care to advance nothing as of moment to be believed, but upon *clear* and *sure* grounds, such as the reason of mankind ought to submit to. But this I shall say more to under another head. However, to return him a question, as before: *Is it impossible for him to be mistaken* (or rather, is it not very natural and easy for him to mistake) in judging of his *sincerity*? I understand it in the sense of *impartiality*, the only sense pertinent to the cause in hand. It is further asked; “May not some things “which he has, or however shall hereafter advance, differ, “*in some sort*, from the ideas in the divine Mind?” Here the terms, *some things*, *shall hereafter*, and *in some sort*, are so obscure and indefinite, that there is no returning a definitive answer, more than this; that what God has *revealed* concerning the *Trinity* is, no doubt, agreeable to the *divine Mind*: and that is all that we contend for, appealing to Scripture for it. However, here again, I presume, we can be at least as *sure* that our doctrine answers the *ideas* of the *divine Mind*, as we can be that our *sincerity* is such as God sees no flaws in. So the question returns; which method may we best trust to? which is

the surest and safest rule to judge by? By a man's knowing *himself* perfectly, or by his knowing the truth of things?

The author proceeds to tell us, that *sincerity* is a proper thing to be inquired after in such cases, and that *civil judicatures* at least do it, when any person is arraigned. But do they ever inquire whether the person arraigned might believe it *lawful* to *steal* in case of necessity, or might judge it his *duty* to affront the government, or to talk treason against the crown? If the plea of *sincerity* were to be admitted in such cases, it would never fail to be pleaded: we should then have new employment for juries, to sit upon men's hearts; and the *verdict*, of course, would be brought in for the criminal, unless he were weak enough to confess malice prepense, and that he acted against *conscience*. The law of the land, and the law of common sense too, has taken a shorter, wiser way, which is to presume that when a man has done an ill thing, he either *knew* that it was *evil*, or else *ought* to have known it. *Ignorantia juris non excusat delictum*, is, I think, the fundamental maxim they go upon. Every man is obliged to know his duty; and it is at his own peril, if he mistakes the *law* he is to be judged by¹. What room then is there

¹ Mr. Bayle, in few words, well illustrates this article. "There is good reason for not excusing an *ignorance of right* at human tribunals: for though it may possibly happen that a man is *honestly* and *innocently* ignorant of what the laws of the land ordain; yet as the judges cannot discern whether he speaks *sincerely* or no, they cannot take up with his excuse, for fear of the disorders which might happen upon it; since a world of malefactors and disturbers of the public peace might make use of the same justification. Therefore, to prevent a general evil, they will make no exception to this general rule, *Ignorantia juris non excusat*. This may possibly be unjust and very hard upon particular persons; but it is necessary to sacrifice something to the good of society.

"This is undoubtedly the reason why *human* tribunals admit no excuse upon an *ignorance of right*: but let us beware imagining that *God* proceeds by the same reason: as he is the *Searcher of hearts*, he knows most assuredly, whether such or such a person be under an *invincible* ignorance of *right*; and if he be, absolves him as freely as if the ignorance were only of *fact*." Bayle, *Supplem. to Philosoph. Comment.* p. 589, 590. Compare Rogers's Review &c. p. 104.

for the plea of *sincerity*? But the gentleman observes, that the “characters of such as are impeached *are often* in-“quired into, *and have* great weight.” Yes, in order to judge whether they are guilty of the *fact*, and how far it was designed and wilful. But, I believe, if it should appear that the *offender* transgressed upon *principle*, and persisted in it, not sensible of any fault, but taking upon him to be *wiser* than the *laws* or the *court*, and to correct his *judges*, such *sincerity* so pleaded would be so far from alleviating the crime, or mitigating the sentence, that it would do just the reverse: and the court would be obliged to judge according to the *nature*, and *quality*, and *tendency* of the fact committed, and not by the mistaken sentiments of the person arraigned. I return therefore to what I before said, that in the question which concerns our behaviour towards the impugnors of the Christian faith, we have nothing to do to consider the *sincerity* of the men, but the quality of their doctrine. As to the rest, God is Judge: and he will make all reasonable and merciful allowances for *unavoidable* failings.

But is it not hard and severe censure, (may some say,) to condemn those *sincere* men who mean as *honestly* as we can do, and to make their *guilt* the ground of renouncing communion with them^u? I answer: this is not a fair representation. That they are as *sincere* as we are in one sense, as *believing* what they teach, we admit; and it is nothing to the purpose: that they are *sincere*, as it signifies *impartial*, is the point to be *tried*; and it depends upon the issue of the main cause. In the mean while, we make, not their *guilt* the formal cause of condemning them, but their *corrupt doctrine*, which indeed generally carries guilt with it, but more or less according to the circumstances and capacities of the persons. Therefore we say not how *deep* their *guilt* is; of that God is judge: but this we say, that we should ourselves be guilty in a very high degree, if we either taught such doctrines, or did not

^u See Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 14, 23, 39, 40, 42, 44, 47.

fully and plainly condemn them, refusing communion with such as openly and resolutely *espouse* them. What we do in this case is not so properly damning others, not passing any peremptory judgment of their final estate, (to their own *Master* they stand or fall,) but it is conscientiously discharging a weighty trust, cautiously providing, first, for our own salvation, and next for the salvation also of as many as we have any concern with. If our adversaries be *honest* and *conscientious*, so much the better for them, and we heartily wish they may be found such before the high tribunal. We approve of what Salvian very mildly and tenderly says, in respect to this very case, so far as concerns all that conscientiously, and in the integrity of their hearts, differ from us: "They are *heretics*, but do not know that they are so. In short, they are *heretics* in our judgment, not so in their own: for they esteem themselves such good Catholics, that they even throw upon us the infamous charge of *heresy*. Such therefore as they are to us, we are to them. We *know assuredly* that they are injurious to the *divine* generation of the *Son of God*, in making him *inferior* to the Father: they, on the other hand, *think* us injurious to the *Father* in believing them both *equal*. *Truth* is on our side; but they *presume* it is on theirs. We in reality *honour God*; but they *think* their opinion does him most honour. They are indeed *undutiful* to God, but this they esteem a great *duty* of religion. They are *impious*, but they believe it true *piety*. They *err* therefore, but they err with an *honest* mind: not out of any hatred to God, but with affection to him, designing thereby to honour and show their love to the Lord. Though they have not the *right faith*, yet they think they have a perfect *love of God*. How they shall be *punished*, at the day of judgment, for this their error of a *false* persuasion, no one can know, except the Judge^x." Thus far we can go in our *charity* towards them: but our *charitable* dispositions

^x Salvian. de Gubernat. Dei, p. 100.

towards their *persons* ought never to bribe us to think favourably of their *principles*, or move us to desert the proper defence of *Gospel truths*, or hinder us from declaring that the corrupting the faith of Christ is in its own nature a *wicked* thing, is *detestable* practice.

It will not be improper here to make mention of a noted and useful distinction of sin or wickedness, into *material* and *formal*; one conceived to go along with the *matter* of the transgression considered in the abstract, the other conceived to make the *person* formally a transgressor and a wicked man. I dare not say, that every one who openly maintains the worst part of *Popery*, or *Judaism*, or *Mahometism*, is *formally* a wicked man: I know not how far *invincible* ignorance, or *unavoidable* incapacity, or *unconquerable* prejudices, (owing, suppose, to *education*, or to a degree of *enthusiasm*, or other particular circumstances,) may be pleadable in his favour: but still, after all the most candid allowances that can be made, I should not scruple to censure his opinions as *wicked*, (*materially* considered,) his doctrines *impious*, and his attempts to propagate them *vile* and *execrable*. They are truly so in the nature of the *thing*, abstracted from the circumstances of the *person*: and to a man that has the full and free use of his faculties, and opportunities suitable, they are crimes of the first magnitude, and ought to be censured as such. The gentlemen with whom I am now debating this point will not scruple to declare as much, with respect to the doctrine of *persecution*, and they are very severe against St. Paul^γ for practising upon it, though he was, in one sense, perfectly *sincere*, *honest*, and *pious*^z (so far as concerned his then present sentiments) in what he did. He went upon the doctrine of the Old Testament, in relation to *false prophets* and *blasphemers*, was right in his general principle, but wrong in the application. He acted not out

^γ Vindication of Mr. Nation's Sermon, p. 35. &c. Reply to P. C.'s Letter, p. 40. &c.

^z P. C.'s Letter to the Author of the Vindication, p. 38. &c. Rogers's Visible and Invisible Church, p. 24, 25.

of *envy*, *malice*, or other *secular* motives, like the Jews who crucified Christ: a *new* case happened which he had not considered so well as he might: he was so over-officious to do his presumed *duty*, that he stayed not to examine strictly whether it was *duty* or no; so eager and impatient to *serve God*, in his way, that he considered not whether it was really *-serving* him, or the *contrary*. This appears to have been his case; and a pitiable case it was. I question whether the corrupters of the Christian faith, many of them, could claim for themselves so fair an apology. Yet St. Paul was to blame, because the thing was evil in itself, and by the use of due care he might have known it. The same I say of *sincere* teachers of bad doctrines: the thing is *evil* in itself, and, generally speaking, they may, by a right use of their faculties, know that it is so. But whether they may or may not, it concerns us not to inquire: it is enough for us that their doctrine is *false* and *dangerous*, tending to subvert the Gospel of Christ.

IV. But it will be further objected, that we all along take for granted that our doctrines are *true*, and theirs *false*: and why are we so confident in this matter, unless we think ourselves *infallible*? The author of *Sober and Charitable Disquisition* is pleased to intimate, that though we will not *own ourselves infallible*, yet *in fact we avow it**. He endeavours to prove the charge thus; “In the point “in which you are *certain*, you are *infallible*, and where- “in you pretend to be *certain*, you do equally pretend to “*infallibility*: for *certainty* is, *cui non potest subesse fal- “sum*. You must have evidence for a point in which you “pretend to be *certain*, not only to put the matter out of “doubt, but enough to assure you a mistake is *impossible*. “I am *infallibly* certain two and two are four—it must “be, and cannot be otherwise; without such evidence “there is no *certainty*: and where error is *impossible*,

* *Sober and Charitable Disquisition*, p. 37.

“ *there is infallibility*^b. Nor can I see that any thing short of downright *infallibility* can justify the behaviour, (of the Trinitarians,) if that can. But to disclaim *infallibility* in words, and claim it in fact, is too common a practice, though no very commendable one^c. It is questionable whether either side have such evidence as will justify them in thinking a mistake *impossible*; without which there is no *proper certainty*; and if there be not, there is room for mutual charity and forbearance^d.”

I do not think it kind or fair in this instance, to bring in the word *infallibility*, where it has plainly nothing to do, only to throw an oblique reflection upon some persons who are far from deserving it: that is not a *sober* or a *charitable* method of debate. The sum of his argument, when the colours are taken off, is no more than this; that if we have not *demonstration*, as clear as in *mathematics* or *metaphysics*, on our side of the question, we ought not to insist upon it so far as to make it a term of communion. Now, suppose we should say we have, (though we say no such thing,) yet would that be what the world has been used to call *claiming infallibility*, or *pretending to be infallible*? Would it not be very wrong to say, that a man pretends to be *infallible*, only because he is very certain that the propositions in Euclid are infallibly true? Such an unmanly playing with words is unbecoming in any cause, much more in this. The infallibility of *science*, resting upon the nature of things, and the supposed truth of our rational faculties, is quite another thing from *personal infallibility* supposed to be an extraordinary gift from heaven, to a *pope*, or a *council*, or to a *church* at large. Things so distinct ought not to have been confounded. Whatever *certainty* we pretend to, we rest it entirely upon the *proofs* we produce, for the world to judge of, and not

^b Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 37.

^c Ibid. p. 39.

^d Ibid. p. 38.

upon any *personal* endowments. How foreign therefore, and beside the mark, must it appear, to speak of our pretending to be *infallible*? Indeed, the Papists have a hundred times told us, that we can have no *proper certainty* without *infallibility*: and if that were true, there is an end of the *Reformation* at once. The ground and basis upon which the Protestant name stands, and without which it would sink instantly, is, that there may be a *proper certainty* in matters of faith, doctrine, and discipline, without *infallibility*. They that endeavour to sap this true principle, undermine the foundation upon which we rest, and betray the clearest and best cause in the world, to *Papists* on one hand, and to *sceptics* on the other. I take this matter to be of exceeding great moment, and therefore shall not scruple the pains of considering it at large. I shall first represent the answers which have been given to the objection, (as urged by Papists,) in the words of our judicious Chillingworth: and I shall next consider what answer may be proper to give to the same objection, in the main, as dressed up anew by adversaries from another quarter.

1. Mr. Chillingworth writes thus: "Though we pretend
 " not to *certain* means of not erring in interpreting *all*
 " Scripture, particularly such places as are *obscure* and
 " *ambiguous*, yet this, methinks, should be no impediment,
 " but that we may have *certain* means of not erring in and
 " about the sense of those places which are so *plain* and
 " *clear* that they need no interpreters: and in such we
 " say our faith is contained. If you ask me, how I can
 " be *sure* that I know the true meaning of these places?
 " I ask you again, can you be *sure* that you understand
 " what I or any man else says?—God be thanked that
 " we have sufficient means to be *certain* enough of the
 " truth of our faith: but the privilege of not being in
 " *possibility* of erring, that we challenge not, because we
 " have as little reason as you to do so, and you have none
 " at all. If you ask, seeing we may *possibly* err, how can
 " we be *assured* we do not? I ask you again, seeing your

“ *eye-sight* may deceive you, how can you be *sure* you
 “ see the sun when you do see it? A pretty sophism!
 “ That whosoever *possibly* may err, cannot be *certain* that
 “ he *doth not* err. A *judge* may *possibly* err in judgment,
 “ can he therefore never have *assurance* that he hath
 “ judged right? A *traveller* may possibly mistake his
 “ way, must I therefore be doubtful whether I am in the
 “ right way from my hall to my chamber? Or can our
 “ *London carrier* have no *certainty*, in the middle of the
 “ day, when he is sober and in his wits, that he is in the
 “ way to London? These, you see, are right worthy
 “ consequences, and yet they are as like to your own, as
 “ an egg to an egg, or milk to milk ^f.

“ Methinks, so subtile a man as you are should easily
 “ apprehend a wide difference between *authority* to do a
 “ thing, and *infallibility* in doing it. The former, the
 “ Doctor, together with the Article of the Church of
 “ England, attributeth to the Church, nay, to particular
 “ churches, and I subscribe to his opinion: that is, an *au-*
 “ *thority* of determining controversies of faith, according
 “ to plain and evident *Scripture* and *universal* tradition
 “ and *infallibility*, while they proceed according to this
 “ rule. As if there should arise an *heretic* that should
 “ call in question Christ’s passion and resurrection, the
 “ Church had *authority* to determine this controversy, and
 “ *infallible* direction how to do it, and to *excommunicate*
 “ this man, if he should persist in his error ^g.

“ The ground of your error here is, your not distin-
 “ guishing between *actual certainty* and *absolute infalli-*
 “ *bility*. *Geometricians* are not *infallible* in their own
 “ science; yet they are very *certain* of what they see *de-*
 “ *monstrated*: and *carpenters* are not *infallible*, yet *certain*
 “ of the straitness of those things which agree with their
 “ rule and square. So though the Church be not *infal-*
 “ *libly* certain that in all her definitions, whereof some are
 “ about disputable and ambiguous matters, she shall pro-

* Chillingworth, p. 99, 100.

^f Ibid. p. 104, 105.

^g Ibid. p. 105.

“ceed according to her rule; yet being *certain* of the in-
 “fallibility of her rule, and that in this or that thing she
 “doth manifestly proceed according to it; she may be
 “*certain* of the truth of some particular decrees, and yet
 “not certain that she shall never decree but what is
 “true^h.

“Though the Church being not *infallible*, I cannot be-
 “lieve her in every thing *she says*, yet I can and must
 “believe her in every thing *she proves*, either by *Scripture*,
 “*reason*, or *universal* tradition, be it fundamental or not
 “fundamental.—Though she *may err* in some things,
 “yet she *does not err* in what she *proves*, though it be not
 “fundamentalⁱ. Protestants believing Scripture to be the
 “word of God, may be *certain* enough of the truth and
 “certainty of it. For what if they say the Catholic
 “Church, much more themselves, may possibly err in
 “some un-fundamental points, is it therefore consequent,
 “they can be *certain* of none such? What if a wiser
 “man than I may mistake the sense of some obscure
 “place of Aristotle, may I not therefore, without any ar-
 “rogance or inconsequence, conceive myself *certain* that
 “I understand him in some *plain* places which carry
 “their sense before them?—We pretend not at all to any
 “assurance that we *cannot err*, but only to a sufficient
 “certainty that we *do not err*, but rightly understand
 “those things that are *plain*, whether fundamental or not
 “fundamental. That God is, and is a rewarder of them
 “that seek him: that &c.—These we conceive both
 “*true*, because the Scripture says so, and truths *funda-*
 “*mental*, because they are *necessary parts* of the Gospel,
 “whereof our Saviour says, *Qui non crediderit, damna-*
 “*bitur*.

“I do heartily acknowledge and believe the Articles of
 “our faith to be in themselves truths as *certain* and *in-*
 “*fallible* as the very common principles of *geometry* or
 “*metaphysics*: but that there is required of us a know-

^h Chillingworth, p. 125.

ⁱ Ibid. p. 133, 134.

“ *ledge* of them and an adherence to them, as *certain* as
 “ that of *sense* or *science*; that such a *certainly* is required
 “ of us under pain of damnation, so that no man can hope
 “ to be in a state of salvation but he that finds in himself
 “ such a *degree* of faith, such a *strength* of adherence:
 “ this I have already demonstrated to be a great error,
 “ and of dangerous and pernicious consequence^k.

“ Though I deny that it is required of us to be certain
 “ in the highest degree, *infallibly* certain, of the truth of
 “ the things which we *believe*, (for this were to *know* and
 “ not *believe*, neither is it *possible* unless our evidence of
 “ it, be it natural or supernatural, were of the *highest* de-
 “ gree,) yet I deny not but we ought to be and may be
 “ *infallibly certain* that we are to believe the religion of
 “ Christ. For, 1. this is most *certain*, that we are in all
 “ things to do according to *wisdom* and *reason*, rather
 “ than against it. 2. This is as *certain*, that *wisdom* and
 “ *reason* require, that we should believe those things
 “ which are by many degrees *more credible* and *probable*
 “ than the contrary. 3. This is as *certain*, that to every
 “ man who considers impartially what great things may
 “ be said for the truth of Christianity, and what poor
 “ things they are which may be said against it, either for
 “ any other religion, or for none at all, it cannot but ap-
 “ pear by many degrees *more credible*, that the Christian
 “ religion is *true*, than the contrary. And from all these
 “ premises, this conclusion evidently follows, that it is *in-*
 “ *fallibly certain*, that we are firmly to believe the truth
 “ of the Christian religion.—There is an abundance of
 “ arguments exceedingly credible, inducing men to believe
 “ the truth of Christianity: I say, so credible, that though
 “ they cannot make us *evidently see* what we *believe*, yet
 “ they evidently convince, that in *true wisdom* and *pru-*
 “ *dence*, the articles of it deserve credit, and ought to be
 “ accepted as things *revealed* by God^l.”

^k Chillingworth, p. 140, 141—290.

^l Chillingworth, p. 295. alias p. 254. Compare Stillingfleet's *Rational Account*, p. i. chap. vi. p. 178, &c. 187, &c. 196. chap. vii. 205, &c. Com-

I have laid these several passages together, drawn out of this excellent writer: by which it may appear what kind of *certainty* is professed by Protestants, and how much the Protestant cause depends upon that single article. The sum is, that though we have not strict *mathematical* demonstration for matters of *belief*, so as to make *faith* and *science* the same thing, yet we have such a *certainty* as leaves no reasonable room for doubt, such as is sufficient to build *saving faith* upon, and as much *authority* also as is necessary to support it. And thus we get clear of Popish subtilty and sophistry, showing that there is a medium, namely, *moral certainty*, between *scepticism* on one hand, and papal *infallibility* on the other.

2. No sooner are we thus relieved on that hand, but presently we are attacked from another quarter, and with the same artillery as before, only a little differently managed, as it is now to serve different purposes. For here again it is alleged, that without either *infallibility* or *demonstration* we can have no *proper certainty*, nor any just *authority* to declare matters of faith, or to insist upon them as *terms of communion*: and the conclusion here aimed at, or what must naturally follow, is, to sit *loose* to every thing, unconcerned for the faith of Christ, cold and indifferent towards the great truths of the Gospel. Deists here and Papists there combine together to oppose the *truth*, and both extremes meet in one. But let us examine how our *new* adversaries manage. Their whole strength lies in one single dilemma, thus: "Either you have *certainty*, or you have not: if you pretend to *certainty*, that is claiming *infallibility*; if you renounce *certainty*, you have *no authority* to determine *faith*, or prescribe *terms of communion*." We answer, by distinguishing the *kinds* and *degrees* of certainty, and therefore do say, that though we claim not *infallibility*, yet we do claim

pare also Mr. Cumming, who has very fully and solidly treated this argument. Dissertat. on Scripture Consequences, p. 61—76. Considerations, &c. p. 315—321.

certainty sufficient to guard against *scepticism* or *heresy*, and to maintain just *authority*.

I shall first examine the invidious charge of our claiming *infallibility*. The author of the *Sober and Charitable Disquisition* intimates, as before said, that we disclaim it in *words*, but in *fact* avow it. The same thing has been said by a multitude of other writers : I shall cite one only for a sample, because he has urged it as ingeniously and sarcastically as a man could well do, in a *Dedication to the Pope*. “ Your Holiness is not perhaps aware, how near “ the churches of us Protestants have at length come to “ those privileges and perfections which you boast of as “ peculiar to your *own*.—You *cannot err* in any thing “ you determine, and we *never do* : that is, in other words, “ you are *infallible*, and we *always in the right*.” It may hereupon be observed, how this witty gentleman takes upon him to ridicule a very necessary distinction, between an assurance that we *cannot err*, and a sufficient certainty that *we do not err* : a distinction, which the judicious Chillingworth laid all imaginable stress upon, perceiving that the whole *Protestant cause* depended upon it. For if we cannot have sufficient *certainty* that in several things, relating to faith and worship, we *do not err*, how do we justify our separation from the Church of Rome ? If we are not *certain* that therein we *do not err*, then neither are we *certain* that she *has erred*, and that there was a *just cause* for leaving her ; but all must resolve into humour, fancy, fickleness, and unsupported persuasion. It was this very principle of a sufficient certainty, that we *do not err* in what we *prove*, which rescued us from the tyranny of those who pretend that they *cannot err* in whatever they *define*. The difference between those two is so great, and so palpable, that one would think it must argue either very slow faculties, or a perverse temper of mind, for any person to confound them. However, to give a more distinct idea of the two cases, I shall endeavour to represent

^m Steel's *Dedication to the Pope*, p. 2.

the difference to the eye in one view, in two opposite columns, corresponding to each other.

Popish Infallibility.

1. The Church *simply* infallible in what she defines.

2. The Church *says so*, is the last resort, and decisive.

3. Submit to *authority* in all instances whatever: for authority here stands for *proof*.

4. Absolute implicit faith in *man*.

5. Examination *superfluous* and *dangerous*: prove nothing, swallow every thing.

6. The subject obeys the *interpreter* at all adventures, and submits as to an infallible verity.

7. Be a thing ever so *unreasonable* or plainly *false*, (*transubstantiation* for instance,) it must be received as divine, though a *human* decision.

Protestant Certainty.

1. The Church *morally* certain in what she *proves*.

2. Not because the Church *says it*, but because *Scripture* and *reason* by her mouth declare it.

3. Submit to *authority* in such instances only, where you see no *good reason* to the contrary; for then it is *reasonable* so to do.

4. Absolute implicit faith in *God* only.

5. Examination allowed and approved: prove all things, hold fast that which is good.

6. The subject obeys his own *reason* in submitting to what is *proved*, and what the reason of mankind ought not to reject.

7. Nothing ordered to be received, but upon the foot of *reason* and *Scripture*, with great tenderness to *private* judgment: only taking for granted, that our *faculties* are *true*, and may, in things plainly proved, be depended upon.

From this summary view, it may sufficiently appear, that there is a very wide difference between the pretended

papal infallibility, and *Protestant certainty*: and that as the one is contrived to introduce and perpetuate all imaginable errors, so the other is undoubtedly the surest way to exclude all *pernicious* errors, at least, and to preserve the most weighty truths.

The ground of what I call Protestant certainty is *moral evidence*: which, though it comes not up to *infallibility*, or to the evidence of *demonstration*, yet is *certain* enough for all the purposes of *faith*, or of a competent *authority* to maintain *true* doctrine. "Our Church," as a judicious writer says, "no where makes *infallible certainty* of assent a necessary condition of faith, it being sufficient to make faith certain, if our *rule* be *infallible*, and that applied with *moral evidence*."^a

Moral evidence, for the most part, governs the great affairs of the world, while *rigid demonstration* serves rather for the entertainment of contemplative men, than for the uses of common *life*. And since God has so ordered both our religious and secular affairs, as to lay us under a necessity of submitting, in most cases, to *moral evidence*, he has thereby bound it upon us as a *duty*; so that if we have not strict *demonstration* for what we *believe*, yet it is *demonstration* that our evidence is such as must command our assent, under pain of incurring the *divine* displeasure. As to the nature, and quality, and force of *moral evidence*, in general, I refer the reader, for satisfaction, to an excellent writer, who has distinctly and fully considered it^o. I shall content myself with making only a few occasional observations.

It seems to me a prejudice done to religion, that the *learned* and *philosophical* sense of the words *probable* and *certain*, (so different from the common *vulgar* sense of both,) has been so often made use of by Divines. When a common Christian hears it said, that it is only *probable*, not absolutely *certain*, that Christ lived or died; or that

^a Fuller's *Moderation of the Church of England*, p. 142.

^o Ditton on the *Resurrection of Christ*, part ii. p. 93, &c.

the Christian religion is true, or the like ; how must it astonish him, or afflict him ? In the vulgar use of the words *probable* and *certain*, it is a shocking thought ; though in the *scholastic* sense all may be right, as there is no rigid or scientific demonstration of any matter of fact, or of any article of pure faith : and every thing short of that the Schools are pleased to call *probable* only, not *certain*. If we were to hear any one, in ordinary conversation, say, that it is *probable*, not *certain*, that there is such a city as Rome, Paris, or Constantinople, would not the man be thought mad ? Or if he were to say further, that it is *probable* only, not *certain*, that there was once such a prince as Alexander, or Julius Cæsar, or William the Conqueror, or Henry the Eighth, should we take him to be right in his wits ? And yet it is in such a sense only that Divines mean it, when they say, that the Christian religion is *probably*, not *certainly* true ; understanding at the same time, that it is as *certain* as any ancient fact can be, fully, perfectly, indisputably *certain*, according to what the world generally means by *certain*. I should think therefore, it were better to leave off the *scholastic* way, (which must needs give offence, and which few understand,) and to adapt our phrases to the common acceptance, as also to Scripture language. Look the Scripture through for the meaning of the word *certain* and *certainty*, and you will find that it stands for *certainty of facts*, which is *proper certainty*, when properly proved : and it is but sinking the idea, and confounding common hearers or readers, to discredit it with the low names of *probable* and *probability* ; which, in common speech, scarce rise higher than *doubtful*. I chose to mention this the rather, because I find that *infidels* have taken advantage of those expressions, to run down Christianity as not *certain*, but barely *probable*. And how that must sound to a common English reader, let any man judge.

I would observe farther, that the like mischiefs may

* See Christianity as old as the Creation, chap. xii. p. 184.

sometimes follow from an improper use of the word *believe*. Were any one to say, he *believes* there is such a country as France, or such a person as a Pope of Rome, he would presently be asked, why? can he *doubt* of it? That expression of *believing* commonly carries in it an idea of *doubtfulness*, and is used to denote a *diffident* assent. But when we would express any fact of which we have no doubt, we say we *know* it, or are *certain* of it. So here again there appears to be a difference between the language of the *literati*, and common speech, while the same ideas are not affixed to the same words, here and there. However, this latter case will not be apt to breed so much confusion as the former, though it may create some: which might perhaps be prevented by the addition of an *adverb*, when we are speaking of matters of faith, saying we *assuredly* believe, or *undoubtedly* believe thus and thus.

Now to return to the author of *Sober and Charitable Disquisition* 9. He objects to us, that we have not a *proper certainty* of what we believe, like as we have of what we *know*, as that *two* and *two* are *four*. It is granted, we have not. Belief is not strictly *science*, nor faith *vision*: what then? In his sense of *proper certainty*, there is no certainty that the sun *shines* when we see it, nor that fire *warms* when we feel it, nor that there is any such thing as the *sun* in the firmament, nor indeed any *material world*: for, I apprehend, philosophers are agreed, that there is no strict *demonstration* of these things^r. Have these things therefore no *proper certainty*? Yes, they have, and such as ordinarily makes stronger impressions than *abstract* reasonings, or *ideal* speculations, and are more out of the reach of all *doubt* to the bulk of mankind. So say I likewise of matters of faith; they have a *proper certainty*, such as things of that kind admit of, such as is fitted to common capacities, such as the world

⁹ *Sober and Charitable Disquisition*, p. 37.

^r See Clarke's Notes upon Rohault, part i. c. 2.

is governed by, such as passes for *undoubted certainty* in common language and common estimation, such as God has *ordained* for our use, and has *obliged* us to follow, and such as both our *present* interests and our *eternal* happiness are made to depend upon. So much for the *certainty* of matters of faith, considered in the general.

As to the particular point now before us, the *certainty* of it stands thus: we are *morally* and *indubitably* certain of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. And though we presume not to say, or to think, that we *may not* or *cannot* misconstrue Scripture, yet we have many and strong reasons to persuade us that in this instance we *do not*: and therefore it is *infallibly* certain, (as Mr. Chillingworth well argues with respect to Christianity in general,) that we *ought* firmly to believe it; because *wisdom* and *reason* require, that we should *believe* those things which are by many degrees *more credible and probable* than the contrary. Thus have we *sure* and *safe* grounds to go upon^s. And as we are in strict duty bound to re-

* I may here observe something of Mr. Bayle. In his Philosophical Commentary, (part i. p. 337, &c.) after taking notice, that the Romanists have perpetually reproached the Protestants as destitute of any *well-grounded certainty*, and that the Protestants had answered the objection a *thousand times over*: he adds, that it never was *fully* answered, *never can be*, in the common way, only it may be irresistibly retorted upon Papists: and the conclusion he at length rests in is, that God requires no more than a *sincere and diligent search after truth*. Mr. Bayle is so far right; but he forgot to tell us, how we may arrive at a *well-grounded certainty* of that fact, that we have made a *sincere and diligent search*, without prejudice or bias, without any culpable *sloth* and *negligence* in inquiring, or *precipitancy* in judging. There is no *mathematical* or *metaphysical* certainty as to this fact, which by him is made the main thing. *Moral certainty* is the utmost that any one can here pretend to, and that not so *great* as we can have of *matters of faith*: neither can our *sincerity* be any way so *certainly* proved, as by the *evidence* we produce for the doctrines we maintain. Therefore Mr. Bayle commits a fallacy, or is guilty of great forgetfulness, in making a *well-grounded certainty* of our *sincerity* the last resource, rather than the other; for generally speaking, it is not so *sure* or so *firm* a ground to rest on, as the *reasons* of things, or the *merits* of a cause. For considering how *obscure* the search is into the inmost springs of action, or persuasion, which are very involved and intricate, how *careless* men are apt to be in the examination, and how liable also to be imposed upon by *self-flattery*; I

ceive it as a *revealed* truth, so because it is a very *important* one, an article of the *foundation*, we are as strictly bound to *preserve* it, and earnestly to *contend* for it: and because one very proper means of *preserving* it, as well as of keeping ourselves *pure*, is to refuse *communion* (according to the general direction of Scripture in such cases) with those that openly impugn it, therefore a necessity is laid upon us so to act, and woe is unto us, if we act otherwise. But we do not therefore say, as is unkindly insinuated, *that there is not room left for mutual charity*: for we verily are persuaded, yea, and assuredly know, that our so acting is *charity* both to the *faithful* and *unfaithful*, and towards all mankind; and that the charging it as a breach of *charity* is hard and *uncharitable* censure, is judging according to *appearance* only, not according to *truth*.

All depends upon this, that men take care, in every thing of moment, to go upon *sure grounds*, to *know* what they do. That is the very thing which chiefly distinguishes *resolution* from *obstinacy*, *orthodoxy* from *heresy*, *wisdom* from *rashness*, and *righteousness* from *iniquity*. God has given us *rational* faculties to discern *truth* from *error*, and *right* from *wrong*: and we ought to be well *assured*, in whatsoever we teach, as of moment, that we have made that use of our faculties which we *ought* to have done, to discern between good and evil. It is not our *persuasion* that can justify us; there are many *fond* persuasions; and we are not commanded merely to obey our *persuasions*, (though we ought not to go against them,) but to obey the *truth*. It is not merely our *sincerity* that can support us, for of that we know nothing,

say, these things considered, it is much *safer* to rely upon the *moral certainty* appearing in things, than upon any pretended certainty we may conceive of our own *sincerity*. I believe, the fallacy in this case has been chiefly owing to the equivocal meaning of the word *sincerity*: for because in one sense, as opposed to *hypocrisy*, a man may easily *know* he is *sincere* when he is so; it has been too hastily concluded, that he may as easily *know* it in the other sense of the word, as opposed to *prejudice* or *partiality*.

in any just and proper sense, but by the *right* and *reason* of the cause; and we are not commanded to hold fast our *sincere errors*, but to hold fast *that which is good*.

But what, will some ask, do we then pretend to *know* that our doctrine is true? Is *faith* advanced into *knowledge*? To this I answer, that we *know*, not *scientifically*, but with *moral* certainty, which is *knowing* according to use of common speech; and though we do not strictly *know* what we merely *believe*, yet we *know* that we have such *moral* evidence for what we believe, as binds us to the belief of it. In this sense, we *know* what we do, and we have a *well-grounded* assurance that what we do is *right*, which is our justification. And this is what we ought always to have (I speak more particularly of *guides* and *teachers*) in points of *importance*, and where it is not allowed to *suspend*. Cannot we *know*, for instance, that a Deist is rash in rejecting all *revealed religion*? Yes, we *know* it as certainly, as that it would be rash to deny, that there is any such city as Rome or Constantinople; or that there ever were such men as Virgil, Horace, or Cicero. Cannot we *know* that a Jew is much in the wrong to deny that the Messiah is come? Yes, we *know* it as assuredly, as that a man would be in the wrong to deny that the twelve Cæsars lived some centuries ago. Cannot we *know* that the Popish doctrines of *transubstantiation*, *image-worship*, service in an *unknown* tongue, and the like, are not *primitive Christianity*? Yea, we *know* it as evidently, as that modern Rome is not ancient Rome, or that London is not Canterbury. Cannot one *know* that the Socinian interpretation of John i. 1. or of Hebr. i. 10. or of the texts relating to Christ's *preexistence*, is not the mind of Scripture? Yea, one may *know* it as certainly, as that a *counter* is not the King's *coin*, or that a *monster* is not a *man*. I give these instances to show, that it is not merely *persuasion* or *sincerity*, that we have to plead for our faith, but *certainty* and *well-grounded* assurance; such as is judged sufficient for *wise* and *considerate* men to go upon, and conduct themselves by, in se-

cular affairs of greatest consequence. We have no occasion for *infallibility* to support us in such a claim: common reason suffices, taking in the proper *helps*, and making the due use of them with humility and care, with sobriety and godly fear^u. Having gone through the most material objections I had met with, I may now proceed to the slighter and less considerable, but dispatching them in fewer words.

V. It has been sometimes invidiously suggested, that our zeal and constancy in contending so earnestly for what we call *faith*, is bearing hard upon our Christian brethren of an opposite persuasion, is afflicting and oppressing them, and, in short, is *persecution* and *Popery*. It can scarcely be conceived, that any sensible men should seriously advance such odd fancies, or that they mean any thing more by them than rhetorication and flourish. Yet certain it is, that such things have been offered with a *serious* air, and by men of no mean parts: I shall give some examples. One writes thus: “The humour of *creed* making and *creed imposing* is one of the *most grievous* instances of *persecution*, and the grand source of every other kind of it. If it be only their *good opinion* of us, that our fellow *Christians* suspend upon our non-assent

^u But here again it may be asked, may not a Jew, a Deist, a Papist, a Socinian, or an Arian, with equal confidence say, that he *knows* he is in the right? He may so, and probably will. Yet *truth* and *falsehood* have a *real* distinction in nature, and depend not on fond conceits, or strength of *persuasion*. If any man presumes to say, he *knows*, when he does not know, he deceives himself, and is *guilty* before God; unless some *unavoidable* incapacity, or *unconquerable* prejudice, which God only is judge of, makes him *innocent*. And in that case it is not because he delivers his *real* persuasion, (for it may be *impious* as to the *matter* of it,) not because it is *well-grounded*, for he only *thinks* it is; but it is because of his *infirmity*, which himself neither *sees* nor *knows*, (if he did, he would correct it,) that God acquits him. How much any of us may stand in need of such merciful allowances, we cannot say: but in the mean while, all we have to look to, or to trust to, is to be as watchful and careful, that we go upon *sure grounds*, as if no such allowances might be made us. Such *wary conduct* is well enough understood and practised in *temporal* affairs, where any thing considerable is depending: the like we are to observe in *spiritual*.

“to their *confessions of faith*, they, in a very *inhuman* and “*unchristian way, persecute us*. It is in itself *barbarous*,” says Mr. Marvel, “for these faith-stretchers, whosoever they be, to put men’s consciences upon the *torture*, to “rack them to the length of their own notions^x.” This declamatory talk has been gravely, solidly, and satisfactorily answered by a very good writer^y: and yet the objector chose rather to declaim again upon the same head, for several pages together^z, than to quit his false reasonings, or acknowledge his mistakes. To say the best of it, it is a very wanton way of talking in a subject of the last importance, and is making a jest of the liberties of mankind here, and of their happiness hereafter. If those gentlemen have been so *inhumanly* and *barbarously* persecuted, how is it that they have not yet assumed the title of *martyrs* or *confessors*? For *persecution* and *martyrdom* are a kind of correlates, which suppose and imply each other. And what is that *inhuman* torture, that *barbarous* persecution, which they have endured? Have they had trial of *cruel mockings* and *scourgings*, of *bonds* and *imprisonment*? Have they wandered about in *sheep skins* or *goat skins*, in *dens* or *caves* of the earth, for the sake of *truth* and *godliness*? No, but good Christians have *suspended* their *good opinion* of them, that is the grievance. And for what? Not for *thinking* as they please, (for thoughts are free,) but for overt acts of *heresy*, or perhaps *blasphemy*; for making *public* appeals to the people, in order to draw them off from listening to their better guides, to seduce them from the *faith* they have been baptized into, and to impose upon them such doctrines as must endanger their everlasting salvation. The kind and charitable endeavours of good men, whose province it is to prevent such fatal mischiefs in the mildest and gentlest way, (such as Christ himself has prescribed;)—these are the *inhuman*

^x Occasional Paper, vol. ii. numb. 1. p. 12, &c.

^y Preface to the Westminster Confession, p. 96—104.

^z Defence of the Scripture as the only Standard of Faith, by the Author of the Occasional Paper, p. 35—49.

and *unchristian* persecutions which those gentlemen complain of. But to be a little more particular, they must not take it amiss to be told, in return to their odd complaint; 1. That they are guilty of a most intolerable abuse of words and names, in speaking of *rack*, *torture*, and *persecution*, where, even by their own account, there is not so much as a semblance of them: for it amounts, after all, only to the *suspending* our *good opinion* of them. 2. In this way of giving *new* and *wrong* names to things, they may, if they please, make the primitive churches also, and martyrs, yea, and Christ and his Apostles, *persecutors*. The primitive discipline, by their account, will be most of it *persecution*; and so instead of ten *heathen* persecutions, (as they are commonly reckoned,) they may increase the number of persecutions to five hundred or more, and call them *Christian* persecutions, or rather *unchristian* ones, for that, it seems, is the name for them. 3. It is wrong in these gentlemen to furnish the Papists with fresh topics for *real* persecution. For since it will follow from this account, that *persecution* is *Scripture doctrine*, it may be pleaded, that *Papal persecutions* differ in *kind* only, or *degree*, from the other, but in the main are warranted by the New Testament itself, and by the universal practice of the Church in the best and purest ages. 4. This will likewise be furnishing *infidels* with new arguments against *Christianity*, as it is a *persecuting* religion: for it is certain, that the pretended *persecution* here complained of, is such as Scripture itself prescribes, as I have before proved. 5. But to come yet closer up to those complainants, let it be considered, whether they are not themselves the real *persecutors*, guilty of that very crime which they charge upon the churches of God. To *revile* men for doing their bounden duty, to load them with *reproaches* for *righteousness* sake, to *libel* and *defame* them for maintaining the *faith* of Christ in a *Christian* way, to *seduce* their flocks from them, and to demand at the same time to be caressed and honoured as *fellow Christians*; these are grievous *impositions* and *oppressions*, and may

amount to *persecution*, properly so called. They that refuse to conform to *order*, who submit not to *sound* words and wholesome doctrine, who give unnecessary disturbance, and assume more than belongs to them; they are the invaders of liberty, the *oppressors* and *persecutors* of religious and righteous men.

It will be said, perhaps, that *creed makers* and *creed imposers*, as such, assume more than belongs to them. But if that be a fault, it is a fault common to all parties: for they who impugn the doctrines of the Church are themselves as much *creed makers*, and *creed imposers*, by their *appeals* to the people, and by their *imposing* their own doctrines on the public in a clamorous way, (and generally with satire and invective upon all that dislike them,) as others are who impose their creeds in a more regular and authoritative manner. Much has been said against *creed making*, by many who have as long creeds as others, only not the same creeds, and who are as confident in dictating, and as dogmatical in defining, and as eager to impose their own sentiments, as it is possible for men to be. The question, properly, is not, whether there shall be *creeds* or no; for all parties are for them, under one shape or other, and always will be: but the real matter in controversy is, who shall have the *drawing* of them, or who shall *impose* them: and when men declaim against *imposing* of creeds, the secret meaning of all seems to be, that they like not that such a power or privilege should be lodged in any hands but their own. However, the fault lies not in imposing *creeds*, (where there is a competent authority,) but in imposing *false* doctrine for *true*: and therefore the complaint is wide, while it runs only in generals, against all *creed making*, and against *impositions* at large, especially as practised in the Protestant churches. We pretend not to impose articles of faith in an *arbitrary* manner, or to require any implicit belief in the *Church*: we require no man to receive them for *true*, because they are *ours*, but because they carry their *evidences* along with them, and will bear *examining*.

But it will be said, that the *Protestant* churches, however, do determine beforehand, that every person upon examination *ought* to find these things true which they have formed into *creeds* or *articles*. They do so, as to the main things at least; and where is the harm? It is no more than presuming that there are some things so *certain*, that the reason of mankind *ought* to submit to them, and that those things which they have defined are of that kind. To illustrate this matter farther, we may put a few cases: let the propositions, suppose, of Euclid be given into any man's hand to examine, there will be no presumption in telling him beforehand, that he will find them true: and if he afterwards says the contrary, it will be no breach of charity or ill manners to tell him, that either he has not duly examined them, or is not sincere in his report, or labours under an incapacity. Thus far will readily be allowed with respect to propositions of *mathematical* or *metaphysical* certainty: we may reasonably determine beforehand, in such instances, that they will be found *true*, upon a due examination, where capacity is not wanting. The like may be said of an *account*, which has been carefully cast up, and *proved* by the never failing rules of art: if any man comes after, and pretends to find an error in it, one may be assured beforehand that the error is his *own*, and that he has been guilty of some neglect in the casting it up. Apply this reasoning to cases of *moral certainty*: some of them are so plain, that a man may have as well grounded an assurance there, as any where. Let the question be about the truth of *Christianity* in general: a point so clear and so certain, that there is no uncharitableness in judging that the person who brings in a verdict against it has never fully and *sincerely* examined, or labours under some unconquerable infirmity. The like may be affirmed with respect to many particular doctrines contained in our *Creeds* or *Articles*. There is such a degree of *moral evidence* to attest them, that the reason of mankind *ought* to receive them. Now the imposing such doctrines, in those whose pro-

vince it properly is, is not *assuming*, but is discharging a weighty trust: and this is quite another thing from the *Popish* way of imposing what they please, forbidding men to *examine*, or so much as to *doubt* of what they *define*; because their Church, they say, is *infallible*. Our way supposes that men ought to *examine*, (if capable,) in order to know that the doctrine proposed is *true*: and we judge, with reason, that if they examine with care, and decide with impartiality, they cannot think otherwise of it. The foundations we go upon are, that *reason* is *reason* with every man; that human faculties are *true*; and that there is such a thing as moral *certainty*, and that it is *ground sufficient* for the governors of the Church to rest their own faith upon, and to hold out their light to others committed to their charge, and for whom they are so far responsible. Indeed, if the Church-governors should happen to administer *poison*, instead of *wholesome* food, there will then be reason for complaint: but let not the complaint run against *creed making* or *creed imposing* in the general, (which is foreign and impertinent,) but let the particulars be *specified*, wherein they have rigorously imposed something *false*, or at least *doubtful*; and if the charge can be made good against them, they then ought with the same zeal to throw such article out, as they keep the rest in. Upon the whole, there is neither *persecution* nor *Popery* merely in imposing *creeds*, &c. under pain of Church censures, or exclusion from the ministerial function: but there is good order and discipline in it, such as Christ and his Apostles have commanded, and the Church in the best and purest ages has observed, and such as is necessary to keep the unity of the faith in the bond of peace.

VI. There is another objection near akin to the former, namely, that for Church-governors to direct men what to believe, and to exclude them from the Christian Church, for impugning such *belief*, is *assuming* a kind of *dominion over the faith and consciences of other persons*. To which I answer; men may call those powers which

Christ has left with his Church by what *invidious names* they please, but they cannot thereby alter the nature of things. That Christ has appointed his ministers as guardians of the *faith*, and has empowered them to *excommunicate* the impugners of it, is a very plain case: and this is all that any Protestant churches plead for. Whether it should be called *assuming dominion over the faith and consciences of men*, (since it is assuming no more than Christ has commanded,) let the objectors consider. The objection is worded in ambiguous terms, which carry no certain or determinate ideas: the very phrase of *having dominion over one's faith*, though a Scripture phrase, is of obscure meaning; and it is hard to know whether St. Paul, who has used the phrase^a, disclaimed all such dominion, or only declined the use of it in some circumstances. If it means, prescribing to others *arbitrarily* for one's own pleasure or advantage, not pursuant to Christ's directions, (as some interpret^b,) then St. Paul disclaimed it absolutely: but if it means only the exercise of the power of *excommunication*, such as St. Paul did exercise over Hymenæus and Alexander, (for so others interpret^c,) then St. Paul only declined the use of it in some particular circumstances. Whatever the phrase means, this is certain, that the *Protestant* churches claim no more than a *directive* or *instructive* power over men's *faith* or *consciences*: Church censure and discipline affect only the overt acts^d, the *speaking, writing, teaching* perverse things,

^a 2 Cor. i. 24.

^b See Grotius and Hammond.

^c See Whithy and Wells.

^d "The laws of the Church regard only the *external* conduct. They do not require the *inward* belief of the mind in articles of faith, or the *secret* grace of the heart in moral duties. These things the ministers of Christ *teach* and *exhort*, but do not *command*. But the actions which they prescribe by their laws, are such *external* performances as are the *visible* signs, the natural and proper expressions of such *inward* acts and dispositions of soul, as *Christ* has commanded. And these laws they do not affirm to have any farther obligation on the *conscience*, than as the performance directed by them is a proper sign and expression of such an *inward* disposition of the heart as *Christ* requires, and consequently is

not the *thinking* or *conceiving* them : for how can a man be *censured* for private *thoughts*, which no one knows but himself ? But if any persons presume to *teach* false doctrine, and endeavour to draw disciples after them, then indeed they are accountable to the *Church*, as much as another kind of offenders are accountable to the *State*. Christianity is a *social* religion, and the members of it are bound to submit, in their external behaviour, to the rules of the *society*, under pain of forfeiting the outward *privileges* of it. And with what modesty, decency, or consistency, can any man claim a right of *perverting* his fellow Christians as he pleases, and at the same time deny others a right of doing what in them lies to preserve their people from falling into the snares laid for them ? It is to very little purpose for seducers to plead, that their *consciences* are oppressed by Church censures, or their *liberty* restrained : for would not the *consciences* of better men be more oppressed, and their *liberty* restrained, if they were obliged tamely to sit by and look on, while their flocks are torn from them, not permitted to make use of those *spiritual* powers which God has put into their hands ? Either therefore let the adversaries be content to keep their thoughts to themselves, and then nobody can have *dominion* over their faith at all ; or if they resolve to usurp upon others, and to take all advantages for spreading *false* doctrines, let them not be offended, if the guides of souls, whose peculiar charge it is, use their best endeavours, in a proper manner, to apply such preservatives as Scripture directs in those cases. This is not taking cognizance of the *inner man*, but of the *outward* behaviour only ; and that so far as such outward behaviour affects the prosperity or safety of the whole community, and might be of dangerous consequence to the *peace* of the *Church*, the *purity* of the Christian *faith*, the *honour* of *God* and *religion*, and the *everlasting* interests of mankind.

“ agreeable and subservient to his law. And when even the action is thus qualified, they do not pretend that the *conscience* is obliged by their law, “ but by Christ’s.” *Rogers, of the Visible Church*, p. 101.

Now, can the guarding, in a Christian manner, against such fatal mischiefs, be properly or justly styled affecting *dominion* over others? Or is it not rather making use of a power which God has given them, to hinder others from exercising a lawless dominion over Christians, and over the Church of God? Say, that the Church is *fallible*, what then? Are her adversaries *infallible*? Or are they less liable to abuse their *liberty*, than the Church is to misemploy her *authority*? But enough of this.

VII. There is another objection, of more weight than the former, namely, that the censuring of *heretics* may often provoke them to return the like censures; and thus a kind of reciprocation of censures may be carried on to the great disturbance of the public peace, and the destruction of Christian charity. A late writer expresses the thing in a very lively manner, but somewhat overstrained, thus: "May not Arians, in their turn, think "you guilty of as great sin, in opposing what they call "the truth? And may not Christians, on all sides, in so "great and indeed necessary difference of opinions, rant "and bluster against one another for the same reason, and "bring their constant accusations against those who cannot think and say as they do, for *denying* the faith; "or against those who have the same notions with "themselves for *betraying* it? But what then? Would "not Christian churches become cockpits, or fencing "stages?" In reply to what is here urged, I will not so far disguise my sentiments, as not to allow that it is a consideration of some moment: but yet there are other considerations of still greater moment, which must preponderate, and weigh down the scale. It is very certain, that *ungodly* men, for a cloak, will make use of the same pleas, and claim the same privileges, as *righteous* men do: and an *erroneous* conscience may honestly (if *invincibly* ignorant) usurp the same rights which a well-grounded faith has a clear title to. But still there is a very wide

• Reply to Mr. P. C.'s Letter, p. 44.

difference between *true* and *false*, between *right* and *wrong*: and it is no argument against the *use* of proper methods in a *righteous* cause, that others may *abuse* the same methods in a cause of a very contrary nature and quality. But I shall debate this point more distinctly, both from *Scripture* and *reason*, as it is a point of some moment.

1. Let us consider what light we can have from *Scripture*. It is fact, that the power of *excommunication* began to be misemployed, and to be turned against the Church itself, even in the times of the Apostles: for Diotrephes, loving to have the preeminence, *cast* some persons *out of the Church*^f, very unwarrantably, and even in defiance of St. John himself: yet that *usurpation* of power, or *abuse* of power, did not move St. John to condemn the *use* of it in a proper way. So far from it, that he threatened to repay Diotrephes in his kind, to excommunicate or depose him, for his so rashly *censuring* other persons. “Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious words &c.” We may observe likewise, from St. John’s Second Epistle^h, and from the charges given to the churches of Pergamus and Thyatiraⁱ, that the use of *excommunication* was to be retained in the Church, and was recommended from heaven by our Lord himself. And if it be said, that the Nicolaitans were an abominable sect, that alters not the case at all, so far as the present objection is concerned: for the more wicked any sect was, the more likely to retaliate upon the Church, and to make all possible disturbance when provoked to it. Notwithstanding all which, that accidental inconvenience, of a misapplication of power, was not judged considerable enough to counterbalance the great advantages and important uses of the same power rightly employed. And as we have the authority of an *Apostle*, who had the Spirit of God to

^f 3 John 10.

^g 3 John 10. See Bishop Potter on Church Government, p. 380.

^h 2 John 10, 11.

ⁱ Revel. ii. 14, 15, 20.

direct him in what he wrote, and in what he did; this alone may be sufficient to determine the point in question. For whatever we may be apt to imagine, (upon a superficial or limited view of circumstances,) it is certain, that *infinite* wisdom cannot err, and therefore by that direction we ought to abide. St. Paul seems to have left us a general rule for all cases of this nature, in these words: “Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries ^k, &c.”

2. As to the reason of the thing, it is a known rule, that when there is a *necessity* on one hand, it is in vain to plead *inconveniences* on the other. God has sent mankind a charter of salvation: it is *necessary*, above all things, that this charter be preserved inviolable; that it should not be falsified, perverted, frustrated. There will always be some or other, set on by the grand enemy of mankind, who will be labouring to corrupt and adulterate it, either adding to it, or taking from it; and if such practices are suffered to go on without rebuke, there is an end of Christianity. Here lies the *necessity* of watching against all such attempts, and strenuously resisting them; which cannot be done effectually without condemning the authors, and in the last result separating from them. Hence may arise mutual contentions and bickerings: let them bear the blame who give the offence, and are aggressors in the contests. Truths of everlasting moment must be supported, whether with *peace* or without. The Apostles were censured as men that *turned the world upside down*^l: the fault was in the *world*, and not in *them*. Their errand was *important* enough for the risking such a consequence. Our blessed Lord himself predicted what the *accidental* effect would be of the preaching of the Gospel; that it would “set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against the mother^m,” and so on; which perhaps, in ridicule, might be called making *cockpits*, or

^k Philipp. i. 27, 28.

^l Acts xvii. 6.

^m Matth. x. 35.

fencing stages: but the Gospel was *worth* it, and carried more than enough in it, to make mankind amends. As long as religion is held in any *value* or *esteem*, and meets with *opposers*, it must occasion *warm* disputes: who would wish that it should not? What remedy is there for it, while men are men, which is not infinitely worse than the disease? A total *contempt* of religion might end all disputes about it, nothing else will: and even then men's quarrels would not be *fewer*, but *more*; only they would be about matters of another kind, about every thing they should *value* or *esteem*. Upon the whole, it is better, I suppose, that we should have *some* religion, though we often contend about it, than to have *none at all*, and to quarrel ten times oftener about *trifles*. It has been complained of, and has been thought to be a shrewd remark, that *ecclesiastical history* is made up of little else but *religious contests* and *animosities of churchmen*. But, pray, what is the *history of mankind*, but a history of wars and contentions about something or other, which they had a tender *concern* for? And it would be strange indeed, if a history of *religion*, the greatest *concern* of all, should not contain many contests. Who could believe that men had *any religion*, if during the state of the Church *militant*, and while there is like to be great *opposition*, there should be no *warmth* or *vivacity* shown in defence of it? But this I have hinted more than once already. Now to return to our point. Though the *censuring* of men that corrupt the faith may provoke, may increase ill blood, &c. yet it *must* be done: and to decline it, when necessary, is a culpable moderation, a blameable timidity. And it is farther to be considered, that though rejecting some persons from the communion of the Church may inflame the quarrel between the Church and its adversaries, yet it tends to preserve and promote the *peace* of its members within: therefore St. Paul prescribes this very remedy, for the securing the *peace* of the Church: "Mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned,

“and avoid them.” So that though in some sense or respect, strict order and discipline may *accidentally* heighten differences, yet its true and natural tendency is *peace*; which it serves and promotes in one view, much more than it obstructs or disserves it in another. The *objection* therefore is grounded upon a false presumption, that *peace* suffers upon the whole, by such conduct; which we deny: for, upon a just balancing of the account, peace is very much befriended by it °, and true and proper *Christian peace* could not long subsist without it.

However, I allow there is so much weight in the objection which I have been answering, that the consideration of it ought to make us exceeding cautious and deliberate, as to the steps we take, and the heights we proceed to, in all cases of that nature: not to multiply *necessaries* without or beyond reason; not to divide upon indifferent *rites, customs, ceremonies*, as Pope Victor is known to have done; nor upon *dubious* points of discipline, as Pope Stephen did: who had indeed *right* on his side, as to the matter in dispute, but pushed it too rigorously; and St. Cyprian, though mistaken, was yet the *wiser, humbler, and better* man. Where the main cause is both *clear and weighty*, yet even there many *prudential* cautions should be taken; not to suspect any persons without sufficient evidence; not to be prying and inquisitive into their retired sentiments; (*ministers* only excepted, or *candidates* for the *ministry*, whose faith should be strictly inquired into †, before they be allowed;) not to proceed to rigours with any man, till all gentle measures have been first tried; nor to break communion with any who do not openly espouse and pertinaciously abet false and pernicious doctrines. These, I apprehend, are the prudential cautions proper in such cases: and there may be more of like kind, which every man’s common reason and discretion may supply. If *truth* and *peace* can be

▪ Rom. xvi. 17.

° See Rogers’s Review, p. 290, 291.

† 1 Tim. iii. 9, 10. v. 22.

maintained together, that is the most desirable conjunction which a good man can wish for: but if human affairs will not always admit of both, then the rule is, out of two evils to choose the least, or of two advantages to prefer the greatest. Where *divine* truths and *human* customs or dictates clash, we must "obey God rather than man:" in other cases, civility and tenderness towards all men, is true obedience towards God. It requires good judgment to discern, under various circumstances, the true and precise boundaries between sinful *men-pleasing* and Christian *charity*: but this is certain, we are as much (yea, and more) obliged to maintain the *fundamentals* of *faith*, as to keep up *peace*. And it would be but an ill way to preserve *peace*, (if it might be called *peace*,) by forfeiting our *Christianity*; or to enlarge *Christian* communion, by receiving those who, in a strict and proper sense, are not *Christians* 9. "Unity is not to be purchased at so dear a rate. It were a thing much to be desired, that there were no divisions; yet difference of opinions touching things controverted, is rather to be chosen than unanimous concord in damned errors: as it is better for men to go to heaven by divers ways, or rather by divers paths of the same way, than in the same path to go on peaceably to hell. *Amica pax, magis amica veritas* 1."

VIII. It has been sometimes pleaded, in bar to the principles which we have before asserted, "that no one ought to be excluded from Christian communion, whatever his faith be, provided he acknowledges sacred Writ for his rule, and is ready to admit any creeds or confessions drawn up entirely in Scripture terms." To which I answer, that a man who never declares his faith otherwise than in *Scripture words* is very safe from censure, and can never be excluded from Christian communion for *heresy*. It is the maintaining doctrines contrary

9 Vid. Suicer. in voce *Xpovianè*, p. 1540, 1541. Bingham, Antiq. b. i. c. iii. s. 4.

1 Chillingworth, p. 218.

to Scripture, in points fundamental, which makes a *heretic*; and therefore if a man never *interprets* it at all, but barely repeats the words, he is perfectly secure so far; and no one can condemn him. If this then be all that the plea aims at, it is foreign and impertinent to the cause in hand.

But if the meaning of the plea be this, that though a man teaches any wild doctrines whatever, yet if he does but father those doctrines upon sacred Writ, by any feigned and forced construction, (acknowledging Scripture all the while as his rule of faith,) he ought to be received as a fellow Christian; I say, if this be the plea, it is so manifestly absurd and ridiculous, at the first hearing, that it can scarce deserve a serious answer. For does the faith of Christ lie in *words* only, or in *things*? or is the repeating of the bare *letter* of Scripture, after a man has spirited away the *sense*, delivering *divine* truths, or contradicting and defeating them? To make the case plainer, I shall illustrate it by a resembling instance. Franciscus a Sancta Clara, a known Papist, (who published his book A. D. 1634.) contrived to make our XXXIX Articles speak his own sentiments, reconciling them with great dexterity, and most amazing subtilty, to the Council of Trent. Now, put the question, whether upon his thus professing his faith in *Protestant* terms, *popishly* interpreted, he could justly claim every privilege of a Church of England man, and whether we were bound to receive him as a *fellow Protestant*? A very little share of common sense, I presume, will be sufficient to determine the question in the negative. The like I say of any person who interprets our Christian charter to an Anti-Christian sense: he has no more right to be admitted as

* Nulla vox divina ita dissoluta est et diffusa, ut *verba tantum* defendantur, et *ratio verborum* non constituantur. *Tertullian. de Præscript.* c. 9.

Nec sibi blandiantur [hæretici] si de *Scripturarum capitulis* videntur sibi affirmare quod dicunt, quum et diabolus de *scripturis aliqua* sit loquutus; et *scripturæ* non in legendo consistant, sed in intelligendo. *Hieronym. Dial. adv. Lucifer.* p. 386.

a *fellow Christian*, than the other had to be received as a *fellow Protestant*. For though both admit the same *words* or *forms* which we do, yet so long as they teach things directly *contrary* to those very words or forms rightly understood, they are chargeable with *false* doctrine, in our account; and their teaching such doctrine in a manner so *insidious* and *fraudulent* is so far from alleviating their guilt, that it greatly enhances it. It may be said perhaps, in the way of reply, that the famous Abbot of St. Clare knew that he perverted the true meaning and intent of our Articles, while those that pervert the sense of Scripture may believe that they justly interpret it. If that be the case, it is true that it will make a difference: but I have no occasion to consider that difference here, being foreign to the present point. For supposing the perverters of Scripture to do it ever so wickedly and fraudulently, yet they may make use of the same plea, that they are ready to profess their faith in *Scripture words*, and therefore ought not to be excluded from Christian communion. A Valentinian, a Montanist, a Muggletonian, or any other wild sectary, by this rule, might equally claim Christian communion, provided he does not reject *Scripture* itself, and turn *infidel*. Now a plea which thus manifestly overshoots the mark ought to be rejected as an absurd plea, like as an argument which proves too much ought to be thrown aside as worth nothing. Those who *undesignedly* pervert Scripture should have something better to plead than their retaining the *words* of Scripture: otherwise their plea reaches no farther than theirs does who *industriously* do the same thing; for they also retain the same *words*. Upon the whole therefore, a man's retaining the bare *letter* of Scripture, while he corrupts the *sense*, is no sufficient reason for receiving him to Christian communion. For he is not only chargeable with *denying* the *faith*, as much as if he had rejected the text itself, but

• *Tantum veritati obstrepit adulter sensus, quantum et corruptor stilus.*
Tertull. de Præscript. c. 17.

with perverting the *words*, and defeating the *sense*, while he professes an outward veneration for both. I cannot better express this whole matter than a late excellent Divine of our Church has done, in the words here following: "It is not barely repeating so many *words*, but the " assenting to the *proposition* expressed by those words, " which Christ requires.—The *proposition* affirmed or denied in Christ's words is the doctrine of Christ. He " therefore who will not believe the *proposition* affirmed " in Christ's words, ought to be looked upon by the " Church as an *heathen and a publican*.—Let us take for " instance these propositions; *Jesus is the Christ; he " was crucified; rose again from the dead*: every word " and sentence of Scripture, in which these articles are " delivered, the most heretical among the Quakers will " profess their assent to; but then they mean only this, " that *Christ is an internal principle of light within them*, " that his *crucifixion and resurrection* are nothing else but " the *mortification and regeneration* of every believer.— " Now are these the doctrines of Christ, or are they not? " If they are not, if they are *contrary* to the doctrines of " Christ, then the persons understanding these Scriptures " in such a sense may justly be looked upon as *heathens* " and *publicans*; and, notwithstanding their readiness to " *profess the words of Scripture*, unfit to be admitted or " continued in the Church^u." Thus far Dr. Rogers, whose words I take to be a just and full answer to the objection I have been examining. The reader will observe, that I have not been considering how far *Scripture words* may or may not be proper in Creeds, Tests, Confessions, and the like, and in what cases it may be prudent or necessary to express the Scripture sense in phrases suited to times, places, and circumstances: questions of that kind fall not within my present argument, but have been largely and thoroughly treated of by others^x. All I

^u Rogers's Review, p. 399, 400.

^x Preface to the Westminster Confession, p. 105—142. Stebbing's Rational Inquiry, p. 19—56. Rogers's Review, p. 395—411.

am concerned to show is, that if any persons are found to pervert the *sense* of Scripture in any notorious manner, so as thereby to undermine the *essentials* of faith, their pretending a high regard for the *authority* of sacred Writ, or for the *letter* of it, is not reason sufficient for receiving them as fellow Christians.

IX. There is one objection more, which might have been brought in as an appendage to *objection the second*, had I sooner thought of it, but may conveniently enough have a distinct consideration here; namely, that the charging *heresy* as a crime of the first magnitude, seems to give too much countenance to the *sanguinary* proceedings of Papists against it. The objection runs thus: "If these charges against them are just, and their fellow creatures have any authority to chastise them for such enormities, I cannot see why the Romish Church should be blamed for *roasting* such accursed villains (as the Arians) among other heretics. If we think a traitor against an earthly potentate worthy of *death*, how much more one who vilifies the Lord of heaven and earth! Is a *murderer* of an earthly father obnoxious to death, and shall such a viper as this escape? If civil power have authority to punish heretics, such a villain deserves far severer penalties to be inflicted on him, than multitudes of others whose injuries to their neighbours expose them, by our statute-laws, to the gallows²." The sum of this argument, so far as it may be called an argument, amounts to thus much; that it is wrong to charge *heresy* in general, or *Arianism* in particular, with *wickedness* and *impiety* to any high degree, since it is neither *felony* nor *treason*: or if it be as *bad*, or *worse* than *either*, then the Papists are justified in all their *sanguinary* proceedings, which among Protestants is confessedly absurd. To which I answer, that the objection proceeds upon several

¹ Vindication of Mr. Nation's Sermon, p. 12. Compare Mr. P. C.'s Letter in answer, p. 23, 24.

² Reply to Mr. P. C.'s Letter, p. 21.

false suppositions or suggestions : as 1. That those who plead only for *spiritual reproofs or censures* are pleading at the same time for *civil penalties*. 2. That the magnitude of crimes is to be measured by what passes in *civil courts*. 3. That *civil courts* look strictly to the *demerits* of the criminal, and not rather to the *necessities* of State. In opposition to these and the like mistakes, I observe :

1. That *Scripture* itself warrants and commands spiritual reproofs and censures ; which is a point very foreign to that of *civil penalties*. St. Jude, St. Peter, St. John, St. Paul, and Christ himself, are often very sharp and poignant in their *reproofs and censures*, where they had no thought of exposing the offenders to *civil penalties*, or of justifying any *sanguinary* proceedings. St. Jude scruples not to call the heretics of his time *ungodly men, deniers of the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, filthy dreamers, despisers of dominion, followers of Cain, Balaam, and Core, raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame, wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever* : and yet amidst all this severe, but just reproof, or satire, I presume, he never would have advised the correcting them by *fire and faggot*. St. Peter treats the same men with the like sharpness of style, in his Second Epistle : but it would be injurious to conclude from thence, that he was for *sanguinary* measures. St. John, in his Epistles, gives very hard names to heretics, calling them *antichrists*, &c. yet this does not prove that he was for using any *violent* methods with them. St. Paul describes the heretics of his time in very black characters, such as they deserved, yea, and pronounced them *accursed* ; and yet it does not appear that he would have approved the *roasting* of them, had they been much greater *villains* than they were. *Shaming* them, *humbling* them, and bringing them to *repentance*, that their "souls might be saved in the day of the Lord "Jesus," was the utmost hurt he intended them. Our blessed Lord himself rebuked many with great sharpness,

calling them *hypocrites, blind guides, children of hell, fools, whited sepulchres, serpents, vipers*^a, and the like: and yet it does not appear, that he would have approved any violent and sanguinary proceedings with those very persons. Therefore it is wrong to furnish the Romanists with arguments for their *cruelties*; as if *civil* penalties were *just*, wherever smart *rebukes* are proper; or as if it were warrantable to punish according to the *degree* of wickedness, though the wickedness be of such a kind as falls not properly under *civil* cognizance.

2. There may be crimes much greater than *felony* or *treason*; such as *apostasy*, (which is “crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame,”) *blasphemy* against the Holy Ghost, and some kinds of *heresy*. Certainly, it may be lawful for Christian Divines to set forth those wickednesses in their proper colours, and they ought to do it: though at the same time they may desire that the offenders in such sort may rather *live* to repent, than suffer *death*, or any *civil* penalties. And what if *felons*, or *traitors* against the State, be punished with *death*? It does not from thence follow, that they are the *greatest* of sinners; but reasons of government require, that crimes which more particularly affect the State, should be punished by the State: the rest are left to the *censures* of the Church, and the righteous judgment of God.

3. And I must further observe, that civil penalties look not merely at the *demerits* of the criminal, but the *necessities* of the civil community. Civil governors do not, cannot observe any exact proportion: God only can do it, in his final retributions. *Theft* and *murder* are crimes of a different magnitude; yet they are equally liable to *capital* penalties. As to *heresies* of such a kind, they may be greater sins than either in God’s sight: but it is not so *necessary* for a State to take cognizance of them, unless they break in upon *civil* peace. *Felonies* hurt many

^a See Matt. xxiii.

innocent men, who have no possible way to escape: none can be hurt by *heresies* (after proper warning given) but by their *own consent*. And therefore if *spiritual censures*, reproofs, admonitions, and other the like preservatives, be duly applied, those are ordinarily sufficient in cases of this nature: for if any, after such warnings given, will still listen to *deceivers*, and run in with them, they perish with their eyes open, and may take the blame to themselves. I mention this as one reason among many, why *heresies*, though supposed to be crimes of the first magnitude, yet ought to be treated in a milder way than crimes against the State. And I shall subjoin another reason to enforce the former, namely, that when we speak of heresies as heinous crimes, we mean as *materially* considered, not determining whether the men are *formally* so wicked as those expressions amount to: which again makes a sensible difference between this case and the other of *felonies* or *treasons*, where the offenders commonly sin directly against *conscience*, and cannot plead so much as a *good* meaning or design. However, that favourable presumption, pleadable in excuse for *heresies*, ought to be no bar to *spiritual* censures. For if the persons offend *wilfully*, then no censure of that kind can be thought severe: and if they offend *ignorantly*, such awakening admonitions may be of great use to them, to recover them from their stupid lethargy. And if the effect answers, they are delivered from a doubtful state, which at most could promise them *pardon* only, or rest them upon uncovenanted mercy, to a state of well-grounded hope and joy, entitling them to a reward: but this I hinted before. Upon the whole, there appears no force in the objection, that *heretics* ought either to be punished with death, or *not censured* as *blasphemers* and *grievous* sinners. *Extremes* are always wrong, whether of mildness or severity: and there is a medium between taking *violent* measures with them, and treating them as *fellow Christians*. The sin of *corrupting* the faith, *dividing* the Church, and *seducing* the people, cannot easily be too much aggravated, in order to create

a just *abhorrence* of it: and it is the more necessary, because ordinarily men are not so apprehensive of the heinousness of this sin, as they are of the iniquity of *treason*, or *felony*, or gross *immoralities*.

I have now finished what I intended as to the argumentative part: but it remains still to confirm the main thing by the *judgment* and *practice* of the *ancients*, who may be properly called in, and will be found to be of considerable weight in the controversy: if the Scripture be plain to us now, in all things *necessary*, the same Scripture was undoubtedly *plain* to them, and to them more especially: and therefore, their *judgment* or *practice* cannot but be of *use* to us, if it be only to render *plain* things still *plainer*, as there are degrees of plainness.

After I had finished this chapter, I had the pleasure of reading Mr. Ball's little treatise of 33 octavo pages, in answer to most of the same *objections*^b which I have been considering. If I may be allowed to give my judgment of it, it is written with great strength and solidity, without colouring or disguises, and is extremely well suited to common capacities. One shall not easily find more good sense and close argument in so short a compass. The Sober and Charitable Disquisition, as I apprehend, was intended by way of reply to that pamphlet of Mr. Ball's. But every discerning reader who shall compare the two performances together, will easily perceive the difference between *artificial* logic and *natural*, between laboured *subtilties* and plain naked *truth*.

CHAP. VI.

A summary View of the Judgment and Practice of the primitive Churches, in Relation to the Necessity of believing the Doctrine of the Trinity.

THE very judicious and learned Bp. Bull has repre-

^b An Answer to some common Objections made against those Ministers in the West, who have appeared in Defence of the Doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity and its Importance. Written with all plainness, for the use of private Christians, by John Ball. Exon: printed by A. Brice, &c. A. D. 1727.

sented this matter in the fullest and clearest light, in a set treatise, professedly written by way of reply to Episcopus, as I have before hinted in the entrance. To him therefore I refer such readers as will be at the pains to look thoroughly into the subject of this chapter; while I content myself with giving a summary view of the main things, interspersing here and there a few slight observations, which may be, as it were, supplemental to that great work. There are three ways of coming at the sentiments of the primitive Church, as to the *necessity* or *importance* of believing any doctrine: 1. By consulting the ancient Creeds, conceived to take in the most *important* articles of faith, when rightly understood. 2. By observing what doctrines were all along condemned as *impious* and *heretical*. 3. By collecting the testimonies of *Fathers* declaring their *own* sentiments, or the *Church's*, or both, as to what doctrines are *important*, or what opinions pernicious and dangerous.

I. I shall begin with Creeds. Here it is observable, that the doctrine of the Trinity, implicit or express, always made an article in the ancient Creeds: nay, several learned men have conceived, that in the earliest times it made up the *whole*^c. Episcopus himself was of opinion that the ancient baptismal Creed was no more than this: "I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost^d." He designed, by the observation, to serve his own *hypothesis*, viz. that the divine eternal generation of the Son was not inserted in the Creeds from the beginning. But he did not consider how much at the same time he disserved his own cause another way, by making the doctrine of the Trinity so *important*, as to have been the *sole* article, (if I may so speak,) or entire matter of the first Creeds.

^c Bull. Judic. Eccl. Cathol. cap. iii. s. 3. p. 308. cap. vi. s. 80. p. 331. Wall, Hist. of Inf. Baptism, part ii. cap. 9. sect. 11. p. 491.

^d Antiquissimum, quodque in prima baptismi administratione jam inde ab ipsis apostolorum temporibus usitabatur, hoc erat: *Credo in Deum Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum*; nempe ad præscriptam ab ipso *Jesu* formulam. *Episcop. Institut.* lib. iv. c. 34. p. 340.

Nothing can be stronger for that doctrine, than that the ancient Creeds should be comprised in these few words: "I believe in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;" since it is declaring the sacred Three to be the *one God*^e, and recommending that faith as the *prime* thing, or the *one thing* necessary, without which no man could be a Christian. Bp. Bull very justly observes, that the short Creed now mentioned expressed the doctrine of the Trinity in a clearer, closer, and stronger manner than some of the more enlarged Creeds afterwards did. For the inserting of additional articles, time after time, carried the words *Son* and *Holy Ghost* so far off from the word *God*, that it might look as if that high title, which belonged indifferently to all three, was there applied to the *Father* only: though the compilers of those larger Creeds really designed the same *common* application of the name *God*, as before^f. From hence therefore it appears, that allowing Episcopius the supposition which he goes upon, in relation to the short concise form of the first baptismal Creed, yet it is so far from favouring his cause, that it makes against him; since that form so worded carries in it a confession of the *three* divine Persons being the *one true God* of Christians: and if the Creed in the first age

^e Perspicuum est in hac formula, *Credo in Deum, Patrem Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum*, vocem *Deum* ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀδὸς ad omnes tres, nempe *Patrem, Filium et Spiritum Sanctum* referri. Quod Græci adhuc clarius exprimunt; Πιστεύω εἰς τὸν Θεόν, εἰς Πατέρα, εἰς Υἱόν, καὶ εἰς ἅγιον Πνεῦμα. Ita sane hanc brevem confessionem veteres intellexerunt. Hinc Tertullianus (adv. Prax. cap. 13.) communem Christianorum de Patre, Filio, et Spiritu Sancto fidem exponens, ait: *et Pater Deus, et Filius Deus, et Spiritus Sanctus Deus, et Deus unusquisque*. Cyprianus itidem, &c. *Bull. Judic.* cap. iv. sect. 3. p. 308.

^f Mihi sane videtur in his paucis verbis: *Credo in Deum, Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum*, magnam illam veritatem, nempe *Filium et Spiritum Sanctum*, usum esse cum *Patre Deum*, aliquatenus clarius exprimi quam in fusiore quibusdam symbolis quæ subsequuta sunt. Nam per addita illa post verba, *Credo in Deum Patrem*, et adjectiones post mentionem *Filii*, non repetita voce *Deum* in articulis de Filio, et Spiritu Sancto, videri potest, et nonnullis visum est, *Dei* appellatio ad solum Patrem pertinere; plane contra mentem ac sententiam eorum qui latiora illa symbola considerant. *Bull. ibid.* p. 309.

contained no more, then that very doctrine must have been looked upon, from the beginning, as the sum and substance of Christianity.

As to the question about the *length* of the apostolical Creeds, or the *number* of articles they contained, learned men may offer their conjectures, and have done it: but perhaps, after all, we have not sufficient light to determine any thing with *certainty*. What I at present apprehend of that matter, I shall express distinctly, in the particulars here following. 1. It appears to me not improbable, that the earliest Creeds, as they took their rise from the form of baptism, contained little or nothing beyond it. There is a short Creed of that kind still extant in Cyril^h, comprehending but one single article, besides the article of the Trinity. And I may observe, that the shorter form of the Roman Creed, (called the Apostles',) published by Usherⁱ, seems to carry some marks of its having been formerly shorter, by its bringing in the article of the Holy Ghost in this abrupt manner, "and in the Holy Ghost:" words which came in very aptly in the primitive form, when they immediately followed "and in the Son;" but which would appear abrupt, after several new insertions made between the two articles. Wherefore to salve that appearing abruptness, the Church afterwards striking out *and*, inserted *I believe* in that place, making the article run, as it does at this day, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, &c." This observable circumstance relating to that Creed is a confirmation of the opinion, that the *first* Creeds (in some places at least) were of such a kind as Episcopus mentions. 2. It appears to me farther probable, that when the Creeds ran

^g See Critical History of the Creed, p. 33, &c. Grabe in Annotatis ad Bulli Judic. cap. 4, 5, 6. Bingham, Eccles. Antiq. lib. x. cap. 3. sect. 7. Rogers's Review &c. p. 261—271. Berriman's Historical Account &c. p. 21, &c. Buddei Isagoge, vol. i. p. 441, &c.

^h Πιστεύω εἰς τὸ Παῖσιν, ἔτι εἰς τὸ Τίον, ἔτι εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα, ἔτι εἰς τὸ βασιλευμενον μυσταίον. *Catech. Mystag.* i. n. 6.

ⁱ Usher de Symbolis, p. 6, 9.

in that short concise form, yet the *interrogatories* to and *answers* of the *catechumens* at baptism were fuller and more explicit. Tertullian takes notice, that the *responses* in baptism were then somewhat larger than the model laid down by Christ^k, meaning, than the *form of baptism*: and he refers the enlargement of the *responses* to immemorial custom or tradition. Firmilian of the third century speaks of the *Symbol*, or *Creed of the Trinity*, and of the prescribed *ecclesiastical interrogation*, and seems to make them *distinct*, supposing that the *Symbol* of the Trinity contained less than the other. But if the *whole* ran under the name of the *Creed of the Trinity*, even that shows what was looked upon as the *principal* thing in the *Creed*, giving denomination to the *whole*: and it affords a probable argument, that, at first, the *whole* was comprised in it. 3. It is not unlikely that some of the *additional* articles might have been inserted into the *Creeds*, in the very age of the *Apostles*, in opposition to the *heresies* then breaking out. This *hypothesis* appears to me much more probable, than that such articles should be inserted in opposition to *Paganism* or *Judaism*. It was needless to caution the new converts against *Paganism* or *Judaism*, which they had formally renounced: but it might be necessary to guard them against *false Christians*, who pretended to follow the same *rule of faith*, and to admit the same *Scriptures*. This supposition much better accounts for the article of "Maker of heaven and earth," being so long omitted in the Roman *Creed*, (perhaps for six or seven centuries,) though it was inserted in other *Creeds*, where *heresies* gave occasion for it^m. And this also best accounts for the observable variety in the *additional* articles to the ancient *Creeds*: because the several churches adopted those articles which suited their

^k Dehinc ter mergitatur, amplius aliquid respondententes quam Dominus in Evangelio determinavit. *Tertull. de Coron.* c. iii. p. 102.

^l Cui nec *Symbolum Trinitatis*, nec *interrogatio legitima* et *ecclesiastica* deficit. *Cyprian. Opp. Ep.* lxxv. p. 223.

^m See *Critical History of the Apostles' Creed*, p. 96—106.

then present circumstances, according as they found the faith of Christ most endangered in this or that particular^a, by the *heresies* then and there reigning. I pretend not to propose this as *certain* fact, but as a *probable*, or the most probable opinion^o. The sum of the whole matter seems to be well and justly expressed by a celebrated writer, as follows: “Not long after the Apostles’ days, and even “in the apostolic age itself, several *heresies* sprung up in “the Church, subversive of the *fundamentals* of Christianity: to prevent the malignant effects whereof, and “to hinder such *heretics* from an undiscernible mixing “themselves with the *orthodox* Christians, as also to “establish and strengthen the true believers in the *necessary truths* of the Christian religion, the Christian verities opposite to those *heresies* were inserted in the Creed; “and together with those other articles, which had without intermission been constantly used from the time of “the Apostles, were proposed to the assent and belief of “all persons who came to be baptized^p.”

Now, to return to the doctrine of the Trinity, it is very certain, that that always made either the *whole* or the *principal* part of the first Creeds: and therefore in every view, and upon all hypotheses, it must have been looked upon as a *prime* verity, a *fundamental* doctrine of *Christianity*. But it may be pleaded perhaps, (as indeed it has been pleaded of old time^q, as well as since,) that the ancient Creeds are not *explicit* as to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, in the commonly received sense. To which the

^a See my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 195, &c. *Critical History of the Athanasian Creed*, vol. iv. p. 309.

^o Proxime illi citra controversiam ad verum accedunt, qui symbolum hocce (Romanum) ex solenni baptismi formula, qua baptizandi, se credere profitebantur, in *Deum Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum*, enatum existimant; ita quidem, ut subinde additamenta quedam, *hereticorum*, qui ecclesiam turbabant, erroribus opposita adjicerentur, donec in eam, qua hodie conspicitur, formam exurgeret. *Buddæi Isagog.* vol. i. p. 443.

^p *Critical History of the Apostles’ Creed*, p. 38.

^q See Austin de Fide et Symbolo, cap. i. p. 151. tom. vi. Bened. edit. Fulgentius in Fragment. xxxvi. p. 652. edit. Paris.

answer, in short, is this: that though all the ancient Creeds are not equally *explicit* in that doctrine, (and good reasons may be assigned why they are not,) yet even those which are least explicit, do however contain the main doctrine briefly wrapped up, provided they are but interpreted according to the real meaning and intent of the compilers, as they ought to be.

I. I say, *first*, that all the ancient Creeds are not equally *explicit*; for which good reasons may be assigned, as shall be seen presently. Some of the early Creeds are very full and *explicit* in the doctrine, considering the time when they were made, long before the Trinitarian controversy was come to any such height as it grew up to afterwards. The Creed of Jerusalem preserved by Cyril, (the most ^r ancient perhaps of any now extant,) is very express for the *Divinity* of God the Son, in these words: "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, *true God*, begotten of the Father *before all ages*; by whom all things were made^s." Expressions which seem directly pointed at the Cerinthians, and others, who in the earliest times opposed the *Divinity* of Christ^t.

There is a Creed, or fragment of a Creed, in Irenæus, which plainly enough intimates the real and proper *Divinity* both of the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*. I shall cite such parts of it as are most to our purpose. "There is one God omnipotent, who made all things (out of nothing) by his *Word*—not by *angels* or by *powers* separate from his own mind; for the God of all *needs* nothing, but by his own *Word* and *Spirit*, makes, orders, and governs all things, and gives being to all^u." Here the

^r Ball. Judic. Eccles. cap. vi. n. 5. p. 325. Toutée in Cyrill. Hierosol. p. 82.

^s Καὶ τις ἐκ Κρίστων Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο. Cyril. Hierosol. p. 159. Conf. 114, 137, 149.

^t Vid. Ball. Judic. Eccles. c. vi. n. 16. p. 330.

^u Unus Deus omnipotens qui omnia condidit per *Verbum* suum—non per angelos, neque per virtutes abscissas ab ejus sententia; nihil enim indiget omnium Deus: sed per *Verbum* et *Spiritum* suum omnia faciens, et

reader will observe, that the *Word* and *Spirit*, the *Son* and the *Holy Ghost*, are manifestly distinguished from all *creatures*, from all the things *made*: and it is the known doctrine of Irenæus, that the *Word* and *Spirit* are the very *self* of the *Father* ^x in a qualified sense, reckoned to him, included in him. But let the reader, who desires fuller satisfaction, take along with him ^y Mr. Alexander's excellent observations upon this and two or three more the like places of Irenæus, and he will find how strong an attestation they amount to, to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity, as now received, was then looked upon as the *summary and groundwork of all that Christians believed*. There is another Creed of Irenæus, wherein the *Divinity* of Christ, the doctrine of *God incarnate*, is expressed in strong terms. *Christum Jesum Dei Filium: qui propter eminentissimam erga figmentum suum dilectionem, eam quæ esset ex virgine generationem sustinuit, ipse per se hominem adunans Deo, &c.* *Iren.* lib. iii. c. 4.

There is a like Creed in Tertullian, fully expressing the *Divinity* of God the *Son*, and obliquely intimating the *Divinity* of the *Holy Ghost*; which however is known to be Tertullian's express doctrine elsewhere, in more places than one^z. His Creed runs thus:

“ We believe in one God, but under this *dispensation*,
 “ which we call the *economy*, that the one God hath a
 “ *Son*, which is his *Word*, who proceeded from him, by
 “ whom *all things* were made, and without whom no
 “ thing was made. He was sent from the Father to the
 “ *Virgin*, and was born of her, both *God* and *man*, Son
 “ of *man*, and Son of *God*—who afterwards, according

disponens, et gubernans, et omnibus esse præstans. *Iren.* lib. i. cap. 22. p. 98. Bened. edit.

^x Fecit ea per *semetipsum*, hoc est, per *Verbum* et *Sapientiam* suam: adest enim ei semper *Verbum* et *Sapientia*, Filius et Spiritus, per quos, et in quibus, omnia libere et sponte fecit, p. 253.

Fecit ea per *semetipsum*, hoc est per *Verbum* et *Sapientiam* suam, p. 163.

^y Alexander's Essay on Irenæus, p. 19. Printed for J. Clark and R. Hett, 1727.

^z Tertull. contr. Prax. cap. 9, 13, 30.

“to his promise, sent from the Father the *Holy Ghost*,
 “the Comforter, the Sanctifier of the faith of those who
 “believe in the *Father*, and the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*.
 “This is the rule which has come down to us from the
 “beginning of the Gospel^a.”

In the next century we have the famous Creed of Gregory Bishop of Neocæsarea, commonly called Thaumaturgus, on the account of the many *miracles* which God wrought by him. The Creed is as express and explicit as possible for the doctrine of the Trinity, drawn up probably for the obviating all extremes of that time, whether of Samosatenians or Sabellians. Some have questioned the genuineness of it, but without sufficient cause^b. I shall here set it down at full length, as follows:

“There is *one God*, Father of the living *Word*, the substantial *Wisdom*, and *Power*, and eternal express image:
 “perfect parent of one perfect, Father of the only begotten Son. There is *one Lord*, one of one, God of God, the express character and image of the Godhead,
 “the effective *Word*, the *Wisdom* that grasps the system
 “of the universe, and the *Power* that made every creature, true Son of the true Father, invisible of invisible,
 “incorruptible of incorruptible, immortal of immortal,
 “and eternal of eternal. And there is *one Holy Ghost*,
 “having his subsistence from God, and shining forth by
 “the Son, [*viz.* to mankind,] perfect image of the perfect
 “Son, life causal of all living, the holy fountain, essential

^a Unicum quidem Deum credimus, sub hac tamen dispensatione; quam *synopsias* dicimus, ut unicus Dei sit et Filius, Sermo ipsius, qui ex ipso processerit, per quem omnia facta sunt, et sine quo factum est nihil. Hunc missum a Patre in Virginem, et ex ea natum hominem et Deum, *Filium hominis* et *Filium Dei*, et cognominatum *Jesum Christum*.—Qui exinde miserit, secundum promissionem suam, a Patre *Spiritum Sanctum*, Paracletum, Sanctificatorem fidei eorum qui credunt in *Patrem* et *Filium* et *Spiritum Sanctum*. Hanc regulam ab initio Evangelii decurrisse, &c. *Tertull. adv. Prax.* c. ii. p. 5, 6. Welchm. edit.

^b The genuineness of the Creed is maintained by Bishop Bull, *Defen. F. N.* sect. ii. c. 12. p. 137. Fabricius *B. Gr.* vol. v. p. 249. Opp. Hippol. vol. ii. p. 224. Dr. Berriman's *Historical Account*, p. 138, &c. Mr. Abr. Taylor, *True Script. Doctrine*, p. 128, &c.

“ sanctity, author of all sanctification : in whom God the
 “ Father is manifested, who is above all, and in all, and
 “ God the Son, who is through all. A perfect Trinity,
 “ undivided, unseparated in glory, eternity, and dominion.
 “ There is therefore nothing created or servile in this Tri-
 “ nity, nothing adventitious, that once was not, and came
 “ in after : for the *Father* was never without the *Son*, nor
 “ the *Son* without the *Spirit*, but this Trinity abides the
 “ same, unchangeable and invariable for ever^c.” This is
 the so much celebrated Creed, of which some stories have
 been told more than we are bound to believe, by Gregory
 Nyssen : but misreports in circumstances do not invali-
 date the main thing. I have inclosed a small part of it
 within brackets, looking upon it as a marginal gloss,
 made by some ignorant sciolist, and afterwards foisted
 into the text. I owe the observation to Le Quien, who
 has confirmed it with substantial reasons^d, in his edition
 of Damascen.

If it should now be asked, why other Creeds, elder
 than this, should not be equally *explicit*, as to the doc-
 trine of the Trinity, or why the western formularies were
 not as minute and express as some of the eastern ; the
 answer is short and easy : there was not the same occa-
 sion. *Heresies* were more or less prevalent at different
 times, and in different places ; and Creeds varied accord-
 ingly. The east was more infested with them than the

^c Εἰς Θεός, πατήρ λόγου ζῶντος, σοφίας ὑφιστάσης, καὶ δυνάμεις, καὶ χαρακτῆρος
 ἀΐδιου τέλειος, τιλίω γινώσκω, πατήρ υἱὸς μονογενῆς. υἱὸς κύριος, μόνος ἐν μόνου,
 Θεὸς ἐν Θεῷ ἡ χαρακτῆρ ἕ ἰσὸν τῆς Διότητος, λόγος ἴσχυρος, σοφία τῆς τῶν ἔλων
 σοφίας περιεκτικῆ, καὶ δύναμις τῆς ἔλων κτίσεως παντατικῆ, υἱὸς ἀληθινὸς ἀληθινῷ
 πατρὶ, ἀέριστος ἀεράστῃ, ἕ ἀφθάρτος ἀφθάρτου, καὶ ἀθάνατος ἀθανάτου, καὶ ἀίδιος
 ἀίδιου. Καὶ ἐν πνεύμα ἁγίω, ἐκ Θεῷ τὴν ὑπαρξὴν ἴσχυον, ἕ δι' υἱὸν ἀποφθῆναι. [Ἐπιλαθὴ
 τοῖς ἀδρόμοις] ἰσὸν τῷ υἱῷ τιλίω τιλία, ζῶντων αἰτία, πηγὴ ἁγία, ἀγιότης
 ἀγιασμῷ χορηγός, ἐν ᾧ φαινεῖται Θεὸς ἡ πατήρ ἡ ἐνὶ πάντων ἕ ἐν πᾶσι, καὶ Θεὸς ἡ
 υἱὸς ἡ διὰ πάντων. Τριάς τιλία, δέξῃ ἕ ἀΐδιότητι καὶ βασιλείᾳ μὴ μνηζομένη μὴδὲ
 ἀπαλλοτριουμένη. οὔτι οὐν πτερόν τι ἢ δῶλον ἐν τῇ τριάδι, οὔτι ἰσισκαπτόν τι, ὡς
 πρέσβιον μὴν οὐχ ὑπάρχον, ὕψιστον δὲ ἰσισιλδόν. οὔτι οὐν ἰσισιλπί ποτι υἱὸς πατρὶ, ὅτι
 οὔτῃ πνεύμα, ἀλλ' ἄτριπτος ἕ ἀπαλλοιώτης ἡ αὐτῇ τριάδι αἰί. *Gregor. Thaumaturgi*
Symbolum apud Gregor. Nyssen. in Vit. Gregor. Opp. tom. ii. p. 978, 979.

^d Mich. Le Quien, in Dissertat. Damascen. tom. i. p. 2.

west : and therefore the eastern Creeds were larger and more explicit, generally, than the western. And when some churches had formed their Creeds, and made it customary for the *catechumens* to recite them publicly, they might not afterwards think it proper to alter the forms which the people had long been used to, without the greatest necessity. Such is Ruffinus's account of this matter^e. And I may add, that there was no absolute necessity of enlarging the baptismal Creeds as often as *heresies* arose in the Church; because the defects of the shorter Creeds might be competently supplied another way; namely, by very particular instructions and cautions given to the candidates for baptism, in the Catechetical Lectures contrived for that purpose: of which I have treated sufficiently elsewhere^f, and need not here repeat.

2. But I am further to observe, that even those *shorter* Creeds, such particularly as the Roman, though not so *explicit* in the article of the Trinity as the *eastern* Creeds, do yet contain the sum and substance of the doctrine in full and strong terms; provided only, that they be interpreted according to the true and certain meaning of the compilers, as they ought to be. The Creeds of the Church ought most certainly to be interpreted according to the mind of the *Church*, and not by any after-thoughts of *heretics*^g. For though the Scripture, properly, is the rule

^e In diversis ecclesiis, aliqua in his verbis inveniuntur adjecta: in ecclesia tamen urbis Romæ hoc non deprehenditur factum. Quod ego propterea esse arbitror, quod neque *heresis* ulla illic sumsit exordium; et mos ibi servatur antiquus, eos qui gratiam baptismi suscepturi sunt, publice, id est, fidelium populo audienti symbolum reddere, et utique adjectionem unius saltem sermonis, eorum qui præcesserunt in fide non admittit auditus. In cæteris autem locis, quantum intelligi datur, propter nonnullos *hereticos*, addita quedam videntur, per quæ novellæ doctrinæ sensus crederetur excludi. *Ruffin. in Symbol.* p. 17. edit. Ox. Conf. Bull. Judic. Eccl. c. v. p. 312.

^f Sermons, vol. ii. p. 194, &c.

^g Quid refert si quis besternus *hereticus* verba aliter explicari posse condat? Symbola certe *Ecclesiæ* ex ipso *Ecclesiæ* sensu, non ex hæreticorum cerebello exponenda sint. Quod posterius si fieret, Deum immortalem! quam cito, ex omnibus fidei nostræ articulis, ne unus quidem nobis satis

for receiving any Creed, or any doctrine, yet it is not the rule of *interpretation*; but words, phrases, and formularies, must be interpreted according to their received use, and the known sense of the compilers and imposers^h. The very judicious author of the Critical History has expressed the same sentiments very fully and clearly, as follows: “Although nothing contained therein must be *believed* any farther than it agrees with the holy Scriptures, yet the *intended sense* of the greatest part thereof is not to be fetched from thence, but from the *writings* of the *Fathers*, and from those *heresies* against whom it (the Creed) was designed: which expression may, at the first hearing, be perhaps esteemed by some too hasty and inconsiderate: but the nature of the thing, well reflected on, makes it evident, and beyond contradiction. And if the authority of others before me will be more valued, and better received, it will be no difficult task to produce several who have affirmed the same thing. But at present I shall content myself with the testimony of Monsieur Jurieu, a French Divine now living, who writes in express terms, that for his part, *he is persuaded, that we must not seek the SENSE of the articles of the Apostles’ Creed in the SCRIPTURES, but in the INTENTION of those that composed it!*”

From what has been said, it ought to be admitted as a clear case, or a ruled point, that the Creeds of the Church should be interpreted according to the mind of the Church; and the mind of the Church is to be learned chiefly from the *writings* of the *Fathers*. And while we proceed by this rule, it is manifest that the ancient Creeds, whether of the larger or shorter kind, do express the doctrine of the Trinity, as commonly received at this day. The Roman Creed for instance, even in its shorter form, (as it stood in

sanus atque integer relinqueretur. Symbola Ecclesiæ non tenet qui aliter quam Ecclesia intelligit. *Bull. Judic. Eccl.* cap. v. p. 322.

^h See the Case of Arian Subscription Considered, vol. ii. p. 354, 355. Remarks on Dr. Clarke’s Exposition of the Catechism, p. 25. edit. 3d.

[†] Critical History of the Apostles’ Creed, p. 42. edit. 4th.

and before the fourth century,) fully expresses the true and proper Divinity of Christ; indirectly, in calling the first Person *Father*, and directly, in calling the second Person *only Son*. The very name of *Father*, applied in the Creed to the first Person, intimates the relation he bears to a *Son*, of the same nature with him, existing of him, and from him, and with him. This is an observation frequently occurring in the Post-Nicene writers, who derived it from the more early Fathers, as I shall make appear presently. Fulgentius argues, that the *Divinity* of the *Son* is sufficiently intimated in the *Creed*, by the first article's acknowledging God to be a *Father*; inasmuch as *Father* and *Son* must be allowed to be of the *same nature*, and *equal* in all essential perfections^k. Ruffinus, before him, argues in like manner, and so interprets the first article of the *Creed*^l. Hilary, before them both, expresses the same thought more than once, and insists upon it as of great weight^m. The Greek writers are full of the same notion, asserting God to be a *Father*, and from that

^k Cum enim quisque se dicit credere in Deum *Patrem* omnipotentem, hoc ipsum quod in Deum *Patrem* dicit, sicut in eo veritatem naturalis divinitatis, ita veritatem naturalis quoque paternitatis, et ex hac veritate etiam naturalis generationis ostendit.—Totum igitur in se habet illa generatio divina quicquid in se habet Dei Patris æterna substantia. Proinde sufficiebat ut diceretur de *Patre* solo, quicquid æqualiter intelligendum esset de *Filio*: Pater enim sic *omnipotentem* Filium genuit, sicut est ipse *Pater omnipotens*.—Omnia igitur quæ Deo *Patri* dantur in Symbolo, ipso uno *Filii* nomine, naturaliter tribuuntur et Filio. *Fulgent. Fragment. xxxvi. p. 652.*

^l *Patrem* cum audis, *Filii* intellige *Patrem*, qui *Filius* supradictæ sit imago substantiæ.—Hoc ergo ipso nomine quo Deus ipse *Pater* appellatur, cum *Patre* pariter subsistere etiam *Filius* demonstratur.—Est ergo Deus *Pater* verus tanquam veritatis *Pater*, non extrinsecus *creans*, sed ex eo quod ipse est, *Filium* generans, &c. *Ruffin. in Symbol. p. 18. ed. Ox.*

^m Cum *Patris* nomen auditur, nunquid natura *Filii* non continetur in nomine?—Neque enim *Filius* est cui alia ac dissimilis erit a *Patre* substantia, *Hilar. de Trin. p. 789. Ecclesiæ Fides* solum verum Deum *Patrem* confessa, confitetur et Christum.—Per id enim Christum confessa Deum verum est, quod solum verum Deum confessa sit *Patrem*.—Non enim unigenito Deo naturæ demutationem naturalis nativitas intulit: nec qui ex subsistente Deo secundum divinæ generationis naturam Deus subsistit, ab eo qui solus verus Deus est, separabilis est veritate naturæ, p. 1006. *Conf. 860, 938, 1163. ed. Benedict.*

principle inferring the *coequality* and proper *Divinity* of Christ his Son. Gregory Nyssen, in his first oration against Eunomius, expresses the thing thusⁿ: “He says, “there is one only God Almighty: if he means a *Father* “under the name of *Almighty*, he says the same that we “do, and nothing different; but if he intends it of an “Almighty who is not a *Father*, he may preach up *circumcision* if he pleases, along with his other Jewish “tenets. The faith of *Christians* looks to a *Father*. The “Father indeed is all; he is *Most High*, *Almighty*, *King* “of *kings*, and *Lord of lords*: whatever titles sound high “or great, they belong to the *Father*; and all things that “are the *Father’s* belong to the *Son*. Allow but this, and “we admit the other.” To the same purpose speaks Athanasius, that the professing our belief in God, as a *Father*, is at the same time acknowledging the *Divinity* of the *Son*^o. And the like is observed by Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Exposition of the first article of the Creed^p.

The authors which I have cited, and to which more might be added^q, are all Post-Nicenes; but they very well understood the true and genuine principles of their Catholic predecessors, and are so many presumptive evidences of the doctrine of the Ante-Nicene Church, when, though writing on different occasions, and in distant places, they

ⁿ Εἰς γὰρ ἓς, φησὶ, καὶ μόνος Θεὸς παντοκράτωρ. εἰ μὴ οὖν τὸν πατέρα διὰ τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος προσηγορίας ἰδιόκουνται, ἡμίτερον λέγει τὸν λόγον, καὶ οὐκ ἄλλοτριον· εἰ δὲ ἄλλοι τιὰ παρὰ τὸν πατέρα τοῦ παντοκράτορα, καὶ τὴν κριτικὴν εἰ δεοῦ κηροσίστω, ὁ τῶν δογμάτων τῶν Ἰουδαϊκῶν προσάπτει. τῶν γὰρ Χριστιανῶν ἡ πίστις πρὸς τὸν πατέρα βλίσκει. πάντα δὲ ἓς ὁ πατήρ· ὕψιστος, παντοκράτωρ, βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλιούτων, κύριος τῶν κυριούτων, καὶ πάντα δεα τῆς ὑψηλῆς ἔχεται σημασίας, τοῦ πατρὸς ἓς ἴδιον· τὰ δὲ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ υἱοῦ ἓς πάντα. ὅτι τούτου ὄντος, καὶ οὐκ ἀρχίμωδα, κ. τ. λ. *Gregor. Nyssen. Orat. 1. p. 15.*

^o Ὁ δὲ τὸν Θεὸν πατέρα λέγων, εὐθὺς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὸν υἱὸν σημαίνει, καὶ οὐκ ἀγνοήσει ἓς υἱὸς ὄντος, διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τὰ γινόμενα ἐκτίσθαι πάντα. *Athanas. de Decret. Synod. Nic. p. 236. Benedict.*

^p Πατέρα τὸν Θεὸν ὀνομάσαμεν, ἵνα ἅμα τῷ υἱῷ πατέρα, τοῖσιν καὶ τὸν υἱὸν υἱὸς γὰρ καὶ πατὴρ οὐδὲν ἓς· μεταξὺ τῶν ὄντων. *Cyrl. Hierosol. Catech. viii. n. 3. cont. Catech. viii. n. 1.*

^q See others cited and referred to in the *Critical History of the Apostles’ Creed*, p. 77, 78.

fall in so unanimously with the same way of thinking. Besides, testimonies may be cited from the Ante-Nicene writers themselves, expressing the same notion. Dionysius of Alexandria, who flourished about the middle of the third century, intimates the same thing thus: "The *Father* being eternal, the *Son* must be eternal too, light of light.—The names by me mentioned are undivided and inseparable: when I named the *Father*, before I mentioned the *Son*, I signified the *Son* in the *Father*.—If any of my false accusers suspect, that, because I called God Creator and former of *all things*, I made him Creator of Christ, let him consider, that I before styled him *Father*, and so the *Son* was included in *him*," &c. Here we may observe, how this early and excellent writer argues from the very name and relation of *Father*, that Christ could not be a *creature*, in like manner as the Post-Nicene writers (before cited) argue from the same title applied to the first Person in the Creed. So that if we interpret the Creed according to the strict sense which the ancients had of the term *Father*, that very title indirectly asserts the *Divinity* of Christ, since God is thereby understood to be the *Father* of Christ^s, and not his *Creator*, as of angels or men.

But the same thing will be more directly proved from the title of *Son*, or *only Son*, applied to the second Person of the Trinity, in the Creed: for all the Fathers, both Ante-Nicene and Post-Nicene, constantly understood that title as applied to Christ, to be expressive of his real and proper *Divinity*, of his partaking of the same nature and Godhead with the *Father*, whose *only Son* he is. Bishop

^r "Ὅτις οὖν αἰώνιος τοῦ πατρὸς, αἰώνιος ὁ υἱὸς ἐστίν, ὅτις ἐκ φωτὸς ὤν—τῶν ὄντων ἰσχυρῶς λέγονται ἰσχυρῶς ἰσχυρῶς ἐκ φωτὸς ὄντων. πατέρα ἴσον, ἢ πρὸς ἰσότητα τὸν υἱὸν ἰσότητα καὶ τῶντος ἐν τῷ πατρὶ.—Ἐὰν δὲ τις τῶν συκοφαντῶν ἰσχυρῶς τῶν ἀπάντων ποιητὴν τὸν Θεὸν καὶ δημιουργὸν ἴσον, αἰσθάνεται καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον, ἀκουσάτω μου πρότερον πατέρα φέροντος αὐτὸν, ἐν ᾧ ἢ ὁ υἱὸς προσεγγίζοντα. *Dionys. Alex. apud Athenas. de Sententia Dionysii*, p. 254, 257.

^s Compare the Creed of Gregory Thaumaturgus, cited above, where the term *Father* is interpreted in the same high sense, and as implying the real and essential *Divinity* of the *Son*.

Bull, in reply to Episcopus, has largely insisted upon this argument, proving that the title of *μονογενής*, *only begotten*, or *only Son*, in the Creed, denotes the real and eternal Divinity of Christ. He proves it, 1. from such places of Scripture where that title is applied to Christ. 2. From the strict force and propriety of the expression itself. 3. From the order and texture of the Creed. 4. From the universal and constant interpretation of the ancients[†]. I may refer to Bishop Bull, and others that have come after him, for proof that the title of *Son of God*, or *only begotten Son*, in Scripture, cannot reasonably be understood either of our Lord's *miraculous conception* by the Holy Ghost, or of his *Messiahship*, or of his being the *first begotten* from the *dead*, or of his receiving all power, and his being *appointed heir* of all things: none of these circumstances singly considered, nor all together, will be sufficient to account for the title of *only Son*, or *only begotten*; but there is a necessity of looking higher up to the preexistent and divine nature of the *Word*, who was in the beginning *with God*, and was himself *very God*, before the creation, and from all eternity[‡]. *Angels* and *men* have been called *sons of God*, in an improper and metaphorical sense; but they have never been styled *only begotten*, nor indeed *sons* in any such emphatical and distinguishing manner as Christ is. They are sons by *adoption*, or faint resemblance: he is truly, properly, and eminently *Son of God*, and therefore *God*, as every son of man is therefore truly *man*[§]. Novatian speaks the sense of all the Ante-Nicene

[†] In Symbolo Romano Christum dici Dei *Filium unicum*, sive *unigenitum* (τὸν μονογενῆ) respectu divinæ suæ naturæ, qua non modo ante Mariam, sed etiam ante omnia secula ex et cum Deo Patre extitit, probatu facile est: 1. Ex locis Scripturæ ubi vox *μονογενής* reperitur Christo tributa. 2. Ex vi et proprietate ipsius vocis. 3. Ex ordine et contextu verborum in Symbolo ipso. 4. Denique ex constante ac perpetuo Catholicæ Ecclesiæ sensu atque interpretatione. *Bull. Judic. Eccl.* cap. v. p. 313.

[‡] See *Bull. Judic. Eccl.* cap. v. p. 313—320. Dr. Sherlock's *Scripture Proofs of our Saviour's Divinity*, p. 161—183. *Remarks on Dr. Clarke's Exposition of the Catechism*, p. 44—48.

[§] Ut enim præscripsit ipsa natura *hominem* credendum esse, qui ex ho-

Fathers in that article : I forbear to produce their testimonies here, having done it elsewhere⁷ : there is not a more noted principle or maxim among the earliest writers of the Church than this, that Christ is truly, properly, essentially God, because he is properly *Son of God*. The sum then is, that the Apostles' Creed, in styling Christ *only Son*, or *only begotten*, has expressed his *coeternal Divinity* in such terms as were constantly and universally understood by the ancient churches, to carry that idea with them. Therefore the very learned Bishop Stillingfleet had good reason to say, "that although the Apostles' Creed does not in *express* words declare the Divinity of the three Persons in the Unity of the divine essence ; yet taking the sense of those articles, as the Christian Church understood them from the Apostles' times, then we have as full and clear evidence of this doctrine, as we have that we received the Scriptures from them⁸." The result of what has been said under the present article is, that whether we take the longer or the shorter Creeds of the ancient churches, whether those that are most explicit or those that are least so, all of them contained the *doctrine of the Trinity*, either as their *whole* subject-matter, or as their *principal* part : and therefore so far as the Creeds of the ancient Church can be of use to show that any point of doctrine was judged *important* or *fundamental*, we have full proof that the doctrine we are speaking of was looked upon as an *essential* of Christianity in the best and purest ages.

It must indeed be owned, that it never was the intention of Creeds to furnish out any *complete catalogue* of fundamentals⁹, and so it would be very wrong to argue and

mine sit; ita eadem natura præscribit et Deum credendum esse, qui ex Deo sit: ne si non et Deus fuerit cum ex Deo sit, jam nec homo sit licet ex homine fuerit. Novat. cap. xi. p. 31. edit. Welchm.

⁷ Sermons, vol. ii. p. 198.

⁸ Stillingfleet on the Trinity, chap. ix. p. 229.

⁹ See my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 193—196. Critical History of the Athanasian Creed, vol. iv. p. 309, &c.

infer *negatively*, that such an article was not in this or in that Creed, and therefore was not judged a *fundamental* by the compilers, (for by that rule, neither the article of God's being *Maker of heaven and earth*, nor that of *life everlasting*, would be fundamental, having both been omitted in the old Roman Creed,) but it may be right enough to argue and infer *positively*, that such an article was inserted in the Creeds, and was therefore judged to be a *fundamental*, or of great *importance*; since none could be admitted to Christian baptism, in such or such places, in the early times, without an open and explicit profession of it. So much for the head of Creeds.

II. Another way of knowing the sentiments of the ancient Church, in relation to the *necessity* of believing the doctrine of the *Trinity*, is to observe what *censures* were passed upon the open impugners of it. For if it was accounted *heresy*, pernicious and deadly *heresy*, to oppose that doctrine, in whole or in part, then it is plain, that the doctrine was judged *important*, was looked upon as an *essential* of the Gospel faith. Among the impugners of that doctrine, in the article of Christ's *Divinity*, have been commonly reckoned these seven. 1. Cerinthus, 2. Ebion, 3. Theodotus, 4. Artemon, 5. Beryllus, 6. Paul of Samosata, 7. Arius. Of whom I shall treat in their order, as briefly as may be consistent with perspicuity.

A. D. 60. CERINTHUS.

Cerinthus lived in the apostolic age, was an impugner of our Lord's *Divinity*, and was condemned for it, probably, by St. John himself, and by the whole Church of that time and after: therefore the article of Christ's *Divinity* was then looked upon as a *fundamental* article. This is the sum of what I maintain under this head: I now come to the distinct proof of the several particulars.

1. That Cerinthus lived in the apostolic age is a fact so well attested by great variety of ancient evidences, (some of which will come up presently,) that it ought to pass for a certain and manifest truth. Yet a late learned fo-

reigner^b, having a private hypothesis to serve, has called the fact in question, as some few others before him had also done^c. His reasons have been considered and answered by learned hands^d; to whom I refer the reader, rather than enter into a needless dispute. Irenæus is an authority so early, and so express for Cerinthus's^e flourishing in St. John's time, that it is alone sufficient to remove all doubt of the fact. Indeed Epiphanius^f and Philastrius^g place Cerinthus so high in the apostolic age, that they suppose him to have given great disturbance to St. Peter and St. Paul, and to have occasioned the calling of the first council at Jerusalem, A. D. 49. recorded in the Acts^h. But there is reason to suspect the truth of that reportⁱ, and therefore I am content to place Cerinthus some years lower, but early enough to have spread his heresies before St. John wrote his Epistles, and even before St. Paul wrote some of his.

2. Cerinthus held many errors: but the only one I am concerned to take notice of, is his denying the *Divinity* of Christ. That he did so is plainly asserted by the ancient author of the Appendix to Tertullian's book of Prescription^k. But Irenæus, a more early and a more accurate writer, will give us the truest and most distinct account of what Cerinthus held with respect to the *Divinity* of our blessed Lord. The sum of this heresy in that point was, that *Jesus* and *Christ* were two Persons: *Jesus* a mere

^b Frideric. Adolph. Lampe, in Comment. in S. Johan. Proleg. lib. ii. cap. 3. p. 181, &c.

^c Vid. Buddæus in Eccles. Apostol. p. 411.

^d Taylor's True Scripture Doctrine, p. 263. Buddæus, Eccl. Apostol. p. 412—419.

^e Irenæus, lib. iii. cap. 3. 11.

^f Epiphani. Hæres. xxviii. n. 2. p. 111.

^g Philastr. Hæres. xxxvi. p. 80. edit. Fabric.

^h Acts xv.

ⁱ Vid. Buddæus, Eccles. Apostol. p. 113, 196.

^k Cerinthus—Christum ex semine Joseph natum proponit, hominem illum tantummodo sine *Divinitate* contendens. Tertul. de Præscript. cap. lxxviii. p. 221. Rigalt.

man, conceived in the natural way, of Joseph and Mary; and *Christ* a celestial spirit, which descended from above, and resided in the man *Jesus*, not constantly, but occasionally, from his baptism to his crucifixion¹. Whatever view we take this doctrine of Cerinthus in, it is denying the proper *Divinity* of our blessed Lord. The man *Jesus*, upon his principles, could not be *divine* at all, having no constant or personal union with what descended from above: and as to that *spiritual* substance, called *Christ*, which was supposed, some time, to reside in him, even that was not properly *divine*, according to Cerinthus. The most that he said of it was, that it was *spiritual*, and *impassible* because spiritual; he does not say because *divine*. He separates him from the *principality* that is *over all*, that is to say, from *God supreme*, and therefore could not look upon him as properly *divine*. I may further observe, that his doctrine of the *Logos*, or *Word*, was, that he was Son, not of *God supreme*, but of the *only begotten*^m, one remove still farther off from *God* most high. And since he thus distinguished him from the *only begotten*, who was alone supposed to *know* the Father immediately, it is plain he could not look upon the *Word* as strictly *divine*. Add to this, that Epiphanius, speaking of some of the Ebionites, (who were near allied to the Cerinthians, and borrowed much of their doctrine from them,) says, that they supposed their *Christ* to have descended from heaven, being a *spirit*, and first *created* of all, higher than the angels, and bearing rule over all;

¹ Cerinthus autem quidam in Asia—*Jesum* subjecti, non ex virgine natum (impossibile enim hoc ei visum est) fuisse autem eum Joseph et Mariæ filium, similiter ut reliqui omnes homines, et plus potuisse justitia et prudentia et sapientia ab hominibus: et post baptismum descendisse in eum, ab ea principitate quæ est super omnia, *Christum* figura columbæ, et tunc annuntiasset incognitum Patrem, et virtutes perfecisset: in fine autem revolasse iterum *Christum* de *Jesu*, et *Jesum* passum esse et resurrexisse, *Christum* autem impassibilem perseverasse, existentem spiritalem. *Iren.* lib. i. cap. 26. p. 105. Bened. Conf. Epiphan. Hæres. xxviii. p. 110.

^m Et initium quidem esse *monogenem*, *Logon* autem verum Filium unigeniti. *Iren.* lib. iii. cap. 11. p. 188.

which afterwards assumed a bodyⁿ. This description of *Christ* from above seems to answer pretty nearly to Cerinthus's notion of a *spiritual substance*, called *Christ*, so descending and residing in *Jesus*; and is a confirmation of what I am pleading for, *viz.* that Cerinthus did not look upon *Christ* as *divine*, (in any capacity) but as a *creature* only. So then, whether we consider Cerinthus as making *Jesus* a mere man, or as supposing the *Christ* (sometimes residing in *Jesus*) to be an inferior *Æon*, produced in time, and the offspring of *silence*^o, or, in short, a *creature*; either way he plainly impugned the true and proper *Divinity* of *Jesus Christ*.

3. The next thing to be considered is, what kind of reception such his doctrine met with in the Church of *Christ*. We have good reason to believe, that it was condemned as *antichristian* doctrine, by the Bishops of Asia, and by *St. John* himself. Indeed our proofs of this matter are of the conjectural kind: but they are not without their weight, if they amount to rational presumptions or strong probabilities. If it can be probably argued from *external* evidence, that *St. John* wrote his *Gospel*, or *Epistles*, in direct opposition to the tenets of Cerinthus, and if the *internal* characters of his writings themselves confirm the report; then both these circumstances concurring in the same thing, will together amount to as fair a proof of what we pretend, as matters of this nature will generally admit of.

That *St. John* wrote his *Gospel* with a view to confute Cerinthus, among other false teachers, is attested first by *Irenæus*^p, who was a disciple of *Polycarp*, and who flou-

ⁿ "Ἄλλοι δὲ ἐν αὐτοῖς λέγουσι ἄνωθεν μὴ ἕσσαι, πρὸ πάντων δὲ κτισθίνα, πνεῦμα ἕσσαι, καὶ ὅτις ἀγγέλους ἕσσαι, πάντων τε κυριώτερα, καὶ Χριστὸν λήγειν, τὸν ἑαυτοῖς ἢ αἰῶνα κικληθῆναι. *Epiiphân. Hæres. xxx. cap. 3. p. 127. Conf. Vitrings, Observat. Sacr. lib. v. cap. 12. sect. 7. p. 146. edit. ult.*

^o See *Bishop Bull. Def. F. N. sect. iii. cap. 1. p. 160, et Greg. Nazians. Orat. xxiii. p. 414.*

^p Hanc fidem annuncians Joannes Domini discipulus, volens per Evangelium annunciationem auferre eum qui a Cerintho insemminatus erat hominibus errorem, et multo prius ab his qui dicuntur Nicolaitæ, qui sunt vulsio ejus, quæ

rished within less than a century of St. John's time. He is very particular in the account, observing what special errors of the same Cerinthus and others, the Apostle had an eye to, in the penning of his Gospel.

Our next author to Irenæus is Victorinus Petavionensis, who flourished about A. D. 290. He reports that the Bishops of Asia, being alarmed at the pernicious doctrines then disseminated by Valentinus, Cerinthus, and Ebion, came in a body to St. John, importuning him to bear his testimony against them⁹. The author, probably, mistakes in bringing in Valentinus so early: but that will not invalidate his report as to the other two, or as to the main thing. Some doubts have been raised about the genuineness of that treatise ascribed to Victorinus: but Dr. Grabe seems to have well taken off the only material exception to it^r: to him therefore I refer the reader.

Our next author is Jerome, who twice tells the same story, with some particular circumstances, not so plainly intimated elsewhere; once in his prologue to his Commentaries on St. Matthew^s, and again in his book of

falso cognominatur scientia, ut confunderet eos, et suaderet, quoniam unus Deus qui omnia fecit per Verbum suum; et non, quemadmodum illi dicunt, alterum quidem fabricatorem, alium autem Patrem Domini; et alium quidem fabricatoris Filium, alterum vero de superioribus Christum, quem et impassibilem perseverasse, descendentem in Jesum Filium fabricatoris, et iterum revolasse in suum pleroma; et initium quidem esse Monogenem, Logon autem verum Filium unigeniti; et eam conditionem, quæ est secundum nos, non a primo Deo factam, sed a virtute aliqua valde deorsum subiecta, et abscissa ab eorum communicatione, quæ sunt invisibilia et innominabilia: omnia igitur talia circumscribere volens discipulus Domini, et regulam veritatis constituere in Ecclesia,—sic inchoavit in ea, quæ est secundum Evangelium, doctrina: In principio erat Verbum, &c. Iren. lib. iii. cap. 11. p. 188.

⁹ Quam essent Valentinus, et Cerinthus, et Ebion, et cæteri scholæ Satanas diffusi per orbem, convenerunt ad illum de finitimis provinciis omnes, et compulerunt ut ipse testimonium scriberet. *Victorin. in Apocalyp. Bibl. PP.* tom. i. p. 576. alias tom. iii. p. 418.

^r Grabe, *Spicileg.* vol. ii. p. 45.

^s Johannes Apostolus et Evangelista—quum esset in Asia, et jam tunc hæreticorum semina pullularent Cerinthi, Ebionis, et cæterorum qui negant Christum in carne venisse (quos et ipse in epistola sua *antichristos* vocat, et

Ecclesiastical Writers^t. He does not say, in particular, from whence he had his accounts: but he was a learned man, conversant in books, and he intimates that he had his intelligence from ecclesiastical memoirs.

Epiphanius of the same time testifies more than once, that St. John wrote against Cerinthus and Ebion, who had taught that Christ was a mere man^u. It is some confirmation of this, what Irenæus relates of St. John's meeting with Cerinthus at the bath, (as I have before noted,) and running from him with disdain. It shows, at least, that St. John and he were contemporaries, and that the Apostle well understood his principles, and detested them.

The main of the account may receive some farther confirmation from what Julian, the apostate Emperor, was pleased to observe, (thirty years or more before St. Jerome,) that John perceiving how that the persuasion of *Christ's* being *God* prevailed mightily among the Christians dispersed through many cities of Greece and Italy, did then take upon him to assert the same doctrine in his Gospel, with a view to humour them, and to get himself reputation^x. Here then we have a plain confession from

Apostolus Paulus frequenter percutit) coactus est ab omnibus pene tunc Asiæ Episcopis, et multarum Ecclesiarum legationibus, de *divinitate* Salvatoris altius scribere, et ad ipsum, ut ita dicam, *Dei Verbum*, non tam audaci, quam felici temeritate prorumpere. Et ecclesiastica narrat historia, quum a fratribus cogeretur ut scriberet, ita facturum se respondisse, si indicto jejuniio in commune omnes Deum precarentur: quo expleto, revelatione saturatus, in illud proœmium cœlo veniens eructavit: *In principio erat Verbum*, &c. *Hieronym. Prolog. in Matt.* p. 3. opp. tom. iv. edit. Bened.

^t Joannes, novissimus omnium scripsit Evangelium, rogatus ab Asiæ Episcopis, adversus Cerinthus aliosque hæreticos, et maxime tunc Ebionitarum dogma consurgens; qui asserunt Christum ante Mariam non fuisse: unde et compulsus est *divinam* ejus nativitatem edicere. *Hieronym. de Viris illustrib.* c. ix. p. 54, 55. Fabric.

^u "Εὐθα γὰρ ἐν Χροντῶν Ια παρατριβῆς ψιλὸν ἀνθρώπων ἰαήρυττοι ὁ Ἐβίων καὶ ὁ Κέρνθος, καὶ οἱ ἄμφ' αὐτούς, φησὶ δὲ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ, ἰαὶ ἐὸ πνεῦμα ἐὸ ἄγιοι ἀνίτιλις τῇ πύργῳ αὐτόν ἐν ἁγίῳ βουάνῳ, εἰπὼν θάμῳ τὴν ἀποδιώξασαι ἐν ὄφει, καὶ λύνασαι ἐν τοῦ Διαβόλου τυραννίδα· ἰαὶ γὰρ ὁ ἅγιος Ἰωάννης. κ. τ. λ. *Epi-riphan. Hæres.* li. 2. p. 423. Conf. p. 424, 433, 434. *Hæc.* lix. p. 747.

^x Ὁ χροπὸς Ἰωάννης, αἰεθάρμῳις ἦθα, κολὸ πλῆθος ἰακωὸς ἐν κολλαῖς τῶν

a vehement adversary, which confession of his (ridicule and banter apart) amounts to this; that the generality of Christians, as early as the apostolic age, were exceedingly zealous for the doctrine of Christ's *Divinity*, and that St. John himself commended them for it, encouraged them in it, and wrote his Gospel to confirm it. Julian, very probably, had learned it from incontestable monuments of antiquity; and since he could not disown the fact, he endeavoured, in his ludicrous way, to turn the whole into ridicule. He says nothing indeed of Cerinthus or Ebion, as he had no occasion: but yet this story of his, as he has told it, falls in with the other accounts in the main thing; for which reason I have mentioned it. Such is the *external* evidence we have to prove, that St. John, at the request of the bishops and churches of that time, wrote his Gospel to establish the faith of Christians in our Lord's *Divinity*, against Cerinthus and Ebion, or other false teachers who opposed it.

The truth of the fact will be much confirmed from the *internal* characters of St. John's writings: and this will fully appear by comparing his expressions with Cerinthus's tenets, observing, all the way, how aptly they answer in that respect, directly confronting and overturning the principles of that heresiarch and his followers.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD. That is to say, at the *creation* of all things (*ἐν ἀρχῇ*, as in Genesis) the *Word* existed²: therefore he was before any creature; not only before Joseph and Mary, but even before any

¹ Ἑλληνίδων καὶ Ἰταλιωτίδων πόλιων ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς ἰσοῦς ἀκούων δι, ὅμαι, καὶ τὰ μύθηματα Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου, λάθρα μὲν, ἀκούων δι ἡμῶς ἀπὸ θαυμασιώτατου, πρώτος ἐτόλμησεν εἰπεῖν [τὸν Ἰησοῦν Θεόν.] *Julian apud Cyril.* lib. x. p. 327. edit. Lips.

² The very learned Vitranga has objected to this account, as to some circumstances. *Observ. Sacr.* lib. v. c. 10. sect. 7, 8. But he is well answered by Buddeus, *Eccl. Apostol.* p. 419, &c.

³ Δύναται μὲν ταῦτι τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ὄνομα λαμβάνεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ἀρχῆς, μαθηματικῶν ἡμῶν διὰ τῶν λογικῶν, οἱ περιβύτιος ὁ λόγος τῶν ἐπ' ἀρχῆς γινόμενων ἦν. *Origen. Comment. in Joan.* p. 50. *Conf. Buddeus, Eccl. Apostol.* p. 430, 438. *Bull. Judic. Eccl.* c. ii. sect. 4. p. 294.

such created *Æon* as Cerinthus had talked of, whether called the *Word* or *Christ*.

AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD. Not a separate *Æon*, inferior to God, and distant from God, (like to what Cerinthus supposed of the *Demiurgus*, the Maker or Framer of the world^a;) not estranged from God, but united to him, and abiding with him^b, while personally distinct from him.

AND THE WORD WAS GOD. Not a mere *man*, as Cerinthus asserted of *Jesus*, nor a *creature*, as Cerinthus imagined of *Christ*, or of the *Word*, but *very God*^c.

THE SAME WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD. This is resuming what had been said before, after a kind of break, to connect it the more closely with the account of the creation, (which the Apostle was just going to mention,) and to inculcate the more strongly, against Cerinthus, that he *by whom all things were made* was no distant, inferior *Æon*, estranged from God, and unacquainted with him, but one that had been always *with* the supreme Father.

ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM. By the *Word*. Not by an inferior *Demiurgus*, not by any separate *powers*, not by *angels*, (as the Cerinthians taught^d;) not by any creature-creator, but by the *Word* himself, very God, and one with God^e.

^a Irenæus, lib. i. c. 26. p. 105. lib. iii. c. 11. p. 188. Pseudo-Tertullian. de Præscript. Hæret. Append. p. 221. Epiphani. Hæres. xxviii. n. 1. p. 110.

^b Καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. οὐ γὰρ ἰγένετο πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. καὶ ταυτὸν βῆμα, εὐὸ ἦν, τοῦ Λόγου καταγορεύεται, ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν, καὶ ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν ἦν, οὗτοι εἴς ἀρχῆς χειρίζομενοι, οὗτοι τοῦ πατρὸς ἀπολιπέμενοι. Origen. in Joan. p. 44.

^c Addit, *et Deus erat Verbum*; illud, non minus quam ipsum Patrem, verum summumque Deum esse significans. Atque istud quidem Cerinthi commentis e diametro est oppositum, quippe qui per τὸν Λόγον, sive *Christum*, equidem substantiam quandam *Spiritualem* eamque humana natura præstantiorem, neutiquam autem *divinam* quandam *divinam* quæ et ipsa *Deus* esset, intelligebat. *Buddæi Eccles. Apostolica*, p. 438.

^d Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. lib. ii. c. 3. lib. v. c. 9. Augustin de Hæres. c. viii. Epiphani. Hæres. 28. 1. Philastr. Hær. 36, p. 77. Pseudo-Tertullian. Præscript. c. 68. Danfascen. Hær. 28.

^e *Omnia per illud (Verbum) facta sunt.* Commentis Cerinthianis est op-

AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADE. Not the *lower* world only, but the *upper* world also; not the material and *visible* world only, but the world of *invisibles*, the celestial spirits, angels and archangels, they also were made by the same *Word*; for there was nothing made without him ^f. “By him were “all things created, that are in heaven, 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 ^ε.” So writes St. Paul, the best interpreter of what we have in St. John, as writing by the same Spirit, and with the same views, and probably against the very same men. Indeed, there is not in the whole New Testament any thing of a more sublime and exalted strain, concerning the personal dignity of our blessed Lord, than what we find in the first chapter to the Colossians, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth verse inclusive; and in the second, from verse the second to the tenth. Those passages come the nearest of any to St. John’s divine *proeme*, and are only to be matched with it. It would be too great a digression here, to show how those so emphatical expressions of St. Paul are all particularly fitted to confront the tenets of Cerinthus, as if chosen for that very purpose, and directly pointed at them: but the learned reader who is disposed to examine into the fact, may consult a very judicious foreigner, who has drawn that matter out at length, expounding what

positum: non enim a *fabricatore* quodam mundi, a Deo primo diverso, sed a *Λόγῳ ὑπερτατίῳ*, qui et ipse verus summusque Deus sit, mundum huncce et omnia quæ in eo sunt, condita esse, verbis istis docet. *Buddæi Eccles. Apostol.* p. 438. Conf. Vitring. *Observ. Sacr. lib. v. c. 13. a. 4. p. 155.*

^f In eodem commate, contra eosdem hæreticos addit, *et absque eo factum est nihil*. Quæ verba, qui intentionem Apostoli non attenderit, nihil aliud quam inanem *ταυτολογίαν* contipere suspicetur. Sed nimirum hæretici isti (ut recte Grotius) alium volebant opificem eorum quæ cernimus, sive mundi hujus *aspectabilis*; alios rerum *invisibilium*, et quæ super hunc mundum sunt, in suo quemque pleromate: nihil igitur eorum quæ facta sunt, ex operibus *εἰ* *Λόγῳ* excipit Joannes. *Bull. Judic. Eccles. c. ii. p. 194.*

^ε Colos. i. 16. See my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 34—37.

St. Paul has said in those two chapters, in a very clear and excellent manner, by the opposition which it carries in it all the way to the Cerinthian heresy^h. I return to St. John.

IN HIM WAS LIFE, AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN. The same *Word* was *life*, the *Λόγος* and *ζωή*, both oneⁱ. There was no occasion therefore for subtilly distinguishing the *Word* and *life* into two *Æons*, as some did.

AND THE LIGHT SHINETH IN DARKNESS, AND THE DARKNESS COMETH NOT UPON IT. So I render the verse, conformable to the rendering of the same Greek verb, *καταλαμβάνω*, by our translators, in another place of this same Gospel^k. The Apostle, as I conceive, in this fifth verse of his first chapter, alludes to the prevailing error of the Gnostics, and of all that sort of men^l; who had adopted the ancient Magian notion of a *good God* and an *evil God*, the first called *Light*, and the other *Darkness*: which two they supposed to be under perpetual struggles, and *obstructed* by each other. In opposition, probably, to those Magian principles, St. John here asserts, that the *Word*, the true *light*, was much superior to any such pretended rival power. In him was no *darkness* at all^m: no such opposite *power* could come upon him, to obstruct his purposes, or defeat his good and great designs.

HE WAS IN THE WORLD, AND THE WORLD HAD

^h Buddæus, *Eccles. Apostolica*, p. 468—487.

ⁱ Hunc ipsum *Λόγος* esse vitam hominis; otiosam innuens illorum subtilitatem, qui in systemate divinarum emanationum, *ζωήν vitam*, a *Λόγῳ* distinguebant, eidemque subordinabant. *Vitringa in Prolog. Evangel. Johan. Observ. Sacr.* lib. v. c. 13. p. 180.

^k John xii. 35. Vid. Bos. *Exercitat. in Johan.* p. 54, 55.

^l Vid. *Vitringa, Observat. Sacr.* lib. v. c. 13. p. 136. Epiphanius speaking of the Gnosticism of those times, derives it in part from the perplexity which those men were under, in the question about the *origin of evil*. *Epiphani. Heres.* xxiv. 6.

^m "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all," 1 John i. 5.

BEEN MADE BY HIM, BUT THE WORLD KNEW HIM NOT. So I translate, for greater accuracy and perspicuity. HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN, AND HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT. These two verses manifestly confront several of the Gnostic principles, viz. that the world was made by an *inferior* and *evil* God, an angel called *Demiurgus*; and that Christ came into another person's work, or province, not into his *own*, when he manifested himself to the worldⁿ; and that he did not so manifest himself before his incarnation. Those several errors seem to be directly pointed at, and confuted by what the Evangelist has taught in those two verses^o. But of the true interpretation of those two verses, I have treated more largely elsewhere^p.

AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, became personally united with the man *Jesus*; AND DWELT AMONG US, resided constantly in the human nature so assumed. Very emphatical and pointed expressions, searching to the root of every heresy almost of that time, so far as concerned the person of Christ: for none of them would admit the *Word made flesh*, or *God made man*^q. Such sentiments agreed not with their vain philosophy; they

ⁿ Scilicet Cerinthi et aliorum omnium hæreticorum, qui mundi hujus conditorem a summo Deo separabant, hæc fuit notissima sententia, Christum servatorem nostrum a summa omnium *principalitate* in hunc mundum venisse tanquam in *alienum opus*; idque ut homines a dominio et servitute conditoris universi in nescio quam libertatem (licentiam rectius dixeris) vindicaret. *Bull. Judic. Eccles.* cap. ii. sect. 4. p. 294. Conf. *Iren.* lib. iii. c. 11. et lib. v. c. 18.

^o Docet itaque semper illum in mundo fuisse, et a primo rerum ortu, et generis humani instauratione, se in Ecclesia, quam in mundo habuit, manifestasse, et ut *lucem veram* suos illuminasse; etiamsi a maxima mundi parte, et ab ipsis Judæis carnalibus *agnitus non sit*: explodens erroneam illorum hypothesin qui Filium Dei ante suam *inseparabilem* se in mundo non manifestasse, neque illi *cognitum* fuisse, asserebant. *Vitringa, Observ. Sacr.* vol. iii. p. 180.

^p Sermons, vol. ii. p. 28, 29, 30.

^q Secundum autem nullam sententiam hæreticorum, *Verbum Dei caro factum est*. *Iren.* lib. iii. c. 11. p. 189. Conf. *Bull. Judic. Eccl.* c. ii. sect. 4. p. 194.

deemed the thing to be *incredible*¹. The Cerinthians admitted that a celestial spirit descended occasionally upon Jesus; but they neither allowed that spirit to be *personally* united with Jesus, nor to be properly *divine*, as St. John teaches: so that in two respects those words of the Apostle confute their principles².

AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY, THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, &c. Words diametrically opposite to Cerinthus's hypothesis³, which made the *Logos* not the *only begotten* of the Father, but a remove farther off, *viz.* the *Son* of the only begotten, as before observed.

AND OF HIS FULNESS HAVE ALL WE RECEIVED, AND GRACE FOR GRACE. The expression, *of his fulness*, [*ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ,*] is very observable. The Gnostics in general, and the Cerinthians in particular, were wont to talk much of the *πλήρωμα*, or *fulness*; by which they meant a fictitious plenitude of the Deity, in which the whole race of *Æons* was supposed to subsist, and into which *spiritual* men (such as they esteemed themselves) should hereafter be received. It was the doctrine of the Valentinians, (and probably of the elder Gnostics also,) that they were themselves of the *spiritual* seed, had *constant grace*, and could not fail of being admitted into the *plenitude* above⁴; while others were in their esteem *carnal*, had *grace* but sparingly, or occasionally, and that not to bring them so high as the

¹ *Incredibile præsumperant Deum carnem. Tertul. contr. Marcion. lib. iii. c. 8. p. 401. Conf. Just. Mart. Dial. p. 140, 204. edit. Jebb.*

² *Dum dicit Verbum caro factum, et habitavit inter nos; significat ipsum istum Λόγον, qui Filius Dei, simulque verus ac summus Deus, erat, quemque tam multis descriperat verbis, carnem factum, hoc est, humanam naturam, non ad certum tempus, sed perpetuo, indissolubili, et inseparabili nexu adsumsisse. Budd. Eccl. Apost. p. 440.*

³ *Indicat eundem istum Λόγον, qui caro factus erat, etiam esse unigenitum Patris: adeoque discrimen illud quod Cerinthiani inter μονογενῆ sive unigenitum, et Λόγον sive Verbum, constituebant, explodit. Buddæus, ibid. p. 440.*

⁴ *Iren. lib. i. c. 6. p. 31.*

plenitude, but to an intermediate station only. But St. John here asserts, ^x that *all* Christians equally and indifferently, all believers at large, have received of the *plenitude*, or fulness of the divine *Logos*; and that not sparingly, but in the largest measure, *grace upon grace*, accumulated *grace*^y: or rather, *grace following in constant succession, grace for grace*; that is, new succours coming on as quick as the former should wear off or cease, or *new* supplies for the *old* ones past and gone^z, without failure or intermission. Our present rendering, *grace for grace*, is literal, and just; provided only we understand it thus, that whenever one *grace* ceases or expires, another comes in its place, and is given us *for* the former, or in lieu of the former.

I have now run through the *proeme* of St. John's Gospel, endeavouring all the way to show how aptly the expressions suit with the supposition which I here go upon, that it was penned with a particular view to the heresies of Cerinthus and Ebion; to say nothing of Simon Magus, or the Gnostics of those times: for though I have chiefly, or in a manner solely, made Cerinthus's heresy the subject of this article, yet I would be understood to include any other heretics of the same time, or before him, so far as they fell in with the same common errors.

Let us now pass on to St. John's First Epistle, in order to consider whether that likewise may not be naturally

^x Docet denique ex hujus unigeniti et primogeniti Dei Filii *πληρώματα* (qua notione Gnostici uti consueverunt) *omnes* accipere *gratiam pro gratia*, omnes omnis generis et ordinis in Christum credentes, ejusdem in hac vita participes esse *gratia*, et ad ejusdem *gloria* spem vocatos esse: neququam vero ita se rem habere ut Gnostici jactabant, *solos* suæ sectæ homines, et suæ imbutos philosophiæ mysteriis, ad summam illam felicitatem primi *pleromatis* divinitatis adspirare posse, reliquorum credentium animabus inferioris et *medii* generis beatitudinis statum destinatum esse. *Vitringa, Obs. Sacr.* lib. v. c. 13. p. 155, 156.

^y See Bull. Harmon. Apostol. Dissert. ii. c. 11. p. 481.

^z Vid. Gataker. Adversar. Sacr. c. xxvii. Anonymi Fortuita Sacra, p. 80, 81, &c. Suicer. Thesaur. in *χάρις*, p. 1497.

interpreted the same way; so that one and the same key may serve for both.

Irenæus seems to say, that St. John pointed his Epistle ^a against the same. Tertullian also intimates, that St. John directed some parts of his *Epistle* against the Ebionites ^b. And St. Jerome insinuates, that he pointed his censure both against Cerinthus and Ebion, marking them out as *antichrists* in his Epistle ^c. If we come to examine the *Epistle* itself, we shall easily perceive, that a great part of it was levelled, not so much against Jews or Pagans, as against *false Christians*, against the *heretics* of that time, Simonians perhaps, or Cerinthians, or Ebionites, or Nicolaitans, or all of them, according as his expressions here or there are particularly pointed. The two principal errors which he there censures were, the denial of Christ's being *come in the flesh* ^d, and the disowning that *Jesus was Christ* ^e. The *Docetæ*, (as they were afterwards called,) the followers of Simon Magus, denied *Christ's* real *humanity*, making him a mere *phantom*, *shadow*, or *apparition*, a walking ghost, as I observed above ^f. And the Cerinthians making a distinction between *Jesus* and *Christ*, did not allow that both were one person. Against those chiefly St. John wrote his Epistle. He speaks of *antichrists* newly risen up ^g; which could not be intended of Jews or Pagans, who had opposed the Gospel all along: and he speaks of men that had been of the Church, but had apostatized from it; "they went

^a Igitur et omnes extra dispositionem sunt, qui, sub obtentu agnitionis, alterum quidem *Jesum* intelligunt, alterum autem *Christum*, et alterum *unigenitum*, &c.—Quos Joannes in prædicta Epistola fugere eos præcepit, &c. *ibid.* p. 207.

^b At in Epistola eos maxime *antichristos* vocat, qui Christum negarent in carne venisse, et qui non putarent *Jesum esse Filium Dei*. Illud Marcion, hoc Hebion vindicavit. *Tertull. Præscrip.* c. 33. p. 214.

^c See the whole passage cited above, p. 178.

^d 1 John iv. 3. compare 2 John 7.

^e 1 John ii. 22.

^f See above, p. 9, 107.

^g 1 John ii. 18, 22. iv. 3. 2 John 7.

“out from us, but they were not of us^h.” Let us now proceed to the explication of those passages in St. John’s Epistle, which relate to our purpose.

The Apostle observes, that **THE WORD OF LIFE** (or the *Word* in whom *was life*, John i. 4.) **WAS FROM THE BEGINNING**ⁱ; conformable to what he says in the entrance to his Gospel, and in opposition both to Cerinthus and Ebion, who made *Jesus* a mere *man*, and who either denied any preexisting substantial *Logos*, or, at most, supposed him to stand foremost in the rank of *creatures*. The Apostle further styles the same *Logos* **ETERNAL LIFE**^k, to intimate his *eternal* existence, in opposition to the same heretics. He adds, **WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER**, parallel to what he says in his Gospel, *was with God*, and which has been explained above^l.

In the second chapter of the same Epistle, the Apostle describes the *antichristian* heretics of that time as **DENYING THAT JESUS IS CHRIST**; which amounted to the same with **DENYING THE FATHER AND THE SON**^m; because **WHOSOEVER DENIETH THE SON, THE SAME HATH NOT THE FATHER**ⁿ. Cerinthus denied that *Jesus* was *Christ*, dividing *Christ* from *Jesus*, as before explained: and he of consequence denied *the Son*, because he allowed not that *Jesus* was personally united with the *Word*, the *eternal Son of God*, nor that that *Logos* which he speaks of was the *only begotten* of the Father, being *Son* only of the only begotten, according to his scheme:

^h 1 John ii. 19.

ⁱ 1 John i. 1.

^k 1 John i. 2. compare 1 John v. 20.

^l See above, p. 181. Conf. Tertull. contr. Prax. c. xv. Bull. Judic. Eccles. c. ii. sect. 5. p. 295.

^m 1 John ii. 22.

ⁿ 1 John ii. 23. Apostoli verba—commune Cerinthi et Ebionis dogma manifeste perstringunt, nam illi ambo *Jesus* esse *verum Dei Filium* ante Mariam, adeoque ante res omnes creatas ex Deo Patre natum omnino negabant, ac proinde, Apostolo iudice, neque *Deum Patrem* re vera confessi sunt: siquidem a revelato Evangelio, nemo potest Deum *Patrem* rite colere aut credere, nisi qui Deum *Filium* simul amplectatur. Bull. Judic. Eccles. c. ii. sect. 5. p. 296.

so that he totally disowned the *divine* Sonship both of *Jesus* and *Christ*, and by such denial denied both the *Father* and *Son*°.

The Apostle goes on to say, **WHOSOEVER SHALL CONFESS THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, GOD DWELLETH IN HIM, AND HE IN GOD**. Where again he manifestly strikes at the Cerinthian and Ebionite principles, which allowed not *Jesus* to be *the Son of God*, in any true and proper sense, such as St. John lays down in several places of his writings, but particularly in the entrance to his *Gospel*⁹, as explained above.

In the chapter next following, the Apostle repeats the same thing as before, or uses words to the same effect: **WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, IS BORN OF GOD**†: and soon after adds, **WHO IS HE THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD**‡? Here lay the main stress, to believe that *Jesus*, who was truly and really man, was as truly and really the eternal *Son of God*‡. The Apostle, in the next verse, seems to point at the *Docetæ*, as he had before done in the same

° Dum enim Cerinthiani negabant *Jesum* esse *Christum*, per veram scilicet perpetuamque unionem; *Christum* insuper *Filium Dei* verum et *unigenitum* inficiebantur; perinde hoc erat ac si et *Patrem* et *Filium* negassent, cum, ut recte Joannes dicit, *Qui Filium negat, nec Patrem habeat*.—Eo ipso enim, dum negabant *Jesum esse Christum*, nec ipsum quoque *Christum* pro *Dei Filio* agnoscebant, non poterant non multo magis negare, *Jesum esse Filium Dei*. *Buddæi Eccles. Apostol.* p. 445.

⁹ 1 John iv. 15. compare iii. 23.

† Non est dubitandum quin Apostolus his verbis confessionem exigat illius *Filii Dei* quem ipse ex parte supra in hac Epistola prædicaverat, et plenius in Evangelio suo declarat: nempe *Filii Dei*, qui sit *Dei Patris* *Áγος*, qui *in principio* erat, et *apud Deum* erat, et *Deus ipse erat*, per quem *omnia facta sunt*, &c.—Hujusmodi vero *Dei Filium* *Jesum* nostrum esse, non confessus est Cerintius, neque post ipsum Ebion. *Bull. Judic.* c. ii. sect. 9. p. 297.

‡ 1 John v. 1.

• 1 John v. 5.

‡ Quia præ aliis maxime tunc cresceret Cerinthii hæresis, ideo Apostolus fidem illam qua creditur *Jesum esse Dei Filium*, passim in hac Epistola commendat, urget, inculcat. *Bull. ibid.* p. 297.

Epistle^u, being equally concerned to maintain, that Christ had real *flesh*, as that he had real *Divinity*; that so the faith of the Gospel might stand upon this firm foundation, that the eternal Son of God became Son of man for the salvation of mankind. Hereupon therefore the Apostle, in defence of Christ's real *humanity*, says, THIS IS HE THAT CAME BY WATER AND BLOOD^x. What he elsewhere expresses, by his *coming in the flesh*, here he expresses more emphatically, by his *coming in*, or by *water and blood*; alluding to what Christ shed at his *passion*, as a proof that he had then a real body, and was really *man*, not a spectre, phantom, or apparition, as some heretics pretended. It is to be noted, that the ancient *visionaries*, (who were the Simonians, Menandrians, Saturnilians, and Basilidians,) being ashamed perhaps to confess Christ crucified^z, contrived any wild supposition imaginable to evade it. Basilides pretended that Christ himself did not suffer, but that Simon of Cyrene was crucified in his room^a. The elder *Docetæ* had not so happy a talent at inventing, but were content to say, that Christ had no *real* body, and suffered in *appearance* only, imposing upon the eyes of the spectators. In opposition probably to that kind of men, (of which there might be many in the apostolic age,) the Apostle here emphatically observes, that Christ came by *water and blood*: for his shedding both *water and blood* out of his side, at his *passion*, was a demonstration, that there was a *real* body then hanging upon the cross, not a *phantom*, or a *spiritual* sub-

^u 1 John iv. 2, 3. compare 2 John 7. and see Bull. Judic. p. 296. Buddæi Eccl. Apostol. p. 550, &c.

^x 1 John v. 6.

^y 1 John i. 1, 2. iv. 2, 3. 2 John 7. compare 1 Tim. iii. 16. 1 Pet. iii. 18. iv. 1.

^z Hence it is that Polycarp joins both together in the same reproof: *εἰς γὰρ, εἰς δὲ μὴ ἰμολογῆ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἰληλυθῆναι, ἀντίχριστός ἐστι· καὶ εἰς δὲ μὴ ἰμολογῆ τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἐν τοῦ Διαβόλου ἐστὶ.* Polycarp. *Epist.* c. 7.

^a Irenæus lib. i. c. 24. alias 23. p. 101. Epiphani. xxiv. 3. Philastr. c. xxxii. p. 68. Augustin. de Hæres. n. iv. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. lib. i. c. 4.

stance. Which very argument is well urged by Irenæus^b and Novatian^c, in proof of the same thing, against the *Docetæ*. As St. John is the only Evangelist who has related that circumstance of the passion^d, so it is observable, how particular a stress he lays upon it; immediately subjoining, in confirmation of it, AND HE THAT SAW IT (meaning himself perhaps, or else the *soldier* that pierced our Lord^e) *bare record*, AND HIS RECORD IS TRUE, &c. And he confirms it farther from two *prophecies* out of the Old Testament. Wherefore it is the more probable, that in his *Epistle* before, he alluded to that circumstance, and in proof of Christ's *humanity*. But St. John strengthens the argument further, by superadding the consideration of the testimony of the *Spirit*. AND THERE IS THE SPIRIT ALSO BEARING WITNESS, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT IS TRUTH ^f *itself*, is essential truth. The Spirit residing in the Church, and working in believers by supernatural graces, bears testimony to the doctrine taught by the Apostles, and believed by the Church; particularly to the doctrine here spoken of, *viz.* that Christ the *Son of God* became *Son of man* for the salvation of mankind.

The Apostle, having said that the *Spirit is truth*, or essential truth, (which was giving him a title common to *God the Father*, and to *Christ*,) in order to obviate any misapprehension or offence, accounts for what he had said, and reconciles it, by declaring presently, that the *Father*, and the *Word*, and the *Spirit* are all *one*, are equally *truth* itself: FOR THERE ARE THREE THAT BEAR RECORD IN HEAVEN, THE FATHER, THE WORD, AND

^b Quomodo autem, cum *caro* non esset, sed *pareret* (i. e. *appareret*) quasi homo, crucifixus est, et a latere ejus puncto *sanguis* exiit et *aqua*? *Iren.* lib. iv. c. 33. (alias 57.) p. 271.

^c Sanguis idcirco de manibus ac pedibus, atque ipso latere demanavit, ut nostri consors corporis probaretur, dum occisus nostri legibus moritur. *Novat.* c. x. p. 31. edit. Welchm.

^d John xix. 34.

^e See Dodwell, *Dissert.* in *Iren.* i. p. 39.

^f 1 John v. 6.

THE HOLY SPIRIT; AND THESE THREE ARE ONE^ε. Therefore it was as right to say, that *the Spirit is truth*, as it might be to say it either of *Father* or *Son*, since they are all *one*. That point being cleared, the Apostle then returns ^h to speak of the *Spirit*, the *water*, and the *blood*, as testifying the same thing to mankind, which is testified above to the angels in heaven. And the *Spirit* is now particularly mentioned as bearing witness in earth, (rather than the *Father* or the *Son*;) because, since the time of Christ's ascension, the Church has been under the special *economy* of the Holy Spirit, who was to *guide* the Apostles, and the churches after them, *into all truth*ⁱ.

I know it has been objected, that this way of reckoning the *Spirit* twice, is reducing the *six* witnesses to *five*. Now, indeed, if the text had called them *six* witnesses, there would have been some force in the objection: but as it is mere fancy and presumption, to make them *six*, we may take the liberty to think, that the *fifth* twice told will fully answer all that the text mentions.

The Apostle having said thus much of the testimony of the *Spirit*, who is one with the *Father*, comes next to make the proper application of it, enforcing it still farther, by directly calling it the *testimony of God*: IF WE RECEIVE THE WITNESS OF MEN, THE WITNESS OF GOD IS GREATER; FOR THIS IS THE WITNESS OF GOD, WHICH HE HATH TESTIFIED OF HIS SON^k— THAT GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON^l. This is the burden of the whole *Epistle*, the sum and substance of what the Apostle aims at quite through^m, that God had been pleased to reconcile the world unto himself by the mediation of his own *divine* Son *made man*. This was what the *water*

^ε 1 John v. 7.

^h 1 John v. 8.

ⁱ John xvi. 13.

^k 1 John v. 9.

^l 1 John v. 11.

^m Hæc est summa: omnem doctorem qui confessus fuerit unum Jesum Christum, verum Dei Filium, propter hominum salutem vere hominem factum, ex Deo esse (nimirum ea parte, qua id confitetur et docet, ut recte Estius) contra pro Pseudo Propheta atque antichristo habendum esse, quisquis hoc confessus non fuerit. Bull. Judic. Eccl. c. ii. s. 9. p. 297.

and the *blood* testified in part, and what the *Spirit* of God, one with God, more abundantly testifies in the whole ^a.

I was willing thus occasionally to explain that celebrated passage, concerning the *three Witnesses*, which has been the subject of long and warm debates, both as to the genuineness of the text, and the connection of it with the rest, upon which hangs the true interpretation. The exposition which I have given appears to me just and natural, supposing the text to be genuine: and I conceive that the genuineness thereof has been sufficiently maintained by a great many able hands ^o; and particularly by a late learned and accurate writer ^p, to whose useful labours I refer the reader for satisfaction, and now I return.

The Apostle, in the close, remarkably sums up all, in these strong and chosen words: WE KNOW THAT THE SON OF GOD IS COME, AND HATH GIVEN US AN UNDERSTANDING, THAT WE MAY KNOW HIM THAT IS TRUE, AND WE ARE IN HIM THAT IS TRUE, EVEN IN HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. THIS IS THE TRUE GOD, AND ETERNAL LIFE ^q. I need not here stand to prove, that the title of *true God*, in this text, is to be understood of Christ, because I have done it elsewhere ^r: but I would observe farther, how aptly every word is chosen to obviate the erroneous tenets of Cerinthus, and of other

^a Immo quæ deinceps, ver. 6, 7, 8. de *tribus Testibus*, in cælo pariter ac in terra, docet, huc præcipue comparata esse videntur, ut ostendat *Jesum esse Filium Dei*, quod Cerinthiani, ut diximus, negabant. Hinc concludit: Si hominum *testimonium admittimus, Dei testimonium majus est*. Quodnam est hoc Dei testimonium? Respondet: *Atque hoc est, quod Deus de Filio suo testimonium dicit*. *Buddæus, Eccl. Apostol.* p. 446.

^o See most of them numbered up in Taylor's *True Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 32.

^p Mr. Twells, *Critical Examination of the New Text and Version of the New Testament*, part ii. p. 123—154.

^q 1 John v. 20.

^r *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 123—128. Compare Taylor's *True Scripture Doctrine*, p. 282, &c. Dr. Bishop's *Eight Sermons*, p. 56, &c.

the like false teachers of those times. *The Son of God*: not the Son of Joseph and Mary, nor the Son of the *only begotten*, but the immediate *Son of God*; related to God as a *son* to a *father*, not as a *creature* to his Lord and Maker. He *is come*, come in the flesh, and not merely to reside for a time, or occasionally, and to fly off again, but to abide and dwell with man, clothed with humanity. We are *in him that is true*, in the true Father, by his *Son* Jesus Christ: who is the *true God*; not an inferior *power* or *angel*, (such as Cerinthus supposed the *Demiurgus* to be,) not a created *Æon*, the offspring of the *Monogenes*, or of *Silence*, as Cerinthus fondly imagined the *Logos* to be; but *true God*, one with the Father. *And eternal life*, the same that had been with the Father from the beginning, before any thing was created, consequently from all eternity.

I have now gone through both the *Epistle* and *Gospel* of St. John, pointing out the most observable passages in both, which concerned the present question. The sum of what I have advanced under this article is, that St. John most apparently levelled a great part of his First Epistle against the Cerinthian doctrines; and that it may be strongly argued, from evidences *external* and *internal*, that he wrote the *proeme* to his Gospel with the same or the like views. It appears further, that in his Epistle particularly, he has asserted the *necessity* of believing our Lord's *divine* Sonship, his proper *Divinity*, under pain of being excluded heaven and happiness: "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." Whosoever denies Christ to be Son of God, (in St. John's sense of *Son*, a Son that was *always* with God, and is *God*,) is a *liar* and *antichrist*, denying both *the Father and the Son*^s. The conclusion therefore from all is, that the denying our blessed Lord's real *Divinity* is *heresy* and *antichristianism*, much to be abhorred by every disciple of Christ, according to the infallible decision of an in-

^s 1 John ii. 22, 23.

spired Apostle^t. Many were the evasions and subterfuges of self-opiniated men, who thought it a thing *incredible* that the *divine Word* should put on *flesh*, or *God* become *man*, and who chose rather to pass censure upon the *wisdom of Heaven*, than suspect their *own*: but sober and modest men resigned up their *faith* to *divine* revelation, as was their bounden duty to do; and among the foremost of those was our blessed Apostle. So now, besides the *reason* of *things*, taking in what the Scriptures have declared of the *truth* of our doctrine, and besides the true and natural import of the form of *baptism*, (urged above,) we have moreover the determination of St. John himself, for the *importance* of the doctrine of our Lord's *Divinity*, and of consequence, for the doctrine of a coequal and coeternal Trinity.

But supposing it might be reasonably doubted (though I see not how it can) whether we have rightly interpreted St. John as to the main thing, or whether Cerinthus and others of like principles were directly struck at by him; yet still we may be able to maintain our point another way, by showing at least that the ancient churches, next succeeding the Apostles, and the churches after, did condemn Cerinthus and Ebion, and all others who denied our Lord's *real* and proper *Divinity*. And I may here observe, before I go farther, that if what I have offered about St. John's condemning the doctrine of Cerinthus be just, it may be considered as looking *forwards*, and condemning the principles of the Ebionites also, whom I

^t Hæc autem ideo fusius prosecutus sum, quod hinc non modo ex antiquissimorum Patrum monumentis, sed etiam ex *scriptis Apostolicis*, omnibus liqueat, fuisse in ipso *Apostolorum* ævo, qui Christi Domini nostri *Divinitatem* negarunt, quique eo nomine pro *hæreticis*, adeoque pro *antichristis* (tantum aberat ut *fratres* et *vera Ecclesie membra* censerentur) ab *Apostolis* habiti fuerint. Præterea, hinc quoque clare elucet, doctrinam de Filii Dei *ἰσακρίτου*, sive de Christo *ἑως ἑώσης*, *vero Deo* et *vero homine*, ut a nascente Evangelio varie a variis hæreticis impugnata fuit, ita ab Ecclesie veris Pastoribus, modis omnibus omnique studio, tanquam *fidei Christianæ Caput et Fundamentum ipsam*, religiosissime semper conservatam et custoditam fuisse. *Bull. Judic. Eccl.* p. 298.

am next to mention : and so on the other hand, what I shall have to say of the Ebionites, and their being condemned by the Church, may be understood to look *backwards*, equally affecting the Cerinthians so far as they agreed in the same common sentiments. Indeed, Bishop Bull had considered both together, and in a *scriptural* view, as I have hitherto considered Cerinthus singly : but I apprehended that if one were taken in a *scriptural*, and the other in an *ecclesiastical* view, the two parts would reflect light and strength one upon another, and the whole would be both more *distinct* and more *complete*. I proceed then to consider the Ebionites, as censured by the *Church*, in the *second* and *third* centuries, for denying our Lord's *Divinity* ; though, if what I have before advanced be true, they were fully condemned before for the same, even within the *apostolic age*, as well as the Cerinthians.

A. D. 72. EBION.

From Cerinthus the master, I pass on to Ebion, his *disciple* and successor^u ; so called, I suppose, because of his being Cerinthus's admirer and follower in some things. They seem to have been contemporaries, both of the *apostolic age*, though Ebion, perhaps, the younger or later of the two. I follow Epiphanius chiefly, in placing Ebion as I do^x, a little after the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. But if he flourished ten or twenty years later, or began to spread his heresy but a little before St. John wrote his Gospel, (that is, before A. D. 97.) as Jerome seems to have thought, that will make no difference with respect to the main thing which I am upon.

Neither is it very material, whether there ever was such a person as Ebion, founder of the sect, or whether

^u Hujus successor Hebion fuit, Cerintho non in omni parte consentiens. *Pseudo-Tertullian. Præscript. cap. xlviii. p. 221.*

Hebion discipulus Cerinthi, in multis ei similiter errans, &c. *Philastr. Heres. xxxvii. p. 81.*

Cerinthum, et hujus successorem Ebionem. Hieronym. *Dial. contr. Lucifer. p. 304.*

^x Epiphani. *Hær. xxx. 2.*

the Ebionites took their name from their mean condition, or from their poor and abject notions, rather than from any leader called Ebion. But as the *ancients* in general do assert there was such a man^γ, though some few of them may seem to contradict it, I cannot but esteem their testimonies as much more weighty than the conjectures of some learned *moderns*^z, though specious, to the contrary: besides that other as learned and judicious *moderns*^a have well defended the *ancient* persuasion, and have sufficiently replied to the common exceptions made to it. Wherefore, there remains very little room for doubt or scruple, as to the truth of the fact, that there was formerly such a person as Ebion, founder of the sect of the Ebionites.

The Ebionites, as all allow, denied any proper *Divinity* of Christ. Some of them indeed admitted that he was born of a *virgin*^b; but most of them, the elder Ebionites especially, denied even that^c, and none of them confessed his true Godhead. I shall not here stand to enumerate or clear their sentiments, because they are well known; besides that they will appear distinctly in the sequel, as I run through the Ante-Nicene writers in order, who have

^γ Tertullian. Præscript. cap. x. xxxiii. de Carn. Christi, c. xiv. xviii. Virg. Veland. c. vi. Victorinus Petavion. in Apocalyps. Alexand. Alexandr. Epist. Synod. apud Theodorit. E. H. lib. i. cap. 4. p. 15. Hilarius, p. 779, 789, 799, 916, 919. edit. Bened. Ruffin. in Symbol. p. 27. Theodorit. Hæret. Fabul. p. 188, 218. Epiphan. Hæres. xxx. 2. et passim. Philastr. Hær. xxxvii. p. 81. Hieron. contr. Lucifer. p. 304. et in Isai. i. 3. p. 10. adv. Helvid. p. 141. et alibi. Augustin. Epist. ad Hieronym. lxxii. p. 195. ed. Bened.

^a See the most of them numbered up in Ittigius de Hæres. primi Secul. p. 303. Buddæus, Eccles. Apostol. p. 492.

^b Bull. Judic. Eccles. cap. ii. sect. 17. p. 303. Fabricius in not. ad Philastr. p. 81, &c. Mosheim. Observ. Sacr. lib. i. c. 5. Et in Vindic. cont. Tolland. c. 7. Buddæus, Eccles. Apostol. p. 491, &c. Berriman, Serm. p. 48.

^c Vid. Origen. contr. Cels. lib. v. p. 272. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. lib. ii. c. 1. p. 219.

^d Vid. Irenæus, lib. iii. c. 21. p. 215. lib. v. c. 1. p. 292. Tertullian de Carn. Christi, c. xiv. p. 319. Eusebius, Eccl. H. lib. iii. c. 27. Epiphan. Hær. xxx. p. 125. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. lib. ii. c. 1. p. 218. Philastr. Hæres. xxxvii. p. 82.

condemned the Ebionites by name, or at least have condemned their principles, as amounting to *heresy*.

A. D. 107. I shall begin with Ignatius, an eminent personage, a disciple of St. John, and by him ordained Bishop of Antioch, and who afterwards died a martyr, either in 116 or 107. Accounts differ as to the time: I choose, with the learned Mosheim^d, to take the earlier date, according to the Acts of his martyrdom, being as probable as the other. Ignatius does not mention the Ebionites by name; but he plainly enough condemns their principles, in more places than one.

In his Epistle to the Ephesians, he commends their unity of *faith* and *doctrine*, inasmuch as they walked according to *truth*, and no *heresy* dwelt with them^e. Then he proceeds to speak of *heretics*, as follows: "Some are
"wont to bear about them the name [of Christ] in wicked
"craftiness, while they commit things unworthy of God:
"whom it behoves you to avoid as you would wild
"beasts. For they are a kind of fell dogs that will bite
"you unawares: you should be upon your guard against
"them, as they are next to *incurable*. There is one *Phy-*
"sician *fleshly* and *spiritual*, *made* and *not made*, God in-
"carnate, in mortality true life, both of *Mary* and of
"God, first passible and then impassible, [Jesus Christ
"our Lord,] let no one therefore deceive you; as hitherto
"you are not deceived, but are wholly of God^f."

These words of Ignatius, in their general view, strike at all the heresies of that time, which any way tended to undermine the doctrine of *God incarnate*, whether by impugning Christ's *humanity* or *Divinity*: and as the

^d Mosheim. *Vindiciæ Antiquæ* contr. Toland. c. viii. p. 230.

^e Ignat. Epist. ad Ephes. c. 6.

^f Εἰδῶσαι γὰρ τινὲς δόλον ποιεῖν τὸ ὄνομα περιφέρειν, ἀλλὰ τινὰ πράσσοντες ἀνάξια Θεοῦ. οὗς δι' ἡμᾶς ὡς θηρία ἐκκλίειν· ἰσθὶν γὰρ κύνας λυσσῶντες, λαθροδῶνται· οὗς δι' ἡμᾶς φυλάσσεισθαι ὄντας δυσδραστήτους. ὡς ἰσθρὸς ἴσθιν, σαρκινὸς τε ἔστω πνευματικὸς, γινητὸς ἔστω ἀγίητος, ἐν σαρκὶ γινόμενος Θεὸς, ἐν θανάτῳ ζωὴ ἀληθινή, ἔστω ἡ Μαρία καὶ ἡ Θεοῦ, πρῶτον παθητὸς καὶ τότε ἀπαθής.—μὴ οὖν τις ἡμᾶς ἐξαπατάτω, ὡς περ οὐδὲν ἐξαπατάσθαι, εἰσι ὄντες Θεοῦ. Ignat. ad Ephes. 7, 8.

Ebionites and Cerinthians were among those that impugned our Lord's *Divinity*, the censure here given must of course affect them. Some of the expressions seem to be particularly pointed at them. *Made and not made*: the words *not made* directly confront both those heresies. So also the words *God incarnate*, God coming in the flesh. Then again, *of Mary and of God*: those heretics would have said, of Mary and of Joseph; none of them would then have said, *of God*. Let the reader observe, that Ignatius here plainly excludes all such heretics from salvation, since they had rejected the only *Physician* that could *heal* them, Christ *God-man*, by denying the union of *God* and *man* in him^h. The principles which this truly primitive and apostolical writer goes upon are,

1. That the *salutary* doctrine of redemption is, that the reconciliation of God and man is wrought by a Mediator who is both *God* and *man*.
2. That denying and opposing that doctrine is, in effect, renouncing all claim to the benefit of it, since it is reasonable to think, that when God reveals his good and gracious designs towards mankind, they who will not give credit to them shall have no part in them. St. John himself seems to go upon the same general principle, where he says, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Fatherⁱ." He that throws up the *belief* of the privileges granted, does interpretatively throw up the *privileges* themselves: this is a maxim which appears to run through the writings of all the Fathers, where they are treating of *heresies*; and we shall find more of it as we pass along.

^a See my Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 239. Bull. Def. F. N. sect. ii. c. 2. p. 39. Judic. Eccl. cap. i. n. 1. p. 286.

^b Nulla est hominibus salus, nisi per unicum animarum medicum, Christum Deum et hominem, Deum inter hominesque Mediatorem. At isti hujusmodi medicum et Mediatorem nullum agnoscunt, nullum volunt: itaque plane deplorata est ipsorum salus, nisi scilicet ab hæresi sua tandem ferio recipiant, ac Deum Filium pro sua salute incarnatum atque hominem factum amplectantur, atque omni obsequio venerentur. Bull. Judic. Eccl. p. 286.

ⁱ 1 John ii. 23.

In the same Epistle, the same heavenly man, after expressing his detestation of heresies in very strong words, which I have quoted above^k, proceeds to set down the faith of the Church, with respect to the *Incarnation* of the Son of God, in these remarkable lines: "For Jesus Christ, *our God*, was conceived of Mary, according to "the divine dispensation, being of the seed of David, and "of the *Holy Spirit*!" Against the impugners of this doctrine, the good man, in the same place, threatens hell and damnation^m: so little was he acquainted with that *neutrality* and *indifference* which has since too much prevailed. Yet he was a person of admirable *lenity* in his temper, and of a most exalted *charity*; which he proved by that very instance, since nothing could have extorted those expressions from him, but a most ardent zeal for the salvation of soulsⁿ.

A. D. 155. Justin, the *philosopher*, afterwards *martyr*, is our next considerable writer. His real and great concern for the doctrine of our Lord's *Divinity* appears all the way through his famous Dialogue with Trypho the Jew; being the relation of a conference he had held at Ephesus with that most celebrated Rabbi^o. He makes no express mention of the Ebionites, and so does not con-

^k See above, p. 198.

^l Ὁ γὰρ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, Ἰησοῦς ἡ Χριστὸς, ἐκνοθευήθη ὑπὸ Μαρίας, κατ' οἰκονομίαν Θεοῦ, ἐν σπέρματι μὴν Δαβὶδ, πνεύματος δὲ ἁγίου. *Ignat. ad Ephes.* c. 18.

^m Ὁ τοῦτος, ἰσχυρὸς γινόμενος, εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄβυσσον χωρήσει, ὁμοίως καὶ ἁπάντων αὐτῶ. cap. 16.

ⁿ In seductores, et seductos istos intonat, et ignem ipsis inextinguibilem minatur vir alioqui mitissimus, quod primam religionis Christianæ veritatem, cujus præcipue cûlos καὶ ἰδρυαίωμα esse debet, monente Apostolo, omnis vera Christi Ecclesia—nempe *magnum illud pietatis mysterium, Deum in carne manifestatum* fuisse convellere niterentur. Qui istam impietatem moliti sunt, duo fuere, Ignatii ætate, hæreticorum genera, sibi invicem non minus quam veritati repugnantium. Alii divinam quandam servatori nostro naturam attribuentes, *humanam* prorsus ipsi detraxerunt—qua in hæresi fuere Simoniani, Menandriani, Saturniniani, alique, quos propterea omnes *Δαιμονιάς* et *Φαντασιακάς* posterior ætas appellavit: alii contra, humanam tantum in Domino Jesu naturam agnoscebant, ut Cerinthiani, et Ebionæi. Utra hæresis perniciosior fuerit, haud facile dictu. *Bull. Judic.* c. i. p. 287.

• Euseb. E. H. lib. iv. c. 18.

demn them by *name*; but he does it more than once, by necessary inference and implication. I forbear to cite the places, choosing rather, for brevity sake, to refer the reader to Bishop Bull, who has produced them at length, and descanted properly upon them P.

But there is one passage in Justin, which requires a more particular consideration, because the Socinians and Remonstrants have frequently boasted of it, and do so to this day, as proving, in their opinion, that those who disowned Christ's proper *Divinity*, or even *preexistence*, were tolerated in the primitive Church, were received as brethren and fellow Christians. This pretence has been largely and solidly confuted by Bishop Bull; and as there is scarce room for adding any thing, (the question being in a manner exhausted,) so neither is there much need of any reinforcement. But it may be of some use to recapitulate what that learned Prelate has said, as also to take some brief notice of what the adversaries have since attempted, in order to depreciate and disparage it, instead of making any just reply to it. I shall first cite the whole passage of Justin, and then give a summary account of Bishop Bull's reasonings upon it, that the reader may then judge for himself, as to the force of them. Trypho the Jew, in the Dialogue, having a little before told Justin, that his doctrine concerning Christ (that he was *God before the world*, and afterwards became *man*, and of a *virgin*) appeared to him a very great paradox, and contrary to common sense, Justin replies as follows: " I

P Bull. Judic. Eccles. cap. vii. s. 11, 12. p. 349, &c.

¶ Οὐδ' ἔστι παρεδόξος ὁ λόγος δοκεῖ εἶναι, καὶ μέγιστα τοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους ὑμῶν, οἵτινες τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἔστι νοῆσαι οὕτω ποιῆσαι ποτὶ βιβάλησθαι, ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν διδασκάλων ὑμῶν, ὡς αὐτοὶ ὁ Θεὸς βοᾷ. ἦδη μίντοι, ὦ Τρύφων, εἶπον, ἐκ ἀπόλλυται τὸ ταῦτον [ταῦτον] εἶναι Χριστὸν τῷ Θεῷ, ἰὰν ἀποδιῆξαι μὴ δύναμαι ἔστι καὶ προῦπῆρχιν υἱὸς τοῦ ποιητοῦ τῶν ἔστων, Θεὸς ὢν, καὶ γιγίνηται ἄνθρωπος διὰ τῆς παρθεῖνου. ἀλλὰ ἐκ παντὸς ἀποδοκιμασίῃ ἔστι οὗτος ἔστιν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅστις οὗτος ἔστιν ἰὰν δὲ μὴ ἀποδοκίμῃ ἔστι προῦπῆρχιν, καὶ γινώσκῃται ἄνθρωπος ὁμοιοσταθῆς ἡμῖν, σάρκα ἔχων, κατὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς βουλὴν ὑψίμην, ἐκ τούτου πιστευθήσεται μοι μόνον λίγην δίκαιον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀρετίσθαι ἔστι ὁσὶς ἔστιν ὁ Χριστὸς, ἰὰν φαίηται ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γινώσκῃται, καὶ ἐκλογὴ γινώσκῃται εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν εἶναι ἀποδοκίμῃται. καὶ γὰρ εἰσὶ τινες, ὧ φίλοι, ἔλιγον,

“ am very sensible that this account will look like a paradox, and more especially to those of your nation, who are in no disposition either to apprehend or follow the things of God, but he dictates only of your own Rab- bins, as God himself proclaims^r. Nevertheless (said I to Trypho) my argument does not fall, as to his being the *Messiah* of God, though I should not be able to prove that the Son of the Maker of the universe *pre- existed*, being *God*, and was born a man of the *Virgin*: but after it has been once fully proved that he is the *Messiah* of God, (whatever else he be,) though I should not farther demonstrate his *preexistence*, and his conde- scending to become man of like passions with us, tak- ing flesh upon him according to the Father’s good plea- sure, all that you can justly say is, that I am so far in an error; but you should not hereupon deny that he is the *Christ*, appearing as a man born of human parents, and approving himself as the chosen *Messiah*. For, said I, my good friends, some there are of our profes- sion (of your nation^s) who acknowledging him to be the *Messiah*, yet conceive of him as of a man born of human parents: whom however I assent not to, no, not though there were ever so many concurring to tell me so^t; since we are commanded by Christ himself,

ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡμετέρου [ἡμετέρου] γένους ἡμολογῶντες αὐτὸν Χριστὸν ὄναι, ἐνθροῦνον δὲ ἐξ ἀν- θρώπων γινόμενον ἀποφανόμενον οἷς ἡ συνείδημα, ἢ ἂν πλῆθει ταῦτά μοι δεξάσασθε ἰσῶν, ἰσχυρῶς ἐκ ἀνθρώπων διδάγματα κειλιόμεθα ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰδέναι, ἀλλὰ τοῖς διὰ τῶν μακαρίων προφητῶν κηρυχθεῖσι, καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ διδαχθεῖσι. *Just.* *Dial.* p. 140. *Jebb.* 234. *Thirlby.*

^r Isa. xxix. 13.

^s Ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡμετέρου γένους is undoubtedly the true reading; warranted by the propriety of the expression, and Justin’s usual phraseology, and the whole turn and texture of the sentence. See *Bull. Judic. Eccl.* cap. vii. sect. 6. p. 346. *Thirlby* in locum.

Nevertheless, one might perhaps, in prudence, wave this just criticism, since nothing depends upon it, as to the main cause, (except it be to make Justin write sense so far,) but the insisting upon it gives the adversaries a handle for dropping the material things, and making some show of an opposition upon this bye-point, as if all depended upon it.

^t I prefer the rendering here given before the common one, taking the

“not to submit to the doctrines of men, but to what the holy Prophets have delivered, and himself hath taught us.”

This is the famous passage, from whence (as I have said) the Socinians and Remonstrants have endeavoured to draw an argument for *neutrality* or *indifference* concerning the article of Christ's *Divinity*; imagining that the impugnors of that doctrine were received by Justin and the Church in his time, as brethren and fellow Christians. But there is nothing in this paragraph of Justin to support such fancies. Let it be observed in the first place, that the persons whom Justin here speaks of, as believing in *Jesus* as the *Messiah*, but denying his birth of a *virgin*, and his *preexistence*, were most certainly the Ebionites of his time. Their hypothesis, and theirs only, exactly answers the description here given; as Bishop Bull has demonstrated at large^u. This premised, we may now proceed to lay down the *arguments* urged by Bishop Bull against the construction offered by the Remonstrants, and next subjoin a summary of the *solutions* he has given in answer to their objections.

1. As the passage itself in Justin is very far from declaring in express terms, or by any *certain* consequence, what some collect from it, so it is very unlikely that Justin should be *singular* in his sentiments on that head, directly thwarting the sentiments of Ignatius before him, of Irenæus and Tertullian of the same century with him, and, in short, of all the ancients besides him, who have constantly condemned those Ebionite principles as pernicious and heretical^x.

2. The argument drawn from this passage by our adversaries, if it proves any thing at all, proves *too much*; which is a certain sign that it is faulty: for it proves that

hint from the ingenious Mr. Thirlby in his notes upon the passage. The common rendering is; *neither would it be admitted by the generality [of Christians,] who are in my sentiments: the sense is flat.*

^u Bull. Judic. Eccles. cap. vii. sect. 8. p. 347.

^x See Bull. Judic. cap. vii. sect. 5. p. 345.

even those who denied our Lord's birth of a *virgin* (a truth attested to by the *Prophets* and *Evangelists*, and most religiously held by the ancient *Church*) were received as *fellow Christians*; which is highly absurd^γ.

3. It is very observable, that the Ebionites rejected three of the Gospels, receiving only St. Matthew's, (or what they called so,) and that curtailed. They rejected likewise all St. Paul's writings, reproaching him as an apostate^z. How unlikely is it that Justin should own such reprobates as those were for fellow Christians! Episcopus was himself sensible of this difficulty, and could not but acknowledge it plainly absurd, that Justin, and the Church of his time, should hold any communion with such an ungodly race of men as the Ebionites were^a. What salvo therefore had he for it? None, but the denying that Justin was there speaking of the Ebionites; though it is a plain case that he was: therefore Episcopus was here caught in his own snare, as Bishop Bull justly observes, retorting his own concessions upon him with irresistible force^b.

4. Add to this, that the Liturgies then used in the Church were so full and express for the *Divinity* of Christ, that there is no likelihood that the Ebionites should join in them; neither could they do it without solemn mock-

^γ Qui enim hic a Justino notantur dogmatistæ, Servatorem nostrum, non modo *hominem* tantum, sed *hominem ex hominibus* genitum, hoc est, ex viri et fœminæ concubitu, communi hominum more, natum esse affirmarunt. Hinc igitur, si recte ex hoc loco Remonstrantes argumentantur, sequetur, Justinum ecclesiamque Justini tempore, cum iis qui susque deque habita sacrorum *Evangelistarum* autoritate, spreteque Apostolicæ et Catholicæ Ecclesiæ constanti concordique traditione Christum hominem ex Maria Virgine natum esse negare ausi sunt, communionem coluisse: quod quisquis serio sibi persuaserit, ad Anticyras plane relegandus est. *Bull. ibid.* sect. iiii. p. 343.

^z Ebionæi—solo eo quod est secundum Mattheum Evangelio utuntur, et Apostolum Paulum recusant, apostatam eum legis dicentes. *Iren.* lib. i. c. 26. Conf. Epiphani. *Hær.* xxx. 13. Euseb. *E. H.* lib. iii. c. 27. Origen. contra Cels. lib. v. p. 274. Theodoret. *Hæret. Fab.* lib. ii. cap. 1.

^a Vid. Respons. ad Specim. Calumn. p. 296.

^b Vid. Bull. Append. ad cap. vii. sect. 9. p. 357.

ery. See this argument drawn out at large in Bishop Bull^c.

5. If the Church would have communicated with the Ebionites, the Ebionites would not with them: and therefore Justin could never have intended to call them *brethren*. See this also explained at large in Bishop Bull^d. These are the reasons which that incomparable Prelate has urged against the Socinian or Episcopian construction of the passage in Justin. But as it is not always sufficient to demonstrate a *truth*, and leave it to shift for itself, without *reconciling* it, and *clearing* it from *objections*; we may next go on to specify the solutions given to the difficulties pleaded on the other side.

1. It is pleaded, that according to Justin, a person might reasonably be supposed the *Messiah*, though no more than a *man*. But to this it is answered, that Justin nowhere asserts that such a thing could be supposed consistently with *Scripture* or *good sense*. No; his constant doctrine is, and which he every where labours and contends for, that the *Messiah* is and must be God^e. But since the Jews, with whom he was disputing, had taken up low notions of their expected *Messiah*, Justin urged it against Trypho, as an argument to *him*, and such as upon his principles he could not gainsay, that he might receive *Jesus* (as his Ebionite countrymen had done) for the *Messiah*, though he disowned his *Godhead*. So there was no necessity for his continuing in *Judaism*, though he would not admit the *Divinity* of *Jesus*.

2. It is pleaded, that those impugners of Christ's *Divinity* are styled *men of our profession*, that is, Christians; and therefore he admitted them as fellow Christians. To say nothing here of the *truer* reading, (*men of your nation*,) there is no consequence in the argument. The Ebionites were Christians in a large sense, men of Christian profes-

^c Bull. *ibid.* p. 353.

^d Bull. *ibid.* p. 349. Conf. p. 346.

^e See this explained at large in Bull, c. vii. p. 344, 345.

sion, nominal Christians; as Justin allowed the worst of heretics to be^f: and this is all he could mean by allowing the Ebionites to be Christians^g.

3. It is pleaded, that Justin signified his dissent from them very faintly and coldly, (*whom I assent not to*), expressing no detestation or abhorrence of the men, or of their principles. To which it may be answered, 1. That he expresses himself as strongly here, as he does in another cause of great moment, against those who denied that the world was created^h. 2. As Justin here expressed no abhorrence, so neither did he express any *approbation* of them; as his way was when he *dissented* from ⁱ persons of the Church, with whom he held communion: so we may fairly set one *negative* argument against another. 3. There might be special reasons why, in that particular case, he did not launch out into satire and invective against the Ebionites. He was endeavouring to persuade Trypho to come so far at least as the Ebionites had done, rather than continue an hardened and desperate Jew: it would have been highly improper, in the conducting an argument of that kind^k, to have fallen severely upon the Ebionites, whose tenets he was making so good use of^l. 4. Yet even in that very passage he gave oblique intimations of his heartily disapproving the Ebionite principles. He rebukes Trypho and his associates with some tartness, as shutting their eyes against the *truth*, and being slow to perceive the *things of God*, for their not admitting the *Divinity* of Jesus Christ, so fully proved from the Old

^f Vid. Dialog. p. 100, 244, 245. Jebb. alias 208, 311, 312. Apolog. i. p. 43. edit. Thirlby.

^g Vid. Bull. Judic. cap. vii. sect. 6. p. 346.

^h "Ἡ δὲ τὸν κόσμον εὐὲ ἀγίνετον λέγεις; τίσιν οἱ λόγοις, ἐ μίσητι γὰρ αὐτοῖς συνασπασίθῃσαι ἴσῳ. Just. Dial. p. 20. alias 148.

ⁱ Vid. Justin. Dial. p. 243, alias 311.

^k See Thirlby upon the passage, p. 243.

^l See a like argument urged by Novatian from the doctrine of the Docetæ; which he heartily detested, but yet contented himself, in that instance, while making use of it, with saying, *Quod tamen nos non probamus*, (c. 23.) which was sufficient: more would have been there and then improper.

Testament: what then could he think of the Ebionites, who had both Old Testament and New before them, and yet rejected their Lord's Divinity^m? Then again, in the close of the same passage, Justin plainly enough intimates, that those who denied Christ's *Divinity* or birth of a *virgin*, rejected the doctrine of the *Church*, and of the *Prophets*, and of *Christ* himself, to follow *human* inventions, or doctrines of menⁿ. So if Justin did not condemn the Ebionites with hard words, he did it with hard arguments, which were altogether as forcible, and served his purpose better. Upon the whole therefore, nothing can be inferred from this passage of Justin, to countenance the receiving of the Ebionites, or their successors, to Christian communion: the contrary is evident as the light. And indeed it would be hard to say for what purpose Justin wrote that very Dialogue, (the main substance whereof is taken up in proving the *Divinity* of Christ,) if after all he thought it an article of slight moment, and such as was not of weight sufficient to be made a term of Christian communion. But enough of this.

Bishop Bull's answer to Episcopus has met with the esteem of the learned world^o, and nothing like a just reply has been attempted since: only Le Clerc, above twenty years after, writing an Ecclesiastical History^p, was pleased, in passing, to make some brief strictures upon it, and to bring up again some of the former pretences, which had long been exploded. He deals more in hints and insinuations, than in arguments, or direct assertions, like one who had an inclination to put some fallacy upon his readers, but at the same time to provide for a retreat. He hints, ^q that the persons whom Justin

^m Compare Bull, cap. vii. sect. 4. p. 344. ⁿ Ibid. p. 347.

^o See Nelson's Life of Bull, p. 383, &c.

^p Published A. D. 1716.

^q Non constare an ii, seu Nazaræi, seu quicumque alii fuerint, negarent, Præter hominem ex hominibus natum, quidquam in *Jesu* fuisse; hoc est, divinitam ejus naturam rejicerent, neque enim perspicue hic loquitur Justinus. Cleric. *Eccles. Histor.* p. 635.

there speaks of might be Nazareans. He was very sensible where the difficulty pressed, if they were supposed to be Ebionites; as Bishop Bull had fully proved them to have been. But whether they are to be called Ebionites or Nazareans, they were undoubtedly men that denied Christ's *Divinity* and his birth of a *virgin*, (as before shown,) and were therefore *heretics* in ecclesiastical account. As to Nazareans, about whom so much has been boasted of late^r, it will be soon enough to consider how far Justin had a view to them, when it can be proved, that their principles, with respect to Christ, were the same with those which Justin there condemns: a hard thing to make out^s.

Le Clerc would appear to doubt whether the persons pointed to in Justin really denied Christ's *divine nature* or no. It is as plain as possible, that they did. But however if they did not, then there is an end of all the Remonstrant pretences at once: and there is not so much as colour left for saying, that Justin held communion with the impugnors of Christ's *Divinity*.

He goes on to observe how mildly and softly Justin treated them^t, above common *heretics*, whom he allowed not to be Christians. This is the old Episcopian plea^u, which had been abundantly answered by Bishop Bull, as Le Clerc well knew; though he took no notice. Neither does it appear that Justin believed the Ebionites (of whom he speaks) to have been Christians in any other sense than as other *heretics* were, that is, *nominal* Christians, as I have observed above.

^r By Zuicker, Sandius, Toland, Artemonius, and others.

^s Vid. Mosheim, *Vindic. Antiq. Discipl. advers. Toland.* cap. 5, 6. Buddæus, *Eccles. Apostol.* p. 545—550. Mosheim, *Histor. Eccles. Sæc. i. part. 2. sect. i. c. 4.* p. 99. Conf. Buddæus, *Eccles. Apostol.* p. 547. Bull. *Judic. Eccl.* cap. ii. sect. 13—16. Primit. *Trad.* cap. i. sect. 6—10. Huetius in not. ad Origen. *Comment.* p. 74. Le Quien, *Dissert. Damascen.* vii. p. 94, &c.

^t Eum minime in eos invecum, ut in Basilidianos, Saturnilianos, Valentianos, et Marcionitas, quos Christianos fuisse negat. *Ibid.* p. 635.

^u Respons. ad Specim. Calumn. p. 296.

He proceeds to say, that it cannot be determined, for want of ancient evidences, how far those Nazaræans (for so he chooses to call them) were *tolerated*^x. Directly false, or sophistical. Indeed, as to Nazaræans, since it is disputable who or what they were, or how far orthodox y, (accounts being different, and sometimes repugnant,) it may be disputable how they were received by other Christians: but as to such persons as Justin speaks of, (whatever name we assign them,) men that denied Christ's *Divinity* and *miraculous* conception, it is a very clear case, and fully attested by many and undoubted evidences, that they never were *received* by the Church of Christ, but constantly rejected as *antichrists* and *heretics*. And this is all that we need contend for: the rest is only playing with words and names, and is mere amusement, wide of the point in hand.

He goes on to infer, that since Justin was so *moderate* in that case, there is no reason now for condemning the Socinians or others that impugn Christ's *Divinity*: that is plainly his drift and meaning, only a little covertly expressed^z. So, though he had neither answered nor considered the reasons offered by Bishop Bull against any such inference from Justin's words, nor the *solutions* given

^x Sed quatenus eos ferrent alii Christiani, aut qui ipsi se erga alios gererent, ob veterum monumentorum penuriam, nobis non constat. p. 636.

^y Though I say *disputable*, because very learned men have been much divided about the Nazaræans, yet I make no question myself, but the Nazaræans were the remains of the first Christians of Jerusalem, were entirely orthodox in the article of Christ's *Divinity*, and directly opposite to the Ebionites. So far, at least, Bishop Bull and Le Quien have, in my judgment, clearly and satisfactorily proved. So that to obtrude the Nazaræans upon us here, instead of Ebionites, is only raising a mist, to confound weak readers.

^z Interim cum Justinus de ejusmodi hominibus, non exiguo errore laborantibus, tanta verborum *moderatione* loquatur, invidia non est iis facienda, qui *Jesus* non tantum *Messiam*, sed etiam a Spiritu Sancto, præter naturam ordinem, conceptum credentes, totumque Novum Testamentum admittentes, et ad ejus normam mores componentes, æternis suppliciis addicere non audent; eo tantum quod in arduo capite, de *divina* Christi natura, a ceteris dissentiant, quia eam in Novi Testamenti libris doceri non putant. *Clerici Eccles. Hist.* p. 636.

to the *objections* before made, nor indeed had advanced any thing beyond mere surmises and shuffles; yet he draws the same *conclusion* which the Remonstrants had before done, as if he had proved his point to satisfaction.

But lest he should seem entirely to have passed over Bishop Bull's performance, he singles out a bye-point^a (not material in respect of the main thing) to contest with him. It is the emendation of a word which Bishop Bull had offered, and justified, like a judicious writer and a true critic, to make his author speak sense, rather than to support the main cause, which did not need it: I say, Le Clerc singles out that to dispute upon, and that is all. And even there he is entirely wrong, as has been abundantly shown by a learned hand^b; for which reason I shall say no more of it. But allowing those gentlemen their absurd *reading*, the cause stands just where it did; and they are as far off as ever from being able to prove from that passage in Justin Martyr, that the Socinians should be received as *fellow Christians*.

I had almost forgot to take notice of two insinuations dropped by Le Clerc in their favour, *viz.* that they receive the *whole Canon*, (which the Ebionites did not,) and they lead good *moral lives*. As to the first, it is only maintaining their *heresy* with greater *art*, and more exquisite *subtilty*, and in a way which may do the more *mischief*, because the *poison* is concealed: the ancient heretics were *plainer* men. Besides, any one who has seen the Five Letters of Inspiration, and knows also what freedom that author has taken with the *sacred writers*, in his comments and elsewhere, will conceive no high opinion of his veneration for the *Scriptures*: it is keeping them indeed, for the saving of appearances, but in order to *expose* them the more insidiously.

As to a good *moral life*, that is, a *partial obedience*, it avails nothing, while maintaining of heresies is itself im-

^a Clerici Eccles. Histor. p. 636.

^b Thirlby, in Notis ad Just. Mart. p. 234.

moral practice, both against God and man: besides that the natural consequence of *Socinianism* is *Deism*; which leads to all *immorality*. And this distant, and almost insensible way of introducing *Deism*, is the most dangerous of any: for thousands perhaps may be thus led by slow and almost imperceptible degrees into it, who could not have been brought to it by the shorter, coarser methods. But I pass on.

There is another gentleman, who, after Le Clerc, has appeared on the same side. He calls himself Artemonius in his last piece^c, as in another, long before, Lucas Mellierus, and is known to be Samuel Crellius, descended from the famous John Crellius. He hath here acted a more ungenerous part than Le Clerc himself had done. He pretends, *first*, that Le Clerc (who had scarce touched the main things, as I have shown) had *confuted* Bishop Bull; and next insinuates, that the Bishop had laid *violent* hands upon the text of Justin, only to serve his hypothesis: which is untrue in both its parts. For the Bishop's correction is undoubtedly right: or if it were not, yet nothing depends upon it, the main cause being perfectly secure without it. In the last place, he takes notice of Mr. Thirlby's Reply to Le Clerc, and contents himself with a kind of faint promise to make some rejoinder^d. I shall only remark, that when a person so well disposed for any *impracticable* undertaking (as appears by his strange attempt^e upon John i. 1.) declines

^c Initium Evangelii S. Joannis restitutum per L. M. Artemonium, A. D. 1726.

^d Post Apostolorum tempora, pro Christianis in Ecclesia tolerandis [Ebionæi] habebantur; ut ex illo celebri apud Justinum Martyrem, in Dial. cum Tryphone, loco p. 267. est manifestum. Quem Georg. Bullus magno conatu frustra convellere nititur, et *violentam* ei infert manum, vocem ἡμισίην, quia suæ hypothesi est contraria, in ὁμισίην mutans, confutatus etiam a celeberr. Clerico Hist. Eccl. ad Ann. cxl. Cui quidem vir clariss. Styanus Thirlby pro Bullo respondit: Verum sint quæ Thirlbyo reponi, et præterea plura in hanc rem afferri possent: quod fortasse aliquando fiet, &c. *Artemonius*, p. 516.

^e It is an attempt to make an emendation (Θεὸς ἦν ἰ Λόγος, instead of Θεὸς ἦν ἰ Λόγος) against all the *manuscripts* of the New Testament, against all the

venturing, and *promises* only, and that faintly too, where he has a strong inclination, it is a certain sign that he apprehends more difficulty than ordinary; and that while he *verbally* triumphed over Bishop Bull, he was wiser than to engage in close dispute.

The reader, I hope, will pardon me for dwelling so long upon this passage in Justin. I thought it worth the considering with some care: and I have endeavoured to be as short as the nature of the question would permit me to be. I am sensible, after all, that I have not taken compass enough to do full justice to it; and therefore I entreat the reader, who would have entire satisfaction about it, to consult Bishop Bull himself, in whom he will find it.

A. D. 176. About this time^f, very probably, the famous Irenæus wrote his treatise against *heresies*: and he is the first that condemns the Ebionites by name; and that not merely for being *immoral* men, nor merely for rejecting a great part of the *sacred Canon*, neither yet for denying Christ's birth of a *virgin*, but for impugning Christ's *Divinity*. He excludes them from Church-communication, and from a state of grace and salvation, chiefly, or solely, upon that score. He writes thus: "The spiritual
" man will pass judgment also upon the Ebionites. How
" can they be saved, unless it was God (ὁ Θεός) that
" wrought their salvation on earth? or how shall man
" come to God, if God had not come to man^g?" Irenæus here lays the charge upon the fundamental error of the Ebionites, their rejecting Christ's *Divinity*; an error

versions, against all the *quotations* from antiquity, in a very *critical* passage, (where, if any where, some remains of such a reading would have been preserved among Ebionites, Samosatensians, Arians, or others, had it ever been known,) by mere dint of *wit*, and force of *fancy*, without any foundation of *reason* or *authority*.

^f Vid. Oudin. de Scriptor. Eccles. vol. i. p. 207. Dodwell. Dissert. iv. 360. Fabric. Bibl. Gr. lib. v. c. 1. p. 66.

^g Ἀνακρίσι δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἠλιώτου πῶς δύναται σωθῆναι, εἰ μὴ ὁ Θεὸς ἦ· ὁ εὐὸν σωτηρίας αὐτῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ἐργασάμενος; ἢ πῶς ἄνθρωπος χωρήσει εἰς Θεόν, εἰ μὴ ὁ Θεὸς ἔχωρησεν εἰς ἄνθρωπον; Iren. lib. iv. c. 33, alias 53.

which they had imbibed from their countrymen the Jews, and brought with them into Christianity. And this was the principal ground and reason of their rejecting some of the Gospels, particularly St. John's: for they had not yet learned the art of reconciling the doctrine of the New Testament with their principles. Irenæus excludes the men from *salvation* for their *disbelief*, abstracting from the consideration of *invincible* ignorance or *sincerity*; which would be impertinently brought in with respect to *this* or *that* particular case, since it is *common* to all, and makes no difference as to the abstract nature of things, or our judgment thereupon: for we are to judge by what we know, leaving things *secret* to God. The Ebionites are here censured as rejecting *salvation*, because they rejected the *belief* of the *divine* methods appointed for it; agreeable to a maxim before laid down by Ignatius, and before him by St. John, as I have observed above^h.

Before I proceed further with Irenæus, I would here take notice by the way, how considerable a person he was. He is said to have been near the *Apostles'* timesⁱ; for indeed he was born in or near that age^k, and was advanced in ^l years when he wrote his book against heresies. The *charismata*, the *miraculous* gifts, were common in his days, and he himself a witness of them in many instances. The gifts of *healing* (as restoring *sight* to the *blind*, and *hearing* to the *deaf*, and *limbs* to the *cripple*, yea, and *life* to the *dead*) continued in the Church to his time; besides the gift of *tongues*, and of *prophecy*, and of casting out *devils*, and the like^m. He speaks twice of raising the *dead*, and in one place very emphatically thus: "And now, as I before said, the *dead* have *risen*, and

^h See above, p. 199.

ⁱ Ὁ ἰγγὺς τῶν Ἀποστόλων γινόμενος. *Basil. de Sp. S.* c. 29. Ὁ τῶν Ἀποστόλων διάδοχος. *Theodorit. Hæret. Fab.* lib. ii. cap. 2. *Epiphani. Har. H.* xxiv. 8. *Vir Apostolicorum temporum. Hieron. Epist. liii. ad Theodorum*, p. 581.

^j See Dodwell. *Dissert. in Iren. Diss. iii.* p. 229.

^k Dodwell. *Dissert. iv.* p. 291. *Oudin. vol. i.* p. 207.

^l Vid. *Iren. lib. ii. c. 31.* p. 164. *aliaq. c. 56.* p. 188. *lib. ii. c. 32, alias 57.* lib. v. c. 6.

“ have continued with us many yearsⁿ :” those very gifts are what Irenæus more than once appeals to, as proofs of the true faith resting in the Church, in opposition to *heretics* who had not the extraordinary graces, but were detected in their imposture, whenever they pretended to them^o. He lays it down as a rule, and a maxim, that *truth* then went along with the *Church*, because the *Spirit* of truth rested upon it^p; which is the argument St. Paul himself uses to the like purpose^q: and it was a very good one at that time, and as circumstances then stood^r. But I return.

Irenæus, in another place, smartly reproves the Ebionites for denying Christ's *Divinity*, and his birth of a *virgin*^s. “ *God* therefore became man, and the *Lord* “ himself saved us, giving the sign of the *Virgin*: and not “ as some now say, who presume to interpret the Scripture, *Behold a young woman shall be with child, and shall bear a son*; as Theodotion the Ephesian, and “ Aquila of Pontus, both of them Jewish proselytes, interpret. Whom the Ebionites following, pretend he “ was begotten of Joseph, thereby dissolving, so far as in

ⁿ Ἡδη δὲ, καθὼς ἴθαμιν, καὶ νεκρὸν ἠγύρθησαν, καὶ παρέμειναν σὺν ἡμῖν ἱκανοῖς ἰστωῖ. lib. ii. cap. 32. p. 166. Conf. Dodwell. Dissert. ii. p. 165, &c.

^o Iren. lib. ii. cap. 31, 32.

^p Ubi enim Ecclesia, ibi et *Spiritus Dei*, et ubi *Spiritus Dei* illic Ecclesia, et omnis gratia: Spiritus autem veritas. Iren. lib. iii. cap. 24, alias 40.

^q Gal. iii. 2.

^r Nihil ergo prorsus video quod in hoc Irenæi nostri testimonio desiderare possint adversarii. Ut enim Ecclesiis omnibus sic solis datas fuisse gratias testatur Irenæus, nullis nimirum *hereticorum* aliorumve quorumcunque infidelium conventiculis. Inde sequitur, ut *falsam* fuisse hæreticorum fidem, sic contra Ecclesiæ *orthodoxam*, divino constitisse testimonio. Quæ utinam cogitarent Sociniani, alique hodierni omnes a primævorum Christianorum doctrina in fide novatores. Dodwell. Diss. ii. p. 168.

^s Ὁ Θεὸς σὺν ἁθροῦτος ἐγένετο. καὶ αὐτὸς Κύριος Ἰησοῦν ἡμᾶς, διὰ τὸ τῆς παρθένου σημεῖον. ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἱναὶ φασὶ τῶν τῶν μεθελθησάντων τὴν γραφὴν ἰδοὺ ἡ νεῖκος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει, καὶ τίξεται υἱὸν, ὡς Θεοδοτίων ἠρμήνευσεν ἐ' Εφίσιος, καὶ' Ἀκύλας ἐ Ποντικῶς, ἀμφότεροι Ἰουδαῖοι προσήλυτοι. οἳ κατακαλυψάμενοι οἱ Ἐβιωνῆται, ἐν τῷ Ἰωσήφ αὐτὸν γεννηθῆσαι φάσκουσι, tantam dispositionem Dei dissolventes, quantum ad ipsos est, frustrantes prophetarum testimonium quod operatus est Deus. Iren. lib. iii. cap. 21, alias 24.

“ them lies, that so important dispensation of God, and “ frustrating the prediction of the Prophets which God “ has brought about.” Here it is observable how strong the expression is, *God (ὁ Θεός) became man*, and the *Lord* himself saved us. So far in opposition to the Ebionites, with respect to their denial of Christ’s *Divinity*: the rest relates to their denial of his *miraculous* conception. Could any one judge from his smart reproof of them in the close, that those men were received as *Christian brethren* in that age? Absurd and incredible.

I would only take notice further, that some over censorious critics have suspected that Irenæus was here out in his chronology, and inconsistent with himself, in making the Ebionites to be *followers* of Aquila and Theodotion. But Irenæus is to be understood of the Ebionites of his own time only^t. The sect had subsisted long before, but now received fresh countenance and encouragement from the versions of Aquila and Theodotion, which they greedily closed in with, as favouring their *heresy*.

There is a third passage in Irenæus, where he again falls upon the Ebionites, for their opposing Christ’s *Divinity*, and birth of a *virgin*^u. “ Vain also are the Ebionites, “ in not receiving the *union of God and man*, by faith, into

^t Vid. Mosheim. Vindic. Antiq. cap. vii. p. 179, 180.

^u Vani autem et Ebionæi, unionem Dei et hominis, per fidem non recipientes in suam animam, sed in veteri generationis perseverantes fermento; neque intelligere volentes, quoniam *Spiritus Sanctus* advenit in Mariam, et *virtus Altissimi* obumbravit eam: quapropter et quod generatum est, *Sanctum* est, et *Filius Altissimi*, Dei Patris omnium, qui operatus est incarnationem ejus, et novam ostendit generationem; uti quemadmodum per priorem generationem mortem hæreditavimus, sic per generationem hanc hæreditaremus vitam. Reprobant itaque hi commixtionem *vini celestis*, et solam *aquam secularem* volunt esse, non recipientes *Deum* ad commixtionem suam; perseverantes autem in eo qui victus est, Adam, et projectus est de Paradiso: non contemplantes, quoniam quemadmodum ab initio plasmationis nostræ in Adam, ea quæ fuit a Deo adspiratio vitæ, unita plasmati, animavit hominem, et animal rationale ostendit; sic in fine, *Verbum Patris* et *Spiritus Dei* adnitus antiquæ substantiæ plasmationis Adæ, viventem et perfectum effecit hominem, capientem perfectum Patrem: ut quemadmodum in animali omnes mortui sumus, sic in spiritali omnes vivificemur. *Iren.* lib. v. cap. l. 293, alias p. 394.

“ their souls, but persisting still in the old leaven of
 “ [common] generation: for they will not understand,
 “ that the *Holy Spirit* came upon Mary, and the *power of*
 “ *the Highest overshadowed her*, and therefore that which
 “ was born of her is *holy*, and is the *Son of the Highest*,
 “ of God the Father of all, who wrought his incarnation,
 “ and manifested a *new generation*; that as by the first
 “ generation we had inherited *death*, so by this other ge-
 “ neration we might inherit *life*. They then reject the
 “ mixture of *heavenly wine*, content to be no more than
 “ *earthly water*, not taking *God* into their mixture, but
 “ abiding only in Adam, who was vanquished and expelled
 “ Paradise. They consider not, that as at the beginning
 “ of our formation in Adam, the breath of life from God,
 “ united with the frame, enlivened the man, and rendered
 “ him a rational creature; so at the end, the *Word* of the
 “ Father and *Spirit of God*, united with the old substance
 “ of Adam’s formation, has made a living and perfect
 “ man comprehending the perfect Father; that as in the
 “ *natural man* we are all dead, so in the *spiritual man* we
 “ may all be made alive.”

Here we are to observe, that Irenæus judged the Ebi-
 onites to be in a dangerous or desperate state, on the ac-
 count of their not admitting the *union of God and man*
 in the Person of Christ, on account of their not tak-
 ing the *divine nature* in, to supply the imperfections of
 the human, the *Word of the Father*, the *Spirit of God*, to
 enliven and exalt the human nature, the old Adam. I may
 remark by the way, that Irenæus here seems to under-
 stand *Spirit of God*, and *Holy Spirit* before, of the second
 Person, of the *Logos* himself coming down upon the
Virgin. So the earliest Fathers commonly do², interpreting

² Hoc ergo corpus, in quod inductus est Spiritus Sanctus, &c. *Hæm.*
 lib. iii. Simil. v. cap. 6.

³ Ως μὲν ἐν πρώτῳ πνεύματι, ἔγιγεν εὐχέλ. *Clem. Ep.* ii. cap. 9.

Τὸ πνεῦμα οὖν, καὶ τὴν δύναμιν ἐνὶ παρα τοῦ Θεοῦ, οὐδὲν ἄλλο νοῦσαι θέμις, ἢ τὸν
 λόγον. *Just. Mart. Apol.* i. p. 54, alias 75.

Luke i. 35. to that sense: which I the rather note, because so their asserting Christ's birth of a *virgin*, and his pre-existing as *Spirit of God*, and *God*, amounted to the same thing. For the reason given by St. Luke, (or rather by the *angel* in St. Luke,) why Mary should conceive, though she knew not a man, is, that the *Holy Spirit should come upon her*, that the *power of the Highest* [δύναμις ὑψίστου] should *overshadow* her: so that, after this, to deny the birth of a *virgin*, amounted, in construction, to the same with denying any such coming of an *Holy Spirit* upon Mary, any divine preexistence of Christ. And hence, I conceive, it is, that we so often find in the ancient Fathers those two doctrines so linked together, or so intermingled with each other, that they appear, in a manner, but as the same thing twice told, or the same doctrine diversely expressed. The Ebionites denied the descent of the *Logos* upon Mary: they rejected the *divine* part in Christ, admitting only the *human*. This is what Irenæus calls rejecting the *heavenly wine*, (alluding to their celebrating the Eucharist in *water* only, without *wine*;) not receiving

Προελθὼν δὲ ὁ Λόγος, ἐπισημαίνων αὐτοῖς, ἵερὸν καὶ ἰαυρὸν γινῆ, ἵερὸς ὁ Λόγος ἐπέχει γίνεσθαι. Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. v. p. 654.

Qua autem *Spiritus Dei* et *virtus Altissimi*, non potest infra angelos haberi. Tertul. de Carn. Christi, cap. xiv.

Ecce, inquit, ab angelo prædicatum est, *propterea quod nascetur Sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei*: caro itaque nata est, caro utique erit Filius Dei. Immo, de *Spiritu Dei* dictum est. Certe enim de *Spiritu Sancto* Virgo concepit; et quod concepit, id peperit: id ergo nasci habebat quod erat conceptum et pariendum; id est *Spiritus*, cujus et vocabitur nomen *Emmanuel*, quod est interpretatum *nobiscum Deus*. Caro autem *Deus* non est, ut de illa dictum sit *quod nascetur Sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei*, sed ille qui in ea natus est, *Deus*.—Quis *Deus* in eo natus? Sermo et *Spiritus*. Tertul. contr. Prax. cap. xxvii.

Verbum Dei incarnatum per *Spiritum* illum de quo angelus refert, *Spiritus venit in te*, &c.—ut principalitas nominis istius, *Filius Dei*, in *Spiritu* sit Domini qui descendit et venit. Novat. cap. xx.

Hic in Virgine labitur, carne *Spiritus Sanctus* induitur. Cyprian. de Idolor. Vavit. sic cod. German. et 4. MSS. Pamel.

Descendens itaque de celo *Sanctus ille Spiritus*, sanctam Virginem, cujus utero se insinaret, elegit. Lactant. lib. iv. cap. 12.

† Epiphani. Hær. xxx. 16.

God into their mixture, but contenting themselves with the earthly Adam, who was cast out of Paradise; intimating that the Ebionites should as certainly be excluded heaven. The thought which Irenæus goes upon may be illustrated from a passage in Hippolytus, which, speaking of *Christ*, runs thus: "As it was prophesied beforehand, " so he manifested himself of the *Virgin* and *Holy Spirit*; " made a *new man*, (a second Adam,) having an *heavenly* " nature of the Father, as he is the *Logos*, and having an " *earthly* one, as of the *old Adam*, incarnate of a virgin. " He came into the world, and manifested himself as " God²." But to return to Irenæus, it is very plain that he looked upon the reconciliation of God and man as depending entirely upon the Mediator's being *both* in one^a: and in how strict a sense he understood Christ to be *God* is well known to as many as know any thing of Irenæus. But if the English reader desires farther satisfaction on that head, he may have it abundantly from Mr. Alexander's Essay on Irenæus^b, a very judicious and faithful performance, a finished piece in its kind. I heartily wish that that learned gentleman had leisure, as he has abilities, to draw out more of the Fathers in the same way.

A. D. 206. Tertullian reckons the Ebionites among the *antichrists*, for denying *Jesus* to be *Son of God*^c, that is, for impugning the *Divinity* of Christ: for that Tertullian understood the phrase of *Son of God* as applied to Christ, to mean the same as *God of God*^d, is plain from all his

^a Καὶ ἂν οὖν κρείσσον ἐκπεύχθη, κατὰ τοῦτον καὶ παρὰ ἰφανίσεων λατὸν ἐν καρδίᾳ καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμετέρας γινόμενος: τὸ μὴ οὐράνιον ἔχειν τὸ παρῆεν ὡς Λόγος, τὸ δὲ ἰσχυρὸν, ὡς ἐν παλαιῷ Ἀδάμ διὰ καρδίας ἐσπεύμενος. οὗτος περιελάθων εἰς κρίματι Θεῷ ἰφανιζέσθην. κ. τ. λ. Hippolyt. contr. Noët. cap. xvii. p. 18, 19. Conf. Tertullian. de Carn. Christi, cap. xvii.

^b Vid. Iren. lib. iii. cap. 18, alias 20.

^c Printed for John Clarke and Richard Hett, A. D. 1727.

^e At in Epistola eos maxime *antichristos* vocat qui Christum negarent in carne venisse, et qui non putarent Jesum esse *Filium Dei*: illud Marcion, hoc Hebion vindicavit. Tertul. Præscript. cap. xxxiii.

^d Hunc ex Deo prolatum dicimus, et prolatione generatum, et idcirco *Filium Dei* et *Deum* dictum, ex unitate substantiæ.—Ita de Spiritu Spiritus, et de Deo Deus, ut lumen d lumine accensum.—Quod de Deo profectum est,

writings. And what he must think of the dangerous state the Ebionites were in, by their heresy in that article, may appear sufficiently from a maxim he lays down, that none have *life* who believe not in the *Son*, and none believe in the *Son*, who admit not that he is a *Son*^c in such a sense as he had mentioned.

He again censures the Ebionites, as making Christ a *mere man*, and denying that he is the *Son of God*^f. Where it is observable he passes over in silence their denying his birth of a *virgin*, or condemns both their positions in one, as resolving into the same error. However, the stress of his censure lies upon their impugning Christ's *divine* Sonship, that is, his real and proper *Divinity*: for such was Tertullian's sense of *Son of God*, as I before intimated.

In another place, he speaks of the Ebionites as denying Christ's birth of a *virgin*, but makes that amount to denying his being *Son of God*^g, in his high sense of that phrase. And the reason why the denial of the one implied the denial of the other (in his way of arguing, common to other Fathers) seems to have been this; that it would have been utterly *unworthy*^h of the *Son of God* to have

Deus est, et Dei Filius, et unus ambo. Ita de Spiritu Spiritus, et de Deo Deus, &c. Tertul. Apol. cap. xxi.

^c Qui *Filium* non habet, nec *vitam* habet: non habet autem *Filium*, qui eum alium quam *Filium* credit. *Contr. Prac. cap. xxx.*

^f Qua autem *Spiritus Dei, et virtus Altissimi*, non potest infra angelos haberi, *Deus* scilicet et *Dei Filius*. Quanto ergo dum hominem gestat minor angelis factus est tanto non, dum angelum gestat. Poterit hæc opinio *Hebionis* convenire, qui *nudum hominem* et tantum ex semine David, id est non et *Dei Filium* constituit *Jesum*. *Tertullian. de Carn. Christi, cap. xiv.*

^g Non competeat ex semine humano *Dei Filium* nasci, ne si totus esset *Filius hominis*, non esset et *Dei Filius*, nihilque haberet amplius *Solomone*, et amplius *Jona*, et de *Hebionis* opinione credendus erat. Ergo jam *Dei Filius* ex *Patris Dei* semine, id est *Spiritu*; vacabat enim viri semen apud habentem *Dei* semen. *Tertullian. de Carn. Christi, cap. xviii.*

^h Ante omnia autem commendanda erit ratio quæ præfuit, ut *Dei Filius* de *Virgine* nasceretur. *Nove* nasci debebat *novæ* nativitatis dedicator.—Conceptit igitur *Virgo* et peperit *Emanuel*, nobiscum *Deum*. Hæc est *nativitas nova* dum homo nascitur in *Deo*, in quo *homine* *Deus* natus est; carne

taken *man* upon him, except it were by a *virgin*: therefore the denial of the mother's *virginity* amounted to a denial of *God's* being born of her; it was making it *absurd*. From whence we see a further reason of what I before hinted, that the two false positions of the Ebionites were considered as near allied, and were condemned in one, as hanging both together, and perhaps one invented for the sake of the otherⁱ. The denying the *miraculous* conception was, by inference and implication, denying Christ's *Divinity*, as the affirming of the one was conceived to amount to affirming the other. But the later Ebionites, (as we shall see) having a mind to reform their scheme, contrived at length to admit the *miraculous* conception, and still rejected our Lord's *Divinity*: which was retaining the main substance of their *heresy*, but under a better appearance than before. We shall observe presently what the Church of Christ thought of them after that new reform.

A. D. 249. Origen is the first that takes notice of the Ebionites as divided into *two sorts*^k, one denying, as before, Christ's birth of a virgin, the other admitting it. But still he reckons *both* among the pretended Christians^l, and introduces them among other *heretics*^m. But whether or no he charged them with *heresy* on account of their denying our Lord's *Divinity* would not certainly appear, if he had not expressed himself more fully in some other of his writings. In his Comment upon St. Matthew, he takes the like notice of the two sorts of Ebionites, charging

antiqui seminis suscepta sine semine antiquo, ut illam novo semine, id est spiritaliter [fort. *spiritali*] reformaret, exclusis antiquitatis sordibus, expiatam. *Tertul. de Carn. Christi*, cap. xvii.

ⁱ See what the learned Vitringa says of Cerinthus's denying the miraculous conception, *Observat. Sacr. lib. v. cap. 12. sect. 6. p. 145, 146. edit. ult.*

^k Οὐτοι δὲ τισὶν οἱ λεγόμενοι Ἐβιωναῖοι, ἧτοι ἐκ πατρὸς ἡμελογοῦντες ἡμῶν τὸν Ἰησοῦν, ἢ οὐχ οὕτω γεννηθέντα, ἀλλ' ὡς τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀποθρώπους. *Orig. contr. Cels. p. 272. Conf. Comment. in Matth. p. 427.*

^l *Orig. ibid. p. 272.*

^m *Ibid. 271, 272, 274.*

both as rejecting Christ's *Divinity*ⁿ, and as *poor* in faith^o towards Christ Jesus; alluding to their name, which signifies the same as *poor*. But Pamphilus, in his Apology for Origen, produces some passages of his, out of his Comments on the Epistle to Titus, where he condemns the Ebionites more expressly as *heretics*,^r for their denying Christ's *Divinity*^p. As to any doubt which may be made about Pamphilus's Apology, (appearing only in Ruffinus's version,) and the credit due to it, I refer the reader to Bishop Bull, who has largely discussed that question, and has sufficiently maintained the authority of that *version*^q. As to Origen's own orthodoxy in the article of Christ's *Divinity*, it has been abundantly vindicated, and cleared from all reasonable exception^r.

A. D. 290. I shall add but one writer more, Victorinus Petavionensis, before referred to as saying, that St. John wrote his Gospel against Ebion, among others who were of the *school of Satan*^s. It is very plain, by his manner of expression, that he looked upon Ebion as a very ill man and an *heretic*, being of Satan's school, and condemned by the Apostle himself. And considering how particular St. John is, in setting forth the *Divinity* of Christ, we cannot doubt but Victorinus's censure of Ebion respects that article.

ⁿ Οὐ μὴν καὶ μετὰ τῆς περὶ αὐτοῦ Θεολογίας. *Comm. in Matth.* p. 427.

^o Τῶν Ἐβιοναίων παραχύονται περὶ τὴν εἰς Ἰησοῦν πίστιν. *Ibid.* 428.

^p Quid vero sit *hereticus* homo, pro viribus nostris, secundum quod sentire possumus, describamus. Omnis qui se Christo credere profitetur et tamen alium Deum Legis et Prophetarum, alium Evangeliorum Deum dicit, &c.—hujusmodi homines *hereticos* designamus—unum idemque credendum est de eo qui de Domino nostro Jesu Christo falsi aliquid senserit: sive secundum eos qui dicunt eum ex Joseph et Maria natum, sicut sunt Hebionitæ et Valentiniani; sive secundum eos qui primogenitum eum negant et *totius creature Deum*, et *Verbum*, et *Sapientiam* quæ est initium viarum Dei, antequam aliquid fieret ante sæcula fundatam, atque ante omnes colles generatam, sed *hominem* solum eum credentes. *Pamphil. Apolog.* p. 226. edit. Bened. Conf. Comment. in Joann. p. 397.

^q Bull Def. F. N. sect. ii. cap. 9. p. 114, &c.

^r Bishop Bull, sect. ii. cap. 9. Compare my Second Defence, vol. iii. Qu. xii. p. 322, &c.

^s See above, p. 178.

I might add many testimonies of Post-Nicene Fathers, to confirm what I have been proving, namely, that the Ebionites were constantly looked upon as *heretics* for denying our Lord's *Divinity*. But I choose to go no lower than the Ante-Nicene writers, because they are sufficient, and they are the less to be excepted to; and I am willing also to consult the ease of my readers, as well as to spare myself needless trouble. I am aware of a passage in St. Jerome, which seems to say, that the Ebionites and Cerinthians were condemned as *heretics* upon another account, not relating to our Lord's *Divinity*^t: and I observe, that the learned Le Clerc has endeavoured to make use of it^u for the supporting a favourite hypothesis, which he appears too fond of. But it is very certain, that Jerome's words in that place, if interpreted with utmost rigour, are a perfect contradiction to all antiquity, and to what himself has asserted in other places of his works^x. Some therefore have greatly blamed St. Jerome^y for prevaricating in the contradictory account he here gives; while others, more kindly, and, I think, more justly, have endeavoured to bring him off by a candid construction^z. Whichever way we take, there is nothing concerned in it, except it be St. Jerome's character: for as to the cause

^t Si hoc verum est, in Cerinthi et Ebionis hæresim delabimur, qui credentes in Christo propter hoc solum a patribus anathematizati sunt, quod legis ceremonias Christi Evangelio miscuerunt, et sic nova confessi sunt, ut vetera non amitterent. Quid dicam de Ebionitis qui Christianos esse se simulant? Usque hodie per totas orientis synagogas inter Judæos hæresis est quæ dicitur Minæorum, et a Phariseis nunc usque damnatur; quos vulgo Nazaræos nuncupant, qui credunt in Christum *Filium Dei*, natum de Virgine Maria, et eum dicunt esse qui sub Pontio Pilato passus est et resurrexit, in quem et nos credimus. Sed dum volunt et Judæi esse et Christiani, nec Judæi sunt nec Christiani. *Hieronym. ad August. Ep. lxxiv. Opp. tom. iv. 623. Bened.*

^u Clerici Eccles. Histor. p. 477.

^x See two passages quoted above, p. 178, 179. And compare Hieronym. contr. Helvid. tom. iv. p. 140.

^y Mosheim. Vindic. Antiq. contr. Toland. p. 164.

^z Bull. Judic. Eccl. cap. ii. sect. 13. p. 300. Remarks on Christianity as Old, &c. with respect to Ecclesiastical Antiquity: first part continued, p. 78, 79.

we are upon, it is too firmly established by the ecclesiastical writers in general, and even Jerome in particular, (as I before hinted,) to be at all weakened by this single passage to the contrary, if it were contrary.

Having shown above, as I humbly conceive, that the Cerinthians (with whom I would be understood to include the Ebionites) were condemned by St. John himself, for impugning our Lord's Divinity, and having proved further, that the Ebionites (with whom I would be understood to include the Cerinthians) were condemned all along in the Church for the first three centuries; the conclusion I now draw is, that both Cerinthians and Ebionites stand condemned from the days of the Apostles, and downwards, for the opposition they made to that important doctrine. After this, it will be less needful to prove that others also were condemned in like manner for the like opposition to the same doctrine. But since the doing it may tend in some measure to confirm what has been said, I shall go on to mention other impugners of our Lord's *Divinity* within the three first centuries, and a little farther: only, I shall endeavour to be as brief as possible in the account, not to weary the reader.

A. D. 195. THEODOTUS.

Theodotus, a citizen of Byzantium, by trade a currier, but a man of parts, and competently furnished with secular learning, having denied his Saviour in time of persecution, and being afterwards upbraided for it, as one that had denied his *God*; to extenuate the offence, he pretended that he had not denied *God*, but *man*^a, for that Christ was no more. A miserable salvo for a guilty practice; which, instead of lessening his crime, enhanced it yet more, and was so far from removing the just obloquy he before lay under, that it served only to edge and enforce it. However, he hereupon became the reviver of an *old* heresy,

^a Epiphani. Hær. liv. i. Augustin. Hær. 33. Philastr. Hær. cap. i. Damascen. Hær. 54. Synodic. Pappi. cap. iii. Pseudo-Tertullian. Præscript. cap. liii. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. lib. ii. cap. 5.

or the ringleader of a *new* one, (*new* in dress and circumstances,) and soon after called by the new name of the *God-denyng apostasy*^b. The first account we have of this matter is from a nameless author in Eusebius, reasonably supposed, upon comparing other testimonies^c, to have been Caius, the Roman Presbyter, who flourished about A. D. 214. Learned men have inquired how Caius could say that Theodotus was *founder* of the *heresy*^d, and the *first* that made Christ a *mere man*, when it is certain and manifest, that both Cerinthians and Ebionites had done it before him. Some say plainly that Caius was guilty of a blunder^e: which indeed is cutting the dispute short, and may be a good way, if there be not a better. Others say that Theodotus was really the first that made Jesus a *mere man*, for that the Cerinthians and Ebionites, before, admitted of a *superior* nature, a *spirit*^f assistant from above, residing at times in *Jesus*, which made him more than a common man^g. But it will be difficult to prove, either that Ebion was in the same scheme with Cerinthus, as to the doctrine of *Æons*, and as to the dividing of *Jesus* from *Christ*, or that he was not exactly in the same principles which Theodotus espoused, as to making Christ a *mere man*. Eusebius's account of the Ebionites, and their tenets^h, seems to represent their scheme as being exactly the same in that respect; and Theodorit is very express for its being so^h: only Theodotus's was a little more refined than that of the ancients Ebionites, because he al-

^b Ἀρρησίδιος ἀποστασία. Euseb. H. E. lib. v. cap. 28.

^c Vid. Pearson, Vindic. Ignat. part. ii. p. 23. Opp. Posth. p. 147, &c. Cave, Histor. Literar. vol. i. p. 65.

^d Τὸν ἀρχηγὸν καὶ πατέρα ταύτης τῆς Ἀρρησίδιου ἀποστασίας—πρῶτον ἐπίκλητον ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν Χριστόν.—τὸν τῆς αἰρέσεως ταύτης ἡγούμενον. Euseb. *ibid.*

^e Ittigius de Hæresiarchis, sect. ii. cap. 15. p. 261.

^f Vitringa, Observat. Sacr. lib. v. cap. 10. p. 128. edit. ult.

^g Euseb. E. H. lib. iii. cap. 27.

^h Ὁ δὲ Κάριδος τὸν μὲν Ἰησοῦν ἐξ Ἰωσήφ καὶ Μαρίας ἴφρησι, γιννομένου κατὰ κωδὸν τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὄρου, ἀκαθάρτην δὲ τὸν Χριστὸν κατεκλυθῆναι ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν. Ἐβιοναῖοι δὲ καὶ Θεοδοτεῖται, ἃ Ἀρρησιμαῖοι, ἃ Φωστικαῖοι ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐβήσαν ἐκ τῆς πατρὸς τοῦ Χριστοῦ γιννομένου. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. lib. v. cap. 11. p. 278.

lowed the *miraculous* conception or birth of a *virgin*, which they denied. However, both they and he supposed Christ a *mere* man: and therefore he was not the *first* that taught it. Some therefore think that Theodotus is said to be *first*, because he was the first among the Gentile Christians^l; for Cerinthus and Ebion were of Jewish extract: which account appears fair and plausible. But I conceive, after all, that Caius was not considering in that place, who in the Church had first taught that Christ was a *mere man*, but who had been the founder of such a particular sect, called Theodotians, or Artemonians, and who had first taught them to *deny* Christ, under the pretence of his being a *mere man*. Theodotus, plainly, was their founder and leader: he was at the head of that *revolt*, the *first* man that undertook to conduct it, and to support it upon that principle. The other accounts of Theodotus lead to this sense, and in the main say the same thing that Caius does. Epiphanius takes notice, that all the other *Christians* who were apprehended and brought to the question along with Theodotus, honestly *confessed* Christ, and suffered^k: he was the *only* man of the company that presumed to *deny* him, afterwards inventing an odd salvo for it, being more of an artist in his way^l, than others were. No one else, at that time, and upon that occasion, durst venture to deny his *God*: he was the *first* that then broke the ice, and led the way^m, instructing others to say after him, that it was not denying *God*, but *man*. I know not whether, in one particular, he may not be thought to have exceeded the irreverence and impiety of Ebion, namely, in his calling

^l Bull. Judic. cap. iii. sect. 1. p. 304.

^k Epiphanius. Hær. liv. p. 1.

^l Οὗτος ἐν παιδείᾳ Ἑλληνικῇ ἀκρῶς γινόμενος, ἀρα δι' ἄλλοις τῶν ἐν ἡμέραις τοῦ τότε διωγμοῦ μίνας λυσισῶν, μαρτυροῦσάντων λυσίων διὰ Θεοῦ. *Damascen. Hæres.* 54.

^m Theodotus quidam, Byzantinus genere, denegator Christi Dei nostri in persecutione extitit Salvatoris; qui *cepit dicere*, docens ita: communis homo erat, ut omnes homines, Christus. *Philastr. Hær.* 50.

Doctrinam *introduxit*, qua Christum hominem tantummodo diceret, Deum autem illum negaret. *Pseudo-Tertullian. cap.* liii.

Christ a *mere man*, considered even in his state of *exaltation*, when he abjured him. Ebion would have called him *God*, so considered, as having been then *deified*, according to his way of thinking^a. But Caius probably had no view to any such nicety of distinction, but intended only to say, that Theodotus was the *founder* of a *new* sect, called afterwards by his name, and teacher also of a *new* doctrine; *new* as to the circumstances and application, though, as to the main substance of it, borrowed from the Ebionites before him, or more particularly from the Alogi, a branch of the Ebionites^o.

Having seen that Theodotus was an impugner of our Lord's *Divinity*, we are next to observe, that he was condemned immediately by the Church for it. He was excommunicated by Victor then Bishop of Rome, as an *heresiarch*: so the same Caius relates^p. A sentence approved by the churches of Christ: otherwise Victor himself would have been condemned for it, as he was greatly blamed for misapplying the ecclesiastical censure in a case of another nature, relating to the time for keeping Easter. The churches and bishops of those times were exceeding watchful and jealous of any *abuses* of power in particular churches or men. They were as checks one upon another, that nothing of moment should be done by any, which had not the consent of the rest. This conduct obliged every one to observe the strictest caution in any affair of general concern, and it tended to keep up the exactest harmony and unanimity in the several churches. But I return.

Hippolytus of the third century takes notice, in passing, of this Theodotus, as a person that falsified the truth, and

^a See Hilary de Trin. lib. ii. n. 4. p. 789. Epiphani. Hær. xxx. n. 18. p. 142.

^o Θεοδοτός τις, ἀπίστωμα ὑπέλαξεν ἐν τῆς προσημαίτης Ἀλόγου αἰρέσεως. Εἰρηλκ. Hær. liv.

^p Βίβλος τὸν ἐναντία Θεοδοτοῦ, τὸν ἀρχηγὸν καὶ πατέρα ταύτης τῆς ἡρησιδίου ἀποστασίας ἀπεκάλυξε τῆς κοινῆς—ἀπίσταλι Θεοδοτοῦ τὸν τῆς αἰρέσεως ταύτης ὑμνητήν. Euseb. lib. v. cap. 28. Conf. Theodor. Hæret. Fab. lib. ii. cap. 5.

perverted Scripture, in order to countenance his erroneous doctrine-about Christ's being a *mere man* 9. He compares the heretic Noëtus with Theodotus, to make Noëtus the more odious for following such a leader in his manner of writing: so that it is plain enough what Hippolytus thought of Theodotus.

The same Theodotus is numbered also in the list of *heretics* 1 by the writer of the Appendix to Tertullian's book of Prescription. That Appendix is supposed by some 2 to be little else but an extract from our Hippolytus's Treatise against Heresies. However that be, the piece is ancient, and of good value 3. Theodotus is there charged as a *blasphemer* against Christ, for denying him to be *God*, though he allowed his birth of a *virgin*. It was the *God-denying* heresy: and therein lay its essential malignity. Had he said that Christ was an *angel*, or an *archangel*, or the highest of all *creatures*, it would have been treating our Lord with something more of respect; but still it would have come infinitely short of his real dignity, and of the faith of the Church concerning him, from the beginning. This I observe, lest any favourer of *Arianism* should falsely surmise, that the censures passed upon Theodotus and such other impugnors of Christ's Divinity, do not affect those who make Christ a glorious *creature*, but those only who suppose him a *mere man*: whereas, in truth, Theodotus and the rest were condemned for the impugning Christ's proper and essential *Divinity*;

9 Καὶ τὰυτα βούλονται εἶναι διηγῆσθαι ἕκαστος μόνον αὐτῶν, ὅτι τρεῖς Θεοὶ εἰς ἑνὸς εὐσεβῆ ψιλὸν βουλέμενος. ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐκ αὐτοῦ τι νοήσασεν ἀληθῆς, οἷός' αὐτοῦ, καθὼς αὐτοὶ αἱ γραφαὶ ἐλίχθησαν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν ἡμαθίαις, μαρτυροῦναι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ. Hippol. contr. Noët. cap. iii. p. 7. Conf. Epiphan. Hær. lvii. 2.

1 Accedit his Theodotus Byzantius, qui postea quam pro Christi nomine comprehensus negavit, in Christum *blasphemare* non destitit, doctrinam enim *introduxit* qua Christum *hominem tantummodo* diceret, *Deum* autem illum negaret: ex Spiritu quidem Sancto, natum ex Virgine, sed *hominem solitarium* atque nudum, nulla alia præ cæteris, nisi sola *justitiæ auctoritate*. Pseudo-Tertullian. cap. liii.

2 Allix, Fathers vindicated touching the Trinity, p. 99

3 Vid. Dodwell. Dissert. de Success. Pontif. p. 216.

a fault *common* to them and the Arians, so that both are concluded under the same censure.

I may further add, that the conduct of the Church, with respect to the Praxeans, Noëtians, and Sabellians, is a demonstration of the truth of what I say. Those men charged the Church as teaching three Gods^a. Then would have been the time, and must have been, for the Church to declare, (had they ever meant it,) that the Father *only* is God, and the Son and Holy Ghost *creatures*. But they studiously and conscientiously avoided it, as one sees in Hippolytus and Tertullian, and others. And if any man uncautiously, in debate, happened but to let fall any expressions which seemed to lean that way, (as appeared in the famous case of Dionysius of Alexandria,) the Church of that time would not bear it, but rejected every thing of that kind with abhorrence. They distinguished themselves off from *Sabellianism*, but so as to avoid the other extreme, afterwards called *Arianism*: a plain sign and proof^x that the proper *Divinity* of Christ was what they aimed to support. I may observe also by the way, that the Sabellian objection all along supposed and implied, that the *Godhead* of the *Holy Ghost*, as well as of the *Son*, was the then received doctrine. But I return.

There was another Theodotus, surnamed *Trapezita*, (the *Banker*,) who was a disciple of the former, and who endeavoured to refine upon his scheme, by the addition of some odd conceits concerning Melchizedec. I shall only observe farther, that as from the elder Theodotus some were named Theodotians, so from the junior Theodotus others were called Melchizedecians^y.

^a Tertullian. *contr. Prax.* cap. iii. Epiphan. *Hær.* lvii. 62.

^x See this argument excellently drawn out by Mr. Thirlby, *Def. of the Answ.* p. 36, &c.

^y Vid. Euseb. *lib. v. cap. 28.* Le Quien, *Not. ad Damascen.* *Hær.* lxiv. Theodorit. *Hæret. Fab. lib. ii. cap. 6.*

A. D. 205. ARTEMON.

Artemon, otherwise called Artemas, was a disciple of Theodotus, a reviver or promoter of the same heresy. He appears to have been a very warm man, and of vast assurance; or his followers, at least, were such. For they confidently gave it out, that their doctrine was as old as the *Apostles*^z, and that the doctrine of Christ's Divinity began with Pope Zephyrin, that is, about A. D. 198. Such ignorance, if it was mere ignorance, was pitiable: but there is too much reason to suspect, that they knew better. The nameless author in Eusebius (supposed to be Caius) well urges^a, that besides the *holy Scriptures*, older than all, there were the works of Justin and Miltiades, of Tatian and Clemens, of Irenæus and Melito, and a great many more, defenders of Christ's *Divinity*, directly confronting their wild report, and plainly proving to the world, that it was mere fiction and romance, too improbable to be offered even to the lowest of the populace. And as to their pleading that Pope Victor, the immediate predecessor of Zephyrin, was on their side of the question, he confutes them at once, by observing, that Victor was the very person who had excommunicated Theodotus, their founder and leader, for that very doctrine which they espoused^b. All I have farther to observe of these confident men, is, that they were *censured* by the Church of their time, and not admitted to communion among faithful Christians. That may reasonably be inferred from what Caius says, as before mentioned. But it appears further from what passed some years after, in the case of Paul of Samosata, when the Antiochian Fathers censured him for *heresy*, and sent him to seek communion, if he

^a Euseb. lib. v. cap. 28. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. lib. ii. cap. 4.

^b Euseb. E. H. lib. v. cap. 28.

^b Ἦσαν δὲ οὗτοι ἄμφω Θεοδότου τοῦ σκουτίου μαθηταί, τοῦ πρώτου ἐπὶ ταύτην σὴν φροσύνην, μᾶλλον δὲ ἀφροσύνην, ἀφορισθέντες τῆς κοινότητος ὑπὸ Βίκτωρος, ὡς ἴσθην, τοῦ τότε ἐπισκόπου.

pleased, with the Artemonians^c, whose sentiments he had taken into, and whose *execrable heresy* (so they call it^d) he had revived. To which agrees what Athanasius says, speaking of the Arian heresy: This heresy, says he, was looked upon as *detestable*, before the Council of Nice, when Artemas advanced it^e.

A. D. 242. BERYLLUS.

Beryllus, Bishop of Bostra in Arabia, has been reputed one of those that once denied the *Divinity* of Christ; and therefore Bishop Bull takes him in among the rest^f. But yet strictly speaking, the charge against him was not that he denied the *Divinity* of Christ, but his *proper Divinity*: by which I understand his *personal Divinity*, or *divine personality*. For Beryllus's notion was, that the man *Christ Jesus* was the whole person, a mere human person, which had indeed a *divine Person* residing in him, *viz.* the person of the *Father*. So Beryllus's doctrine was a kind of *Sabellianism*; which however, in strictness, amounts to a denial of Christ's *Divinity*. For while it allows him no distinct *divine personality*, all that remains is, the *man* Christ with the *Father* indwelling; which at length resolves into the same doctrine, in the main, with what Cerinthus, Ebion, Theodotus, and Artemon taught as to the proper person of *Jesus*. It is denying his *divine Sonship*, and *divine personality*, which, in effect, is denying his *proper Divinity*. I the rather note this, because from hence it may appear, that the Church's condemning Praxeas, Noëtus, and Sabellius, as guilty of *heresy*, proceeded from the same pious zeal for the *Divinity* of Christ, as their condemnation of Cerinthus, Ebion, &c.

^c Τῷ δὲ Ἀρτιμῶ ὄντος ἰσχυρίζεται καὶ οἱ τὰ Ἀρτιμῶ φρονοῦντες, τούτου κοινοποιήσαντες. *Euseb. H. E.* lib. vii. c. 30.

^d Τῷ μαρῶ αἰεῖσιν τῷ Ἀρτιμῶ. *Euseb. ibid.*

^e Πρὸ τῆς Νικαίας, ἡ αἵρεσις ἦν βδελυκτὴ, ὅτι ταύτην Ἀρτιμῶς κατεβάλλουσιν. *Athanas. de Synod.* p. 733. edit. Bened.

^f Bull. *Judic.* c. ii. p. 305.

^g Μαθὶ μὲν Διόνητα Ἰδιαν Ἰχθυῖν. *Euseb. E. H.* lib. vi. c. 33.

before: for both were intended to preserve that important article, and to secure the baptismal faith in a *real* and *divine* Trinity. Tertullian was sharp enough to see, that the Praxean doctrine, under colour of magnifying Christ, by advancing him into the *same personality* with the Father, in reality left no *distinct* Son at all, more than the man *Jesus*, and so fell in with Valentinus's notion, (he might have said, Cerinthus's also,) which separated *Jesus* from *Christ*, dividing them into two persons^h. All the difference is, that Cerinthus or Valentinus supposed the *Christ* from above to be some *Æon*, or inferior *power*, residing occasionally with the man *Jesus*; while the Praxceans substituted *God the Father* instead of that supposed *Æon*, making him the *Christ* from above, conceived to inhabit at times the same man *Jesus*. Which as it comes very near the old Ebionite notion, so is it exactly the same with what several of the foreign Socinians, and most of our English ones, have maintained in late times. Indeed, the Praxceans were charged as *Patripassians*, which is a charge that does not affect the modern Socinians: but I apprehend, from the passage of Tertullian just cited, that the Praxceans, to get off from *Patripassianism*, learned at length to divide the *Persons* of Father and Son, and then the Father could be considered only as inhabiting *Jesus*, a mere man, and a distinct person from him. *Sabellianism*, and *Photinianism*, and *Socinianism*, do in reality come at length into one; all resolving into *Judaism*: for the fundamental error of them all is, the denying the *divine Sonship* and personal Divinity of Christ;

^h Undique enim obducti distinctione *Patris* et *Filii*—aliter eam ad suam nihilominus sententiam interpretari conantur: ut æque in *una Persona* utrumque distinguant Patrem et Filium; dicentes Filium *carne* esse, id est *hominem*, id est *Jesus*; Patrem autem *Spiritum*, id est *Deum*, id est *Christum*. Et qui unum eundemque contendunt Patrem et Filium, jam incipiunt *dividere* illos potius quam *unare*. Si enim *alius* est *Jesus*, *alius* *Christus*, alius erit *Filius*, alius *Pater*; quia *Filius* *Jesus*, et *Pater* *Christus*. Talem monarchiam apud Valentinum fortasse didicerunt, *duos* facere *Jesus* et *Christum*. *Tertul. adv. Prax. c. 27.*

rejecting the eternal substantial *Logos*, who was with the Father before the world was, and is God from everlasting to everlasting. I say then, that the zeal shown by the ancient Church against the Sabellians of all denominations, (as well as their zeal against the more direct impugnors of Christ's *Divinity*,) is a very strong argument of their judging the doctrine of a coeternal Trinity to be an *essential* of the Gospel. They intended much the same thing by animadverting upon those or these; for they saw plainly, that the *Divinity* of Christ, considered as a real Person, was as much *undermined* by *Sabellianism*, as it was *attacked* by the other. Many and various have been the ways of evading and eluding these two *prime* verities, *viz.* that three *real* Persons are *one God*, and that God and man is *one Christ*: but watchful and honest Christians still kept their eyes fixed upon those sacred truths, and would never admit any doctrine as *true*, which was *contrary* to them, or as *sufficient*, that was *short* of them. If any one denied Christ's *humanity*, (as the *Docetæ*, or *Phantasiastæ*,) that was manifestly false doctrine, to be rejected at once: but if another admitted his *humanity*, and stopped there, that was *short* and *insufficient*. If it was added, (as by Cerinthus,) that a *celestial* substance or spirit rested sometimes upon *Jesus*, that was true, but still *short* of the whole truth in more respects than one. If it were said, *constantly* residing, that was better, but still very *insufficient*. If to that were added, *personally united*, that came nearer up to the full truth, but still was evasive, and short. Say, *divine substance personally united* with the human: that comes nearer to the point than any of the former; but still there is room for evasion, because it might mean the *Father*; and then it amounts to *Sabellianism* only, and *Patripassianism*. Add, therefore, that such *divine* substance is *personally* distinct from the *Father* and the *Holy Spirit*, and then it is confessing three *real* and *divine* Persons in one Godhead, which is the *whole* truth. The several kinds of *heresies*

which have affected this Scripture truth, are but the various wanderings of *human* imagination. Truth is simple and uniform, while error is almost infinite. But I return to Beryllus.

The error which Beryllus unhappily split upon, was the denying a *real* distinction of *divine* Persons, as I before observed; which in direct consequence made Christ *Jesus* a mere *man*, in whom the *Father* dwelt. The bishops of the neighbouring sees were alarmed at the doctrine, and met in synod to condemn the heresy, and the teacher of it. But the great Origen being called in to debate and clear the point in question, Beryllus was made sensible of his error, and being a person of a pious and an humble mind, he honestly retracted itⁱ: and it is farther to be observed, that he loved his instructor Origen ever after, and was sincerely thankful to him^k for affording him so much new light (new to *him*) in a question of the greatest importance. A rare example of godly *sincerity*, and true Christian *humility*. His mistake had shown some weakness of judgment; but his recovery manifested great strength of mind, and a good command over himself and his own passions.

A. D. 265. PAUL of Samosata.

Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch, was of a temper and character very different from what we have mentioned in the last article: he gave the churches fresh occasion for exerting their pious zeal in behalf of our Lord's *Divinity*. He was impeached for heresy in a council of Antioch, A. D. 265, and distinguished himself off at that time, and escaped without censure; but in another council, A. D. 270, he was again accused, and convicted, and thereupon deposed. He is charged by the council which condemned him, with reviving the heresy of Artemon, with denying his *Lord* and *God*, with disowning any *Son of God* from heaven, preaching up a *detestable heresy*, a

ⁱ Euseb. E. H. lib. vi. c. 33.

^k Hieronym. Eccles. Script. lxx. p. 138. edit. Fabric.

damnable doctrine, and the like¹. The sum of his heresy, upon comparing the best accounts, appears to be this: that there is but one *real* Person in the Godhead, *viz.* the *Father*^m; that the *Logos* is a mere attribute, quality, power, or operation, nothing real and substantialⁿ; and that Christ, as it follows of consequence, is a mere *man*^o. His scheme appears to have been, in substance, little different from the Sabellian^p: but the stress of the charge against him rested upon this, that he had denied his Lord's *Divinity*; and therefore his heresy was called, like Theodotus's and Artemon's before, the *God-denying wickedness*^q.

A. D. 317. ARIUS.

I cannot well conclude this view of antiquity, with respect to the *heresies* against Christ's *Divinity*, without throwing in a word or two about the famous Arius, and his condemnation for proclaiming God the Son a *creature*, therein denying his Lord's real and proper *Divinity*, as much as any before him. Alexander, then Bishop of Alexandria, in his Epistle to the other Alexander of Byzantium, or Constantinople, (about A. D. 321.) charges the Arians with denying their Saviour's *Divinity*^r, and with reviving the heresy of Ebion, Artemon, and Paul of Samosata^s. Not that the Arian scheme was exactly the same with any of those three, (for there are degrees of variation from truth, and many wrong ways to one right,) but it fell in with them all in the main thing, and in which the principal malignity of their heresies consisted, namely, in

¹ Euseb. E. H. lib. vii. c. 30.

^m Vid. Athanas. contr. Apollinar. p. 942. Epiphan. Hær. lxxv. l. 3.

ⁿ Epiphan. Hær. lxxv. l. Philastr. lxxiv. p. 126.

^o Euseb. E. H. lib. vii. c. 27. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. lib. ii. p. 223. Augustin. Hær. 44. Damascen. Hæres. lxxv.

^p See my First Defence, vol. i. Query xxiii. p. 249. Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 423. Dr. Berriman's Historical Account, p. 144, &c.

^q Ἀθεοποίησις κακία. Euseb. lib. vii. c. 29.

^r Theodorit. Eccl. Hist. cap. iv. p. 9. edit. Vales.

^s Theodorit. *ibid.* p. 14.

the rejecting the true *Godhead* of Christ. I shall say nothing of the synodical censures passed upon Arius and his adherents, at the first opening of the heresy. In the year 325 he was condemned, in more solemn form, by the famous Council of Nice, by three hundred and eighteen bishops called from all parts of the Christian world, seventeen only of the number scrupling it for a time, and at last two only or three dissenting. They condemned his sentiments, as amounting to *impiety, madness, blasphemy*, such as they almost trembled to hear¹; which appears by the Council's letter after his condemnation. Their sentence in that cause carried the greater weight in it, as the Council was *general*, called together out of Europe, Asia, and Africa, from all parts of the empire²; as it was upon the matter *free*, and under no secular awe or influences; and lastly, as it was made up of the *wisest, worthiest*, and every way *excellent* prelates³ which the Christian world could then furnish. The determination of so venerable a council gave a considerable check to *Arianism*, and always carried great force with it; though it did not so quash the controversy as finally to put an end to it, any more than the *Council of the Apostles* at Jerusalem⁴ (A. D. 49.) put an end to the dispute about the necessity of imposing circumcision⁵. But as that first council had its use in the Church, and very great use, notwithstanding the repeated oppositions made to it, so had this other also, and has to this day. Divine wisdom has appointed no certain *effective* remedies for the *perverseness* of man, but has provided *sufficient* means for the instruction and direction of the *humble* and *modest*, and well designing.

Some persons have suggested, that the Council of Ariminum, (held in 359,) consisting of four hundred bishops

¹ Ἄπαντα ἀνοσιβήτως ἡ ἁγία σύνοδος, οὐδὲ ἕως ἀκούσαι τῆς ἀσιβητοῦς δόξης, ἢ ἀπειρίας, καὶ τῶν βλασφημῶν ἡμετέων ἀνασχομένη. *Apud Socr.* lib. i. c. 9.

² Enseb. de Vit. Constantin. lib. iii. c. 7.

³ Ibid. lib. iii. c. 9.

⁴ Acts xv.

⁵ See *Buddæus*, *Eccl. Apost.* p. 114, 294, &c.

or more^a, may properly be mentioned on the other side, as a counterbalance to the Council of Nice: but there is no comparison betwixt them, when the circumstances are duly considered. For, 1. the Council of Rimini, or Ariminum, was not *general*, being of the *west* only. 2. It was not *free*, being greatly menaced, distressed, and overawed by the Emperor Constantius^b. 3. Out of the number of four hundred, there were but eighty Arians^c, at the utmost: the other three hundred and twenty, or more, were really orthodox men, induced by artifices to subscribe a creed which they understood in a good sense^d, but which, being worded in general terms, was capable of being perverted to a bad one. The deep dissimulation, at that time used by the Arian managers, procured them the advantage only of a short-lived triumph. For no sooner did the orthodox side perceive how they had been imposed upon, and what use was to be made of it, but they declared to the world their own good meaning, and the perfidiousness of the opposite party. But of this I have treated more largely elsewhere^e. It was of that time that St. Jerome speaks, when he pleasantly says, that the “whole *Christian* world groaned,” (*viz.* under the slander thrown upon them by their adversaries,) “and wondered “to see itself become all over Arian^f :” that is to say, they wondered at the assurance of the Arians, in so imposing upon the Catholics, and in *representing them to be* the very reverse of what they were^g. The learned Mr.

^a Athanas. de Synod. 720, 749. Sulpic. Sever. p. 267. Socr. E. H. lib. iv. c. 17.

^b Athanas. ad Afros, 892, 893. Socrat. E. H. lib. ii. c. 37. Sozom. lib. iv. c. 19. Hilar. Pictav. 1242. ed. Bened.

^c Ariani non amplius quam octoginta: reliqui nostrarum partium erant. Sulpic. Sever. lib. ii. c. 56.

^d Sonabant verba pietatem, et inter tanta mella præconii, nemo venenum insertum putabat. Hieron. contr. Lucifer.

^e See my Defence, vol. i. Query xxiv. p. 331, 332. Answer to Whithy, vol. ii. p. 223. Compare Berriman's Histor. Account, p. 228, &c.

^f Ingenuit totus orbis, et Arianum se esse miratus est. Hieronym. contr. Lucifer. p. 300.

^g Concurrabant Episcopi, qui Ariminensibus dolis irretiti, sine conscientia

Bingham understood these matters well, and has expressed them justly and fully in these few lines ^h. “The Arians put an equivocal and poisonous sense upon them, (*the words of the Council,*) giving out, after the Council was ended, that they had not only abolished the word *consubstantial*, but with it condemned the *Nicene faith* also: which was strange surprising news to the bishops that had been at Ariminum. Then says St. Jerome, *Ingenuit totus orbis, et Arianum se esse miratus est: The whole world groaned, and was amazed to think she should be reputed Arian.* That is, the Catholic bishops of the whole world (for there were three hundred ⁱ of them present at the Council) were amazed to find themselves so abused, and represented as Arian, when they never intended in the least to confirm the Arian doctrine.” But as to the extent of the *Nicene faith*, both at that time and after, I have spoken more particularly of it in another place ^k, and need not here repeat. Only the reader may permit me to sum up the whole in the same words, or nearly as before. “There never was a council on the Arian side so *free*, so *large*, so in every respect *unexceptionable*, as the Council of Nice was: but whatever opposition was made to it, was carried on with such wiles and subtilties and refined artifices, (to say nothing of *cruelties*,) as every honest man would be ashamed

hæretici ferebantur, contestantes corpus Domini, et quicquid in Ecclesia sanctum est, se nihil mali in sua fide suspicatos. Hieron. ibid. 301.

^h Bingham's Antiquities, b. vi. ch. 3. s. 10. Compare Dr. Berriman, Hist. Acc. p. 228, &c.

ⁱ He might have said, three hundred and twenty. But I believe Jerome meant more than that three hundred and twenty by the *totus orbis*: he meant all the *orthodox*; for all of them suffered in the slander raised against their brethren, most of them as orthodox as themselves: so it affected them all, and all were amazed at the *injurious* aspersion. This place therefore of Jerome, rightly understood, is so far from saying, that the *whole world* was then Arian, that it is saying the contrary; namely, that the whole world was Anti-arian: for by *totus orbis* he manifestly there means the *orthodox*, who had been slandered as Arian, and were really Anti-arian. They were the *whole world* in his account, the Arians being but few in comparison.

^k Defence, vol. i. Query xxix. p. 331—334.

“ of : and notwithstanding all that the Arians could do, “ they were not able long to maintain their ground ; but “ the men who sustained the shock, and kept up the “ credit of the *Nicene faith*, were not only the most nu- “ merous, but appear to have been as *wise*, and as *judi- “ cious*, and as *pious* men as ever the Church was adorned “ with since the times of the Apostles¹. ”

From what hath been said under the present article, it is manifest, that the impugners of our Lord's *Divinity* have been all along condemned as guilty of *heresy* for the first three centuries and more ; so that as far as the constant judgment and practice of the Church in their *decrees* and *censures*, during that time, can be conceived to bear weight, the doctrine of our Lord's true and proper *Divinity*, and of consequence, the doctrine of a real and co-eternal *Trinity*, must be looked upon as a *fundamental* of the Christian faith.

III. Besides what has been pleaded upon the *first* topic relating to *creeds*, and upon the *second* relating to *heretics* ; there is yet a *third* head to go upon, namely, the sentiments of Ante-Nicene Fathers, such as they have occasionally delivered in their writings, distinct from what they have reported either of *creeds* or *heresies*. And these are what I am next going to produce, according to order of time, to show what they thought of the *necessity* or *importance* of faith in the ever blessed Trinity. Perhaps I may have anticipated some things under the last head, which might properly have come in here ; or I may chance to take some things in here, which might properly have come in there : but it is of no great moment which head they are brought under, so long as both center in the same conclusion, and the two parts may be considered as supplemental to each other.

¹ See this Council defended more at large by Dr. Berriman, in his *Remarks on Mr. Chandler*, p. 19—42. and in his *Review of the Remarks*, p. 28—41.

107. IGNATIUS.

I begin with Ignatius, who writes thus: "Be not led aside by strange doctrines, nor by antiquated tales, which are unprofitable: for if we yet live according to *Judaism*, it is as much as declaring that we have not accepted *grace*^m; for the most holy Prophets lived according to *Christ Jesus*. And for that cause were they persecuted, being inspired by his grace, that the unbelievers might be convinced that there is one God who hath manifested himself by *Jesus Christ his Son*, who is his *eternal Word*, not proceeding from *silence*ⁿ, who in all things pleased him that sent him." The *Judaizing* heretics (whether Cerinthians, or Ebionites, or Gnostics at large) are the persons here pointed at without dispute^o: and the *Judaism* here principally charged was, their denial of Christ's real and *eternal* Divinity. The Jews would not own a proper *Son of God*^p, an *eternal* subsisting *Logos*, but pertinaciously disputed that point with the Christians; as may appear sufficiently, besides other evidences, from Justin's celebrated Dialogue with Trypho. So here we may observe, how emphatically Ignatius expresses the Christian faith in opposition to those *Judaizers*, by asserting Christ to be God's *Son*, and his *eternal Word*, not proceeding from *silence*, as those

^m Εἰ γὰρ μίχρη οὐκ κατὰ [νόμον] Ἰουδαϊσμὸν ζῶμεν, ἡμολογοῦμεν χάριτι μὴ εὐλοφίαι. *Ignat. ad Magnes.* v. 8.

ⁿ Τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς ἕσπερ αὐτοῦ λόγος ἀόρατος, οὐκ ἀπὸ σιγῆς προελθὼν. *Ibid.*

^o Hæc est secunda hujus Epistolæ pars, quæ eos maxime præmunit contra hæreticos, eos præcipue qui *Judaismum* introducere conabantur; contra quos clare et expresse disputat. Erant autem ii ea tempestate, qui *divinitatem* Christi naturam negabant, ut Ebionitæ, Cerinthiani, Nazareni, et Helxaitæ. *Pearson not. in loc.* p. 43. *Conf. Vindic.* p. 55.

^p Ἰουδαῖοι δὲ οὐκ εἰς ἡμολογῆσαι, ὅτι προφήτης τις εἶπεν ἤξιον Θεοῦ υἱόν. *Origen. contr. Cel.* lib. i. p. 38.

Οὐ πάντες οὖν Ἰουδαῖοι λέγουσι Θεὸν ὄντα τὸν Χριστὸν καταβήσεσθαι ἢ Θεοῦ υἱόν. *Ibid.* lib. iv. p. 162.

Ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ πολλοὶς Ἰουδαῖοις καὶ σοφοῖς γινώσκουσιν ἵνα συμβαλόν, οὐδὲν ἀκήκοα ἰσχυροτέρου τοῦ, λέγοντος εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὡς ὁ Κίλλος ἱερῆς. *Ibid.* c. 2. p. 79.

Judaizers taught. I forbear to enter into the dispute about $\sigma\iota\gamma\eta$, which has been already exhausted by Bishop Pearson, Bishop Bull, and other learned men. What I am most concerned to observe is, that *Judaism* was the common and just reproach thrown upon all the impugners or underminers of Christ's *Divinity*: for that was part of the distinguishing character of the *Christian* faith, as opposed to the *Jewish*, in those days^q. As to Cerinthus and Ebion, the early impugners of Christ's *Divinity*, it is well known that they were *Judaizers*, and brought their *heresy* along with them, transplanting it from the *Synagogue* to the *Church*. Those that followed them in their heresy were judged so far to desert the *Christian* cause, and to side with the *Jews*. Tertullian, though directly pointing to Praxeas, yet makes the charge general against all that deny a *real* and *divine* Trinity^r. Novatian passes the like censure upon as many as denied Christ's *Divinity*^s. Theodotus, though a Gentile *Christian*, is charged with *Jewish* blindness upon the same score^t. Paul of Samosata is observed to have given up Christ's *Divinity* in complaisance to Jews^u. And the Arians afterwards, on the same account, are frequently censured by orthodox Christians, as revivers of *Judaism*^x.

^q I say, *in those days*. For that the ancients Jews were generally in like sentiments, is not probable, but the contrary. Of which see Allix's Judgment of the Jewish Church; and Considerations on Mr. Whiston's Historical Preface, p. 75, &c. and Primitive Christianity vindicated, p. 17, &c. and Stillingfleet on the Trinity, c. ix. p. 203, &c.

^r *Judaicæ fidei est res, sic unum Deum credere, ut Filium adnumerare ei nolis, et post Filium Spiritum—Pater et Filius et Spiritus unum Deum sistunt. Tertul. adv. Prax. c. 31.*

^s *Ignari et imperiti Judæi hæredes sibi hereticos istos reddiderunt. Novat. c. 15. ed. Welchm. alias c. 23.*

^t *Cæcitatibus Judaicæ consors. Philastr. Her. l. Conf. Epiphani. Her. liv. lv.*

^u *Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. lib. ii. c. 8. Athanas. vol. i. p. 386. Epiphani. Her. lxxv. 2, 7. Philastr. Her. lxxiv.*

^x *Athanas. de Decret. Synod. N. p. 209, 233. Orat. ii. 484. Basil. Homil. xxiv. tom. ii. p. 189. edit. Bened. Greg. Nyassen. contr. Eunom. Orat. i. p. 15.*

I now return to Ignatius, who, after charging those impugners of Christ's Divinity with *Judaism*, intimates their thereby forfeiting the *grace* of the Gospel. Then he proceeds to lay down the true Christian doctrine of a *Son of God*, an *eternal Word*, not produced in time, or from *silence*. And since he asserts that the denial of that doctrine is *Judaizing*, and is renouncing the *grace* of the Gospel, it amounts to declaring that the article of Christ's *Divinity* is an *essential* of Christianity.

A. D. 155. JUSTIN MARTYR.

Justin Martyr, in a Fragment produced by Dr. Grabe, lays a very particular stress upon the article of Christ's *Divinity*, as the reconciliation of God and man is nearly concerned in it. The passage runs thus: "When man's nature had contracted corruption, it was necessary that he who would save it, should do away the principle of corruption. But this could not be done without uniting *life by nature* [or *essential life*] with the nature so corrupted, to do away the corruption, and to immortalize the corrupt nature ever after. Wherefore it was meet that the *Word* should become incarnate to deliver us from the death of natural corruption ²."

Here Justin asserts, that it was necessary for *essential life* (or *life by nature*) to be united with human nature, in order to *save* it: which is the same as to say, that it was necessary for *God* to become incarnate, in order to save lost man. So *important* did he take that article to be, conceiving that the redemption of mankind depended

¹ Simplicissima et optima sententia videtur, quod Ignatius, contra omnes veteres hæreticos *Filii æternitatem* negantes, asseruerit Christum non esse instar *humani Verbi* quod post *silentium* prodit, sed *Verbum Patri coæternum*. *Ittigius, Histor. Eccl. Sæc. ii.* p. 118.

² Οὕτω δὲ τῆς φθορᾶς προσγενομένης, ἀκαγακίῳ ἢ ὅτι σῶσαι βουλόμενος ἢ τὴν φθορακοῦν οὐσίαν ἀφανίσαι· τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ ἦν ἰσχύει γινώσθαι, εἰ μήτις ἢ κατὰ φύσιν ζωὴ προσελάσῃ τῇ τὴν φθορὰν διζήμενῃ, ἀφινίξουσα μὴ τὴν φθορὰν, ἀθανάτων δὲ τοῦ λοιποῦ τὸ διζήμενον διατηροῦσα. διὰ τοῦτο τὸν Λόγον ἰδίῃσιν ἐν σώματι γινώσθαι, ἵνα τοῦ θανάτου τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἡμᾶς φθορᾶς ἰλιθιμώσῃ. *Grab. Spicileg. vol. ii.* p. 172. Et in notis ad Bull. Judic. c. vii. s. 5. p. 344.

upon it. The phrase of *life by nature*, undoubtedly imports *necessary existence* and proper *Divinity*, as I have observed and proved upon another occasion^a, and need not here do again. Bishop Bull brings some other passages from Justin of like import with this: but for brevity sake I choose to pass them over, and am content only to refer^b.

A. D. 176. IRENÆUS.

Irenæus has said much the same thing with Justin, in fuller and stronger words. After observing that the *Son of God* and *Word of the Father* became *man*, that he might give *salvation* to his own creature, or workmanship^c, he proceeds as follows: "Therefore, as I said before, he united *man* to *God*: for if it were not *man* that should overcome the adversary of *man*, the enemy would not have been rightly vanquished; and again, if it were not *God* to give the *salvation*, we could not be firmly possessed of it: besides, if man had not been united to *God*, he could never have been partaker of incorruption. So it was meet that a *Mediator* between *God* and *man* should bring both together into amity and concord by his own proximity to both; that so he might present man to *God*, and notify *God* to men^d." What we have here to observe is, that if Irenæus believed it necessary for *God* to become man, in order to work man's salvation, he must of consequence judge the

^a Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 248. Compare Third Defence, vol. iv. p. 97.

^b Bull. Judic. c. vii. s. 5. p. 344, 345.

^c Bonus vere Filius Dei et patiens, *Verbum Dei Patris, Filius hominis factus*.—Salutem donavit plasmati suo, destruens peccatum: est enim piissimus et misericors Dominus, et amans humanum genus. *Iren.* lib. iii. c. 18, alias 20.

^d "Ἦκουν οὖν, καθὼς πείθεσθαι, τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῷ Θεῷ. εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἄνθρωπος ἐγένεσθαι τὸν ἀντίπαλον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, οὐκ ἂν δικαίως ἐνικήθη ἡ ἰχθύρις· πάλιν τε, εἰ μὴ ὁ Θεὸς ἰδρυέσθαι τὴν σωτηρίαν, οὐκ ἂν βεβαίως ἴσχυον αὐτήν. καὶ εἰ μὴ συνήκθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῷ Θεῷ, οὐκ ἂν ἠδυνάθη μετασχῆναι ἀφθαρσίας· ἴδιαι γὰρ τὸν μείστην Θεῷ εἰ καὶ ἀνθρώπων, διὰ τῆς ἰδίας πρὸς ἱνατίου, οἰκιοτήτος, εἰς φιλίαν καὶ ἐμίαν τὰς ἀμφοτέρους συναγαγῶν, καὶ Θεῷ μὴ παραστῆσαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἀνθρώπου δὲ γνωρίσαι τὸν Θεόν. *Irenæus, ibid.*

article of Christ's *Divinity* (in his high sense of *Divinity*) an *essential* of Christian faith, *necessary* to be believed by all to whom it should be revealed, under pain of forfeiting the benefit of it. Irenæus's constant way of reasoning in other places shows that he always carried that conclusion in his mind: and indeed he goes but one page farther on, before he formally draws it, in these strong and emphatical words^c: "They who make [*Jesus*] a "mere man begotten of Joseph, remaining under the "bondage of the first disobedience, are in a dead state, "inasmuch as they are not yet conjoined with the *Word* "of God the Father, nor have received *freedom* by the "Son: according to what himself says; *If the Son shall "make you free, you shall be free indeed*^f. While they "acknowledge not him who of the Virgin is *Emmanuel*, "[God with us,] they forfeit the benefit of it, which is "*life eternal*. While they admit not the *Word* of incor- "ruption, they continue in *mortal* flesh, and are bound "over to *death*, for want of receiving the antidote of life." This excellent writer has a great deal more to the same purpose, in the same chapter: but what I have cited may suffice for a summary view of his sentiments on this head. It is observable, that, according to him, the not receiving the *Emmanuel*, as *Emmanuel*, that is, as *God incarnate*, is in effect throwing up the privileges of it, (*viz. life eternal*;) and is remaining under the dominion of *death* and *hell*. Nothing can be stronger for the *importance* of the article of Christ's *Divinity*; especially if this passage be compared with the author's high and just sense of the name *Emmanuel*, importing that Christ is

* Qui nude tantum hominem eum dicunt ex Joseph generatum, perseverantes in servitute pristinae inobedientiae, moriuntur; nondum commixti Verbo Dei Patris, neque per Filium recipientes libertatem, quemadmodum ipse ait: *Si Filius vos manumiserit, vere liberi eritis*. Ignorantes autem eum qui ex Virgine est *Emmanuel*, privantur munere ejus, quod est *vita eterna*: non recipientes autem *Verbum* incorruptionis, perseverant in carne mortali; et sunt debitores mortis, antidotum vitæ non accipientes. *Iren.* lib. iii. c. 19, alias c. 21.

^f John viii. 36.

substantially, or essentially, *God* in one nature, as he is *man* in another ε. I know not whether I again need to take notice (having twice before done it^h) how Irenæus here mixes the two questions about the birth of a *virgin*, and about the Lord's *Divinity*, as amounting to one, upon the foot of the then present controversies. For the point then in question was, whether Christ was conceived in the common way of human generation, or whether the *divine Logos* coming upon the *Virgin*, superseded and excluded *human* means? The question being so stated, the asserting a *divine Logos* in Christ was of course asserting the birth of a *virgin*; as the denying the birth of a *virgin* was of course denying any personal union of the *Logos* with man. Thus the two questions, at that time, resolved, in a manner, into one: which is the reason, as I hinted before, of their being intermingled together.

A. D. 177. ATHENAGORAS.

Athenagoras, in his Apology for the Christian Religion, written at this timeⁱ, has more passages than one^k, which plainly prove his belief of the *truth* of the doctrine of the *Trinity*: but as to the *necessity*, or the *importance* of such faith, he had the less occasion to speak particularly, or to press it with any earnestness, since his immediate concern was not with *heretics*, or with *Jews*, but with *Pagans* only. Nevertheless, he occasionally drops some expressions, which intimate his high veneration for that

ε Diligenter igitur significavit Spiritus Sanctus per ea quæ dicta sunt, generationem ejus quæ est ex *Virgine*, et *substantiam* quoniam *Deus* (*Emmanuel* enim nomen hoc significat) et manifestat quoniam *homo*, in eo quod dicit, &c. *Iren.* lib. iii. c. 21, alias 26.

Οἱ τὸν ἐκ τῆς παρθενοῦ Ἐμμανουὴλ ἀρχόντοισι, τὸν ἴσως τοῦ Λόγου τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ πλάσμα αὐτοῦ ἰδέσθαι quoniam *Verbum* caro erit, et Filius Dei Filius hominis—et hoc factus quod et nos, *Deus fortis est*, et inenarrabile habet genus. *Iren.* lib. iv. c. 33, alias 66.

^h See above, p. 217, 220.

See Mosheim. *Observat. Sacr.* c. iv.

^k Vid. Bull. Defens. F. N. sect. ii. c. 4. p. 67, alias 71. Dr. Bishop's Sermons, p. 186, &c. Nourrii *Apparat. ad Bibl. Max.* vol. i. p. 487, &c. My Sermons, vol. ii. p. 181. Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 72—78, 250, &c.

sublime and tremendous doctrine, and show how much it concerned Christians to make it the subject of their most serious thoughts and most devout meditations. Speaking of *Christians*, he describes them¹ “as men that made “small account of the present life, but were intent only “upon contemplating *God*^m, and knowing his *Word* who “is from him; what *union* the *Son* has with the *Father*, “what *communion* the *Father* has with the *Son*; what “the *Spirit* is, and what the union and distinction are of “such so united, the *Spirit*, the *Son*, and the *Father*.” From hence we may infer how *important* a doctrine that of the *Trinity*, as understood by Athenagoras, (the same as we understand at this day,) was conceived to be, that the then Christians made it one principal concern of their lives, to contemplate and adore the three divine Persons. I say, *adore*: for though that is not expressed in this passage, it is undoubtedly *implied*, and is the *express* doctrine of the author in other placesⁿ. Thus much we may undoubtedly collect from the present passage, that *mysteries* of faith were not then thought barren *speculations*, or matters of slight concernment. The reflection of a learned foreigner hereupon is very just and proper, and I shall give it the reader in the margin^o, as an useful

¹ Ἀνθρώπου δὲ τὸν μὴν ἑαυτῶν ἑλίγου καὶ μικροῦ τινος ἔξου βίην λολογισμένοι, ὑπὸ μόνου δὲ παραπισπόμενοι τούτου, ὃν ἴσως [forte νοήσανθαι] Θεὸν καὶ τὸν πατρὸς αὐτοῦ Λόγον εἰδέναι, τίς ἡ τοῦ παιδὸς πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἰότης, τίς ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν κοινωνία, τί τὸ πνεῦμα, τίς ἡ τῶν τρεῶν ἰσότης καὶ διαίρεσις ἰουμένων, τοῦ πνεύματος, τοῦ παιδὸς, τοῦ πατρὸς. *Athenag. Legat.* lib. xi. p. 46. edit. Oxon.

^m *Νοήσανθαι*, for *ἴσως*, is an emendation of a learned foreigner, Godfr. Olearius, in his *Dissertat. Theolog. de Spiritu Sancto cum Patre et Filio Adoratione*, contr. Gul. Whiston, A. D. 1711. p. 2. The emendation has been taken notice of before by Dr. Bishop, *Sermons*, p. 188.

ⁿ *Athenag.* c. x. p. 40. xxvi. p. 122.

^o Quamquam in primis Christianismi temporibus id cum primis gloriæ sibi duxerint fidei nostræ sanctissimæ professores, quod non meditatione verborum, sed demonstratione et institutione operum Christianam rem absolvi profiterentur; non tamen ista *Praxis sacra* ita fuit a *theoria* doctrinæ Christianæ separata, ut non *mysteria* etiam *fidei*, a quorum recta cognitione *divini numinis cultus*, tum *vita* de reliquo *recte instituendæ* ratio penderent, non temere quidem, sed neque tamen perfunctorie scrutarentur—Etenim qui in primis Christianismi initiis, inque ipso adeo *φωτισμῷ* suo, accepissent

comment upon this paragraph of Athenagoras. I proceed to other ecclesiastical writers in their order.

A. D. 209. TERTULLIAN.

Tertullian has some very remarkable expressions relating to the faith of the Church in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, *one God*, as being the *sum* and *substance* of the Gospel, the very life and spirit of the Christian religion. I have cited part of the passage before, but shall now give it entire. “It is mere *Judaism*, to believe *one God* “in such a sense as not to reckon the *Son* to him, and “after the *Son*, the *Spirit*: for wherein is the great difference between them and us, except it be in this article? What is it that the Gospel has done, what is the “substance of the New Testament, extending the Law “and the Prophets as far as John, if from thence forwards Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons, are “not believed to make one God?” I have taken a little liberty in translating, just enough to keep the English up, and not to alter the sense. *Three Persons* is barely a literal rendering of *tres*, in that place, which cannot be otherwise so well expressed in English: besides, the word *Persona*, for the same thing, is common in Tertullian⁹. As to what concerns the *importance* of the doctrine of the Trinity, it is impossible to invent any thing fuller or stronger, in so few words, than this passage. I am sensible it will be pleaded in bar to his evidence, that he was a *Montanist*. The fact is true, but there is no argument at

fidem in Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum, eaque nomina perpetuo in ore haberent, eos sane oportebat eo contendere, ut cresceret in omni plenitudine scientiæ de mysterio tam augusto tamque venerando. Godfr. Olear. in Dissertat. p. 1, 2.

‡ Cæterum Judaicæ fidei est res, sic unum Deum credere ut Filium adnumerare ei nolis, et post Filium, Spiritum. Quid enim inter nos et illos, nisi differentia ista? Quod opus Evangelii? Quæ est substantia Novi Testamenti statuens Legem et Prophetas usque ad Johannem, si non exinde Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus, tres crediti, unum Deum sistunt? Tertul. adv. Prax. c. xxxi. p. 102. edit. Welchm.

‡ Tertul. contr. Prax. c. xi. p. 32, 34. xii. 35, 37.

all in it, as has been often shown by learned men; but more particularly by the learned and judicious Mr. Welchman^r, in his late very correct edition of the treatise against Praxeas. Tertullian was no *Montanist* in 198: but it has been sufficiently proved, both by Mr. Welchman and Mosheim, that his Apology (which contains the same doctrine) was as early as that year.

A. D. 256. CYPRIAN.

St. Cyprian has a remarkable passage, which speaks full and close to our purpose. Arguing for the invalidity of *heretical* baptisms, he asks, how any person baptized by *heretics*, and thereby partaking in their heresy, (so he must mean,) can be presumed to obtain remission of sins, and to become the *temple of God*? “If he be thereby made the temple of God, I would ask, of what God [or *divine Person*] it is? Is it of [God] the *Creator*? he could not be so, if he believed not in him. Is it of *Christ*? neither can he be his temple, while he *denies* Christ to be *God*. Is it then of the *Holy Ghost*? But since the *three are one*, how can the Holy Ghost have friendship with him that is at enmity with either *Father* or *Son*?” Here it is observable, 1. That St. Cyprian gives the name or title of *God* to each of the divine Persons. 2. That to deny Christ to be *God*, is interpretatively excluding one’s self from Christ, and declaring *enmity* towards all the *three*, who are *one*. 3. That therefore the acknowledging Christ to be *God* is necessary to salvation, and the impugning that doctrine is destructive of it: consequently, one is a *fundamental* article of faith,

^r Welchman. Præfat. ad Tertul. contr. Prax. p. 5—13. Conf. Mosheim, Disquis. Chronologico-Crit. de vera ætate Apologetici a Tertulliano conscripti.

• Si peccatorum remissionem consecutus est et sanctificatus est, et *templum Dei* factus est, quæro, *cujus Dei*? Si *Creatoris*, non potuit qui in eum non credidit: si *Christi*, nec hujus fieri potest templum, qui negat *Deum* Christum: si *Spiritus Sancti*, cum tres unum sint, quomodo *Spiritus Sanctus* placatus esse ei potest, qui aut *Patris*, aut *Filii* inimicus est? *Cyprian. Ep. 73. ad Jubaian. p. 203. edit. Oxon.*

and the other a *fundamental* error. So far is plain. And now if there remains any room for dispute, it can only be about the true and full meaning of the word *God* in this place. But Cyprian's declaring that salvation depends upon the article, is a strong presumption that he understood the word in its *just* and *proper* sense: his applying it indifferently to all the three Persons, without any mark of distinction, is a further presumption of the same thing: his saying, that the *three are one*, [*unum*,] one substance, one thing, makes it still plainer: and lastly, his applying the title of *God* to the Son, in the strictest and highest sense, in other parts of his works, sets it beyond dispute^t. I may observe, by the way, of Cyprian, as I have before hinted of other Fathers, that he went upon this maxim, that whosoever shall *disbelieve* the doctrines of *salvation* revealed to mankind, shall have no part in the salvation so tendered to them, ordinarily at least.

A. D. 257. NOVATIAN.

Novatian expresses the same thought in very clear and strong terms. "If God the Father saves none but through *God*, then no one can be saved by God the Father, who does not confess that Christ is *God*; in *whom*, and by *whom*, the Father promises to give *salvation*: wherefore, very justly, whosoever acknowledges him to be *God*, is in the way to be *saved* by Christ, who is *God*; and whosoever doth not acknowledge him to be *God*, forfeits *salvation*, because he cannot otherwise have it but in Christ as *God*^u." Words too plain to need any

^t The passages are collected in Bishop Bull, Def. F. N. sect. ii. c. 10. p. 119, &c. and in my First Defence, vol. i. Qu. ii. p. 21, &c. Second Defence, vol. iii. Qu. ii. p. 137.

^u Si non salvat nisi in *Deo* Pater Deus, *salvari* non poterit a Deo Patre quisquam nisi confessus fuerit Christum *Deum*, in quo, et per quem se promittit Pater salutem daturum: ut merito, quisquis illum agnoscit esse *Deum*, salutem inveniat in *Deo* Christo; quisquis non recognoscit esse *Deum*, salutem perdidit, quoniam alibi nisi in Christo *Deo* eam invenire non poterit. *Novat.* c. xii. p. 36.

comment. Only, I may observe that Novatian, as well as Cyprian, understood the word *God*, as applied to Christ, to import *proper* and *substantial* Divinity; as I have abundantly proved elsewhere^x. Besides which, it is certain, that the Novatians, his followers, were always orthodox in the article of Christ's *Divinity*, as also in the doctrine of the whole *Trinity* *γ*.

A. D. 259. DIONYSIUS of Rome.

Dionysius, Bishop of Rome, in a valuable Fragment, preserved by Athanasius, styles the doctrine of the Trinity, "The most venerable doctrine of the Church of God^z;" understanding the doctrine as we do at this day: it was not then looked upon as a *speculative* opinion, or as a matter of *slight* importance. But this is not all I have to observe from the same excellent writer: he goes on to speak of some who had the presumption to call the Son of God a *creature*, led to it by their indiscreet opposition to *Sabellianism*, as it was natural enough for weak men to run from one extreme to another. He rejects the notion with the utmost abhorrence, as every wise and good man would: and after censuring Marcion's Tritheistic doctrine as diabolical, he proceeds to speak of the other, as follows: "Nor are they less to blame, who think the Son *creature*, and who suppose the Lord to have come into being, as if he were one of the things that were really made: the sacred oracles assign him a *generation*, suitable and proper, not a *formation* and *creation*. Wherefore it must be *blasphemy* of no ordinary size, but of the first magnitude, to say that the Lord was a kind of handy-work. For if he began to

^x First Defence, vol. i. p. 9, &c. p. 97, &c. Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 59, &c. 120, &c. 139, 455, 459. Conf. Bull. Def. F. N. sect. ii. c. 10. p. 121, 122.

^γ The testimonies may be seen collected in a late pamphlet, entitled, An Answer to Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiston, &c. by H. E. in the preface, p. 2, 3.

^z Τὸ εἰμύσταν κήρυγμα τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Θεοῦ. *Apud Athanas.* vol. i. p. 231.

“ be, he once was not : but he existed eternally, if so be “ that he is *in the Father*, as himself testifies, and if Christ “ be the *Word*, and *Wisdom*, and *Power*.” There is more to the same purpose in what follows : what I have cited may suffice to show, that the doctrine of our Lord’s coeternal *Divinity* was then looked upon as an article of the highest *importance*, and that to deny it was to *blaspheme* in a most grievous manner, according to the sentiments of the Church at that time. For Dionysius speaks not his own sense only, but the sense of the Roman Synod, and of good Christians in general ; as he himself intimates by his saying to those whom he addresses himself to, that he had no need to dwell upon that matter before persons so enlightened by the Spirit of God, and so well apprised, as they were, of the great *absurdity* of making the Son a creature ^b.

A. D. 259. DIONYSIUS of Alexandria.

The case of Dionysius of Alexandria is a famous case. He had written some things against the Sabellians, wherein expressing himself unwarily, he was suspected by some to lean too far towards the opposite extreme, as if he had not just notions of the *Divinity* of Christ. A jealousy being raised, the matter was thought considerable enough to be brought before the other Dionysius, Bishop of Rome : which probably occasioned his writing what I have just now cited from him^c. The Bishop of Rome took cognizance of the cause, and the Bishop of Alex-

^a Οὐ μίση δ’ ἂν τις καταμίμνηται ἢ τὸς πνεῦμα τὸν υἱὸν εἶναι δεξιζοντας, καὶ γιγασίαι τὸν Κύριον, ἕσσις ἴσ τι ὄντας γινεμίνοι νομίζοντας, τὸν Δεῖον λογίαν γίνηται αὐτῷ τὴν ἀερόττουσαν καὶ ἀρίσσαν, ἀλλ’ ἄχι πλάσει τιὰ ἢ πνεῦσι προσημαρτυρήτων. Βλάσφημοι οὖν ἢ τὸ τυχεῖν, μίγισον μὲν οὖν, χιροποιήσιν τρέσει τιὰ λίγιον τὸν Κύριον. εἰ γὰρ γίγισσι υἱὸς, ἦν ὅσι οὐκ ἦν’ ἀὶ δὲ ἦν, εἰ γι ἐν τῷ πατρὶ ἴσιν, ὡς αὐτός φησι, ἢ εἰ λόγις, ἢ σοφία ἢ δόναμις ὁ Χριστός. *Apud Athanas.* vol. i. p. 231, 232.

^b Καὶ εἰ ἂν ἐπὶ πλείονσ παρὶ τῶτων πρὸς ὑμᾶς διαλεγόμενι, πρὸς ἄλλοις πτωματοφύροις, καὶ σαφῶς ἰσισαμίνοις τὰς ἀποσίαι τὰς ἐκ τῷ πνεῦμα λίγιον τὸν υἱὸν ἀνακαπτόσσις ; *Ibid.* p. 232.

^c See Athanas. de Sententia Dionysii Alex. p. 252. de Synod. 757.

andria, though not inferior to him, nor under his jurisdiction, submitted so far as to put in his answer or *apology*: which alone shows, that it was looked upon by all parties as a cause of great moment; for in smaller matters, bishops were not obliged to give account to their colleagues. St. Cyprian well expresses both the cases, *viz.* where and when independent bishops were accountable to other bishops^d, and where they were not^e. The sum is, that in the *ritual* part of religion, such bishops were independent and unaccountable; but in the *substantial* part, in matters of *necessary* faith, they were liable to be censured by their brethren. Seeing therefore that Dionysius of Alexandria was accused in a cause of *heresy*, the Bishop of Rome could not decline hearing it, nor the other refuse to submit to have it heard and judged. The whole process of that affair shows that the *Divinity* of Christ (about which the question was) was looked upon by all parties as a cause of the utmost concernment to religion. The whole Christian world, in a manner, was in an alarm about it: complaint was brought from Egypt as far as to Italy: the Bishop of Rome, with his clergy in Synod, were in the greatest concern upon it, and sent their judgment of the matter in question to the Bishop of Alexandria, requiring him to give an account of his faith: and that aged venerable *Primate* did so soon after, declaring in the face of the world, that he never intended

^d Copiosum corpus est sacerdotum, concordiae mutuae glutino atque unitatis vinculo copulatum, ut si quis ex collegio nostro *haeresin* facere, et gregem Christi lacerare et vastare tentaverit, subveniant caeteri, et quasi pastores utiles et misericordes, oves dominicas in gregem colligant. *Cyprian. ad Steph. Ep. lxxviii. p. 178.*

^e Superest ut de hac ipsa re, singuli quid sentiamus, proferamus; neminem judicantes, aut a jure communionis aliquem, si diversum senserit, amoventes. Neque enim quisquam nostrum episcopum se episcoporum constituit, aut tyrannico terrore ad obsequendi necessitatem collegas suos adigit; quando habeat omnis episcopus pro licentia libertatis et potestatis suae arbitrium proprium; tamque judicari ab alio non potest, quam nec ipse potest judicare: sed expectemus universi judicium Domini nostri Jesu Christi, qui unus et solus habet potestatem et praepo-
nendi nos in Ecclesiae suae gubernatione, et de actu nostro judicandi. *Concil. Carthagin. apud Cypr. p. 229, 230.*

the least injury to the *Divinity* of Christ, or to his *consubstantiality*, but himself believed it, as sincerely and fully as any man else could. This affair is recorded by Athanasius ^f, from whom I have collected what I have said: and it is a standing monument of the high regard paid to the doctrine of our Lord's *Divinity*, as a most important and fundamental article of Christianity in those days, sixty years and more before the Council of Nice.

A. D. 319. ALEXANDER of Alexandria.

I shall close this account with the sentiments of Alexander and his clergy, among which were near a hundred more bishops of the province, upon the present question, at the first breaking out of the Arian heresy. In their synodical letter, after sentence of excommunication passed upon Arius and his adherents, they represent the Arians, or Eusebians, as fallen into an *apostasy*, and as forerunners of *antichrist* ^h: they compare them with Hymenæus and Philetus, and the traitor Judas; and they stigmatize them as enemies to God, and subverters of souls. Such was their sense of the high importance of the doctrine of Christ's *Divinity*, which Arius had impugned. About two years after, the same Alexander, in his circular letter to the other Alexander of Byzantium, after declaring his faith in Christ, as truly and essentially *God*, of that and other articles of his Creed, he says: "These we teach, " and these we declare: these are the apostolical doctrines of the Church, for which we should be content " to die, making small account of them who would compel us to deny them: for though they should even " torture us to comply, yet would we not cast off our " hope in those [*doctrines*:] for the opposing of which

^f Athanas. de Sententia Dionys. p. 252. de Synod. 757, 758.

^g See the whole thing more particularly drawn out, and vindicated from exceptions, in Bull. Def. F. N. sect. ii. c. 11. Thirlby's Answers to Whiston's Suspicions, p. 31, &c. Berriman, Hist. Account, p. 127, &c.

^h Ἄνδρες παράνομοι καὶ χριστομάχη διδάσκοντες ἀποστασίαν, ἢ ἐκείνους ἢ οἱ ἐκείνους ἢ ἀντιχρῆστου ἰστορήσεως ἔκκλησιον. *Ap. Athanas. p. 397. et ap. So-crat. lib. i. c. 6.*

“ Arius and Achillas, with their accomplices, being enemies to the truth, are ejected out of the Church, as deserters of our holy faith, [*godly doctrine* ;] pursuant to St. Paul’s rule : If any one *preach any other Gospel unto you* than what you have received, *let him be accursed*, though he should pretend to be an *angel from heaven*.” Such were the sentiments of this good and great man, relating to the *importance* of the doctrine he taught ; the same which was afterward confirmed by the general Council of Nice, summoned from out of all Christendom to decide so *momentous* a question.

The sum of what I have advanced in this chapter is, that by three several topics it is proved to be certain *fact*, that the doctrine of our Lord’s *Divinity*, and so of the whole Trinity, was looked upon by the ancient churches of Christ as one of the *prime* verities, one of the *essentials* of Christianity. This, I say, is proved from Creeds, and from *censures* upon *heresies*, (*public* acts of the Church,) and from particular testimonies of *Fathers*, declaring their own private sentiments of the *weight* and *importance* of the doctrines we have been considering. Now I proceed to inquire of what *use* and *value* this view of the *ancients* may be to us.

CHAP. VII.

Showing the Use and Value of Ecclesiastical Antiquity with Respect to Controversies of Faith.

I INTEND not here to consider *the use of the Fathers* in its largest extent, but only so far as concerns *articles of faith*. I shall endeavour to set this matter in as clear a light as I can, for the impartial and discerning reader to judge of, avoiding all *extremes*. A certain writer, whom I should not perhaps have taken the least notice of, had

¹ Ταῦτα διδάσκωμεν, ταῦτα κηρύττομεν ταῦτα τῆς ἐκκλησίας τὰ Ἀποστολικὰ δόγματα, ὅσπερ ἂν καὶ ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τῶν ἱζήμευσθαι αὐτὰ βιαζομένων ἥτοι πιθεσιότητι, εἰ καὶ διὰ βυσάνων ἀναγνάξουσι, τὴν ἢ αὐταῖς ἰστοῖα μὴ ἀπορριψόμενοι. ὡν ἰσακίου κ. τ. λ. *Apud Theodorit. E. H. lib. i. c. 4.*

it not thus fallen in my way, has been pleased to tell the world, that “ Dr. Waterland and some others, who have “ appeared on the same side of the question, have only “ considered the Scripture in that light which a sober “ Turk or an Indian might discover in it. But Scripture “ has a much greater force in the hands of St. Athanasius and of St. Basil, (who viewed it in its true, that “ is, in its *original* and *traditional* sense, and under the “ lights of *faith*,) than it has in Dr. Waterland’s; who “ ascends no higher than the bare *letter*, and that sense “ of which all men, who are sincere, may equally judge, “ whether they believe it or not. But when St. Athanasius and St. Basil argue from Scripture, they have a “ regard to *faith*, and those ideas which *Catholics* have “ always had concerning the Son and the Holy Spirit*.” The report which this gentleman has here made may be true in part: and, so far, what he intended as an article of blame may appear much otherwise to more equal judges. I doubt not to say, that the Scripture is plain enough in this cause, for any honest Turk or Indian to judge of, who is but able to discern the difference between *wresting* a text, and giving it an *easy* and *natural* interpretation. Nor do I see why a man may not be as *certain* of the construction of Scripture in this article, from the words themselves, comparing Scriptures with Scriptures, as he may be of the sense of Homer or Aristotle, of Cicero or Cæsar, in plain and clear passages. Nevertheless, if over and above this, any further *light* or *strength* may arise from comparing *Scripture* and *antiquity* together, it is an additional advantage to our cause, such as we are thankful for, and constantly make use of. All kinds of evidences are *useful*; and there is so much weakness generally in mankind, that we have no reason to throw aside any assistances given us for relief or remedy. *Anti-*

* An Answer to Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiston, concerning the Divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit, with a summary Account of the chief Writers of the three first Ages. By H. E. Printed by Roberts, 1729. See pref. p. 4, 5.

quity therefore, superadded to Scripture, is what we sincerely value, and pay a great regard to; perhaps much greater than that gentleman himself really does: for if I be not very much mistaken in the drift and tendency of his censure, it is such as plainly discovers (notwithstanding his artful disguises) a much more affectionate concern for a *modern* corrupt Church, than for the pure and *ancient* faith. St. Athanasius and St. Basil pleaded the same cause, and exactly in the same way, as we of the Church of England do. They appealed to *Scripture* first, speaking for itself, and proving its own sense to the *common reason* of mankind, according to the just rules of grammar and criticism: after that, they referred also to the well known faith of all the *ancient* churches, as superabundantly confirming the same rational and natural construction. Athanasius and Basil were wise and honest men, and would never have admitted what this writer *meanly* insinuates ^l, (while he pretends to be an advocate on the same side,) that *Arianism* would not be *heresy* upon the foot of *Scripture*, singly considered. Such unworthy suggestions are as contrary to the general sense of *antiquity*, as they are to *truth* and *godliness*, and tend only to *betray* the *best* of causes, for the sake of serving and supporting one of the *worst*. Athanasius's sentiments may appear from one single passage, which is all I need refer to at length in proof of a thing so well known. He observes, that the Arians, finding nothing in *Scripture* to countenance their *heresy*, were forced to have recourse to confident presumptions and collusive sophistry; and when they had done with those, their next attempt was, to abuse the *Fathers* also ^m, who favoured them as little as the *Scripture* did. Athanasius appealed to *Scripture* in the first place, and laid the main stress there: which indeed is his constant

^l An Answer to Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiston, &c. pref. p. 6, 7.

^m Τῶν δ' Ἀρειομαντῶν τὴν ἀλογίαν καὶ τὴν ἐπίγνῶν. ἔδιν γὰρ οὐτ' εὐλογεῖ, οὐτε πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν ἐκ τῆς θείας γραφῆς ἢ τὸν ἐχθρὸν τῆς αἰρέσεως αὐτῶν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀνεπιστάτως ἐπιτιθέμενοι καὶ σοφίσματα πιδανὰ· οὐδ' οὐδ' ἀποβάλλουσιν εἰς τὴν ἀπολογία. *Athanas. de Sent. Dionys.* p. 243.

way in his dispute with the Arians. No man speaks more highly of the *perfection* and *sufficiency* of Scripture than he does: namely, that it affords the fullest and strongest evidences for establishing the *faith* against the Ariansⁿ; and that it is in itself *sufficient* for every thing^o. The like might be shown of Basil, were it needful. Therefore let not that gentleman hope to find shelter for his insidious conduct under those great and venerable names.

He proceeds to observe, that “*Catholics* (*Roman Catholics* I suppose he means) are so accustomed to join “*faith* and reading the holy Scripture together, that they “*account* this to be the *natural* signification of the words^p.” Which is artfully insinuating, that the sense which Trinitarians affix to Scripture is not *natural*, but made to *appear* so, through the prejudice of education, or through the lights of an *infallible* chair. And so he pleads, under cover, for *imposing* a sense upon Scripture, instead of *taking* one from the natural force of the words. This never was the advice of the *ancients*^q, neither ought it to be the practice of *moderns*. We insist upon it, that our interpretation of Scripture is *just* and *natural*, and that one great use of *antiquity* is, to guard that *natural* construction against *unnatural* distortions. To do violence to Scripture, in order to bring it to speak what we have a mind to, or what we have preconceived, is making Scripture insignificant, and setting up a *new rule of faith*: and indeed this gentleman, afterwards, gives very broad intimations, that Scripture is not the *whole* rule of faith^r. So now the secret is out: and I suppose, by this time, it is manifest what cause he is serving; and that he has something else more at heart than the doctrine of the

ⁿ Vid. Athanas. p. 274, 720, 237. edit. Bened.

^o Athanas. p. 1.

^p Answer to Dr. Clarke, &c. p. 7.

^q Optimus enim lector est, qui dictorum intelligentiam exspectet ex dictis potius quam imponat, et retulerit magis quam attulerit; neque cogat id videri dictis contineri, quod ante lectionem præsumserit intelligendum. *Hilar. de Trin.* lib. i. col. 777.

^r Answer to Dr. Clarke, pref. p. 17. book 22, 23.

Trinity. However, to do him justice, though he has made too many concessions, and has not sufficiently considered his subject^s, he has yet given us a neat methodical summary of the doctrine of the *ancients* upon that head. Only it would grieve a man to observe, how disadvantageous circumstances he chooses to place those venerable saints in, as overruling the *natural* sense of words, and making that *heresy* which Scripture has not made so, having no authority for doing it, but what they are forced to borrow from a particular Church^t, which gives the same to every article of the Trent Creed. But leaving this gentleman to take his own way, let us now proceed to the business in hand.

There is no occasion for magnifying *antiquity* at the expence of *Scripture*; neither is that the way to do real honour to either, but to expose both; as it is sacrificing their reputation to serve the ends of novelty and error. *Antiquity* ought to attend as an handmaid to Scripture, to wait upon her as her mistress, and to observe her; to keep off *intruders* from making too bold with her, and to discourage *strangers* from misrepresenting her. *Antiquity*, in this *ministerial* view, is of very great use; which I shall endeavour to show as distinctly as may be.

^s This appears from his lame and confused account of the word *person*, p. 5—11, 38.

^t The very pious Mr. Nelson, in a Letter to a Popish Priest, has some reflections worth the inserting in this place.

“ I am not ignorant that two of your great champions, Cardinal Perron and Petavius, to raise the authority of *general councils*, and to make the rule of their faith appear more plausible, have *aspersed* not only the holy *Scriptures*, as incapable, by reason of their *obscurity*, to prove the *great* and *necessary* point of our Saviour's *Divinity*, but have impeached also the *Fathers* of the first three centuries as tardy in the same point.—
“ Blessed God! that men should be so fond of *human* inventions, as to sacrifice to them those *pillars* of our faith, which are alone proper and able to support it; I mean *Scripture* and primitive *antiquity*. But to do justice to the memory of so learned a man as Petavius, the Bishop of Meaux told me, discoursing with him once on this subject, that in the last edition he made of his works, he *retracted* this opinion: which I am willing to believe upon the authority of that great man, &c.” *Dr. Hickeys's Letters*, &c. p. 334. Compare Chillingworth, pref. sect. 16, 17, 18.

But, first, let me premise a few things, in order to give the reader a clearer idea of the true state of the whole case. It is to be considered, that Scripture consists of *words*, and that words are but *signs*, and that *common* usage and acceptation is what must settle their *meaning*. And when any thing comes down to us in a *dead* language, as Scripture now does, the customary use of words in that language, at the time when they were spoken or written, must be the rule and measure of interpretation^u; only, taking in with it the drift and intention of the speaker, or writer, so far as it may be certainly known, or probably presumed from evidences or circumstances.

It is next to be considered, that there is something of *equivocalness* and *ambiguity*, for the most part, in *words*, or *phrases*, though ever so well and wisely chosen; and that many through *ignorance*, or *inattention*, or *prepossession*, may mistake or pervert their true meaning. Subtile wits may at any time take advantage of this natural imperfection of all languages, and may wrest the *plainest expressions* from their true and certain meaning, to a false and foreign one. The nature of language, I say, is such, that it may be done, and the depravity or weakness of mankind is such, that it often *will* be done: and then disputes will arise about the jarring and dissonant interpretations, all perhaps appearing severally *possible*, and all *plausibly* recommended, though amongst them all there is but one which is truly *reasonable*.

It may further be considered, that all languages abound with metaphors, tropes, figures, or schemes of speech; and it is allowable to interpret *figuratively*, *allegorically*, *emblematically*, as often as there is a *necessity* for it, or good reason to apprehend that the thing was written in the way of *figure*, *allegory*, or *emblem*. This allowable liberty may easily be extended too far, through want of *judgment*, or want of *care*, or want of *honesty* and *sincerity*. Indeed most of the *abuses*, with regard to inter-

^u See Rogers's Review, p. 41—51.

preting of Scripture, when traced up to their fountain head, will appear to have been owing to this, that some will *fancy* the plain and obvious sense *unreasonable*, or *absurd*, when it really is not; and will thereupon obtrude their own *surmises*, *conjectures*, *prejudices* upon the word of God. For having taken their own *conceits* for certain *truths*, and having determined beforehand, that the *letter* of Scripture shall give way to them, they will of course rack and torture Scripture, as far as wit, learning, or invention can assist them, in order to contrive some construction or other, which may but seem to favour their preconceived opinions; unless they choose rather to reject or adulterate the texts which make against them, or to devise *new* Scriptures to serve the purpose.

Add to this, that the art of *torturing* plain words has been advanced to great perfection in these latter ages, since the revival of learning and sciences; and especially since the Socinians * and Romanists have taken almost incredible pains to make themselves complete masters in that way. There is nothing now almost, but what some

* The Socinian management is thus elegantly described by Abr. Calovius.

Dici non potest quam nefario ausu, quam profana impietate, quam horrendo sacrilegio versentur illi Scripturarum corruptores in sacris literis, ut *sua* aut favere videantur, aut saltem non adversari *sententiæ*: modo enim scripta *Σιόνισσα*, partim *Novi* partim et imprimis *Veteris* Testamenti, de sublimi auctoritatis *divinæ* fastigio deturbant; modo sententias et periodos quasdam Scripturæ sacræ *in dubium revocant*; modo distinctiones *parenthesium* et *cola* intervertunt, ac *trajectionum* novo *σύριγματι* Spiritus S. sensum invertunt; modo per *apostrophas*, vel *exclamationes* mentem Scripturæ corrumpunt; modo per constructiones *recens excogitatas*, modo per vocum significationes *ipsuitatis*, nullisque lexicographis cognitæ; modo per *ἀνάλογον* violentam, modo per *ἑξήγησιν* prorsus insolentem, interdum et *κατὰ διάμετρον* oppositam et contrariam, sacras literas detorquent: quadrata rotundis, supra inferis, cælum terris miscent, horrendaque *σεισλίθησι* oracula sanctissima pervertunt, detestanda *μεταμερῶσιν* transformant: quicquid denique apertum et clarum in sacris literis, id veluti sepis rationis suæ obcurant atramento. Ipsam autem Scripturam perplexitatis, *ἀνομοθεσίας*, *ἀπαδιουσίας*, *ἀνακλουδίας*, ambiguitatis, obscuritatis, incertitudinis, erroris, falsitatis, impie postulant et accusant; scilicet juxta illud Hieronymi veriverbium, hæretici convicti de perfidia, conferunt se ad maledicta. *Vid. Wucherer. Vindic. adv. Whiston.* p. 21. A. D. 1732.

or other will attempt (if there be occasion) to drag over into the service of any cause, and to wrest to what sense they please, though ever so contrary to the words themselves, or to the known intention of the authors or compilers. The ancient misbelievers most of them were young practitioners in comparison : for they commonly *rejected* or *adulterated* the Scriptures which they did not like, not understanding, or however not trusting to *qualifying* interpretations, which might steal away the *sense*, without injuring the *letter*.

Lastly, it should be considered, that God has provided no other general remedies against these and the like *abuses*, or against men's being *imposed* upon by them, than what he has provided against any other wiles of *Satan*, or any other *temptations* ; namely, *prayer* and *watchfulness*, *care* and *endeavour*, and the use of proper *means*. We are no more secure against *heresy*, than we are against any other *sins* : but there are as strong temptations to it, (founded in natural *pride*, *vanity*, *curiosity*, *emulation*, *ambition*, or sometimes *credulity*, *supineness*, *secular* interest, or *revenge*;) as there are to other vices of a coarser kind.

These things considered, it will be highly expedient to take in all the helps we can procure, for the *ascertaining* the true and full meaning of sacred Writ, and for preserving, so far as in us lies, the doctrines of Christ. No proper *means* are to be neglected or set aside, lest we fall into error for want of the use of such means, or be found guilty of despising the gifts of God. Now we may come to the main question, whether *antiquity* may not be justly reputed one of the *proper means*, or how far it is so ? In which inquiry I shall proceed by several steps or degrees, for the clearer and more distinct conception of what belongs to it, under its several views.

I. The *ancients*, who lived nearest to the *apostolical*

† The heretics, so charged, are Cerinthus, Ebion, Saturninus, Carpocrates, Cerdon, Marcion, Lucian, Appelles, Tatian, Ptolomeus, Theodotus, Artemon, Manichæus ; the Ophitæ, Cainites, Sethoites, Alogi, Pepuzians, Severians, and perhaps some others.

times, are of some *use* to us, considered merely as contemporary writers, for their *diction* or *phraseology*. Any other coetaneous writers, Jewish or Pagan, are of use in that view: but home writers, Christian authors, will be so more especially, as conversant in the same subjects, and breathing the same spirit with the sacred writers themselves^z. This, however, is the least, and the lowest use of the ancient *Fathers*; besides that we have but *few*, and those very *short* tracts, which bear so early a date.

II. A further use of the ancient *Fathers* is seen, in their letting us into the knowledge of antiquated *rites* and *customs*, upon which some Scripture allusions may be formed, and upon the knowledge of which the true interpretation of some Scripture phrases or idioms may in some measure depend^a. But this general use is such as may also be answered, in a lower degree, by any as early writings, Jewish or Pagan; as likewise by *Lexicons*, or books of *antiquities*.

III. The ancient *Fathers* are further useful, as giving us insight into the *history of the age* in which the sacred books (of the *New Testament*, I mean) were written. For there is nothing which is apt to give so much light to any writing, as the well understanding and considering the *historical occasion* of it: a much surer and safer rule to go by, generally speaking, than mere criticizing upon words; as is manifest in the case of *charters*, *statutes*, *records*, and other ancient monuments.

IV. I come, fourthly, to mention some more peculiar and eminent views, in which the ancientest *Fathers* may be exceeding *useful*, for fixing the sense of Scripture in controverted texts. Those that lived in or near the apostolical times might retain in memory what the Apostles themselves, or their *immediate* successors, thought and said upon such and such points. And though there is no trusting, in such case, to *oral* tradition distinct from Scrip-

^a Vid. Dodwell. Dissert. in Iren. in prefat. sect. 15. et Dissert. 1.

^z Dodwell. Dissert. in Iren. i. c. 44.

ture, nor to *written*, disagreeing with Scripture; yet *written* accounts, consonant to Scripture, are of use to *confirm* and *strengthen* Scripture, and to *ascertain* its true meaning. Ignatius, for instance, had been intimately conversant with the Apostles^b, and was a disciple of St. John^c: and therefore he may reasonably be presumed to have justly represented the mind of the Apostles, in the doctrine he has left behind him, extant at this day. This the learned Mosheim has admitted, and even contended for^d, though otherwise no zealous admirer of the ancient *Fathers*.

The like may be said of Polycarp, who had been taught immediately by the Apostles, and had conversed with many who had seen *our Lord*^e. He was also particularly acquainted with St. John^f, was one of his *disciples*, and ordained Bishop of Smyrna by his hands^g. His doctrine, so far as it reaches, and may be certainly depended upon as his, (whether we have it at *first* or at *second* hand,) will be of great use for confirming the sense of Scripture, being a *secondary* attestation of the same doctrine: which Mosheim, before mentioned, does also allow, and plead for^h. Our most reverend metropolitan, speaking of the *authority* of the very early Fathers, sums it up in these several particulars. “ 1. That they were *contemporary* “ with the *Apostles*, and instructed by them. 2. That “ they were men of an eminent *character* in the *Church*, “ and therefore such as could not be ignorant of what “ was taught in it. 3. They were careful to preserve the

^b Chrysostom. Hom. in Ignat. tom. i. p. 499. Socrat. Eccl. H. l. vi. c. 8.

^c Act. Ignat. p. 9. edit. Grab. in Spicileg.

^d Si doctrinam quam hic publice proposuit, intelligimus, id simul quod Petrus, Joannes, cæterique Servatoris amici senserint et Antiochenis tradiderint, exploratum habemus. *Mosheim. Vindic. contr. Toland. sect. i. cap. 8.* Compare Abp. Wake, c. x. p. 111, 114. 2d edit.

^e Iren. lib. iii. c. 3. Euseb. E. H. lib. iv. c. 14.

^f Iren. Ep. ad Florin. inter Fragment. p. 340. Euseb. E. H. v. 20.

^g Hieronym. Catal. Scriptor. Eccl. 17. Tertullian. Præscript. c. 32.

^h Indubitata itaque fidei testem rursus habemus, non modo doctrine, quam ipse cætui suo tradidit, sed et ejus quam *optimus magister* discedens suis reliquit. *Mosheim. ibid. p. 237.* Abp. Wake's Apostolical Fathers, c. x. p. 111.

“ doctrine of Christ in its purity, and to oppose such as
 “ went about to corrupt it. 4. They were men not only
 “ of a perfect *piety*, but of great *courage* and *constancy*,
 “ and therefore such as cannot be suspected to have had
 “ any design to prevaricate in this matter. 5. They were
 “ endowed with a large portion of the *Holy Spirit*, and, as
 “ such, could hardly err in what they delivered as the
 “ *Gospel of Christ*. 6. Their writings were approved by
 “ the *Church* in those days, which could not be mistaken
 “ in its approbation of them ⁱ.”

Mr. Bayle allows that, “ in the days of the Apostles,
 “ or their *first disciples*, it had been easy to discover those
 “ who gave the Scriptures a *wrong interpretation*, because
 “ the infallibility of the Apostles, (who might have been
 “ consulted by word or by letter,) and the *fresh remem-*
 “ *brance* of the verbal instructions they had given their
 “ *disciples* and *pastors*, whom *themselves* had consecrated,
 “ was a ready means for clearing any doubt or disputed
 “ point ^k.” It appears then to be on all hands agreed,
 that those *most early* Fathers are competent witnesses of
 the doctrine of the Church in their days; nay, and of the
 doctrine also of Christ and his *Apostles*, to whom they
 immediately succeeded: and therefore their general sense
 is of signal use (so far as it reaches) to ascertain the in-
 terpretation of Scripture, and more especially as being
 consonant to the *easy* and *natural* import of the words
 themselves.

The like may be said in proportion, and in a lower
 degree, of the writings of Justin Martyr, Athenagoras,
 Irenæus, and Clemens Alexandrinus¹; eminent person-
 ages, who flourished within fifty or sixty, or at most
 ninety years of the *apostolical* age. Their nearness to

ⁱ Abp. Wake's *Apostolical Fathers*, cap. x. p. 110.

^k Bayle's *Supplement to Philosophical Commentary*, p. 692.

¹ Clemens of Alexandria, the latest of the four, yet testifies of himself,
 that he had received his doctrine from several *disciples* of the very chief
 Apostles, who had truly preserved the *tradition* of the blessed doctrine as
 coming directly from the holy Apostles, Peter, James, and Paul. *Strom.*
 lib. i. p. 322. Conf. Grabe, *Instances of Omissions and Defects*, &c. p. 9.

the time, their known fidelity, and their admirable endowments, ordinary and extraordinary, add great weight to their testimony, or doctrine, and make it a *probable* rule of interpretation in the *prime* things: but there is another consideration, to follow in its place, which will give it still greater strength of probability than what I have here suggested. As to later *Fathers*, the argument, in this view, loses its force more and more, the lower we descend. Yet it deserves our notice, that the *Fathers* of the *third* and *fourth* centuries had the advantage of many *written* accounts of the doctrine of the former ages, which have since been lost; and therefore their testimonies also are of considerable weight, and are a mark of direction to us, not to be slighted in the main things. Neither indeed is this saying any thing very highly of them, but may be thought rather to be setting them too low, and sinking them beneath their real value: for the testimonies of Jews, heretics, or Pagans, so far as we can depend upon them, must be allowed to carry in them the same use, where they testify any thing of the general doctrine or practice of the Christian Church in their times. Pliny, Lucian, Celsus, and Julian (to name no more) are all useful to us in this view, as they give some light into the doctrine of the first and purest ages. They confirm the *fact*, that such doctrines were then generally taught, and they corroborate other evidences. Socinus seems to have allowed more to one testimony of Lucian, than to many Christian evidences^m. No doubt, but it was some advantage to it in his esteem, that it came from a Pagan: though still it had not weight enough to conquer his prejudices; for he never wanted evasions. But I pass on to what I intend farther. All kinds of evidences are of use, which can bring us any light as to what the doctrine of the Church

^m Nec vero nobis quidquam hactenus legere contigit, quod trini istius Dei, a Christianis jam tum recepti et culti, fidem facere videatur magis, quam quæ ex dialogo, qui Philopatris inscribitur, et inter Luciani opera numeratur, ad id probandum affert Genebrardus, lib. i. et §. de Trinitate. *Socinu. adv. Eutrop.* c. xv. p. 698. *Opp.*

was in the best and purest ages : and when we are once advanced so far as to come to any certainty about that *fact*, then we have ground whereon to stand, and can build our argument upon it.

V. The next consideration therefore is this, that a very particular regard is due to the *public acts* of the ancient Church, appearing in *creeds* made use of in baptism, and in the *censures* passed upon heretics : and the observable *harmony* and *unanimity* of the several churchesⁿ, in such acts, is a circumstance which adds irresistible force to them. It is not at all likely, that any *whole* church of those early times should vary from *apostolical* doctrine in things of moment : but it is, morally speaking, absurd to imagine, that *all the churches* should combine in the same error, and conspire together to corrupt the doctrine of Christ^o. This is the argument which Irenæus and Tertullian insist much upon, and triumph in, over the *heretics* of their times : and it is obliquely glanced upon by Hege-sippus and Clemens Alexandrinus of the same *second* century, and by Origen also of the *third*. The argument was undoubtedly true and just, as it then stood, while there were no *breaks* in the succession of doctrine, but a perfect *unanimity* of the churches all along, in the *prime* articles : though, afterwards, the force of this argument came to be obscured, and almost lost, by taking in things foreign to it, and blending it with what happened in later

ⁿ Traditionem itaque Apostolorum in *toto mundo* manifestatam in *omni Ecclesia* adest respicere omnibus qui vera volunt videre : et habemus annumerare eos, qui ab Apostolis instituti sunt episcopi in Ecclesiis, et successores eorum usque ad nos, qui nihil tale docuerunt, neque cognoverunt quale ab his deliratur. *Iren.* lib. iii. c. 3.

Itaque *tot ac tantæ* Ecclesiæ una illa ab Apostolis prima, ex qua omnes. Sic omnes *primæ*, et *apostolicæ*, dum una omnes probant *unitatem* ; dum est illis communicatio pacis, et appellatio fraternitatis, et conteseratio hospitalitatis : quæ jura non alia ratio regit, quam ejusdem sacramenti *una* traditio. *Tertull. Præscript.* c. 20.

• Ecquid verisimile est, ut *tot ac tantæ* in *unam* fidem erraverint? Nullus inter multos eventus unus est. Exitus variasse debuerat error doctrinæ ecclesiarum. Ceterum, quod apud multos *unum* invenitur, non est erratum, sed traditum. *Tertull. ibid.* c. 28.

times. The force of it could last no longer than such *unanimity* lasted. I say, while the churches were all *unanimous* in the main things, (as they were in Irenæus's time, and Tertullian's, and for more than a century after,) that very *unanimity* was a presumptive argument that their faith was right, derived down to them from the *Apostles* themselves. For it was highly unreasonable to suppose, that those several churches, very distant from each other in place, and of different languages, and under no common visible head, should all *unite* in the same *errors*, and *deviate* uniformly from their rule at once. But that they should all agree in the same *common faith*, might easily be accounted for, as arising from the same *common cause*, which could be no other but the *common delivery* of the same uniform faith and doctrine to all the churches by the *Apostles* themselves ^p. Such *unanimity* could never come by *chance*, but must be derived from one common source: and therefore the *harmony* of their doctrine was in itself a pregnant argument of the truth of it ^q. As to the *fact*, that the churches were thus unanimous in all the prime things, in those days, Irenæus, who was a very knowing person, and who had come far east to settle in the west, bears ample testimony to it ^r. Tertullian, in the two passages last cited from him, testifies the same thing, as to the *unanimity* of the churches of those times in the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. Hegesippus, contemporary with Irenæus, gives much the same account of the *succession* of true doctrine, down to his own time, in the several churches ^s. Clemens of Alexandria means the same thing, where he recommends the faith of the *uni-*

^p See this argument very well explained and enforced by Dr. Sherlock, in his *Present State of the Socinian Controversy*, cap. ii. sect. 2. p. 60, &c.

^q Vero simile fit complures Ecclesias originis apostolicæ, regionibus linguaque dissitas, eam doctrinæ concordiam ab uno fonte hausisse, utpote quæ a casu non introducta videtur. *Sam. Barnag. Annal.* tom. i. p. 742.

^r Iren. lib. i. c. 10, alias 3. lib. iii. c. 3, 4.

^s Ἐν ἑκάστῃ δὲ διαδοχῇ καὶ ἐν ἑκάστῃ πόλει οὕτως ἔχου, ὡς ὁ νόμος κηρύττει, καὶ οἱ προφῆται, ἔξ ὁ Κύριος. *Hegesipp. ap. Euseb.* lib. iv. c. 22.

versal Church as *one*, and as more *ancient* than heresies ^t. And Origen of the third century testifies the same of the Church in his time, and argues in the same manner from it ^u. Irenæus and Tertullian were both of them so strongly persuaded of the certainty, first, of the *fact*, and next of the *inference* from it, that they scrupled not to urge it as a very full and convincing proof of the *apostolical* faith, singly considered ^x, and abstracting from *Scripture proof*. An argument which there is no need to be jealous of, if it be but rightly understood, and limited to such circumstances as it was grounded upon. For the meaning was not, that *apostolical* churches could *never* err, nor that *tradition* would be *always* a safe rule to go by: but *such* tradition as that was, which might easily be traced up to the *Apostles*, by the help of *writings* then extant, (as easily as we may now trace up the doctrine of our Church to the reign of Charles, or of James the First,) such a *tradition* might be depended upon. Besides that the *unanimity* of the churches all the world over (which could not be rationally accounted for on any other supposition but that they had been so taught *from the beginning*) confirmed the same thing. The argument in this light, and in those circumstances, was a very good one. But when those circumstances came to be altered, and

^t Clem. Alex. Strom. vii. p. 898, 899. Conf. Strom. i. p. 322.

^u Cum multi sint qui se putant scire quæ Christi sunt, et nonnulli eorum diversa prioribus sentiant, servetur vero ecclesiastica prædicatio per successionis ordinem ab Apostolis tradita, et usque ad præsens in Ecclesiis permansens: illa sola credenda est veritas quæ in nullo ab ecclesiastica traditione discordat. Origen. in Apolog. Pamp. inter Opp. Hieron. tom. v. p. 223.

^x Tantæ igitur ostensiones cum sint, non oportet adhuc quærere apud alios veritatem, quam facile est ab Ecclesia sumere, &c.—Quid enim, et si de aliqua modica quæstione disceptatio esset, nonne oporteret in antiquissimas recurrere Ecclesias, in quibus Apostoli conversati sunt, et ab eis de præsentibus quæstione sumere quod certum et re liquidum est? Quid autem si neque Apostoli quidem *Scripturas* reliquissent nobis, nonne oportebat ordinem sequi *traditionis* quam tradiderunt iis quibus committebant Ecclesias? Cui ordinationi assentiunt multæ gentes barbarorum eorum qui in Christum credunt, sine charta et atramento scriptam habentes per Spiritum in cordibus suis salutem, et veterem traditionem diligenter custodientes, &c. Iren. l. iii. cap. 4.

there had been several *breaks* in the succession of doctrine, and that too even in the *apostolical* churches, then there could be no arguing in the same precise way as before: only thus far they might argue, in after times, (upon a supposition that their faith could be proved to be the same as in the former ages,) that since their doctrine was still that very doctrine which the churches held while they were *unanimous* and had admitted no *breaks*, therefore it is such as was *from the beginning* in the Church of Christ. In this manner we can reason even at this day, and can thereby make Irenæus's or Tertullian's argument our own⁷; provided we have first proved that the faith we contend for is the very same that obtained in the churches of that age.

But before I leave this head, I would observe something more particularly of Tertullian's manner of expressing himself in this case: he did not only conceive that an argument might be drawn from *tradition* alone, abstracting from *Scripture*, but he preferred that way of arguing, in disputes with heretics, as a shorter, easier, nay, and surer method of confuting them, than engaging with them upon the foot of *Scripture*^z. This may ap-

⁷ Ad hanc itaque formam probabuntur ab illis Ecclesiis quæ, licet nullum ex Apostolis, vel apostolicis, auctorem suum proferant, ut multo posteriores, quæ denique quotidie instituuntur, tamen in *eadem fide* conspirantes, non minus *apostolicæ* deputantur pro *consanguinitate* doctrinæ. *Tertull. Præscripti.* c. 32.

^z Quid promovebis exercitatissime *Scripturarum*, cum si quid defenderis, negatur; ex diverso, si quid negaveris defendatur: et tu quidem nihil perdes, nisi vocem in contentione; nihil consequeris nisi bilem de blasphématione. Ille vero, si quis est, cujus causa in congressum descendis *Scripturarum*, ut eum dubitantem confirmes, ad *veritatem*, an magis ad *hæreses* deverget? Hoc ipso motus, quod te videat nihil promovisse, æquo gradu negandi et defendendi adversa parte, statu certe pari, altercatione incertior discedet, nesciens quam *hæresis* judicet: hæc utique et ipsi habent in nos retorquere. Necesse est enim et illos dicere, a nobis potius *adulteria Scripturarum*, et *expositionum mendacia* inferri, qui proinde sibi defendant *veritatem*. Ergo non ad *Scripturas* provocandum, nec in his constituendum certamen, in quibus aut *nulla*, aut *incerta* victoria est, aut *par incerte*.—Ordo rerum desiderabat illud prius proponi, quod nunc solum disputandum est, *quibus* competat *fides ipsa*, cujus sunt *Scripturæ*; a *quo*, et per *quos*, et *quando*, et *quibus* sit tra-

pear to us now an odd way of talking: but if it be taken as he meant it, and with a view only to the then present circumstances, I believe, it will be found to turn out right. He could not mean that the tradition of the *sense* of Scripture was more *certain* than the tradition of the *words* or *books* of Scripture: neither could he design to intimate that *Scripture texts* did not themselves afford as *certain*, or more certain proofs of a doctrine than *tradition* could do, among persons qualified to judge in a *critical* way: neither could he imagine, that *Scripture* should not be made use of, or should not be looked upon as the *principal* thing, in *written* debates against heretics; for no man makes more or better use of Scripture in that way than himself does. All he seems to have meant was, that in *verbal* conferences with *heretics*, in the presence of *weak* and *infirm* Christians, the wisest way would be, not to engage the adversaries on the foot of *Scripture*, (to bring on a debate about the Canon of Scripture, and the strict meaning of *words* or *phrases*, and so to discuss the whole in a *logical* and *critical* way, tiresome to ordinary Christians, and commonly *fruitless**,) but to put the issue of the cause upon a few plain and short questions, such as *common* Christians could better judge of. It was easy to discern, what party of men had been successors to the *Apostles*, and had in constant succession made up the body of the *Church*, preserving the same *faith* with great *unanimity*. This argument from *tradition* was an argument drawn from sensible *fact*, and was much more affecting, obvious, and popular, than dry altercations about

dita disciplina qua fiunt Christiani. Ubi enim apparuerit esse *veritatem* et disciplinæ et fidei Christianæ, illic erit veritas *Scripturarum*, et *expositio-num*, et omnium *traditionum* Christianarum. *Tertull. Præscript.* c. 17, 18.

* *Scripturas* obtendunt, et hac sua audacia statim quosdam movent: in ipso vero congressu *firmos* quidem fatigant, *infirmos* capiunt, *medios* cum scrupulo dimittunt. Hunc igitur potissimum gradum obstruimus, non admittendos eos ad ullam de *Scripturis* disputationem. Si hæc sint illæ vires eorum uti eas habere possint, dispici debet cui competat *possessio* *Scriptura-rum*, ne is admittatur ad eam cui nullo modo competit. *Ibid.* cap. 15. *Conf.* cap. 37.

the *authenticity* of the books of Scripture, or the precise meaning of *words*; and it was *certain* enough, at that time, to be depended upon; and therefore Tertullian recommended that method of debate, in such *verbal conferences*, rather than any other. Wherein to me he seems to have judged very well upon the prudential case, and like a wise and a sagacious man^b. Nevertheless, as often as he employed his pen in controversy with *heretics*, and drew up polemical tracts, though he would not omit to mention the additional advantage he had^c in point of *prescription* or *tradition*, yet he chose to pass it off in short hints, and not to dwell upon it, but rather to rest the issue of the main cause upon *Scripture* and *reason*.

A learned foreign divine has indeed blamed Tertullian for his conduct in this affair, as *derogating* from the authority of Scripture, by laying such stress upon *tradition*: which appears not to be a just censure; but that learned writer runs into the other *extreme*, while he avers, that it is by Scripture *only* that the *verity* or *antiquity* of a doctrine may be proved^d. There are *two* ways of proving the *antiquity*, and consequently the *verity* of a doctrine; namely, *Scripture* and *Church history*: and these *two* differ only in the manner of proof, or in the *degree* of *moral* certainty. Can we prove, for instance, what were the tenets of the *ancient heretics*, by the help of Church history and records; and cannot we as well prove what were the tenets of *ancient Christians* in the same way? It is true, we might more *certainly* prove what those *heretics* held, from their own books, if we had them; and so we may more certainly prove what was the faith of the *first Christians*, from Scripture, than from any Church records:

^b See Stillingfleet's Answer to several Treatises, Works, vol. v. p. 79, 80. Dodwell. Dissertat. in Iren. iii. sect. 30. p. 282, 283.

^c Vid. Tertullian. contr. Marc. lib. i. cap. 1. 20. lib. iii. cap. 1. contr. Prax. cap. ii.

^d Huc illa referenda sunt effata, quibus *Scripture sacre* derogare auctoritati videtur, cum tamen ea *sola* sit, ex qua et veritas et *antiquitas* dogmatis cuiusdam probari queat. *Buddæi Isagog.* vol. i. p. 997.

but still the same thing is *proved* both ways, and by *two* kinds of evidences, differing only, as I said, in *degree* of probability, or moral certainty. And therefore the learned Mosheim, as I before took notice^c, scruples not to assert in broad terms, that the *antiquity* of the Christian faith is *proved* from the writings of Ignatius and Polycarp^f: and he allows the same thing with respect to Clemens Romanus, and Hegesippus^g, and Caius^h, and Irenæusⁱ, and, by parity of reason, to all other Church-writers whose accounts may be depended upon^k. The admitting such a *secondary* proof, in this case, is not *derogating* from Scripture authority, but is *confirming* and *strengthening* it in more views than one: as it is accepting the same kind of proof here, which we accept, in another case, with respect to the Canon of Scripture; and as it is corroborating the Scripture account of the Christian faith with collateral evidences, both to illustrate and enforce it. Not that one would, at this time of day, presume to rest an *article* of *faith* upon Church records *alone*, or upon any thing besides *Scripture*: but while the *superior* proof from sacred Writ is the *ground* of our faith^l, the *subordinate* proof from an-

^a See above, p. 262.

^f Mosheim. Vindic. adv. Toland. cap. viii. p. 221, 222, 223.

^g Ibid. p. 218.

^h Ibid. p. 224.

ⁱ Ibid. p. 238.

^k It is observable of Polycarp, in particular, that he convinced and converted great numbers to the true faith, by the strength of *tradition*, being a sensible argument, and more affecting at that time, than any dispute from the bare letter of Scripture could be. [See Irenæus, lib. iii. cap. 3. p. 177.] It was under Anicetus, about the year 145. See Pearson, *Opp. Posth.* cap. xiv. &c. Dodwell, cap. xiii.

^l Scripture is the *ground of our faith*, considered as the *infallible* word of God: but then that it is really the *word of God*, and that such is the *sense* of this or that text, ordinarily stands only upon *moral proof*; so that our faith at length resolves into *moral evidence*, as it is a known rule, that the *conclusion* follows the *weaker* of the premises, and can be no stronger than that is. But then again, it is to be considered, that the strength of *moral evidence*, in the general, resolves at last into *divine veracity* and faithfulness; since *God* has so made us as to lay us under an *inevitable* necessity of submitting commonly to such evidence, and he cannot be supposed (without manifest absurdity or blasphemy) to have thus exposed the wisest, and most pious, and most

tiquity may be a good mark of direction for the *interpretation* of Scripture in the *prime* doctrines^m. If we can prove from ancient records what that *faith* was which obtained so universally in the second century, and later, we can then argue from it in like manner as Irenæus, Hege-sippus, Tertullian, yea and Clemens also, and Origen did, and can make the like use of it against those that *pervert* Scripture. Only, indeed, there will be this difference, that the argument, as now urged, is become one of the *learned* kind, and therefore not so well adapted to *common* capacities as it formerly was: and it is somewhat *weaker* to us, in another respect, as we have not so *many* evidences now extant, as those writers then had, whereby to prove such *constant* succession of doctrine so long, and such *unanimity* of the churches in professing it. But notwithstanding, we have evidences sufficient to persuade rational men; and the argument is still a good oneⁿ, though with some abatements.

VI. There is one consideration more, tending still to strengthen the former, and which must by no means be omitted: namely, that the *charismata*, the *extraordinary gifts*, were then frequent, visibly rested in and upon the *Church*, and there only. I have occasionally hinted something of this matter before^o, so far as concerned Irenæus,

considerate men to fatal and endless *delusions*. So then, in the last result, *faith* again resolves into, or rests upon, the *truth* and *goodness* of God.

^m Quoties de scripti sensu queritur, magnam vim habere solet, tum *usus sequens*, tum *prudens auctoritas*: quod etiam in *divinis* Scriptis sequendum est. Neque enim probabile est, Ecclesias quæ ab Apostolis constitutæ sunt, aut *subito*, aut *omnes* defecisse ab iis quæ Apostoli breviter præscripta, ore liberalius explicaverant. *Grotius de Jur. B. et P.* lib. i. cap. 2. sect. 9. p. 60.

ⁿ “ This is an unanswerable argument, as long as we can suppose the tradition of the Catholic faith, and the communion of the Church was preserved *entire*: which it visibly was, at least till the first Nicene Council. “ And had we no other ways to know it, we might learn the *faith* of the “ Catholic Church, by its opposition to those *heresies* which it condemned.” *Sherlock's Present State of Socin. Controv.* p. 64.

^o See above, p. 213.

and shall now throw in some additional evidences to make good the same thing. Justin Martyr is a witness of the frequency of the miraculous operations in his time: and he makes use of it, in his dispute with Trypho P, as an unanswerable argument in behalf of *Christianity* against the Jews; which St. Paul himself had done before him 9. Irenæus, as observed above, made the like use of it against *heretics*: and so does Tertullian, though in remote hints, and somewhat more obscurely †. Those *extraordinary gifts* continued in a good measure, though decreasing gradually, for the three first centuries at least ‡. So then, besides *oral* tradition for the faith of the ancient churches, which was least to be depended upon, or lasted but a little time; besides *written* accounts, which might more securely be confided in; besides the *unanimity* of doctrine in all the churches, which was itself an argument that it had been *from the beginning*; I say, besides all these, the testimony of the *Spirit* visibly residing in the Church, and discovering itself in *supernatural operations*, that was a further evidence of the *truth* of the doctrine then generally held. For it is by no means probable, that those primitive churches, so highly favoured from above, so plentifully enlightened and comforted by the Holy Spirit of God, should be permitted to fall into any *dangerous* errors, or should not preserve, at least in points of *importance*, the true and ancient faith derived from Christ and his Apostles. But that this argument may appear to greater advantage, I shall take leave to borrow the excellent words of an abler hand †, which has set it forth in a very true and strong light.

“ It is, I think, impossible, in a *moral* sense, that those

‡ Justin Martyr. Dial. p. 308, 315. edit. Par. alias 315, 329.

9 Gal. iii. 2.

† Tertullian. Præscript. cap. xxviii. xxix.

‡ Vid. Spencer in Notis ad Origen. contr. Cels. p. 5, &c. Dodwell. Dissert. in Irenæum, ii. Dissert. Cyprianic. iv. Remarks on Christianity, &c. part i. continued, p. 51, &c.

† Dr. Knight's preface to his Eight Sermons, p. 4, 5, 6. Compare Dr. Beriman's Historical Account, p. 2, 3, &c.

“ good men should successively concur to impose upon
 “ the Church a false interpretation of *notorious* passages
 “ of the sacred writings, for the following reasons.

“ 1. That the Spirit of God was given to the Church, to
 “ guide and instruct it in *necessary* truth.

“ 2. That, according to the records of those early ages,
 “ the *extraordinary gifts* of the Spirit of God, continued
 “ in the Church, were undoubted evidences of his *presence*
 “ with it.

“ 3. That it cannot be supposed, while the Spirit of God
 “ was present with the Church in so *remarkable* a manner,
 “ and the Church itself so little removed from the times
 “ of the Apostles, that the *letter* of Scripture, especially in
 “ matters of *greatest concern*, should be *generally* under-
 “ stood in another sense than what was agreeable to the
 “ *Spirit of God*, and to that which the *Apostles* had taught
 “ and delivered.

“ 4. That the Doctors of the Church, through the
 “ *difficulty* of the times, and the dangers they were ex-
 “ posed to on account of religion, were more concerned to
 “ prepare for the blessings of another world, by recom-
 “ mending *truth* to the consciences of men, than to pro-
 “ vide for the *flesh*, and the enjoyments of the *present*, by
 “ *dividing* the Church, and *seducing* the simple with per-
 “ nicious doctrines.

“ 5. That their writings *suppose*, or *expressly* affirm, that
 “ Scripture was received in an *uniform* sense, in the
 “ churches of Christ.

“ 6. The consequence of which is, that whensoever it
 “ appears, that the doctrines of the Church *successively*
 “ agree, from the very beginning, in an *uniform* ^u interpre-
 “ tation of certain passages of the sacred writings, relating
 “ to the *chief* and *fundamental* articles of revealed truths ;
 “ such interpretation *ought to be received* as the *mind of the*
 “ *Spirit* in the aforesaid passages : and conclusions drawn
 “ from such expositions are not founded on the *doctrines* of

^u Iren. lib. iv. cap. 35, alias 69.

“*men*, but the *mind of the Spirit* contained and conveyed “in the letter of Scripture.”

This reasoning I apprehend to be just and solid, and to carry much greater weight with it, than any the most ingenious conceits and surprising subtilties of the Polonian brethren, whereby they have laboured to give something of a gloss or colour to their *novel* constructions of the sacred oracles. But to be a little more distinct and particular, I proceed to build upon the foundations here laid, for the more fully demonstrating the *use* of antiquity.

VII. The least that we can infer from what hath been already said is, that the sense of the *ancients* once known is an useful *check* upon any *new* interpretations of Scripture affecting the *main* doctrines. It has a *negative* voice, if I may so call it, in such a case: and it is reason sufficient for throwing off any such *novel* expositions, that they cross upon the undoubted faith of all the ancient churches, or contain some doctrine, as of *moment* to be received, which the *ancients* universally rejected, or never admitted*. This *negative* way of arguing is, I think, generally allowed, and can hardly bear any controversy. Bishop Stillingfleet observes to this purpose, “that it is sufficient *prescription* against any thing which can be alleged out of Scripture, that if it appear *contrary* to the sense of the Catholic Church from the beginning, it *ought not* to be looked upon as the *true meaning* of Scripture. All this security is built upon this strong presumption, that nothing *contrary* to the *necessary* articles of faith should be held by the Catholic Church,

* Sicut in legibus *humanis* valet quidem ad sensum indagandum, *verborum* ac *locutionum* cognitio, *antecedentium* et *consequentium* series, consideratio *ejus* quæ quoque libro tractatur *materia*, sed hæc omnia ita sunt dirigenda, ne impingant in id quod *ab initio* publicatæ legis de re quasque *receptum* et *judiciis* approbatum fuit; ita in legibus *divinis* quidem, sed humano more per *verba*, et verborum signa *litteras*, expressis, eadem interpretationi circumdanda sunt repagula. *Grotius, Rivet. Apolog. Discuss. p. 685. Conf. 724.*

“ whose very *being* depends upon the belief of those articles which are *necessary* to salvation.”

The famous Daillé, whom no man can suspect of *partiality* towards the *ancients*, acknowledges as much as I have here mentioned, where he says, “ What probability is there that those holy Doctors of former ages, from whose hands Christianity hath been derived down unto us, should be *ignorant* of any of those things, which had been revealed and recommended by our Saviour as *important* and *necessary* to salvation?—That they should all of them have been *ignorant* of any article that is *necessarily* requisite to salvation, is altogether impossible: for, after ~~this~~ account, they should all have been deprived of salvation, which, I suppose, every honest mind would tremble at the thought of.”

Dr. Whitby, who was not prejudiced on the side of the Fathers, seems to carry the point rather farther, in these words.

“ In such doctrines as were rejected by the *universal* Church as *heresies*, Austin saith truly, that it was sufficient cause to reject them, because *the Church held the contrary*, they being such as did *oppose her rule of faith*, or *symbol*, universally received; and that it was sufficient to persuade any man, he *ought not* to embrace any of the doctrines of *heretics*, as articles of faith, because the Church, who could not be *deficient* in any point of *necessary faith*, did not receive them. This way of arguing *negatively*, we therefore, with St. Austin, do allow: the universal Church knows no such doctrine; *ergo*, it is no article I am obliged to receive as any part of Christian faith.” Thus far he at that time: and in another treatise which he published in Latin, twenty-five years after, when it is certain he had no very friendly disposition towards the *Fathers*, yet still he thought him-

† Stillingfleet's Rational Account, cap. ii. p. 59.

‡ Daillé, Use of the Fathers, cap. vi. p. 188. Engl. edit.

§ Whitby's Treatise of Tradition, A. D. 1689, part ii. cap. 12. p. 131.

self obliged to admit such a *negative* argument ^b as he had before admitted. A *negative* argument therefore being allowed, (as indeed there is plain reason for it,) it must be allowed also, that the *Fathers* are of *use* to us, so far as such an argument can be of use: and that the *ancients* may be of *great use* in the Church, in this view, is very apparent, being that they serve as an *outwork* (which Dailé takes notice of) for the repelling the presumption of those who would forge a *new faith* ^c.

For example, they are of use, in this view, against the Romanists, with respect to the novel and supernumerary articles of the Trent Creed, or Creed of Pope Pius IV. imposed upon the consciences of men as *necessary* to salvation.

The *ancients* are likewise of use to us, under the same view, against the Socinians, who *innovate* in doctrines of the highest *importance*, teaching things *contrary* to the faith of all the primitive churches; things wherein Christian *worship*, as well as *faith* and *hope*, are very nearly and deeply concerned. It is sufficient reason for rejecting such *novelties*, and the *interpretations* which they are founded upon, that the Christian world, in the best and purest times, either knew nothing of them, or rejected them.

The like may be said with respect to the Arian doctrines, if any man should presume to obtrude them upon us as *articles of faith*. It is a sufficient reason for not receiving either *them*, or the *interpretations* brought to support them, that the *ancients*, in the best and purest times, either knew nothing of them, or, if they did, condemned

^b Distinguendum est inter traditiones de rebus creditu factuque *necessariis*, et *non necessariis*. Traditionibus ad fidem moresque *necessariis* fides adhibenda est, utpote sine quibus nec fides nec vita Christiana esse potest: adeo ut argumentum *negativum* in his omnibus certissimum est; hoc vel illud inter fidei morumve dogmata *necessaria* prius locum non obtinuit, ergo nec hac ætate creditu, factuve *necessarium* dici possit; quoniam Ecclesia in *necessariis* nunquam deficit. *Whitby, Dissertat. de Scriptur. Interpretatione, Præf.* p. 94.

^c Dailé, Use of the Fathers, p. 190.

them^d. It has indeed been pretended, that the *ancients*, in general, supposed God the Father to be *naturally* Governor over the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*: but no proof has ever been made of it, nor ever can be. On the contrary, it will appear upon a careful inquiry, as I have particularly observed in another place^e, that the *ancients* never did, never *consistently* could intend any such thing; but that Arius and his confederates innovated in maintaining that doctrine, and were condemned for it immediately, upon their first introducing it. But it is needless to urge here (had not the course of my argument led to it) that *Arianism* was no matter of *necessary* faith, in the esteem of the *ancients*, having proved in these papers that the *contrary* to it was. Only, I was here to observe the *use* which might be made of the *negative* argument, supposing we could go no farther, or had nothing more to plead from *antiquity*.

VIII. I would next advance a step farther than the mere *negative* argument can *directly* carry us: for, I conceive, that a just inference may be drawn from that *concession*, which will extend our views somewhat beyond what I have just now mentioned. If the *ancients* could not be universally *ignorant* of any *necessary* doctrine, since it is morally absurd that they should be deficient in *necessaries*; by parity of reason it must be allowed, that they could not generally fall into *fundamental* errors, because that also would be failing in *necessaries*, inasmuch as nothing

^d “ In the doctrine of the *Deity* of Christ, or of the *Trinity*, though the
 “ subtlety of such modern heretics as oppose either of those, may so far pre-
 “ vail on persons, either not of sufficient *judgment*, or not sufficiently *versed*
 “ in the *Scriptures*, as at present to make them acknowledge the places are
 “ not so *clear* as they imagined them to be; yet their being always otherwise
 “ interpreted by the *Catholic Church*, or the Christian societies of *all ages*,
 “ lays this *potent prejudice* against all such attempts, as not to believe such
 “ interpretations *true*, till they give a just account why, if the belief of these
 “ doctrines were not *necessary*, the Christians of all ages since the Apostles’
 “ times, did so *unanimously* agree to them, that when any began first to *op-*
 “ *pose* them, they were declared and condemned for *heretics* for their pains.”
Stillingfleet, Rational Account, cap. ii. p. 58.

^e Third Defence, or Farther Vindication, vol. iv. cap. 5. p. 96, &c.

can be more *necessary* in our religious concernments than to stand clear of all *pernicious* or *dangerous* mistakes. From whence it follows, that whatever the *ancient* churches universally admitted as a *necessary* article of faith, must, at the lowest, be *safe* doctrine^f. And because it is hard to conceive how such a doctrine as we are now upon could be *safe*, if it were not *true*, we may reasonably infer that it is *true*, as well as *safe*. Thus far I have been pursuing the consequences which appear to follow from the *concession* made by Daillé and others.

But I apprehend withal, that the same conclusion will more directly and closely follow from the principles before laid down; namely, that morally speaking, it is absurd to suppose that the primitive churches should so *universally* maintain one and the same doctrine, if they had not received it from the beginning; especially considering the *important* nature of the doctrine, and how *near* they lived to the apostolical age, and how remarkably they were blessed, all the time, with plentiful effusions of God's *Holy Spirit*. These considerations taken together do afford, as I conceive, a *positive* argument to prove that what the ancients so held as *true* and *important*, (Scripture also, in its easy and most natural sense, countenancing the same,) ought to be received by us as *Scripture doctrines*, and

^f Hic vero ex concessis Dallæanis recte concluditur, et nullum articulum *necessarium* eos ignorasse; et e fortiore, nulla execrabili hæresi implicitos, nobis errandi duces extitisse.—Minime est probabile (judice ipso Dallæo) vel unicum fidei membrum eos *latuisse*, et multo incredibilius, prolapsos fuisse in errorem *perniciosum*, seu hæresim sanæ fidei contrariam. *Scrivenar. contr. Dal.* p. 222, 223.

^g Cum majorem *omnibus* quam *singulis* Christianis, et *universæ* quam *particularibus* quibuscunque Ecclesiis fidem habendam esse nemo dubitet; cum plurima etiam sint in quæ *universalis Ecclesia* per multa post Apostolos secula *consensit*; cum hæc denique *universalis Ecclesiæ* consensio *certissima* sit, in iis quibus habeatur capitibus, sacræ Scripturæ *interpretatio*; hinc clarissime constat, quali quantoque *usui* sint *antiqui patres*, alique omnium Ecclesiæ seculorum Scriptores, quamque necessario ab iis consulendi sint, quibus Ecclesiasticas agitantibus controversias vel sua salus, vel pax Ecclesiæ cordi est.—Quicquid de aliis dicendum est, ea saltem in quæ *omnes ubique Ecclesiæ* consenserunt, non possunt non certissima esse, et necessario ab

valued accordingly. Any other pretended sense of Scripture, as implying a kind of *moral* absurdity, ought to be rejected; unless it can be proved to carry with it such a degree of *moral certainty* as is more than sufficient to countervail such *prescription* or *prejudice* against it. But now as to the Arian or Socinian interpretations, in this case, they carry no *moral certainty* at all, to counterpoise the *moral absurdity* which stands against them: therefore the judgment of the universal Church (were there nothing else) ought to overrule their interpretations. For it was morally impossible that the primitive churches should err, in doctrines of that high importance, so soon, or so universally^h: but it is not morally impossible, nor at all unlikely, that those later gentlemen should mistake in commenting upon sacred Writ.

The sum then of the whole case, in few words, is this: 1. We assert, that the received doctrine of the Trinity is proved directly to be *true*, and consequentially to be *important*, from Scripture itself, according to the known rules of grammar and criticism: and such proof cannot be evaded, or eluded, without doing the greatest *violence* imaginable to the texts. 2. In the next place, we maintain that the *ancient* churches taught the same doctrine as an *essential*, and condemned the contrary opinions as *pernicious* and *dangerous*: which consideration makes it now *doubly* absurd to interpret Scripture in contradiction to that doctrineⁱ. 3. The result of the two foregoing con-

omnibus etiamnum retinenda. *Bevereg. Cod. Can. vindicat. in Proam. sect. iii.*

^h Constat proinde omnem doctrinam quæ cum illis Ecclesiis apostolicis, matricibus et originalibus fidei conspiraret, veritati deputandam, sine dubio tenentem quod Ecclesie ab Apostolis, Apostoli a Christo, Christus a Deo accepit. *Tertul. Præscript. cap. xxi.*

ⁱ “The unanimous consent of so many distinct visible churches, as exhibited in their several Confessions, Catechisms, or Testimonies of their own or forefathers’ faith unto the Council of Nice, was an argument of the same force and efficacy against Arius and his partakers, as the general consent and practice of all nations, in worshipping a divine power in all ages, is against Atheists. Nothing but the *ingrafted notion* of a *Deity* could have induced so many several nations, so much different in natural

siderations is, that since we have thus proved the *truth* of our doctrine, and the *importance* of it, both ways, (directly from *Scripture*, and indirectly from the *ancients*,) I say, the result is, that this is the faith which we ought to contend for: we are *morally* certain every way, that it is *true*, and if true, *important* of course. And since we have such *moral* certainty as things of this nature can be conceived to admit of, and such as God has obliged us to submit to and follow in other like cases, it is therefore *infallibly* certain (that I may once more copy after the great Chillingworth) that, in *true wisdom and prudence*, we ought to accept this doctrine as *revealed* by God, and to maintain it with a conscientious care and zeal; and consequently to decline communion with all such as openly impugn it.

Here I thought to have concluded this chapter, having offered what appeared sufficient for supporting or illustrating the *use* and *value* of ecclesiastical antiquity: but I considered, that some perhaps might think it an omission, if I should take no notice of sundry *objections*, which have been frequently urged against the *use of antiquity*, particularly in controversies of faith. Now, though I apprehend that a clear and just stating of the case (which is what I have been labouring) is the best way of removing objections, as it is leaving them no foundation to stand upon, or none considerable; yet rather than be thought wanting in any respect to a very important subject, I shall endeavour to return particular answers to the most noted objections which have fallen within my observation. The doing it may help to illustrate the subject; as it is considering it under various views, turned and tried every way: and sometimes just answers to objections have the force almost of *new proofs*, for confirming the positions

“dispositions, in civil discipline and education, to affect or practise the duty of adoration: and nothing but the *ingrafted word* (as St. James calls the Gospel) delivered by Christ and his Apostles in the holy Scriptures, could have kept so many several churches as communicated their Confessions unto that Council, in the unity of the same faith.” *Bishop Patrick, Discourse about Tradition*, p. 21. printed A. D. 1683.

before asserted. I incline the more to it, because great pains have been taken by many to depreciate the value of *antiquity*, and to throw contempt upon the primitive *Fathers*: which is a very unjustifiable practice, and is wounding *Christianity* itself through their sides; though some that have done it might be far from intending it. But I proceed to particulars.

I. It has been sometimes pleaded, that *the Scriptures* are in themselves a *perfect* rule of faith: what need therefore can there be of *Fathers*, with respect to the *fundamental* articles^k? To which we answer, that we produce not *Fathers* to superadd *new* doctrines to Scripture, but only to secure the *old*; not to *complete* the rule, but more strongly to assert and maintain both its *true* sense and *whole* sense. The more *perfect* the rule is, the more care and circumspection it demands, that we may preserve it entire, both as to *words* and *meaning*. For if either of them happens to be stolen away, or wrested from us, Scripture so maimed or castrated is no longer that *perfect* rule which Christ has ordained. It is much to be suspected, that many pretend a zeal for *Scripture*, who mean nothing by it, but to have its *fences* taken down, that they may deal the more freely or rudely with it. They would exclude the *ancients*, to make room for *themselves*, and throw a kind of slight upon the *received* interpretations, only to advance their *own*. Such commonly has been the way, and therefore there is the less regard to be paid to magnificent words. They complain sometimes, that interpreting Scripture by the *ancients* is debasing its majesty, and throwing *Christ* out of his *throne*^l. But we think that Christ never sits more secure or easy in his throne, than when he has his most faithful *guards* about him; and that none are so likely to strike at his *authority*, or to aim at *dethroning* him, as they that would displace his *old servants*, only to make way for *new* ones;

^k Whitby, Dissertat. de Scriptur. Interpret. in præfat. p. 8, 9.

^l Whitby, *ibid.* p. 9.

who may either obtrude themselves without call, or may be unfurnished for the employ, or not well affected to his person and government. But to speak out of figure, and to come closer to the business, the *perfection* of Scripture is a point allowed, and is no part of the question between us: the main question is, how we may be most secure of reaping the full *benefits* of that perfection, whether with the light of *antiquity* before us, or without it? We know how Faustus Socinus, under colour of extolling the *perfection* of Scripture, studied nothing so much as to blazon the *perfection* of his own parts and abilities, deserting the *ancients*, and trusting only to *himself* and his uncle Lælius^m. He presumed to set up his own fond *conceits* as the *measure* of all truth: which, in effect, was advancing a *new rule of faith*, and forcing Scripture to a compliance with it; preferring the rovings of his own imagination before the wisdom of *Heaven*. It might be shown on the other hand, that those who have least indulged their own fancies, but have adhered strictly to *antiquity*, in the prime things, have done most honour to the *perfection* of *Scripture*, and have kept the rule of faith entire: this therefore is the way, rather than the other.

I may add, that when we say that Scripture is *perfect*, we mean, generally, as to the *matter* of it, which is *full* and *complete* to be a rule of life and manners, without taking in any *additional* rule to join with it. But if we speak of Scripture being *perfect* in regard to *words*, or *style*, we can mean only, that it is as perfect as *words* can be, and words (to us now) of a *dead* language. Whatever *imperfection* necessarily goes along with *all lan-*

^m Neminem enim ego in iis rebus de quibus in responsione illa mea describitur, ex iis qui hodie vivunt, ulla ex parte magistrum agnosco; sed Deum tantummodo præceptorem habui sacrasque literas. Quinetiam in universa ipsa divinarum rerum scientia, quæcunque tandem illa in me sit, præter unum Lælium, patrum meum, qui jam diu mortuus est, vel potius præter quædam paucula ab ipso conscripta, et multa annotata, nullum prorsus magistrum me habere contigit. Socin. Ep. ad Squarcialupum, App. tom. i. p. 362.

guages, must of course go along with *Scripture language*; which though dictated from heaven, or conducted by the Spirit of God, is yet adapted to the manner of men, and must take its construction from the common rules of interpretation agreed upon among men. Now if the *Fathers*, as living nearer the fountain, had some opportunities which we want, and might know some things much better than we at this distance can pretend to do, why should we neglect or despise any light or help which they can give for our direction, in settling the sense of Scripture? In *human laws*, as I have hinted above, it has been always thought a good rule of interpretation (not excluding any other good rule) to observe, upon what occasion the laws were made, what was their general scope or view, and how they were understood at their first framing, or immediately after, and to recollect how the *practice* ran: hence it is, that *reports*, and *precedents*, and *adjudged cases* are so highly useful in interpreting *human laws*. The case is not much different in *divine laws*, being that they also are written in *human language*, and their sense is to be investigated and cleared up by the like *human means*. If the *Fathers* were *fallible*, so also are we: and if they, with all their advantages, might misconstrue Scripture, so may we much more. Therefore there is no prudence in throwing off their assistance as *useless* or *superfluous*. Even fallible men may be useful instructors to others as fallible: and in a *multitude of counsellors*, especially such counsellors, *there is safety*ⁿ.

II. But it is further pleaded, that Scripture is *plain* in all *necessaries*; and therefore needs no illustration from the *ancients*^o. We allow, that Scripture is *plain* in *necessaries*; yea, it is what we urge and contend for: and there is nothing which offends us more, than that many persons will endeavour notwithstanding, by violent contortions, far-fetched subtilties, and studied evasions, to

ⁿ Prov. xi. 14.

^o Whitby, *Dissertat.* in præf. p. 10, 19.

elude and frustrate these *plain* things. Such conduct on the adverse side makes it the more necessary to have recourse to *antiquity*, for the greater *security* against all such attempts. For while Scripture is *plain*, antiquity is *plain* also; and *two* plain things are better than *one*. God himself hath taught us, by adding his *oath* to his *promise*, not to think any *confirmation* superfluous, which he is pleased to afford us. His word alone might be *safely* depended upon, being *certain* and *infallible*: but *two immutable* things afford the *stronger consolation*^p; and God considers the infirmities of mankind. In like manner, though Scripture be very *plain* to reasonable men, so far as concerns *necessaries*, yet by taking in *antiquity* to it, the evidence, upon the whole, becomes both *plainer*^q and *stronger*. There is so much weakness commonly in human nature, and so much reluctance shown to the reception of divine truths, that we have need of all the *plain* things we can any

^p Hebr. vi. 17, 18.

^q N. B. It should be observed that the word *plain* is an equivocal word, and of indeterminate meaning, till it be carefully distinguished. It is a *relative*, and means plain to some or other. To God *all things* are plain: to angels *more* things than to man. Doctrines plain to *some men* are not so to *others*, on account of ignorance, inattention, prejudice, or any *infirmity*, natural or contracted. Things also may be plain by the help of *means*, which are not so without the use of such means. Moreover, there are *degrees* of plainness, for it consists not in a point, but admits of a latitude. Besides, the *plainest* things in the world, taken in a *right* point of view, may *cease* to be plain, when put into a *wrong* one; when industriously obscured, embroiled, and entangled, by snares and fallacies, by involving many things in one, (which should be kept separate,) or by expressing them in ambiguous equivocal terms, or by perplexing them with captious and sophistical questions. There are *degrees* also of *attention*, upon which the degrees of *plainness* do very much depend: and attention depends upon the *will*, and the will is variously influenced by *motives*, external or internal.

But though *plainness* be really a *relative*, and often varies according to the *person*, and his degree of *attention*, *capacity*, *inclination*, &c. yet we have formed some kind of idea of an *absolute plainness*, abstracted from particular persons; and we mean by it, as to the point now in hand, such a plainness in the *thing* itself, or in the *words* expressing it, as any one of tolerable *capacity*, with a reasonable *attention*, and by the use of the ordinary *helps*, or *means*, may competently understand: in this sense, or by this standard, *fundamentals* are commonly said to be *plain*.

where procure: and had we twenty more as plain as these, we could make use of them all, and indeed should be obliged to do so, lest otherwise we should be found guilty of despising the blessings of Heaven. It is certain, that there is something very particular in the concerns of *religion*, that *plain* things there have not the same force or weight as they have any where else. It is the only subject in the world, wherein a man may dispute the most *certain facts*, and most *indubitable proofs*, and yet be allowed to be in his senses: for if any one, in the common affairs of life, were to make it a rule to believe nothing but what he *sees*, or were to reject the *faith* of all *history*, he would undoubtedly be despised or pitied by every body, as not well in his wits. Seeing then that the case of religion is so widely different from all others, and that the *plainest* evidences there often lose their effect, we can never be too solicitous in accumulating evidence upon evidence, and testimony upon testimony, to do the most we can towards relieving the weakness, or conquering the reluctance of men slow to believe. And when we have done the best we can, and have pursued every reasonable method we can think of, we are yet to look upon it as *sufficient*, only because we can do no more. Wherefore, no *plainness* of Scripture can ever be justly thought to *supersede* the use of *antiquity*; unless it could be supposed, that no additional *light* nor *strength* can be borrowed from it: which is too extravagant a supposition to need any confutation; besides that I have already obviated every suggestion of that kind in the former part of this chapter.

If it be said, that *common Christians*, at least, can reap no benefit from *antiquity*, nor make any *use* of it; that will not be reason sufficient for throwing it aside, so long as the *learned* may. But even *common Christians* do enjoy the benefit of it, if not at *first* hand, yet at the *second*, *third*, or *fourth*; and that suffices here, as well as in other cases of as weighty concernment. How do they know, for instance, that Scripture is the word of God? They know

it *immediately* or *proximately* from their proper guides, or other instructors; who in the last resort learn it from the *ancients*. So then *ordinary* Christians may thus *remotely* have the *use* of antiquity (not to mention other *nearer* ways¹) with respect to the *sense* of Scripture, as well as with regard to its *authenticity*: and their *faith* may be both strengthened and brightened by this additional reinforcement. "The people are to understand "the *grounds* of their faith, and to judge, by the *best* " *helps* they can, what doctrine is agreeable to Scripture: "but among those *helps*, we take in, not barely the assistance of their own guide, but the *evidence* he brings, "as to the *sense* of the teaching Church, in the *best* and " *purest* ages²." But to return.

We admit, as I before said, that Scripture is very *plain* in *necessaries*: as, for instance, nothing can be *plainer* from Scripture, than that Christ is *God*, and *over all God blessed for ever, true God, great God, Jehovah*, and the like; and that *divine* attributes are ascribed to him, and *divine* worship also, to make every thing clear, and to cut off all reasonable handle for dispute. But notwithstanding that all these things are so *plain*, yet considering that we are not the *first* men that ever looked into Scripture, but that others, who had as good eyes as we, and as upright hearts, and a competent measure of common sense, (besides some peculiar advantages beyond what we can pretend to,) have perused the same Scripture before us; I say, considering these things, it would be something of a mortification to us, or would appear somewhat strange, if such persons should not have found the same doctrines then, which we have the pleasure to find now. For whatever is really *plain* to moderns, and *necessary*, must, one would think, by parity of reason, or for a stronger reason, have been *plain* to the *ancients* also, and *necessary* to them as well as to us. Accordingly, upon examining,

¹ See this matter considered more at large in Bishop Hare's Scripture Vindicated, p. 111, &c.

² Stillingfleet's Answer to J. S.'s Catholic Letters, p. 58.

we find that the same doctrine was *plain* to them, even so far as to be looked upon as an *essential*: a consideration which adds the more strength to what we had before proved from Scripture, as the want of such concurring suffrage would have been a perplexing difficulty; I mean, while we have such *ancient* monuments to look into, and to compare. Indeed, if they were all lost, burnt, or otherwise extinguished, our *Scripture proof* (supposing Scripture itself to want no proof) would stand firm without them: but when we have the *ancients* to compare with Scripture, and know that, in the very nature of the thing, they ought to tally with each other; the *ancients* now, of consequence, must be either a very strong *confirmation* as to any doctrines held for articles of faith, or as strong an *objection*. They are considerable disadvantages where they run counter, and as considerable advantages where they favour.

III. It is sometimes pleaded, that Scripture is its own best interpreter, by comparing texts with texts, and therefore there is no need of *Fathers* in the case; for in the *best* we have all^t.

In reply to which, we are very ready to allow, that comparing Scripture with Scripture is a very *good* method of interpretation, yea, and the *best* and most *satisfactory* of any, to every rational mind: but still we do not see reason why it should be thought to *supersede* any other that is *good*. For, after we have thereby obtained all the home light we can get, where will be the harm of admitting still further light, if we can procure it, from abroad? The more we have of both kinds, the better: every additional increase or improvement, though it were but small in comparison, yet has its use, either for confirming the *weak* and *wavering*, or for comforting them who are *strong* in faith, or for confuting and confounding *novelists*; but most of all for reclaiming those who are over apt to be led by *authority* and *great names*, perhaps of mere mo-

^t Whithy, *Dissertat. præf.* p. 12.

derns. For certainly, if *authority*, or *great names*, or even *numbers*, are of any weight; *ancients* are preferable to *moderns*, considered as such, *Fathers* and *Councils* to *private* dogmatizers, and the *Christian world* to a *few* gain-sayers. Such being the manifest and constant *use* of the argument drawn from *antiquity*, superadded to *Scripture*, there is great reason for taking it in after *Scripture*, that we may have the benefit of *both*.

The excellent Buddeus, otherwise a very judicious writer, appears not so clear, or not so accurate in his account of this matter, as might be wished. He gives his judgment, "that neither *natural reason* nor *tradition* "should be the *rule* of interpreting, but *Scripture* itself, "and the *analogy of faith*." Had he said, neither one nor other, but *all together*, I think he had said right: but as he has taken in only *two* of the things, excluding the rest, as it seems, from bearing a part in the interpretation of *Scripture*, he appears to me to have judged wrong upon the case, or at least to have fallen short of his wonted accuracy. For certainly he ought to have allowed something to *natural reason*, and something also to *antiquity*, though not *every thing*. There is a great deal of difference between admitting either of them to govern absolutely, and throwing them quite out: and there is a just *medium* between giving each of them a *negative*, and making either of them *sole* umpire. There are many considerations to be taken in, for the proceeding rightly in the interpretation of *Scripture*; and all of them respectively must have their share, as they have their weight. To exemplify what I mean; *true* interpretation of *Scripture* cannot, in any case whatever, run counter to any

* A Socinianis, non minus quam Romanensibus discedimus, dum nec *rationem*, nec *traditiones*, (aut Ecclesie auctoritatem,) pro regula et norma interpretandi scripturam agnoscimus, sed *Scripturam* ex *Scriptura* secundum *analogiam fidei* explicandam contendimus: quam quidem viam et rectissimam et tutissimam esse, res ipsa ostendit, et facile perspiciat qui cuncta rite secum ponderaverit. *Buddei Isagog.* vol. ii. p. 1795. Conf. ejusdem Prefat. ad Salom. Glassii Opera, edit. Lips. A. D. 1725.

plain certain principle of *natural reason*, (inasmuch as *truth* can never be contrary to *truth*,) nor, in any case whatever, to *Scripture* itself *rightly* interpreted; nor, in any case whatever, to the *analogy* of faith before proved, (which amounts nearly to the same with the preceding;) nor, without the utmost necessity, to the *natural, usual, unforced* sense of the words; nor, so far as concerns *fundamentals*, to the *universal* judgment of the first and purest ages of the Church. These, as I conceive, are the butts and boundaries within which every *true* interpretation is confined: and whenever any pretended interpretation is found to break through them, or through any of them, there needs no more, to pronounce it *false*. To express the same thing *affirmatively*, which before I have *negatively*, when any interpretation of *Scripture* has all those *five* characters, (*viz. natural reason, parallel places of Scripture, analogy of faith, propriety of language, and countenance of antiquity*,) to vouch directly for it, then it is as strongly supported as it is *possible* for an interpretation to be. If it has only *some* of those *positive* characters, or one only, the rest not interfering, it *may be* a good interpretation; but the *more* it has, so much the *surer* *. For example: the doctrine I am here defending

* Dr. Rogers, in one of his Sermons, (Posth. Sermon. iv. p. 95, &c.) explains this whole matter somewhat differently, but agreeing in the main with what I have here offered. His thoughts upon the point are comprised in the particulars here following, which I shall produce in his own words, as nearly as an abridgment will permit.

“ 1. Many places of sacred Writ are so *plain*, that no man, who reads or hears them, in a language he is acquainted with, can doubt of their meaning.

“ 2. The sense of *other* places we collect from *rational deductions*, comparing one *Scripture* with another.

“ 3. Other places there are which require the knowledge of *history*, of ancient facts and customs, of *early tradition*, and *primitive* acceptance, to determine their sense.

“ 4. The inspiration of the *Scriptures supposed*, we cannot consistently with such supposition, either from the *construction of the words*, or from *deductions* of reason, or from *authority*, admit any proposition, as the intended sense of *Scripture*, which contradicts any *manifest truth*.

“ 5. Neither

has *four* of the said characters *positively* for it, (*viz.* tenor of Scripture, analogy of faith, propriety of language, and *antiquity*), and the *fifth*, which is *natural reason*, is not against it: therefore it is a very just and reasonable interpretation. So many plain legible characters of truth ought, in all equity, to overrule any *seeming* or *conjectural* repugnancies as to the nature of the thing confessedly *mysterious*, so long as there is no *plain* contrariety to any known truth.

Hitherto I have been answering those objections which aim at setting the *Fathers* aside as needless, being *superse-eded* (as is thought) by the perfection, or plainness, or fulness of sacred Writ. The remaining objections, which I am to take notice of, are of another kind, striking more directly at the *reputation* of the *Fathers*, in order to insinuate that they are by no means qualified to serve the purposes they are brought for, being more likely to perplex than to instruct a reader, more apt to mislead and draw us aside, than to set us right.

IV. The *obscurity* of the *Fathers* makes up one half of the learned Daillé's Treatise upon that subject. I need not be very particular in examining into that plea here, because it will come up again, in part, under another ar-

" 5. Neither can we admit *contradictory* expositions of the same or different places of Scripture.

" In the two last cases, we conclude *negatively* with the clearest assurance: but when we go on to ascertain the meaning *positively*, the sense of Scripture which we receive in the *first way*, by an immediate view, appears to us with *greatest* evidence: and the sense we collect in the *second way*, by rational deductions, is *more evident* than what we receive in the *third way*, from the affirmations of *authority*."

So this excellent writer resolves the *positive* characters of true and just interpretation, into *immediate view*, *rational deductions*, and *authority*, all having their proper weight of *evidence* respectively, but in different degrees. The two *negative* characters are checks upon all the *positive* ones, to ascertain their application, and to prevent the pushing any of them too far. This account, in substance, differs so little from what I have offered, that it appears to contain much the same thoughts placed in another light, or differently ranged. It may be of use to a reader to take the same thing in two views, and so to form his own judgment, as he sees best, out of *both*: and therefore I have here presented him with both.

ticle lower down, where I shall consider it more distinctly. For the present it may suffice to observe: 1. That Mr. Daillé, in some instances, rhetoricates upon the subject, and has frequently overstrained. 2. Many things have been cleared up since he wrote that piece, (since the year 1631;) some by himself, more by others after him: so that what might appear to be of some force then, can have little or none now. 3. Particular answers have been returned to the several articles on the head of *obscurity*, by those who have professedly undertaken it, besides what has been done occasionally in *new editions* of *Fathers*, or in *bibliothèques*, or in *critical dissertations*. 4. Whatever truth there may be in the objection, as to sundry controverted points of inferior moment, yet it affects not the cause now before us: for Daillé himself allows, that the *Fathers* are generally clear enough in points *fundamental*, whereof this is one, in his judgment at least. He writes thus: "You shall there meet with very *strong* and *solid proofs* of those *fundamental* principles of our religion, touching which we are all agreed; and also many excellent things laid open, tending to the *right understanding* of these *mysteries*, and also of the *Scriptures* wherein they are contained. In this particular, their *authority* may be of *good use* to you, and may serve as a *probable* argument of the truth²." So then, whatever *obscurity* may otherwise be found in the *Fathers*, (like as in *Scripture* itself,) the cause which we have now in hand appears to be but little concerned in it, according to the judgment of that learned man, who made the most of the objection, as to other matters. For though he sometimes points out some *obscure* passages, as he con-

¹ Scrivener. adv. Dallæum. par. i. per tot. Reeves's Preface to the Apologists, p. 37, &c. Natalis Alexander, Hist. Eccl. Sæc. ii. diss. xvi. c. 22. p. 537, &c. Beverege's Cod. Can. Vindicat. Procem. sect. viii.

² Daillé of the Right Use of the Fathers, part ii. p. 184.

Si in vivis jam esset [Dallæus] quam ægre ferret vir pietissimus, si aliqui reperirentur qui argumentis, quibus ipse causam *Pontificiam* adeo feliciter debellavit, ad labefactandam et subvertendam Nicenam fidem abuterentur. *Cave, Ep. Apologet.* p. 19.

ceived them to be, relating to things *fundamental*, yet, upon the whole, he apprehended, that those doctrines might be plainly enough traced up to the very days of the Apostles, and that the *Fathers* might be exceeding *useful* to us in that view, and for that purpose.

V. It has been frequently objected, that many of the *Fathers* have *erred*, and sometimes grossly: and large collections, of their real or supposed mistakes, have been drawn out, and presented to public view^a. Now, indeed, if any man should presume to say, that the *Fathers* were *inspired*, or *infallible* in what they wrote, such a collection of *errors* might be of use for the confuting the false presumption: but how it affects their credit or character as *witnesses* of the Church's prime doctrines, in their times, appears not. It is not uncommon for those very *Fathers*, where they give a *wrong* and *false* opinion, to make a *true* discovery of the Church's sentiments, in that very instance, *contrary* to their *own*. Therefore a reader should know how to distinguish between delivering an *opinion*, and reporting a *fact*; as also between appealing to the *Fathers* as *unerring judges*, and appealing to them as faithful *witnesses*.

But to speak more directly to the charge of *errors*, it may be justly pleaded in abatement, that upon a careful review, many of them have been found to be purely *imaginary*, mere mistakes or misrepresentations of the too precipitate correctors: and of those that are *real*, most will be seen in things only of a *problematical* kind, and of a *slight* nature^b. Or if they be of a more *grievous* sort, they were the mistakes of some *few*, and were either not

^a Daillé, part ii. c. 4. p. 60, &c. Whitby, Dissertat. in Præfat. sect. iv. p. 15, &c.

^b Monebo tantum, in patrum scriptis *dogmata philosophica a fidei articulis* probe esse distinguenda. In *his*, sacris literis et Catholicæ traditioni strictius se alligant, et in rei summa omnes conveniunt: in *illis*, majori utuntur libertate, et opiniones sæpius adhibent quæ in philosophorum scholis ventilari solebant; quin et in explicandis fidei mysteriis quandoque voces e schola philosophica petitas admovent, sed ad Christianum sensum accommodatas. *Cave, Epist. Apologet.* p. 48.

universal^b, or not *ancient*, and never insisted upon as articles of faith and *terms of communion*. So that whatever *errors* are discovered in any *Father* or *Fathers*, they do not invalidate the argument drawn from the *universal* agreement of the ancient churches in the *prime* things. However, there have not been wanting, upon occasion, learned hands^c to draw up apologies for the *Fathers*, either in separate discourses, or in prefaces to new editions, or by way of note, or the like; by which means most of those unworthy aspersions have been happily removed, and the black catalogues much reduced. A learned foreigner^d, not long ago, being justly sensible of the mischievous tendency of that *unnatural* practice of some Christians, in throwing contempt upon the brightest ornaments of the Christian Church, took the pains to consider the particular articles of doctrine upon which the *Fathers* have been wrongfully suspected, or charged, and to do them justice against their indiscreet or over censorious accusers.

Since that time, I do not know a warmer or keener adversary that the *Fathers* have had, than Mons. Barbeyrac, Professor of Civil Law at Groningen, and known to the learned world by his French translations of Puffendorf and Grotius, and his learned notes upon both. He attacks the *Fathers* principally upon the head of *morality*, (as his subject led him to do,) and seems to exert his utmost endeavours to sink their reputation for *sense* and *conduct*, and even for *conscience* too, in some measure, in order to strike them out of all credit or authority^e. His work

^b See Grotius de Jur. B. et P. lib. i. c. 2. s. 9. p. 60.

^c Thorndiccius de Rat. et Jur. Fin. Controv. c. 25. Scrivener. adv. Dall. par. ii. c. iv. p. 185. Cavii Epistola Apologetica. Reeves's Preface, p. 67, &c. Remarks on Christianity as old &c. with regard to Primitive Antiquity, part i. continued, printed for Crownfield, 1733.

^d Zornius Hamburgensis. Vindiciæ Patrum per omnes fidei Christianæ articulos, oppositæ Joanni Dallæo: una cum selectis observationibus contra recentiores Patrum censors, Anglos, Belgas, Gallos. *Inter Opuscul. Sac.* tom. i. A. D. 1709. Giessæ Hassorum. p. 659. edit. Nup. A. D. 1731.

^e Prefatory Discourse to his French Version of Puffendorf; since rendered

has twice appeared in English, (as well as in French,) and may therefore deserve some notice in this place, as much as I may have room for, not to make too long an excursion.

That *satire* upon the *Fathers* (for it deserves no better name) had not long been abroad, before Mr. Ceillier, a learned Roman Catholic, drew up a formal answer to it, of which I have seen little more than the title ^f, and a few extracts. Afterwards, the learned Buddeus animadverted pretty largely upon him, detecting some of his mistakes, but with great tenderness; moderating, as it were, between Mr. Ceillier and him, in respect of several particulars. § Buddeus was himself not the most zealous admirer of the *Fathers*; and therefore what he says in their *favour* may be justly thought not to exceed in any respect, but to fall within compass. Some officious gentleman amongst us, having met with Mons. Barbeyrac's French Treatise, published it separately in our language, prefixing a kind of boyish title ^h to it, and recommending it with some airs of insult, such as are frequently incident to little minds. Not long after, an ingenious gentleman printed a reply ⁱ, to rebuke the *translator*, for his rudeness, and at the same time to defend the *Fathers* against the injurious accusations of the *author* himself: which he has effectually performed, with good learning and solid judgment.

Now, seeing that so much has been done already, I may content myself with a few strictures, or brief reflections. In justice to the *Fathers*, and to *primitive Christianity* struck at through their sides, it ought to be told, that the learned *civilian* has not dealt fairly with the pub-

into English, and prefixed to the English edition of 1729, sect. ix. x. p. 18, &c.

^f Apologie de la Morale des Pères de l'Eglise contre les injustes Accusations du Sieur Jean Barbeyrac. Paris, 1718.

§ Buddeus, *Isagog.* vol. i. p. 620—642.

^h The Spirit of Ecclesiastics of all Sects and Ages, &c. 1723.

ⁱ The Spirit of Infidelity detected. By a Believer. 1723.

lic in that article. He has not been careful about the *facts* upon which he grounds his censure, but has often taken them upon *trust* from others, transcribing their oversights, or *partial* accounts. Indeed he makes a kind of apology for his taking so much at *second* hand: for he says, he “designedly pitched upon examples which had “been *already* remarked and produced by *others*, and are “extant in books most common and easy to be had^k.” But then he should have inquired whether those examples had not been *already* replied to, and competently cleared up, and whether, at least, they were not capable of it. And he should have considered further, whether the authors whom he copies from were all persons to be entirely relied upon in what they say, as men of known learning, judgment, candour, and modesty; not *prejudiced* against the Fathers, nor otherwise apt to be censorious, and over severe in discovering *imaginary* faults, or exposing *real* ones. Before one determines any thing as to the *character* of the Fathers from second-hand reports, it would be proper to inquire whether their accusers were themselves men of clear and unexceptionable characters. It is no excuse to a person of learning and abilities, that he suffered himself to be imposed upon by others, in a matter which required care and faithfulness.

Besides his too often deceiving himself or others with *false* facts, even those that are *true*, in part, or in the main, are yet seldom placed in a true light. Every *real* or seeming fault of the *ancients* is rhetorically aggravated, the hardest construction commonly put upon it, and *no* favourable allowances are brought in to qualify: but after saying the unkindest things which he had any *colour* for, and a great deal of art used to contrive such colour, he forgets to afford them their due praises in any thing, to counterbalance the obloquy. So that were a reader to form his idea of the *Fathers* only by what he finds in that representation, he would go near to make it the very re-

^k Prefatory Discourse, sect. x. p. 33.

verse of their true and just character. I cannot here take upon me to criticise the whole work; that has been done already by abler hands: but I shall mention a few particulars, to give the readers a taste of his way and manner, whereby they may competently judge of the rest.

The author falls first upon Athenagoras, and charges him with "seeming to establish the worship of angels¹." But this is a *false* report. Athenagoras neither *says* it, nor *seems* to say it. Indeed Dupin, whether to favour the Romish cause, or whether by mere forgetfulness or oversight, had said the same thing: but Mons. Barbeyrac understands the nature of *evidence* too well to apprehend, that the retailing a misreport can amount to a proof. He has another complaint against the same Athenagoras for disallowing *second* marriages. The fact is true in some sense or other; but *what second marriages*, is the question. Might not Athenagoras mean, marrying again after wrongful *divorce*? A very learned man^m has pleaded much, and well, for that construction: and it is favoured by Athenagoras'sⁿ grounding his doctrine upon our Lord's own words^o relating to *such* second marriages.

And though he speaks against the marriage as not good after the *death* of the *wife*, yet he may be understood only of *such wife*, wrongfully divorced before. For he thought that the *adultery* before incurred, by marrying in her *lifetime*, did not cease by her *death*. The marriage contracted in *adultery*, like an error in the first concoction, could never be fully corrected, but would still retain its primitive impurity, as having been *null*, and wrong from the first. If his words may admit that sense, it is sufficient: for an accuser is bound to make good his allegation, and the old rule is, *in dubiis benigniora semper præferenda*. I may add, that Athenagoras has been al-

¹ Prefatory Discourse, sect. ix. p. 18.

^m Suicer. Thesaur. in voce *δίζυμνος*, p. 895.

ⁿ Athenag. Legat. p. 130.

^o Mark x. 11. Matt. xix. 9. Luke xvi. 18.

ways reputed a man of the *Church*: and yet it is certain that the doctrine here charged upon him was condemned by the *Church* in the Montanists and Novatians. Which is a further presumption in his favour, and seems to justify the mild and candid construction of the words in question.

The next man Mr. B. falls upon is Clemens of Alexandria, whom he uses more unkindly than he had before used Athenagoras. He charges him with three special faults ^p. 1. With teaching *stoical paradoxes* for Christian doctrine. 2. With maintaining that "Christ and his Apostles had not any passions at all." 3. With "justifying the idolatry of the Pagans." The first article appears captious and frivolous. For what if Clemens, whether the better to reconcile the Stoics to Christianity, or whether to turn their own artillery upon them, made use of their language and phraseology to recommend true and sound *Christian* principles by ^q; where was the harm? Or what was there in it, which might not well become so wise and so good a man? Let Mr. B. put himself in Clemens's place, and then consider, whether he could do any thing better or more commendable in those circumstances.

The *second* article is founded in nothing but misconstruction, and was cleared up long ago by the learned Dr. Cave ^r, and by others ^s after him: not to mention what the Benedictines have said more largely in defence of Hilary against the same accusation ^t.

The *third* article is entirely without grounds; a conclusion drawn without *premises* to support it ^u, a *false* infe-

^p Prefatory Discourse, p. 19.

^q See *Spirit of Infidelity detected*, p. 31.

^r Cave, *Epist. Apolog.* p. 50, &c.

^s Natal. Alexand. E. H. sect. ii. dissert. 8. p. 395. Nourrii *Apparat. ad Biblioth. max.* vol. i. p. 968.

^t *Præfat. General.* sect. iii. p. 30, &c.

^u Vid. *Buddæi Isagog.* p. 623. *Spirit of Infidelity detected*, p. 33.

rence charged upon very innocent words, in contradiction to the whole tenor of Clemens's writings. Is this dealing fairly with the *ancients* or with the *public*?

Besides these particular charges upon Clemens, he has some others, more *general*, which are either injurious or frivolous. He blames him for want of *method* and *coherence*, for being full of *declamation* and *mystical allusion*, and the like*. Which kind of discourse is itself *declamatory* and *detracting*, not becoming a person of candour or gravity, who would make allowances for circumstances and times, and weigh things in an equal balance. Why must every author walk in trammels, and be confined to rules of art? Immethodical collections are useful in their kind, and ought to have their proper commendation. But it is further said, as from Le Clerc, that "Clemens's Pedagogue abounds with maxims excessively rigid, and far remote from any thing now in practice." We might except to Le Clerc, as to a person of uncommon delicacy, known to lean generally to the *severer* side, and none of the best natured or most happy in his censures, but *prejudiced*, by his principles, against the primitive *Fathers*; jealous of a reputation which, he saw, stood in his way, and much afraid of their superiority. Perhaps, after all, he mistakes Clemens's meaning: or if he does not, his censure may be more an argument of the *present* degeneracy, than of Clemens's excessive rigour or austerity. I shall only add, that before we blame the *ancients* for too strict a morality, (an error, if it be one, on the right hand,) we ought to be well apprised of the *circumstances* of those times: for diversity of circumstances requires a diversity in the application of the same general rules, and prescribes as different a conduct.

* Prefatory Discourse, p. 19.

† Vid. Perizonius in *Ægypt. Origin. Præfat.* p. 8. Curtius Vindicat. p. 10—23, 185—191. Jenkins, *Defens. Augustin. adv. Pheronum. Præf.* p. 9. Reflections on Learning, p. 235, &c. Continuation of the Answer of the Hist. of Oracles, Præf. p. 47, &c. Cave, *Epist. Apologet.* p. 9, 10, 11, 12. Cum multis aliis.

I shall not go on to the other *Fathers* whom this worthy gentleman has animadverted upon: I have given enough for a sample, in the two first. But I shall proceed to observe something with respect to his general manner of carrying on the impeachment. After he has done with the particulars, charged upon the *Fathers* man by man, he pretends to have *demonstrated clearly*, that the *most celebrated* Doctors of the *six first centuries* were but *bad masters*, and *very poor guides* in matters of *moral-ity*. Here we see what it was that he *aimed* at; though he has *demonstrated* nothing, but a strong inclination to detract from true and great worth. There is an artificial confusedness in his throwing *six centuries* together: *three* or a little more will be enough for us to insist upon, so far as our argument from *antiquity* is concerned. Every body knows that corruptions came in *gradually*, more and more every day, after the *world*, as it were, crept into the *Church*^z: we make a distinction between the elder and the later times. It will not be easy to persuade us, that in those *best* and *purest* ages, when *Christian practice* was in the height of perfection, that the *theory* of it was so very lame and defective, as he is pleased to intimate; or that the *guides* and *masters* were so exceeding *low*, or *bad*, when the *scholars* or *disciples* were, for the most part, eminently good. If any one doubts of the fact, he may satisfy himself by looking into the accounts given both by *Christians* and *Pagans*^a; such as make it evident, that the morals of that time were the admiration and envy of the *heathen* world then, as they

^a Scribere disposui ab adventu Salvatoris usque ad nostram ætatem, id est ab Apostolis usque ad nostram temporis ætatem, quomodo et per quos Christi Ecclesia nata sit, et adulta, persecutionibus creverit, et martyriis coronata sit: et postquam ad Christianos principes venerit, *potentia* quidem et *divitiis* major, sed *virtutibus* minor facta sit. *Hieronym. Vit. Malch. Opp.* vol. iv. p. 91.

^b The testimonies are collected into one view, by Cave, in his *Primitive Christianity*; Bingham, in his *Christian Antiquities*, b. vi. c. 1. Fabricius, *Salutaris Lux Evangelii*, c. x. p. 194, &c. Baltus's *Answer to Fontenelle's Hist. of Oracles*, vol. ii. p. 97.

are an excellent *pattern*^b for the Christian world since. The author may conceive as highly as he pleases of *modern morality*, but impartial judges will think it no commendation of it to have it set at *variance* with *primitive Christianity*: to differ from that standard, in any thing material, is to come *short* of it, supposing *circumstances* to be the same. Neither is want of *artificial* method any more an objection against the *ancients*, than against *Scripture* itself, the best *ethics* of any.

But to proceed with our author, he runs off for a while into declamatory invective against those who are "jealous of the honour of the Fathers:" he "pities them with all his heart," thinking it "inhuman to insult them^c;" but doing it all the time. Then he gravely tells his reader, a formal *untruth*, that they *tacitly* suppose the *Fathers* to have been *infallible*^d; as if he had intended only to guard against a false notion of the *infallibility* of the *Fathers*^e. But there is a very wide distance between supposing them *infallible*, and representing them as *bad masters*, *very poor guides*, &c. This learned gentleman, I presume, does not pretend to be *infallible*; and yet he might think himself ill used, if represented as a *bad master*, or a *very poor guide*: there is a *medium* between the *extremes*.

He brings up again, soon after, the charge of *gross errors*, *most profound ignorance* of what they ought to have known; adding, that *most of them*, more or less,

^b Dr. Wotton, in a treatise where he intended to extol the *moderns*, and to adjudge them the preference as often as he could, yet took care to give this testimony to *ancient Christianity*:

"It is certain, that many of the ancient *Fathers* were *excellent casuists*; as indeed every man who has a right judgment, an honest mind, and a thorough acquaintance with the design of our blessed Saviour revealed in the Gospel, must of necessity be. And if at this distance many of their decisions seem over severe, there is as great at least (if not greater) reason to suspect, that the complaints now-a-days raised against them may arise from *our degeneracy*, as from their *unwarrantable strictness*." *Wotton's Reflections on Ancient and Modern Learning*, p. 369.

^c Prefatory Discourse, p. 25.

^d *Ibid.* p. 25.

^e *Ibid.* p. 26.

were led by passion, and that their conduct frequently was neither regular nor justifiable^f. Well then, surely this is something more than barely saying, they were fallible men; and one may presume to contradict such a misreport of them, without maintaining that they were infallible. How will this learned gentleman be able to prove that the character he has here given is their true general character, such as will suit the three first centuries? Church history is flatly contrary, and the Christian world hitherto has been used to honour them with the title of the best and purest ages. He refers us twice^g to some tart reflections of Gregory Nazianzen upon some of the clergy in his time, about A. D. 381. Perhaps Nazianzen himself might be led by resentment to aggravate in some measure; for he was a man of spirit, had some warmth, and might drop too severe a censure, under a sense of the ill usage he had met with. But supposing his censure to be strictly just, what argument is there in it? The clergy about 381. were guilty of many and great faults, therefore the whole order were as guilty all along, for two hundred and eighty years together; reckoning from the apostolic age. I see not by what rules of reasoning such consequence can be drawn^h. Every body knows how miserably the Church had been rent asunder by parties and factions, from the time that Arianism broke out; that is, for sixty years backwards, or thereabout: by means whereof, men's passions were inflamed, and their tempers soured. But how does this affect the elder times, when all the bishops of the Christian Church were in the main unanimous, and held amicably together against Jews, Pagans, and heretics?

^f Prefatory Discourse, p. 26.

^g Ibid. p. 18, 34.

^h Exemplum profert [Clericus] Concilii C. P. 1. quo Gregorius Nazianzenus factionis quorundam artibus vexatus, sede sua cessit potius quam expulsus est; unde fervidioris ingenii vir πολυδύλλων illud de synodis iudicium protulit. Sed fac hanc illamve synodum inique se gessisse, et nullam veritatis, nullam innocentiam rationem habuisse: an mox omnes sunt damnandæ rejiciendæ, exterminandæ? Cave, Epist. Apologet. p. 25.

Allow that heats and animosities prevailed much among Churchmen, towards the end of the fourth century, and that the state of the Church at that time was become very corrupt, according to the accounts given by Nazianzen: but then allow also, that such corruptions were of recent date, and that the like had not been seen in elder times, before the rise of Arius, as Nazianzen himself testifiesⁱ. And he had a vast esteem of one council, at least, the Council of Nice, older than what he speaks of. So then, if Nazianzen is a competent evidence to found the *objection* upon, let him be so also on our side, to supply us with a proper answer, as far as our cause can be concerned in the question.

The author proceeds to contest the right which the *Fathers* have been thought to have, to the very modest title of *propagators of the Christian religion*: he thinks it should be given to the *Apostles* only^k. But certainly the *Fathers* succeeded to the *Apostles* in the great work of *propagating* Christianity, and therefore were as *properly* (though not altogether so *eminently*) *propagators* of it, as the *Apostles* themselves. Yea, they also were *eminently* such during the time that *miracles* lasted, that is to say, for *three* centuries at least. But he is pleased to ask, a little lower in the same page, "Why must the *Fathers* of the three or six first centuries have been men "of true piety and knowledge, rather than those of the "tenth or eleventh?" But why does he insert, *or six*, except it be to blend and confound what should be kept distinct, and to put a fallacy upon the reader? Let the question be asked about the *three first* centuries, and we can assign many and good *reasons* why they must have been, in the general, *better men* than those of the *tenth* or *eleventh*: or if the *reasons* should not satisfy, we appeal to testimony, to certain *fact*, which supersedes all *reasons*. As to the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, they

ⁱ Nazians. Orat. xxi. p. 380.

^k Prefatory Discourse, p. 26, 27.

might decline in proportion, and did so, though there were some excellent men in all: which however I have no need to consider.

A little after, he falls again to softening, and now he asks, "Must the Fathers have been liable to no failings, "no passions, no errors, no ignorance at all^k?" But was that the question? Why all this shifting and shuffling, if a man were not conscious of a bad cause, and of his acting an unhandsome part? The *Fathers* of the *three first* centuries, (that *golden age* of Christianity, tried and purified in the fire of persecution,) though not exempt from *failings*, nor *infallible*, were yet men of a higher character than those of the *tenth* or *eleventh*; and were not *bad masters*, nor *very poor guides*, but the contrary: that is what we say, and what we abide by. He goes on to tell us, that he does "not pretend to say," that they were all "a pack of profligate wretches^l." No; God forbid. I know not whether Celsus, Porphyry, or Julian would have said such a thing, in the greatest extremity of their rage: they had some regard to truth, and to public respect, and to their own *characters*^m. But though he does not say that, what will he at length say? "There were "some among them who were, in *some measure*, men of "piety and knowledgeⁿ." How hard to extort the slightest compliment upon those great and good men! Though he can be lavish enough elsewhere towards Confucius, a Pagan^o, and towards Hobbes^p, a reputed Atheist. He proceeds again to pass a decretory sentence upon the *Fathers*, in the same *detracting* way; that "their virtues "were, for the *generality*, far from being any way con-

^k Prefatory Disc. p. 28.

^l Id. *ibid*.

^m "The heathens themselves, even such as were the greatest enemies to "the Christian religion, could not forbear often to do justice to their great "knowledge and eminent sanctity." So says F. Baltus in answer to Fontenelle. *Continuation*, &c. p. 97. And he instances in Porphyry, and the *heathen* philosophers of his time; he mentions Libanius also, and Longinianus, and Maximus Madaurensis.

ⁿ *Ibid*. p. 28.

^o Pref. Disc. sect. xv. p. 44.

^p *Ibid*. sect. xxix. p. 80.

“sîderable, and their knowledge commonly false and “confused:” and he appears to be much offended with those who would *bring him back* to the primitive food of *hush and acorns*’. Yet the illustrious Grotius was plentifully fed with those *hushs*, or else he had never been Grotius. And he had a very great esteem and value for them: which, as it appears in all his works, so more particularly in that admirable treatise of his, his *System of Morality*. He understood the valuable use of them to that very science, has intimated it over and over in express words^q, and exemplified it quite through that excellent performance. I am aware that Mons. Barbeyrac, in his edition of Grotius, and in his French version, has *notes of correction* upon those passages of his author, and condemns even his master Grotius now, as well as the *Fathers* before. But Grotius was a wise man, and knew what he said; besides that the thing speaks itself. I may add, that this gentleman himself, who has *profited* so much by Grotius and Puffendorf, (who *profited* by the *Fathers*,) has been in some measure obliged to the *Fathers*, though it were only at second or third hand. But the *first* hand is undoubtedly the best^r: and if any man would expect ever to come up to Grotius, it must be, not merely by reading Grotius, but by reading as he read, and doing as he did^s.

^q Pref. Disc. p. 33.

^r Ibid. p. 35.

^s Grotius de Jur. B. et P. Proleg. n. li. p. 32, 33. ed. 1720! Conf. lib. i. c. 2. s. 9. p. 60.

^t “Constant reading of the most perfect *modern* books, which does not go jointly on with the *ancients* in their turns, will, by bringing the *ancients* into disuse, cause the *learning* of the men of the next generation to sink; by reason that they, not drawing from those *springs* from whence those *excellent moderns* drew, whom they only propose to follow, nor taking those measures which those men took, must for want of that foundation which their *modern guides* first carefully laid, fall in no long compass of time.” *Wotton's Reflections*, &c. pref. p. 3.

^u The learned Budeus, a judicious and moderate man, and not prejudiced on the side of the *Fathers*, does justice to them and to Grotius, both at once, in these remarkable words: “*Sapientia* igitur antiquissimis etiam Ecclesie doctores, de juris naturalis capitibus, *haud perfunctorie* sermo instituitur. Basilium Magnum, Gregorium Nazianzenum, ipsumque Chrysesto-

The conclusion which the author makes is suitable to the rest, and runs thus: "Notwithstanding that great *inaccuracy* of the *Fathers*, which has often caused them "to commit *considerable errors*; notwithstanding that "fancy they had for *vain subtilties*, which made them "neglect things of *greater importance*; notwithstanding "all this, I say, the *fundamental* doctrines of *religion* and "*morality* have still been preserved amongst Christians, "even in the most dismal ages of darkness and vice^x." Now, though here he is pleased to attribute no more (in respect of *fundamentals*) to the *best* and *purest* times, than to the "most dismal ages of darkness and vice," (as before he had been pleased to compare the *tenth* and *eleventh* with the *three* first,) yet one might have expected to find, that he had agreed however with those *first* ages in all those *fundamentals*, and have acknowledged his obligations to them for their care and zeal in handing them down to us. But he refers us, for explication of *fundamentals*, to a famous treatise of Le Clerc's, at the end of Grotius de Veritate Religionis Christianæ, A. D. 1709. A treatise so indefinite and loose, that one scarce knows what it aims at; except it be, that nothing should pass for a *fundamental* which has been ever *disputed* by men calling themselves *Christians*, and professing *Scripture*, however interpreted, to be their *rule*^y. Which is judging of *important* truths, not by the *Word of God*, soberly understood, nor by *Catholic tradition*, nor by the

"mum, non tantum Græcæ, sed universæ quacunquæ patet Ecclesiæ sum-
 "mum decus evolvat, legat, scrutetur, cui dabinum forte ambiguumque id
 "quod asseritur, videtur. Hos ingenio acri, judicio singulari, juris hujus
 "quæstiones, quoties eas attingerent (attigerunt autem sæpius) expedivisse
 "constat: ut ipse Hugo Grotius, restaurator hujus philosophiæ felicissimus,
 "tum demum et pondus et robur, et lucem insignem, se assertis suis con-
 "ciliare posse, si præsulum horum auctoritate sententiam suam muniret,
 "fuerit opinatus." *Budd. Histor. Juris Naturalis*, p. 16.

^x Prefatory Discourse, p. 34.

^y See that treatise of Le Clerc's briefly examined by Buddeus, in his *Miscellanea Sacra*, par. i. p. 320. Compare Turretin. de Articulis Fundamentalibus, p. 13.

reason of things, but by the floating humours and fancies of men; as if all Christian doctrines were to be expunged out of the list of *necessaries*, which have had the misfortune to be *disputed* amongst us, and a *short creed* were to be made out of the *remainder*. But what if others, with Baron Herbert of Cherbury, or with the author of the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, building upon the same principles of *latitude*, and willing to compound all *differences*, should advise us to admit nothing for a *fundamental*, but what all mankind have hitherto agreed in, and for the future shall agree in, Atheists only excepted; where will then at length these presumptuous schemes end? or when will weak men leave off dictating to an all-knowing God, preferring their own fond devices to the wisdom of Heaven?

To be short, that treatise of Le Clerc's, while wholly intent upon discharging *unnecessaries*, (as he supposed them,) takes no due care for preserving the *vitals* of Christianity; but is much such another cure for our religious ferments, as bleeding a man to death would be for a *fever*. I presume, one principal view was, to throw out the doctrine of the *Trinity*; (though it might lead a great deal farther;) and it was that consideration chiefly, which induced him, and many others, to vilify the ancient *Fathers* of the Christian Church^z. But I proceed.

Mr. B. besides his ill-will towards the *Fathers*, appears to discover something of an unfriendly disposition towards *ecclesiastics* at large, in more instances than one. But he

^z *Serio hæc mecum pensitanti, vix ulla commodior occurrit ratio, quam quod sancti patres Catholica fidei, Nicænorumque dogmatum testes sint inconcussi, vindices acerrimi: qui fidem ab Apostolis traditam, a majoribus acceptam, ad nos usque propagarunt, acceptam, vita, voce, etiam et sanguine suo confirmarunt, invictisque argumentis contra omnia hæreticorum molimina sartam tectam conservarunt; quique nullis sophismatibus flecti queant, ut in unitariorum causam testimonium dicant. Hinc illæ lachryme! Hæc fundi calamitas. Adeo ut de antiquitate ecclesiastica dici potest quod de ratione alicubi habet Malmsburiensis philosophus: ubicunque ratio homini repugnat, hominem ipsi rationi repugnaturum. Cave, Epist. Apologet. p. 17. Conf. p. 23.*

is particularly offended with the *public sermons*, as seeming to him *not very instructive* on the head of *morality*^a. His translator here, sensible of the indecency of the reflection, endeavours to excuse and soften it by a note; suggesting that he might intend it only against *sermons and books in French*, not against the compositions of the English or Dutch. It was kindly offered; but I find not that the author himself has any where made the exception, or insinuated that he intended any. However, admitting that he had a view to the French only, yet the reflection can hardly be acquitted of some degree of *immodesty*: for, surely, the French Protestant Divines have deserved a better treatment. He quotes Placette and Ostervald to give some colour to his invectives: but neither of them will bear him out in any such general aspersions upon their whole body. And what if *Divines* ordinarily (as *Civilians* also) fall short of Grotius and Puffendorf; or what if they do not follow the same laboured *method*, (any more than the Sermon on the Mount did,) yet their discourses may be *very instructive*, and the more so for their artless simplicity, being better adapted to the capacities of common hearers. There are many *instructive* ways of inculcating *moral precepts*; and it is by no means serving morality, to disparage all others for the sake of one which a man chooses to be fond of, perhaps as thinking it *his own*. It is natural enough for any person to applaud his own taste, and to prefer his own way: but still it must be acknowledged, that there is more of human infirmity, than there is of equity or justice in it. *Ancients* ought to have their due praises as well as *moderns*; and *Divines* as well as *Civilians*: and it is not fair dealing to monopolize esteem, or to affect to draw all into one channel, where a man has placed himself to receive it, disregarding his neighbours.

It is very true, what this gentleman says, that it “was not any of the ecclesiastics, or professors of Divinity^b,”

^a Prefatory Disc. sect. xi. p. 35.

^b *Ibid.* p. 36.

who drew up that *vast system* of morality which Grotius is so justly famed for. It was a work proper for so large a *genius*, and so accomplished a *Civilian* and *Statesman*. Ecclesiastics, I am confident, are so far from envying him the great honour, which he thereby acquired, without seeking it, that they would be heartily glad if every other writer of his profession were *like* him, and *equal* to him, in learning, candour, capacity, gravity, sincerity. This gentleman does not make a just report, when he says, that "the ecclesiastics, instead of returning thanks to Grotius for his excellent work, every where declared against him, and that many even Protestant Divines laboured to cry it down^c." He should have been content to say, that the *Romanists* condemned it^d, while the *Protestants* in general, *Divines* and others, justly esteemed it, and the *reformed* Universities paid suitable regards to it^e. It was not a *Divine*, but a *Civilian*^f, who first appeared against it: and why may I not add, that *Divines* at this day, probably, have a greater esteem of the *work*, and a truer value for it, than the last *Civilian* who translated it, and who has animadverted sometimes too *freely* upon it. Who is it that has told the world, that the incomparable Grotius was "not thoroughly acquainted with the art of thinking justly?" Is it not this very gentleman^g detracting from Grotius, to compliment the author of the *Parrhasiana*, who had said the same thing before^h. It was Grotius's misfortune; it seems, to fall half a century

^c Prefatory Discourse, p. 36.

^d Nec quisquam quam diu vixit Grotius, contra eos (Grotii libros) quicquam movere ausus est, nisi quod tertio ab eo tempore quo prodierunt anno 1627. die quarto Februarii, ab *Inquisitionis* quod Romæ est officio, nota hæreses innreretur. *Buddæi Histor. Jur. Naturalis*, p. 31, 32. Conf. Bayle, Diction. in Grotius, note o.

^e Crescere tum in dies existimatio de utilitatibus librorum Grotii; ut in *academiis* viri docti eosdem prælegere et interpretari consultum ducerent. *Buddæus, ibid.* p. 39. Conf. Bayle in note o.

^f Johannes a Felden, A. D. 1653.

^g Prefatory Discourse, p. 79.

^h Le Clerc's *Parrhasians*, p. 247, 248. Engl. edit.

short, in the art of *just thinking*. But what pains will not some men take to draw reputation to their own apartments: first, disparaging *ancients* in comparison of *moderns*, to bring it so much *nearer* towards *themselves*; next, excluding *Divines* at large, to fix it among *critics* or *civilians*; then highly extolling two or three very *eminent* personages, to beat off *rivals*, and, as it were, to devolve all repute upon them for a season; lastly, giving broad intimations, that there are yet *greater* men than those, as to *true reasoning*, (a prime excellency,) and the perfection of *just thinking*: and who should these at length be, but the same that sit as *judges* upon *them*, as upon all the rest? Various are the windings and turnings of *self-love*, and its illusions many: but I forbear. These reflections, if not capable of the strictest proof, yet have most undoubtedly greater appearances of truthⁱ, than most of those unworthy *aspersions* cast upon the primitive *Fathers*.

After all, we take not upon us to acquit the *Fathers* of all kinds of mistakes, or of human *frailties*; for we very well know that they were *men*, though excellent men. All we desire is, that no *errors* may be imputed more than belong to them, nor that those which they really gave into, be aggravated beyond reason; nor that that wherein any of them *singly* offended, be collectively thrown upon them all. In short, we desire no *favour* in their behalf, but *truth, justice, equity, candour*, and *humanity*, which are *due* to all men, living or dead; and much more to persons of such exemplary virtues, and so exalted a character in the churches of Christ^k. I shall

ⁱ Qui ita omnia reprehendunt, et *inveterata existimationis* auctores tam lubenter explodunt, plerumque id agunt ut *soli* habeantur laude digni: vel certe ad *suum iudicium*, quasi ab erroribus humanis immune, omnia *aliena* volunt conformata; quod arrogantiae est haud vulgaris. *Perizonius, Q. Curt. Vindicat.* p. 192.

^k Recte igitur nostri docent, aequitatis legem postulare, ut quos propter multa praeclare dicta non sequamus *Scripturae*, eosdem propter naevos et errores nonnullos protinus non rejiciamus. Circumtulērunt et ipsi carnem et sanguinem; fassi sunt, se humanae infirmitati obnoxios: perhumano igitur

only add, that had the *Fathers*, several of them, really fallen into as many errors of doctrine, as some would make us believe they did, yet our two main positions would stand firm as before: *viz.* 1. That from the writings of the *Fathers*, taken with other collateral evidences, we may competently learn as to matter of *fact*¹, what was the *general sense* of the three first centuries, in the *important* articles of faith^m. 2. That the historical knowledge of the *fact* so testified, may be of very great use to us, for the interpreting of Scripture, so far as concerns those articles, and for guarding the word of God against any novel and dangerous misconstructions.

VI. It has been sometimes objected, that the *Fathers* were but very indifferent *critics* upon Scripture, and that they frequently misinterpreted particular texts. A learned writer has been at the pains to draw up a moderate *octavo*, full of *supposed* examples of that kind, beginning with Genesis, and descending regularly through the Scripture, almost as far as the Revelationsⁿ. He had a wide field to range in, four or five whole centuries, and more. And if any thing amiss, by way of comment, happened to drop from any *Father*, in all that time, perhaps in some very hasty composition, some *extempore* homily, or the like, that must be brought in to swell the account: and whatsoever any one *singly* has offended in a *single* place,

tractandi sunt, non proterve sugillandi. *Rivet. Tractat. de Patr. Autoritat.* cap. x. p. 65.

¹ A proper distinction should be made (as I before hinted) between the *reasonings* of the *Fathers*, and their *testimonies* as to *fact*. Of which see Dodwell. *Dissert. in Iren.* i. sect. xliii. p. 77, &c. Bishop Smalbrooke's *Vindication of Miracles*, &c. vol. i. p. 123.

^m Nihil dubii esse possit, quin per *duo* saltem aut *tria* ab *Apostolis* secula, *Ecclesia* in primitivo suo vigore, atque, ut ita loquar, *virginitate* permanerit: eodem nimirum statu quo ab ipsis *Apostolis* relicta fuit; nisi quod novæ subinde *hereses* istis etiam diebus erumperent, quibus *Ecclesia exercitata* fuit, minime *corrupta*: haud magis scilicet quam *Ecclesia Apostolica* ab istis *heresibus* depravata fuit quæ *Apostolis* adhuc *superstitibus* emergabant; vix citius enim exortæ sunt quam ab *Ecclesia* rejectæ. *Bevereg. Cod. Cun. Vindic. in Proœm.* s. vii.

ⁿ Whitby, *Dissert. de Script. Interpret.*

(somewhere else perhaps making us amends for it,) he is to bear the odium of it; and not only he, but all his predecessors and successors for so many centuries, all that pass under the name of *Fathers*: for the design is to show, that the *Fathers* in general were very weak men. It would be tedious to enter into a detail of the texts said to be misinterpreted. Therefore I shall only observe, as follows, upon the examination I have made. 1. That some of the interpretations found fault with, are *true* and *just* interpretations, blamed without reason, and brought in for show, or to make bulk. 2. Several others are *doubtful*, and may claim candid allowances. 3. Some are *misreported*, or represented otherwise than the good *Fathers* intended. 4. Most of the blameable ones are of the *allegorical* kind: and they very often are not so properly *interpretations*, (for the *Fathers* generally admitted a *literal* interpretation besides, of the same texts,) as a kind of moral or spiritual *uses* or *improvements* raised upon the texts, for the practical edification of the people. The design seems to have been much the same (only employed upon a nobler subject) with what several pious persons have attempted, in endeavouring to turn every common incident of life, every thing they hear, read, or see, to some spiritual improvement, by apposite reflections or meditations. The reader may find a specimen of such *spiritual exercises* as I speak of, in the very pious and ingenious Mr. Boyle, in his treatise entitled, Occasional Reflections upon several Subjects. Such a kind of *exercise* I take many of those *allegorical* comments (those especially of the *tropological* kind) to have been. They were well meant, and had their use, though often carried too far; but, in strictness, they were not *interpretations* of Scripture, but rather pious meditations upon Scripture. I am sensible that *some* of them were intended as *interpretations*: but, in the general, and for the most part, I conceive, they were rather what I have said. 5. But supposing that the *Fathers* sometimes, or often mistook in their interpretations of Scripture, (in such texts more

especially upon which no *fundamental* doctrine of the Church depended, nor perhaps was concerned in,) what can be supposed to follow from such a concession? Nothing, so far as I can yet apprehend, that will at all affect our present question. It may be allowed, and cannot indeed justly be denied, that *modern* Critics and Divines, of the first rank, having the light of the *Fathers* before them, and greater skill in the *languages*, and many additional helps which the *Fathers* wanted, are better *textuaries*, upon the whole^o, than the ablest of the *ancients* were, or than all the *Fathers* together, because they contain them, in a manner, or the best things in them, with additional improvements. But admitting all this, it concludes nothing against the *use* or *value* of the *ancients*, but *supposes* it all the time. Besides, the stress is not laid upon any *critical* acumen of the *Fathers* in interpreting every particular text, but upon their faithfulness in relating what was the *doctrine* of the *Church*, as to the *prime* things, in their times, or before, and upon their interpretation of some remarkable and leading texts (such for instance as John i. 1.) upon which chiefly the fundamental doctrines were conceived to rest. From whence it is manifest, that the learned collector of *erroneous* comments (supposing his representations just, which they often are not) has shot wide of the mark: and indeed he was sensible of

^o Eruditionem patribus, aut sagacitatem in sequelis colligendis, potiore nullam asserimus quam cœvis aliis eorundem temporum scriptoribus: sed nec potiore illis antiquis *in universum*, quam junioribus nostris. Quin bonas literas studiosius excultas a nuperis nostris Ecclesiæ Reformatoribus libenter agnoscimus: nec in *philosophia* modo, sed in *antiquitate*, in ipsis etiam *linguis* illorum temporum vernaculis: sed et *pressiorem* nostris et *solidiorem* argumentandi methodum agnoscimus quam sit alia illa laxior, et sophistica, et declamatoria, quæ non apud *patres* duntaxat, sed et alios eorundem temporum scriptores erat receptissima. Itaque, exceptis illis quæ ad *fidem* pertinent, aut quæ ad propriorum temporum *historiam*: in aliis facile ferimus dissentientes, judicantesque de eorum ratiociniis juniores. Sed vero in cœvis scriptoribus intelligunt *cœvi* etiam *idiota*, quæ lateant *remotiorum* seculorum etiam eruditissimos. *Dodwell. Disert. in Iven. in pœfat. sect. 15.*

it P; however notwithstanding he thought fit to publish his collection. He acknowledges our meaning to be no more than this; that Scripture be interpreted by the *general doctrine* of the ancient Church, in the prime things⁹. But then he runs on to call it *imposing* a sense upon Scripture, instead of *taking* one from it; making the *Fathers* speak for *Christ*, instead of permitting *Christ* to speak for *himself*, and the like. Now indeed, if every man that should undertake to interpret Scripture out of his own head, were *infallibly* certain to make *Christ* speak for *himself*, and were in no manner of danger of *imposing* a sense upon him, there would be some weight in such reasoning: but did Socinus, did Arius, did Sabellius, did Valentinus, or an hundred more, succeed so well in that way, that that should be recommended as the only *safe* way of delivering the mind of Christ? It is granted on all hands, that Scripture should speak its *own* sense, and that no *foreign* sense ought to be *imposed* upon it: but then one of the best rules we can think of to secure to it its *own* sense, and to exclude all *foreign* senses, is to keep to the *old sense* (while the words will bear it, much more if they require it) which obtained from the beginning, among the *churches* favoured in a very par-

¶ Nec hoc in animum induxisse hos patrum antistites existimo (quod eorum verba præ se ferunt) nempe sacras Scripturas interpretandas esse juxta sensum quem patres de iis speciatim, verbisque conceptis exhibuerunt, quemque nos in hoc opere protulimus; sed tantum eas interpretandas esse juxta doctrinam quam existimant apud primævos patres obtinuisse. Quod quidem non est sensum Scripturæ ex verbis Scripturæ accipere, sed sensum patrum Scripturis adferre, &c. *Whitby, Dissert. præf. p. 19.*

⁹ This matter is very clearly and accurately expressed by Mr. Thorndike.

Est enim magnopere advertendum, cum definiendam ex *traditione Ecclesie* Scripturæ sententiã dico, non hoc me velle quasi teneri possit sensus Scripturæ traditione (quis enim putet Scripturarum scientiam, omni literarum genere constantem, traditione teneri posse?) sed quod recusandum sit, tanquam a vero Scripturæ sensu alienum, quicquid in *traditionem* incurrit: quod est dicere, intra *finis traditionis* continendam esse interpretationem Scripturæ. *Thorndike de Ration. Fin. Contr. p. 147.* Compare *Sherlock, Socin. Contr. p. 78.*

ticular manner by the illustrious presence of the Spirit of God^r.

VII. It has been sometimes objected, that there have been *Fathers against Fathers*, Councils against Councils, and warm contests amongst the *ancient* Doctors themselves; particularly about the time for observing Easter, and about *heretical* baptisms. All which we allow, but further plead, that the more they differed in *rituals*, or matters of *discipline*, (things of slighter concern,) the more regard is to be paid to them in the greater matters wherein they all agreed. For if they would not suffer any *innovation*, or the *appearance* of any, even in the smaller matters, but were exceeding jealous of every thing that looked *new*, and were prepared to oppose any person or persons, how considerable soever in station, age, or dignity, rather than admit a *novelty*; how can we imagine that they should all so unanimously agree in the doctrine of our Lord's *Divinity*, if it were not *old* doctrine, the faith which was once delivered unto the saints? Their *differences* in inferior matters serve to strengthen the plea drawn from their *unanimity* in this, and so are an argument on our side, rather than any objection against us^s.

^r The very judicious and learned Ger. Vossius speaks excellently well on this head.

Ante omnia quidem scrutandum, quid Deus dicat in *verbo suo*: sed ne perperam illud interpretemur, quando omnes ad errorem sumus proclives, attendere etiam debemus, non modo quid unus et alter, sed omnino quid *constanter* docuerit *Ecclesia Dei*. Quantopere enim repugnat *perspicuitati* Scripturæ, si ita exaratae credantur, ut ab Apostolorum excessu, ne in *præcipuis* quidem fidei capitibus, ipsi eas Ecclesiarum doctissimi ceperint autistites! Quantum item adversetur *bonitati* Dei et *amori* erga nos, si per tot secula, ad Scripturarum intelligentiam defuisse statuamus *Spiritum Dei*, viris licet pietate et sanctimonia præcellentibus, ecclesiæque semper commendatissimis, atque eo melioribus quo apostolicis propiores erant temporibus. *Voss. in Epist. ad Forbes. præfix. Histor. Instruct. A. D. 1645.*

^s Daillé himself argues in like manner as we here do.

“As for those *differences* in *opinion* which are sometimes found amongst them, touching some certain points of religion, some whereof we have formerly set down; these things are so far from taking off any thing from the *weight* of their testimonies, as that, on the contrary, they add rather very much to the same. For this must acquit their *consenting*, of all sus-

VIII. It has been objected², that our sixth Article condemns the method of interpreting Scripture by *antiquity*, or, at least, *supersedes* it; because it says, HOLY SCRIPTURE CONTAINETH ALL THINGS NECESSARY TO SALVATION; SO THAT WHATSOEVER IS NOT READ THEREIN, NOR MAY BE PROVED THEREBY, IS NOT TO BE REQUIRED OF ANY MAN, THAT IT SHOULD BE BELIEVED AS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH, OR NECESSARY TO SALVATION. The Article says nothing but what is perfectly right, and perfectly consistent with all we have been pleading for. We allow no doctrine as *necessary*, which stands only on *Fathers*, or on *tradition*, oral or written: we admit none for such, but what is *contained* in Scripture, and *proved* by Scripture, *rightly* interpreted. And we know of no way more safe in *necessaries*, to preserve the *right* interpretation, than to take the *ancients* along with us³. We think it a good method to secure our *rule of faith* against impostures of all kinds; whether of *enthusiasm*, or false *criticism*, or *conceited* reason, or *oral* tradition, or the assuming dictates of an *infallible* chair. If we thus preserve the *true* sense of Scripture, and upon that sense build our faith, we then build upon Scripture *only*; for the *sense* of Scripture is Scripture⁴. Suppose a man were to prove his *legal* title

"picion that some persons might have, that it proceeded from some combination, or some correspondence and mutual intelligence." *Dailly, Use of the Fathers*, part ii. c. 6. p. 186. Conf. Bevereg. Cod. Can. Vindicat in Proem. s. 5.

² Whithy, Dissert. p. 4.

³ So the great Casaubon, speaking both for *himself* and for the Church of England; and at the same time for Melancthon, and Calvin also.

Opto cum Melancthone et Ecclesia Anglicana, per canalem *antiquitatis* deduci ad nos dogmata fidei, e fonte sacræ *Scripturæ* derivata. Alioquin quis futurus est novandi finis?—Etsi omnia mea voluptas est et sola, versari in lectione sacræ *Scripturæ*, nullam tamen inde me hausisse *proprium* sententiam, nullam habere, neque unquam, ἐν Θεῷ σικεῖν, esse habiturum. Magni Calvini hæc olim fuit mens, cum scriberet præfationem suam in Commentarium Epistolæ ad Romanos; non debere nos in *eccl̄is antiquariorum*, a consensu Ecclesiæ recedere. A. D. 1611. *Casaub. Epist. 744. Dan. Heinsio*, p. 434. edit. 3. Roterodami.

⁴ "We reverently receive the unanimous tradition or doctrine of the

to an estate; he appeals to the *laws*: the true sense and meaning of the laws must be proved by the best rules of interpretation; but, after all, it is the *law* that gives the title, and that *only*. In like manner, after using all proper means to come at the *sense* of Scripture, (which is Scripture,) it is that, and that only, which we *ground* our faith upon, and *prove* our faith by. We allege not Fathers as *grounds*, or *principles*, or *foundations* of our faith, but as witnesses, and as interpreters, and faithful conveyers.

That the Church of England has a very particular regard to *antiquity*, may sufficiently appear from a Canon set forth in the same year when our Articles were first perfected and authorized by act of Parliament, namely, in the year 1571. By that Canon it is provided, "that preachers shall not presume to deliver any thing from the pulpit, as of moment, to be *religiously* observed and believed by the people, but that which is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old or New Testament, and collected out of the same doctrine by the Catholic Fathers and the Bishops of the *ancient Church*." A wise regulation, formed with exquisite judgment, and worded with the exactest caution. The Canon does not order, that they shall teach *whatever had been taught* by Fathers; no, that would have been setting up a *new* rule of faith: neither does it say, that they shall teach *whatsoever* the Fathers had *collected from Scripture*; no, that would have been making them *infallible* interpreters, or

" Church in all ages, which determines the *meaning* of the holy Scripture, and makes it more clear and unquestionable in any point of *faith*, wherein we can find it hath declared its *sense*. For we look upon this *tradition* as nothing else but the *Scripture unfolded*: not a *new* thing which is not in the Scripture, but the *Scripture explained* and made more evident." *Dr. (afterward Bishop) Patrick's Discourse about Tradition*, p. 18. Printed A. D. 1683.

* Imprimis vero videbunt [Concionatores] ne quid unquam doceant pro concione, quod a populo religiose teneri et credi velint, nisi quod consentaneum sit doctrinæ Veteris aut Novi Testamenti, quodque ex illa ipsa doctrina Catholici patres et veteres episcopi collegerint. *Sparrow, Collect.* p. 238.

infallible *reasoners*: the *doctrine* must be found first in *Scripture*; only to be the more secure that we have found it there, the *Fathers* are to be called in, to be, as it were, constant checks upon the presumption or wantonness of *private* interpretation. But then again, as to *private* interpretation, there is *liberty* enough allowed to it. Preachers are not forbidden to interpret this or that text, or hundreds of texts, differently from what the *Fathers* have done; provided still they keep within the *analogy of faith*, and presume not to raise any *new* doctrine: neither are they altogether restrained from teaching any thing *new*, provided it be offered as *opinion* only, or an *inferior* truth, and not pressed as *necessary* upon the people. For it was thought, that there could be no *necessary* article of faith or doctrine now drawn from *Scripture*, but what the *ancients* had drawn out before, from the same *Scripture*: to say otherwise, would imply that the *ancients* had failed universally in *necessaries*, which is morally absurd.

From this account it may appear, that the Church of England is exactly in the same sentiments which I have been pleading for. And indeed, if there be any church now in the world, which truly reverences antiquity, and pays a proper regard to it, it is this Church. The Romanists talk of *antiquity*, while we observe and follow it. For, with them, both *Scripture* and *Fathers* are, as to the *sense*, under the correction and control of the *present*

† *Ecclesia Anglicana hoc se universo orbi caractere dignoscendum, hoc æquæ posteritati æstimandum proponit, quod in controversiis fidei aut praxeos decernendis, illud firmum ratumque semper habuerit (et huic basi reformationem Britannicam niti voluerit) ut Scripturis primæ, dein primorum sæculorum episcopis, martyribus, scriptoribus ecclesiasticis secundæ deferrentur. Hammond contr. Blondell. in prælim. cap. xiv. sect. 13.*

Rex cum Ecclesia Anglicana pronuntiat, eam demum se doctrinam pro vera simul et necessaria ad salutem agnoscere, quæ e fonte *Sacræ Scripture* manans, per consensum *veteris Ecclesiæ*, ceu per canalem, ad hæc tempora fuerit derivata. *Casaubon. Epist. ad Perron. 838. p. 493. A. D. 1612.*

Quod si me conjectura non fallit, totius reformationis pars integerrima est in Anglia, ubi cum studio *veritatis*, viget studium *antiquitatis*. *Idem ad Sulmas. Epist. 237. p. 489. A. D. 1612.*

Church^z: with us, the present Church says nothing, but under the direction of *Scripture* and *antiquity* taken together, one as the *rule*, and the other as the *pattern* or *interpreter*. Among them, the *present* Church speaks by *Scripture* and *Fathers*: with us, *Scripture* and *Fathers* speak by the Church. I have before thrown in some testimonies of the high regard which our Church pays to *antiquity*: and if the reader desires more of like kind, he may please to consult such as have collected them, some of which I refer to at the bottom of the page^a.

IX. It may still be objected, that the appealing to *antiquity* may be both fruitless and endless, and can never decide differences, or silence disputes, because all parties almost have or may put in their claim to it; and as it will be hard to decide among the several claimants, so the whole will terminate in confusion^b: therefore the shortest and best method is, to throw off *antiquity*, and to abide by *Scripture* alone. This objection does, in some measure,

^a Vid. Rivet. Tractat. de Patr. Autoritate, cap. vii. p. 40, &c. Patrick on Tradition, p. 41. Stillingfleet's Rational Account, part i. cap. 5. p. 80, &c.

N. B. In the fourteenth article of the Creed of Pope Pius IV. the words run thus. "I do receive the holy Scriptures in the same sense that holy Mother Church doth, and always hath—neither will I receive and interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers." Here are two *contradictory* things blended together, the sense of their *present Church*, and the *unanimous consent of Fathers*: which are no more to be reconciled, than light and darkness; except it be by making *antiquity* as much a Lesbian rule, as they make the *Scripture*. I follow the copy of that Creed given in Latin and English at the end of Dr. Hickes's *Letters*, published A. D. 1705.

^b Scrivener adv. Dallæum, par. i. cap. 9. p. 57, &c. Dr. Fuller's Moderation of the Church of England, p. 80, &c. Bull. Apolog. pro Harmon. sect. i. p. 634. Grabe, Spicileg. vol. i. in præfatione. Saywell, Præfat. Apologet. præfix. Launoii Epist. A. D. 1689.

"It is a *calumny*, to affirm that the Church of England rejects all *tradition*: and I hope, none of her children are so ignorant, as when they hear that word, to imagine they must rise up and oppose it. No, the *Scripture* itself is a *tradition*; and we admit all other *traditions* which are subordinate and agreeable to that; together with all those things which can be proved to be *apostolical*, by the *general* testimony of the Church in all ages." Patrick on Tradition, p. 48.

^b Whithy, Dissert. præf. p. 28, 75, 80.

fall in with others before mentioned: but because it contains, in a manner, the sum and substance of several, I shall return a distinct answer to it, in so many particulars.

1. I would observe, that since all parties almost have put in their claim to *antiquity*, it is a certain sign that they have a *value* and *esteem* for it, and think it of some force. They appeal to *Scripture* also, because it is of weight: one has a *plea* from it, and another a *pretence*. Whatever is worth the *having*, where it is to be had, will be also thought worth the *counterfeiting*, where it is not: therefore, we may expect, in such cases, counterfeit *Scripture* and counterfeit *antiquity*, to give colour to *false* claims, as well as genuine *Scripture* and genuine *antiquity*, to support *true* ones. All this shows, that it is generally thought a great advantage to have *antiquity* on one's side, and as great a disadvantage to any cause, to want it. Men would never contend about it, were it worthless or insignificant: they would not take pains to adulterate the coin, if the coin itself were not *valuable*. Therefore let us not too hastily part with any thing, which all parties either openly speak well of, or secretly covet and admire^c.

2. As to *deciding* differences, or *silencing* disputes, it is granted that *antiquity* will not always be *effectual*, neither will *Scripture*; neither indeed will any thing but what would be effectual to make all men *humble* and *modest*, *wise* and *good*. That so many several *sects* and *parties* differ so widely from each other, and from the truth, is

^c It is remarkable of Socinus, who contemned *tradition* and all the *ancients*, undertaking to coin a *new* religion from *Scripture alone*; I say, it is remarkable of him, that when he found that his disciples would not submit to *worship* Christ, after all he could bring from *Scripture* to persuade them to it, he reminded them of the *ancient* and *universal* practice of *saints* and *martyrs*, as an argument to prove that such was the *sense* of *Scripture*. *Quia nimis aperte in sanctis literis ea illi tribui animadvertunt*, &c. [Ad Matt. Radec. Epist. iii. p. 391.] An argument which, if he had uniformly attended to it, ought to have given some check to his most exorbitant wantonness and self-sufficiency in other matters.

not generally owing to this, that their *different interpretations* of Scripture have led them into different opinions in religion, but their *different opinions* have led them into *different interpretations*. All must of necessity pretend colour, at least, from Scripture, (if they would not be taken for madmen, or infidels) and if *true* interpretation will not answer the purpose, *false* must come up of course. So, it is in vain to cast about for any rules of interpretation, as *certain remedies* for the *healing* differences, or *ending* all disputes: the disease lies deeper, and is too stubborn for human means. There is no *infallible* preservative, no *irresistible* expedient against *heresy*, any more than against any other *vices*: neither ought there to be any; for then a *right belief* would be no matter of *choice*, nor *faith* any longer a *virtue*, as God designed it should be. We pretend not therefore to *infallible* cures by any *means* whatever. But though we cannot expect to work *miracles* by the help of *antiquity* and *Scripture* together, (for *heresies* there will be notwithstanding, and Scripture itself intimates there *must be* ^d), yet they are both of them of very great use, and may have their effect, in a human way, among *reasonable* men; which is sufficient. We are very sensible, that they who study to pervert Scripture, will pervert *tradition* too, and will often turn those weapons against the truth, which were intended only for defence of it. That is an inconvenience common to a thousand other cases besides this: we must be content to bear with it, and to conduct as prudently as we can, under direction from the word of God. And when we have so done all that is proper, or required, and without effect, the appeal must lie to the *common reason* of mankind; and there it must rest till the cause comes to be heard before a higher tribunal.

3. But though *Scripture* and *antiquity* may both of them be *resisted*, or both *perverted*, and are not certainly *effectual*, nor intended to be so, yet both together are of greater

^d 1 Cor. xi. 19.

force than Scripture *singly* can be ; and that is reason sufficient for superadding *antiquity*. Two witnesses are better than one, though one be superior ; and two proofs of the same thing (though one be as *primary*, and the other *secondary*) amount to more than either of them singly can do. Every additional light contributes some lustre, and every accessional weight helps to turn the scale. A man may be able to evade Scripture alone, who may not be able to evade both *Scripture* and *antiquity* ; or if he can evade both, yet perhaps not so *easily* : therefore, if the taking in *antiquity* is of service, as it reinforces *truth*, and bears the harder upon *error*^e, it is worth the urging, for the same reason as all kinds of arguments or dissuasives against sin and wickedness are to be urged in due place.

4. Lastly, I must observe, that there is no such great difficulty as some persons may fancy, in distinguishing *false* claims from *true*, or in pointing out among the several claimants, where the *right* lies. Men of ready wit and invention may draw up a catalogue of innumerable difficulties, taking in all such as might possibly happen in *any* case, and throwing them together, so as to make up one large and floating idea of difficulty, for the reader to apply to *every* case : but if one looks a little closer into any particular instance, he will be surprised to find how *easy* it is, after all, to form a judgment of it, and that not a hundredth part perhaps of that general confuse idea of difficulty does really belong to it. If a man were inclined to hear what fine harangues might be made upon the uncertainty of the reports of *sense*, how often, and how many several ways his eyes or ears, or other senses might deceive him, (which may be illustrated with great variety of instances from *history*, embellished with all the orna-

* Quis vero non fateatur, *prescriptione* ejusmodi multum *firmari* animos nostros in *genuina* Scripturæ interpretatione, *validius* quoque *munitiusque* hæreses refelli ? Quare hoc armorum genere semper pugnatum fuit a sanctis patribus : qui præcipue quidem se tuebantur *Scripturæ* auctoritate, nec tamen prætereunt priorum temporum consensum. Gerard. Voss. *Epist. ad Forbes.*

ments of wit and fancy,) he might be apt, for some time, almost to mistrust his *senses*, and to take life itself for a *dream*. But notwithstanding all, when he comes to consider *use* and *experience*, he will soon find that his *senses* may, for the most part, be securely trusted to, without danger of deception, and that it is scarce once in a thousand trials that they lead him into error. The like may be said, with regard to the studied harangues drawn up by some writers, about the *uncertainty* of all tradition, and the *obscurity* of the Fathers, and the danger of *deception*: they amount only to loose, general *discourse*, which may seem, at first, to have something in it^f, but is soon confuted by *use* and *experience*, the safest *criterion* to judge by. The truth of what I say may best appear by an induction of particulars; and therefore I shall next briefly run over the most observable pretences to *tradition*, ancient and modern, (such as at present occur to me,) that we may judge from the particular instances how that case stands.

Basilides, of the first or second century, and his partizans, pleaded *antiquity*, and put in their claim to *tradition*, deriving it by one Glaucias, from St. Peter himself^g. But the vanity and folly of the plea was apparent at first sight: and no sensible man could ever think it at all reasonable to give credit to a wandering tale, or to that obscure Glaucias, rather than to *certain* fact, (appearing in *Scripture*, and in the *churches* founded by St. Peter,) that St. Peter's doctrine was quite another thing from what Basilides had fathered upon him.

Valentinus, of the second century, and his disciples, pleaded *antiquity* also, as well as *Scripture*, and fetched their doctrine by one Theodades, as they said, from the Apostle Paul^h. A likely matter! that Theodades, who-

^f Legi libros de *abusu patrum*, et quidem sæpius: sed, nescio quomodo, dum lego, assentior; cum posui libros, et mecum ipse de nervis argumentorum cœpi cogitare, assensio omnis illa elabatur. *Zornius*, p. 665.

^g Clemens Alexandrin. *Strom.* vii. p. 898. ed. Oxon.

^h Clemens Alexandrin. *ibid.*

ever he was, should know more of St. Paul's mind, than all the churches founded by that blessed Apostle. The silliness of such a plea betrayed itself at once; and but to name it, was to *expose* it.

The Marcionites, along with the Basilidians and Valentinians, pretended also to derive their *common* doctrines down by tradition from the Apostle Matthiasⁱ. But their plea was mere artifice and pretence, and was effectually confuted by the standing doctrine of all the *apostolical churches*. By their *common doctrines*, I mean such as they all agreed in, as about the *origin of evil*, and the denial of Christ's real *humanity*, or the like.

The Artemonians, of the third century, pretended *tradition* for their heresy, from the Apostles themselves, and by the *apostolical churches*^k. Which was saying something, had they been able to make out the fact: but the falsity of the report was palpable, and a child might see it. For they had contrived their story so oddly, and brought it down so low, that besides ancient records in great numbers, there might be thousands of living witnesses, who could contradict it, and expose it as a shameful imposture.

The Arians, after them, in the fourth century, claimed *tradition*, equally with the Catholics, but not with equal reason. They pretended to derive their doctrine down by the *Fathers* that lived before them; particularly by Origen, and Theognostus, and Dionysius Alexandrinus: but Athanasius easily detected the iniquity of their claim, and effectually confuted it^l.

The Macedonians also, in their turn, pleaded *tradition* for their rejecting the Divinity of the *Holy Ghost*. But the great St. Basil laid open the falsity of their pretences that way, and demonstrated that *tradition* was on the contrary side^m. Afterwards, (A. D. 383.) when both they

ⁱ Clem. Alex. Strom. vii. p. 900. Conf. Dodwell. Dissert. in Iren. i. p. 48.

^k Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. v. cap. 28.

^l Athanas. de Decret. Synod. Nic. p. 230, &c. de sententia Dionysii, 243, &c.

^m Basil. de Spiritu Sancto.

and the Arians were solemnly called upon, and asked if they would admit the common suffrage of the *ancients*, and be concluded by it; they shrunk, and would not stand the test, choosing rather to rest the issue of the cause upon *logical* disputationⁿ, their usual refuge, and which they thought their safest retreat. It seldom happens, but that those who make *false* pretences to antiquity, do by their own conduct, (by their evading, or shifting when pressed, or some other as significant marks,) betray their own cause; insomuch that a stander by, of ordinary sagacity, may often, without entering into the heart of the dispute, give a shrewd conjecture how the case stands. Having considered some of the most noted instances of unjustifiable claims among the *ancients*, let us next descend to *moderns*, for farther illustration of what we are upon.

The Romanists are great pretenders to *Catholic tradition*, or *primitive antiquity*: and yet the *fact* is so full and plain against them, that we can point out to them in every age, when, and where, and how every *corruption* almost commenced, and every *innovation* crept in^o: or can prove, at least, that it was not from the beginning. And it gives ground for suspicion, that they are themselves conscious of the nullity of their claim, when they decline fair disputation. They screen themselves under *modern* infallibility, and take sanctuary commonly in their *own* authority, as *sole* judges of every thing, rather than rest the issue of the cause upon a strict and fair inquiry into *ancient* fact. I may further add, that it can scarce be thought a very difficult matter, to discern how *antiquity* stands, as to that controversy, when a single writer of our own (our excellent Bishop Jewel) was not afraid, though a very modest man, to challenge them publicly upon a great many arti-

ⁿ Socrat. Eccles. Histor. lib. v. cap. 10. Sozom. E. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 12. See my Second Defence, Preface, vol. iii.

^o See more particularly Bishop Bull's Answer to the Bishop of Meaux; and Bishop Stillingfleet's Council of Trent examined and disproved by Catholic Tradition, A. D. 1688. and Dr. Whitby's Treatise of Tradition.

cles, twenty-seven in number, and to give them six whole centuries to look out in, only to produce any *one sufficient sentence* out of any *old Catholic Doctor or Father, or general Council*, that should be found to declare *clearly and plainly* on their side, in any of the said articles. He made the challenge, and upon trial was sufficient to stand his ground^p. The like challenges, with respect to the first three or four centuries, have been offered by others^q, and may be easily maintained by any man of competent learning or judgment^r; so little difficulty is there in tracing *tradition*, or in distinguishing *pretence* from *reality*. Wherefore one can scarce forbear lamenting, that so able a writer as Daillé should take the pains he did to depreciate the *use and value* of the *Fathers*, only for fear the Romanists should take advantage of them^s. He wanted at that time either the *spirit* or the *penetration* of Jewel: otherwise he might have considered, that the Protestant cause could not desire any fairer or greater advantage, than to join issue upon the point of genuine *antiquity*, and to be concluded by it. Indeed, it seems, that he did perceive it afterwards, and made very good use of it, when *years and experience* had more enlarged his views.

The modern Socinians, though their way has been, for the most part, to reject *antiquity*, or to undervalue it, (finding it run against them,) have yet many of them, and of late more especially, thought it policy to set up a claim to *tradition*, deducing it from the Apostles, by the Ebionites and Nazaræans, (whom they ignorantly or artfully

^p Fidem fecerint vel solius Magnæ Britannię vestrę, vel etiam nostrę, tot theologi summi: ante omnes *πικρότερον* illud hominis, Joannes Juellus, antistes Sarisburiensis. Quis enim e Conciliis vel Doctoribus, quotquot primis fuere annis sexcentis, non animosius modo, sed doctius quoque, vel feliciter impugnavit adversarios? Non defuere quidem quibus hoc disputandi genus minus probaretur, sed præstantissimi etiam Whitakeri iudicio, *timidiore* hi fuere quam necesse erat. *Ger. Voss. ad Forbes.*

^q See Dr. Hicks's Letters to a Popish Priest, p. 188, 189.

^r See his Epistle Dedicatory prefixed to his Right Use of the Fathers; as also his Preface to the same.

^s Vid. Scrivener in Præfat.

confound,) down as far as to the days of Justin Martyr, where they are pleased to imagine a break in the descent, making him the first *innovator*. The story is better laid, than that of their predecessors the Artemonians, before mentioned: for they confine us within fifty years from the apostolical age; and they know, that we have but *few* records, within that compass, to confute their tale by. However, by laying all our evidences together, and making the best of them, means have been found to demonstrate, so far as a matter of fact can be demonstrated, the falsity and nullity of their pretended *tradition*. And indeed it must look very odd, at first sight, to every considering man, that a tradition from the *Apostles* should be brought down by Ebionites, men condemned by all the *apostolical* churches; nay, and by the *Apostles* themselves, as may appear from what I have offered above.

There remain now only the modern Arians to be spoken to. Some of whom do with great *assurance* lay claim to *ancient tradition*; while others fluctuate and hesitate upon it, as upon a point which they neither know how to abide by, nor how to give up. As to those who put on the greatest *assurance*, it is a strong presumption of their consciousness of something wrong, that they are unwilling to acquiesce in the Canonical Scriptures, without superadding another Gospel to them, a *new* book of Constitutions, spurious and interpolated pieces of the *third, fourth, and fifth* centuries^u: which, whatever else they be, are undoubtedly no part of the oracles of God. Another circumstance, which looks suspicious, is, that this pretended *tradition* is confined within *two centuries*. The reason is, because the evidences afterwards come in too full and strong to be eluded: besides that Clemens of Alexandria, and Tertullian, who are both within the compass, but

^t Bull. Primitiva et Apostolica Traditio. per tot. Mosheim. Vindic. Antiq. contr. Joan. Toland. Stillingfleet's Vindication of the Trinity, cap. iii. p. 15, &c.

^u See Mr. Turner on the Apostolical Constitutions. Printed A. D. 1715.

happen to speak too broad and clear, are excluded from giving their testimony ^x. And yet, after all, even those which are taken in, as Justin, Irenæus, Athenagoras, &c. furnish out evidence enough to confute the ill-contrived claim, and to prove it a *figment*.

As to other more prudent and cautious abettors of the same cause, though they decline not testimonies from the *ancients*, when any can be made to look favourable to that side, yet they endeavour, more ways than one, to sink the value of *antiquity*, and to lessen the just esteem which we ought to have for it. The testimonies of the *ancients* are depreciated under the low name of bare *illustrations*^y, because they are not *proofs* in the highest sense, as the *Scriptures* themselves are. But there is a *medium* between *proofs* in that strongest sense, and mere *illustrations*: for subordinate proofs of the Church's doctrine from the beginning, drawn from Church writers, are *proofs* of something, (though not *foundations* of our faith,) proofs in the moral kind, *second* only to Scripture^z, and such as ought at least to have a *negative*, so far as concerns *fundamentals*, in the interpretation of Scripture.

Another instance of the low esteem which those gentlemen have of the *Fathers* is seen in this, that while they quote passages from them, such as they can most easily warp to their own *hypothesis*, yet they undertake not, so far as I have observed, to *reconcile* the other numerous passages, or to make the *Fathers*, upon the whole, *consistent* evidences on their side, as we do on ours: this, I say, is another presumptive argument that they are themselves, in some measure, *conscious* how precarious and unsupported their claims to *antiquity* are.

I may add, that some amongst them have taken all pos-

^x Whiston, *Primitive Christianity Revived*, vol. iv. p. 2. Compare Grabe's *Instances of Defects*, &c. p. 8, &c.

^y Clarke's *Script. Doctr. Introduct.* p. 24. third edit.

^z See my *First Defence*, vol. i. p. 321. *Second Defence*, vol. iii. p. 445, &c. See also above, p. 270.

sible pains to *expose* the *Fathers* to the utmost^a, on purpose to render their suffrage, in this cause, *useless* and *insignificant*: a plain sign that they take them not for *friends*, since they do not use them like friends. From this single mark, a man of ordinary discernment may competently judge (without looking farther) whom the *Fathers* belong to, as Solomon, by a like direction, knew whose was the *child*.

Enough hath been said to show, that it is no such very difficult matter, as some would represent, to judge between the claimants, or to distinguish the *rightful* possessor from the false challenger. I believe it is, at least, as easy (generally speaking) as it is to judge in a *critical* way upon texts: for that is what the *plainest* texts imaginable must at length be brought to^b, if one has a subtile adversary to deal with, who has learned to play the whole game. Much learning commonly will be spent on both sides, before the plainest cause can be brought to a full hearing, and argued quite through. I need but instance in the rounds which Artemonius has led us, upon John i. i. mentioned above.

X. There is one objection more, which though sufficiently obviated already, may yet perhaps deserve to have something more distinctly said to it in this place. It is pleaded, that men ought to *judge for themselves*, to make use of their *own understandings*, and to admit no *human authorities*. I allow the plea: but, I presume, it is not hereby meant, that we should receive no *human* explications of texts; for then we must receive none at all. If I interpret Scripture for myself, my explication is *human* to me: or else, how it should become *human* to others who may take it of me, I do not see. No doubt but Socinus's,

^a Dr. Whitby's Dissertation, [de Scripturar. Interpret.] is entirely on this subject, and written with that view.

^b Le Clerc very well observes, that, "to men governed by their passions, and conceited of their prejudices, the most *evident* things in the world are *obscure*; and that there is no *law* so clear, but a wrangler may raise a thousand difficulties about it." *Le Clerc. Causes of Incredulity*, p. 172.

or Crellius's, or Enjedine's explications were *human*, as it is certain that many of them were false: and therefore they that talk in the general against all *human* explications, seem not to consider what they say, or they forget themselves to be *men*.

As to *authority*, in a strict and proper sense, I do not know that the *Fathers* have any over us: they are all dead men. Therefore we urge not their *authority*, but their *testimony*, their *suffrage*, their *judgment*, as carrying great force of *reason* with it; and *reason* we should all submit to^c. Taking them in here, as *lights* or *helps*, is doing what is *reasonable*, and using our *own understanding* in the best manner, and to the best purposes: it is judging *rightly* for ourselves. If it were not so, what prudent man would advise it, or endeavour to persuade others to it? But, says an objector, do not you follow the *Fathers*? Yes, as far as *reason* requires, and no farther; therefore this is following our *own* reason: and he that deserts the *Fathers* in this instance, deserts *himself* and his *own reason*. Their sentiments, so *ancient*, so *universal*, carry the force of an *argument*^d along with them, and a very *strong* argu-

^c "Reason is that faculty whereby a man must judge of every thing: nor can a man believe any thing except he have some reason for it; whether that reason be a deduction from the light of nature, or a branch of divine revelation in the oracles of holy Scripture, or the general interpretation of genuine antiquity, or the proposal of our own Church consentaneous thereto, or lastly, the result of some or all of these; for he that will rightly make use of his reason, must take all that is reasonable into consideration. And it is admirable to consider how the same conclusions do naturally flow from all these several principles: and what, in the faithful use of the culties that God hath given, men have believed for true, doth excellently agree with that revelation that God hath exhibited in the Scripture; and the doctrine of the ancient Church with them both." *New Sect of Latitude-men, in the Phanix*, vol. ii. p. 706. written A. D. 1662.

^d "It is a good argument for us to follow such an opinion, because it is made sacred by the authority of councils and ecclesiastical tradition: and sometimes it is the best reason we have in a question; and then it is to be strictly followed. But there may be also at other times a reason greater than it, that speaks against it; and then the authority must not carry it. But then the difference is not between reason and authority, but between this reason and that, which is greater: for authority is a very good reason,

ment too, all things considered. Therefore the being conducted by those sentiments, along with Scripture, is the same thing with being convinced or persuaded by *argument*; which is hearkening to *right reason*, which is submitting to *God*, (who gave us *reason* for our guide,) and not to *human* authority. It is following the safest and best light which divine Providence has graciously afforded us: for, as a great and good Prelate has observed, “the *general tradition* of the Church, next to Scripture, is the *best* and *surest* confirmation of this great point now in question between us; and that which gives us the *greatest* and *truest* light for the right understanding of the true sense and meaning of Scripture, not only in this, but in most other *important* doctrines of the Christian religion f.”

What I have said, appears sufficient to show that the taking the *ancients* in, for the assisting or informing our judgments in this question, is *judging for ourselves* in the most *rational* way that can be thought on. Nevertheless, I take the liberty to observe, that those who talk most of men’s using their *own* understandings, often mean little by it, but to get the direction of their *faith* and *consciences* to themselves, or to make them change a *reasonable* veneration of the *ancients*, for a *blind* admiration of some *modern* preceptors. They very well know, that the generality of mankind (such as read little, and think less) will scarce

“and is to prevail, unless a *stronger* comes and disarms it, and then it must give place. So that in this question, by *reason* I do not mean a distinct topic, but a transcendent that runs through all topics.” *Taylor’s Liberty of Propheying*, sect. x. p. 220.

• “Since we know what the *Catholic faith* was, and how the *Catholic Fathers* expounded Scripture, if the words of Scripture will *naturally* and *easily* admit that sense, (much more if they will not admit any other sense, without great *force* and *violence*,) let any man judge which is most *safe* and *reasonable*, to expound Scripture as the Catholic faith and Catholic Fathers expound it, and as Scripture most *easily* and *naturally* expounds itself, or to *force* new senses and old heresies upon Scripture, which the Catholic Church has always rejected and condemned.” *Sherlock’s Present State of Soc. Controv.* p. 80.

f Archbishop Tillotson, vol. i. Sermon. xlv. p. 456. fol. edit.

judge for themselves at all, except it be as to the choice of some leader or leaders, whom they may suppose it safest to confide in. And it is among such as these, commonly, that *new* teachers seek proselytes; obtruding themselves as *guides*, and at the same time assuring them that they need *no guides*: which, in effect, is leading them about what way soever they please, artfully telling them that they go by themselves, when, in truth, they only change their leaders. To say all at once, the true and the whole meaning of the incredible pains which some persons have taken to set the *Fathers* aside, has been generally neither more nor less than this; to *remove* as much of the *evidence* which stands against them, as they can with any *decency* attempt to remove. They cannot, they dare not pretend to throw off *Scripture* itself, unless they were resolved to throw up Christianity with it, and to declare openly for *infidelity*: but there may be *colours* invented for throwing off the *Fathers*; and therefore thus far they can proceed, in opposing the ancient faith, and at the same time save appearances. There lies the whole of this matter, as I conceive, generally speaking: otherwise, it is manifestly against all sense and reason to make the least question either of the *use* or the *value* of ecclesiastical antiquity.

The sum of what I have been endeavouring through this whole chapter is, that *Scripture* and *antiquity* (under the conduct of *right reason*) are what we ought to abide by, for the settling points of doctrine. I have not put the case of *Scripture* and *antiquity* interfering or clashing with each other: because it is a case which never will appear in points of *importance*, such as that is which we are now upon. However, as to the general case, we may say, that those two ought always to go together, and to coincide with each other, and when they do so, they stand the firmer in their *united* strength: but if ever they clash, or appear to clash, then undoubtedly there is an error somewhere, like as when two accountants vary in casting up the same sum. In such a case, a wise man will not rest

satisfied, (if the thing be of moment,) till he finds out, if possible, the reason of the difference, and discovers where the *error* lies. For either it must lie on the *Scripture side*, (when a man takes that for *Scripture* which is not Scripture, or that for *true* interpretation which is not true interpretation,) or it must lie on the *tradition side*, through some *misreport* made of the ancients, or some mistake of the ancients themselves. Then the question will be, which of the two suppositions is most likely to be true in that instance: and the resolution at length must turn upon a due weighing and considering all *circumstances*, with the *reasons* offered here and there, and then balancing the whole account.

CHAP. VIII.

Showing that what has been lately offered in favour of the Arian Interpretation of John i. 1, 2. and of Hebr. i. is of no Force or Validity.

THE author of Sober and Charitable Disquisition had been pleased to say, that “an *honest* mind, inquisitive “after *truth*, and *willing* to weigh the matter *impartially*, “and to examine the evidence on both sides *thoroughly*, “might be long in *suspense* before he could determine to “his full satisfaction: and that several men of *equal* “sense, learning, capacity, probity, and piety, may after “such examination make different determinations upon “the matter.” He refers to his appendix for proof, which appendix contains two opposite views of John i. 1. and of Hebr. i. I would here previously remark something of his manner of wording the thing, and then proceed. Might it not as well have been said, that there is as *much reason* on one side of the question, as there is on the other? Why should an *invidious* turn be given to what we are doing, that if we maintain our point, and insist upon it as true and just, it shall be interpreted to be

• Sober and Charitable &c. p. 42, 43.

as much as saying, that our adversaries have not *equal* sense, learning, &c. with ourselves? We design not, we desire not to make any such *comparisons*: we leave *persons* out of the question, and desire only to come to the truth of *things*. It is natural for many to admire the founders of their sect, or the leading advocates of their party^f: and it might look like rudeness, to say a word reflecting on their *sense, learning, capacity, or probity*. Neither indeed is there any occasion for detracting from their general character, since it is certain that men of as great *sense, learning, and piety*, to all outward appearance, as any in their times, have sometimes fallen into *heresy*, (as they might into any other *great sin*,) and have perverted the Gospel of Christ: "Let him that thinketh "he standeth, take heed lest he fall." It is a wrong way to judge of faith by the *mens*, rather than of the men by their *faith* and *conduct*. There is no *sense* however in going against *truth*, no *learning* in contradicting the *wisdom* of Heaven, no *piety* nor *probity* in departing from *God*. *Persons* must be tried by the *rule*, and not the *rule* by their character, be it otherwise ever so high or commendable^h. Men may behave unworthy of themselves; and God permits even *wise* men and *good* men (as Solomon and David) sometimes to fall, when they grow *secure* or *assuming*, for a punishment to them, and

^f Magnus profecto nescio quis significatur magister, et tantæ scientiæ qui sectatoribus propriis non solum quæ *humana* sunt nosse, verum etiam quæ *supra hominem* sunt prænoscere posse videatur; quales fere discipuli sui jactitant fuisse Valentinum, Donatum, Photinum, Apollinarem, cæterosque ejusmodi. *Vincent. Lirinens. c. xv.*

^g Solent quidem isti *infirmiores* etiam de quibusdam *personis* ab hæresi captis ædificari in ruinam: quare ille vel ille *fidelissimi* et *usitatissimi* in Ecclesia, in illam partem transierunt? Quis, hoc dicens, non ipse sibi respondet, neque *prudentes*, neque *fideles*, neque *usitados* æstimandos, quos *hæreses* potuerint demutare. *Tertull. Præscript. c. iii.*

^h Quid ergo si *episcopus*, si *diaconus*, si *vidua*, si *virgo*, si *doctor*, si etiam *martyr* lapsus a regula fuerit, ideo hæreses veritatem videbuntur obtinere? Ex *personis* probamus fidem, an ex *fide* personas? Nemo *sapiens* est nisi fidelis, nemo *major* nisi Christianus; nemo autem *Christianus*, nisi qui ad finem perseveraverit. *Tertul. Præscript. c. iii.*

for a *trial* to othersⁱ, and for a warning to all, that they may learn to be *humble* and *watchful*, and not to trust so much to their own *worth* or *parts*, as to their *care* and *circumspection*, and God's *blessing* upon it.

Thus much being premised for the taking off all undue *admiration* of any man's person, and for the preventing any invidious *comparisons*, (foreign and useless to the point in hand,) as well as for the putting the cause upon a right issue; I now proceed to examine the merits of the debate between the Arians and the Athanasians, so far as concerns John i. 1. and Hebr. i. 10.

I. The author of Sober and Charitable Disquisition undertook to represent the Athanasian and Arian constructions of John i. 1. fairly and impartially, as indeed common equity and justice required. He begins with the Athanasian: but how soon does he discover marks of *partiality* and *unequal* dealing. He smooths over the Arian construction with all affectionate tenderness, covering even its *real* and *greatest* faults, as we shall see presently: but does he show any favour at all to the other? When he is interpreting for us, **THE WORD WAS GOD**, he presently throws in, *the self-same Being with the Father*^k. He must have known how ambiguous and equivocal^l that expression of *self-same Being* is, and that in one sense of it, it is not our doctrine, but the *Sabellian heresy*. Might it not therefore have sufficed to have said, *the same God with the Father*, or *one God with the Father*? That is a doctrine which we inviolably maintain

ⁱ *Luce clarius aperta causa est, cur interdum divina Providentia quosdam Ecclesiarum magistros nova quaedam dogmata predicare patiat: ut tentet vos, inquit, Dominus Deus vester. Deut. xiii. 3. Et profecto magna tentatio est, cum illum quem tu Prophetam, quem Prophetarum discipulum, quem Doctorem, et adsertorem veritatis putes, quem summa veneratione et amore complexus sis, is subito latentes noxios subinducat errores; quos nec cito deprehendere valeas, dum antiqui magisterii ducis præjudicio, nec facile damnare fas ducias, dum magistri veteris impeditis affectu. Vincent. Lirin. c. xv.*

^k Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 51.

^l See my First Defence, vol. i. p. 119, 232.

and adhere to, because Scripture forbids us to admit *two* adorable *Gods*. As to the question about calling them the *self-same Being*, it is a question about a name, or a *phrase*, and a *scholastic* question, invented several ages after our doctrine had stood secure, and independent of it. And when the *Schoolmen* undertook to consider this *verbal* affair, (for it is no more,) they either rejected or admitted the *expression* with proper distinctions; not scrupling to say *tres res*, or *tria entia relativa*, always meaning that the *union* was too close to admit of the name of *Beings* in the plural^m, without a softening epithet: and therefore *Being of being*, or *Substance of substance*, (not *beings* or *substances*,) has been the Catholic language. Let but those who object *sameness of being*, define the terms, and tell us what constitutes *sameness*, and then it will be very easy to tell them how far we suppose the three Persons to be the *same Being*. All the difficulties about *sameness*, or *individual*, or *numerical*, &c. resolve only into this, that we know not precisely, in all cases, what to call *same*, *individual*, *numerical*, and the like. The general notion of the Trinity is clear, but the meaning of those *terms* is loose, confuse, and undeterminate: so that the perplexity (if there be any) lies not in the *thing*, but in some dark *names*, which many use without any certain meaning. Say but what those *words* or *names* precisely signify, and it will be very easy to determine how far they are applicable to the *true notion* of the Trinity. But to proceed:

I have observed how unfairly the gentleman has dealt with our doctrine: let us next take notice, how tenderly he deals with the Arian construction of the same words. *The Word was God*, viz. a *divine Person*, a *most God-like Being*ⁿ. He should have said, *another God*, a *creature* of the *great God*^o, which is their plain and certain meaning; though they are very reserved and bashful

^m See my Second Defence, vol. iii. Query xxiii. p. 415—423.

ⁿ Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 54.

^o See my First and Second Defence, vol. i. and iii. Query v.

in the wording of that article, as they have always been, dreading to speak it out in broad terms. However, if God the Son be *God*, as the text plainly says, he must be either *another God*, or *one God with the Father*: so that if our doctrine of *one God* be rejected, *two Gods* is the consequence directly. Besides, since they must own, and do own, that he was *God* before the world was made, they should tell us, whether he was *God by nature*, or *by office*. He had no *office* so early, that I know of: it seems then, he was *God by nature*. So there are *two Gods* by nature upon the Arian principles. Therefore let any sober Christian judge which is the true interpretation of the text, theirs or ours, thus far. Now let us proceed.

The WORD WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD. That is, say we, *before* any thing was *made*. And we say it for these two plain reasons: because the order of the sentence requires it, since the account of the creation follows after; and because *all things* were made *by the Word*: therefore he was *before all creatures*. The Arian construction, as this gentleman represents it^p, is, “IN THE BEGINNING, when God created the heavens and “the earth.” Now if *heaven* and *earth* are words which signify *all creatures*, we admit the exposition: but if they mean any thing less, they are short of St. John’s exposition of his own phrase, which he interprets to mean *all things* that ever were *made*, that is, *all creatures*.

ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM, AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADE^q.

^p Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 54, 55.

^q One may observe the force of this text even upon those that came very unwillingly (and upon the whole not sincerely) into the doctrine it contained, since it obliged Eunomius himself, one of the grosser kind of Arians, but the shrewdest man of the sect, to admit thus much, that Christ must be as much superior to his *creatures*, as the *Maker* must be to the things he has *made*; and that he was really invested with *creative* powers by the Father. A remarkable concession, and such as ought to have made a *modest* man renounce all his *metaphysics*; which alone hindered him from coming entirely

Now we interpret and say, that if all things were made *by him*, then he himself must be *unmade*: and since *made by him*, amounts to declaring him *Maker* of all *creatures*, (as we shall see upon Hebr. i. 10.) we again conclude, he is no creature; because a *creature creator*, if at all reconcilable with *reason*^r, is however utterly irreconcilable with *Scripture*, which every where makes *creative* power the distinguishing character of God most high^s. The Arian construction is, "All [*other*] things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was [*then*] made." So by inserting *other* there, and *then* here; that is, by altering St. John's most express, most emphatical propositions, a *new* sense is made for him which he had *doubly* excluded, as far as words could do it. For our construction we have, 1. Express text. 2. The *order* and coherence of the sentence. 3. The *tenor* of *Scripture*, appropriating *creative* powers to God supreme. 4. The *reason* of the thing: for it is not *reasonable* to suppose that one *creature* should *create* another. 5. The *universal* judgment of the first and purest ages of the Christian Church. What is there now, on the other

into Church principles. The place I speak of is in his Apologetic, (which was answered by St. Basil,) and runs as here follows.

Τοσαύτην αὐτῷ δυνάμει διατελεῖν, ἵνα ἴχιν ἀναγκάσῃ τῶν θίων κτισμάτων ἐν αὐτῷ. πάντα γὰρ δι' αὐτοῦ γεγονῆσθαι κατὰ τὸν μακάριον Ἰωάννην ἡμελογοῦμεν, συναποκρινόμενοι ἀποδιδόντες αὐτῷ τῆς δημιουργικῆς δυνάμεως, ὡς εἶπαι Θεὸς μονογενὴς πάντων τῶν μετ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ γινόμενος. *Eunom. Apolog.* p. 281. Fabr. Bibl. Græc. lib. v. c. 23. Basil. Opp. tom. i. p. 623. edit. Bened. Conf. Basil. contr. Eunom. lib. ii. p. 255. edit. Bened.

^r A late ingenious writer argues the point, in a very rational manner, thus: "Creation, or the bringing a thing into being which before had none, or was once nothing, is undoubtedly the proper act of an *almighty* or *infinite* power: and, as must be granted, infinite power is an *incommunicable* attribute or perfection. Besides, if a power of *creating* could be *communicated*, then the being on which it is conferred, having the *same* power, might endue a creature of its *own* with such a power; and this creature might *make* another such creature, and so on *in infinitum*; which is so shocking an absurdity, that no one can bear the thought or imagination of it." *Essay concerning Rational Notions*, p. 159. printed for W. Innes, 1733.

^s See my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 53, &c.

hand, to counterbalance these reasons, or to oblige us to run cross to so many evident marks of a *true* interpretation? The author of *Sober and Charitable &c.* pleads on the other side, that the Apostle, if he had intended to teach that the Logos was *God, Creator of all things*, might have said it more *plainly*, and with less circumlocution[†]. But we think St. John has done it in *chosen* and *expressive* words, and could not have made use of better, to express what he intended, all things considered[‡]. He might have said, adds this gentleman, that “in God are three personal distinctions, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit.” But St. John was wiser than to teach *Sabellianism*, as it has been since called: the blessed three are not *personal distinctions*, but *distinct persons*; as is proved from St. John in this very place, because the *Word* was *with* God.

It is asked, could either *Jew* or *heathen* guess that he did not mean a *distinct being*[‡]? I answer, neither *Jew* nor *heathen*, who knew that St. John believed the *Old Testament*, could be so weak as to imagine that he meant to teach *another God*, or *two Gods*. However, the *Christian Church* are the properest interpreters of St. John’s meaning: why must *Jews* or *heathens*, as such, be appealed to, rather than Christ’s disciples, for the understanding *Christian* doctrine? The objector here twice[‡] confounds *personal characters* (as he had before done *personal distinctions*) with *persons*; which is not *fair* towards our side, nor so *prudent* for the other side, because it is tacitly confessing, that our notion wants to be *misrepresented*, in order to afford some *colour* for disputing against it.

He asks, “Why is it doubled over, THE SAME WAS

[†] *Sober and Charitable Disquisition*, p. 55.

[‡] See the whole explained above. Compare Tillotson, *Sermon xliii.* vol. i. fol. edit.

[‡] *Sober and Charitable &c.* p. 56.

[‡] See my *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 21, 22, 23.

[‡] *Sober and Charitable, &c.* p. 56, 57.

“IN THE BEGINNING?” To be the more emphatical against *heretics*, or the better to connect the sentence, and to introduce what follows.

“And why so minute, as to inform us, not one is to be “excepted^a?” Perhaps to foreclose, condemn, and put to shame all those who, notwithstanding such his *minuteness*, would yet be bold enough to foist in *other* there, and *then* here, to elude and frustrate his meaning: experience shows, that all his guards are *useful*, none superfluous. But if the reader desires a fuller account, he may please to look back to what I have said above^b. I have answered all the *questions*: and now let the reader judge, whether they have weight enough to bear down the Christian interpretation founded upon the reasons before recited. Yet the author is pleased to recommend the other, in very high terms: “Not a word is lost, *in that way*, every thing has a plain, proper, and obvious “sense^c.” Is it possible? Has the word *God*, for instance, its *plain, proper, and obvious* sense^d, when it is made to signify a Godlike creature? And is there not a *word lost*, when the very strongest expressions which the Apostle could use, to exempt the *Logos* from being one of the things *made*, are defeated and frustrated, by forcing the words *other* and *then* upon him, which he never wrote, and by obtruding a *sense*, which, it is likely, he abhorred? Have the words, *all things*, and *was not any thing*, their *plain* and *obvious* sense assigned them, when they are violently wrested from their *absolute* meaning to a *limited* one; and are arbitrarily clogged with reserves and restrictions, though, according to the plain letter, and other plain circumstances, they form *universal* propositions, affirmative and negative? If such liberties as these are to be taken with *plain* texts, and without any appa-

^a Sober and Charitable &c. p. 57.

^b See above, p. 182.

^c Sober and Charitable, &c. p. 55.

^d As to the strict sense of the word *God*, in that place, see my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 20, 21.

rent *necessity*, it is in vain to prescribe any *sober* rules of interpretation, or to attempt to *prove* any thing from *dead* writings. But if *words* can be of any weight or signifi-
cancy, these texts of St. John are plainly *definitive* on our side of the question: which I have shown more at large elsewhere^e. Or if the reader pleases to peruse Professor Frank's Treatise, lately translated from the German into English^f, he will there find the *Divinity* of our blessed Lord solidly demonstrated by *six* several *arguments* drawn from this *single* chapter, but compared with other texts.

I may over and above advance one more argument, fairly deducible from the distress which the impugners of Christ's *Divinity* have all along been in, with relation to this proeme of St. John, and the difficulties they have lain under in contriving to evade its force. The Alogi^g, (who appear to have been a branch of the Ebionites,) as also Theodotus^h, took the short and plain way, which was to reject the whole Gospel, as not being of St. John's inditing.

The Arians were so distressed with the same passages, that they knew not how to evade them but by a *new* invention of a twofold *Logos*ⁱ, one considered as an *attribute*, *quality*, or *operation* of God, (after the Sabellian way,) the other considered as a *creature*, made by the former. And here they were under a *dilemma* which they could never get clear of: for either all things were made by the *Logos* in the former sense, and then how was the *Logos* MADE FLESH? Or all things were made by the *Logos* in the latter sense, created by a *creature*, who must also, if the word *all* be strictly taken, have created himself; which

^e Sermons the first, second, and third, at Lady Moyer's Lecture.

^f Frank's Nucleus, or Christ the Sum and Substance of Scripture, p. 93—173.

^g Epiphan. Hær. l. i. 3. Philastr. Hær. lx. Damascen. Hær. li.

^h Epiphan. Hær. liv. 1.

ⁱ Vid. Athanasii Opp. 260, 282, 398, 409, 413, 503, 505, 620. edit. Be-
ned.

is palpably absurd. It seems that they inclined most to the former: and if we may trust to Anastasius Sinaita, that was the very construction which Arius himself espoused ^k.

Next let us inquire, whether the *modern* impugners of Christ's Divinity have succeeded any better, or whether *they* also have not betrayed the like confusion and distress. I need not say any thing of Socinus's wild and extravagant interpretation, which has long been exploded by his own disciples, and which stands now only as a monument of the wonderful virtue of strong *prejudices* and *self-admiration*. Zwicker came after, and he took the surer way, which was to deny the authenticity of the *proeme*, and to strike it out of the Canon of the New Testament. Artemonius (alias Sam. Crellius) is a later instance, and which comes as fully up to my purpose: he has been moving heaven and earth (as I have before^l intimated) to persuade us into a *different reading* of one of the *critical* words in St. John, on which much depends. He has ransacked all *antiquity*^m for authorities to justify an *alteration*; and because he could *find* none, he has *made* as many as he pleased, by mere dint of wit and fancy. Certainly St. John had some direction *extraordinary*, or was otherwise a very sagacious person, that, after the utmost improvements made in the art of chicanery, and wire-drawing of words, yet nothing can effectually do the business, even at this day, but *altering the text*; though, after all, there is no manner of countenance from any copies for doing it. One thing however I may observe of Artemonius, which, as it shows his *acuteness*, betrays at the same time a *consciousness*, or a tacit acknowledgment,

^k Arius's interpretation of the place, according to Anastasius in his *Hodegus*, runs thus:

Καλῶς εἶπεν ὁ Ἰωάννης, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, τοῦτ' ἐστὶ τὸ πῆμα τοῦ Θεοῦ. οὐ γὰρ εἶπεν, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Τίος, ἀλλ' ὁ Λόγος ὁ προφορικὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ. *Anastas. Hodeg.* p. 330.

^l See above, p. 211.

^m *Initium Evangelii S. Joannis ex Antiquitate Ecclesiastica restitutum.* Per L. M. Artemonium, A. D. 1726.

that we are in the right to interpret the word *God* in the strict sense, as we do. He argues, that it was by no means proper that the *Word* should be called *God*, lest that appellation, taken with so many other plausible circumstances, should lead men into a snare, and make them believe Christ to be *God most high*ⁿ. Now what is this but confessing, that such an inference is *natural* and *obvious*, upon the supposition that Christ is called *God* in Scripture? He saw the force of it, and the inevitable necessity we are under of so interpreting: and that consideration made him take such immense, but fruitless pains, to defeat all those texts where Christ is expressly called *God*. But if that single consideration struck this gentleman in so sensible a manner, what can we think of all the other texts, which over and above ascribe to Christ *divine* perfections, and *divine* worship also? It is plain, that Artemonius could not have been against us, had he not set out at first upon a *false* principle, that *human imagination* is the measure of *divine truths*.

II. From John i. I now pass on to Hebr. i. in order to examine whether what we find there be not altogether as *definitive* as the former. Here the author of *Sober and Charitable &c.* undertakes to give a fair and impartial account of both parties. Notwithstanding which, in his very first setting out, he represents us as direct and manifest Sabellians, against all reason and justice, and common equity. He puts these words upon us, as expressing our sense: "God may be said to make all things by "his Son, as a man to understand by his reason^o." This is not our way of speaking or thinking on the subject, (it was Sabellius's, it was Arius's,) and therefore ought not to be reported as *ours*. For what if we do not call Father and Son *two substances*, (the union being too close to admit of such expressions,) yet we scruple not to say, *Substance of substance*, like as *God of God*. We contrive

▪ Artemonius, par. ii. p. 295.

• Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 59.

our expressions so as to suit the Scripture idea of a *real* distinction without *division*, and of an *union* also without confusion. We maintain, that there may be a real *diversity* consistent with real *unity*, and that what is *multiple* in one respect, may be *one* in another. And thus we stand clear, as of *Sabellianism* on one hand, so likewise of *Tritheism* on the other ^p. The author proceeds to set forth ^q a summary of our reasonings upon Hebr. i. And he has indeed brought together a great deal more than can ever be fairly answered. But without replying to what was offered on our side, and without so much as endeavouring to show how the force of those many strong expressions can be evaded, or the words accounted for, he contents himself barely with representing the pleadings on the other side, producing our antagonists not as *respondents*, but *opponents* only. But supposing that the adversaries had ever so much to urge in that way, yet unless they could reconcile it with the words of the texts, and give a clear account of the whole, it is doing the work by halves, and can, at most, be esteemed but as a lame defence. However, by this means all our arguments from Hebr. i. are left standing in full force, and it remains only that we remove objections, to clear the whole thing. Two considerations are suggested by this author; first, that the chapter here under inquiry makes the Son *another being from God*; secondly, it makes him also an *inferior being* ^r. Let us now examine how these pretences are supported.

I. As to the first suggestion, it is to be observed, that it amounts only to a *metaphysical* subtilty about *being* and *person*, as if the words were convertible terms; which though it has been tried a thousand times over, could never yet be made out. But here we may perceive, who they are that run into *metaphysical* and *logical* niceties,

^p See my First Defence, vol. i. Query xxii. p. 233, &c. Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 421, &c. Farther Vindication, vol. iv. p. 51—54.

^q Sober and Charitable Disquisition, p. 59—65.

^r Ibid. p. 66.

to evade plain words of Scripture^s, instead of keeping close to sacred Writ, and what it teaches in full and express terms. But I would further remark, though I have occasionally hinted it before, that all this discourse about *being* and *person* is foreign, and not pertinent; because if both these terms were thrown out, our doctrine would stand just as before, independent of them, and very intelligible without them. So it stood for above one hundred and fifty years, before *person* was heard of in it: and it was later before *being* was mentioned. Therefore, if all the objection be against those, however innocent, *expressions*, let the objectors drop the *names*, and accept the *thing*. They may express the doctrine thus, if they please; that the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Ghost God, and all *one God*; and yet the *Father* is not the *Son*, nor *Holy Ghost*, nor *either* of them the *Father*: this is plainly the doctrine of Scripture, let them express it in what terms they please. Each is *Jehovah*, and yet they are not three *Jehovahs*: this is truth, (if Scripture can prove a truth,) and we need no more. But if any one has a mind to express this doctrine in such words as Justin Martyr, and Athenagoras, and Irenæus, and Theophilus, and Clemens Alexandrinus expressed it in, (before *person* or *being* was heard of,) he is at liberty as to *words*, while he admits the *sense*: for we are not bound down to *names*, but to *things*. These considerations premised, I now proceed with our author.

He objects, that the "Son is distinguished from God^u." From *God the Father*, he means: and so he should be, because *God the Son* is not *God the Father*. He adds, if "God means *God the Father*, he only must be God, for "he says of himself, he is GOD ALONE." Here I might run out into a particular explication of what concerns *ex-*

^u How common and constant the practice is, I have often observed elsewhere. First Defence, vol. i. Query xxii. p. 214, 231, 340. Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 4, 64, 109, 143, 212, 311, 396, 404, 447, 472, 474, 479.

^v See my Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 412.

^w Sober and Charitable &c. p. 66.

clusive terms: but because I have often done it before, I choose to refer^x. But in the mean while, if the *exclusive* terms are so strict, how come the Arians off with their doctrine of *two Gods*? We can give a good reason why the *exclusive* terms should yet tacitly suppose and include what so intimately belongs to God: but certainly all *creatures* are for ever excluded.

The author goes on to observe, that Father and Son must be *two things*^y. One would hope, he does not mean *two Gods*, equal or unequal: as to any thing else, we are unconcerned; we allow that the *Father* is not the *Son*, and so *vice versa*. He says further, the Son is “not the “self-same individual substance^z.” Here again the reader may observe, what kind of arguments we are attacked with: no regard to the *proper, obvious, natural* sense of the texts, but all the dispute is made to turn upon *logical niceties*, or *metaphysical* subtilties about the nature of things confessedly *mysterious*, or rather upon the meaning of *technical* terms and names, such as *individual*^a, &c. It is sufficient again to say, that the *Son is not the Father*, and yet each is *Jehovah*, and *Jehovah is one*. Either deny this to be Scripture, or say, that no Scripture can prove the point: and then what signifies arguing from John i. or from Hebr. i. it is all but empty amusement.

It is asked, can a person *begotten* be the express image of a person *unbegotten*, when the properties are so unlike^b? That our Scripture has so taught^c, is as plain as the sun: therefore the question should have been put, whether the texts shall be allowed, or shall be struck out of the Canon? As to *begotten* and *unbegotten*, they are *relations* only; and (to compare *small* things with *great*)

^x Vol. ii. Sermon iv. *per tot.* Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 30, 53, 54, 79, 92, 183, 356. Third Defence, or Farther Vindication, vol. iv. p. 32.

^y Sober and Charitable &c. p. 67.

^z *Ibid.* p. 68.

^a See my Second Defence, vol. iii. Query ix. p. 300. Query xxiii. p. 412.

^b Sober and Charitable &c. p. 68.

^c Col. i. 15. Hebr. i. 3.

Adam *unbegotten* and Seth *begotten* were exceedingly *alike*, and one the *express image* of the other, notwithstanding: so there must be something more than the circumstance before mentioned, to prove a dissimilitude, or inequality^d. But this way of prying into what is unsearchable, in order to evade plain Scripture texts, is not treating the Scripture reverently: neither is there any argument in it, any more than in a blind man's reasoning about the nature of colours. A very acute and judicious writer well says, "It is certain we cannot speak of *God* "with too great moderation. It is better to rest satisfied "with an *imperfect* knowledge of him, by being content "with *general* ideas, than to run the hazard of thinking "unworthily of that great Being, by our *rashness* in proceeding to *determinate* ideas^e." That is to say, by attempting to *determine* the *modus*, about which we have properly no ideas; or by turning ideas of pure *intellect* into ideas of *imagination*, which is equally absurd. Hitherto we have been considering, whether the Son be *another being* (by which the author means *another God*) different from God the Father: which the objector has not proved.

2. We are next to consider whether the Son be *inferior*, in nature, or perfections, or can be proved to be so from Hebr. i. It is pleaded, that God "appointed him "heir of all things^f." Therefore (for that must be the consequence, or none) he is an *inferior* God. Why then is it not said, that they are *two Gods*? However, to answer more directly, but withal very briefly; the Son's *voluntary* condescension neither *supposes* him *inferior*, nor *makes* him so.

It is further objected, that since God made the worlds *by him*, the Father only is *efficient*, and the Son the *instrument*^g. It must be owned, that the Arians, former-

^d See my Answer to Whitty, vol. ii. p. 218, 219.

^e Crousaz, *New Art of Thinking*, vol. ii. p. 80. English edit.

^f *Sober and Charitable* &c. p. 69.

^g *Id. ibid.*

ly^b as well as since, have suggested as much: but it is all fiction and fancy, without support from Scripture, confuted in this very chapter, as we shall see presently. There is no foundation in the text for any such unworthy thought of God the Son. The preposition *by* proves nothing of it; for it is frequently made use of in Scripture, when the *Father* himself is the person to whom it is appliedⁱ. But what room is there for further dispute here upon that head, when the text itself expresses the proper *efficiency* of God the Son, as fully and clearly as it is possible to be expressed? THOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING HAST LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH; AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF THINE HANDS^k. This is said of God the Son^l, who is also *Jehovah* in the Psalm from whence these words are taken: could there be any words thought on, either plainer or stronger, to express a proper *efficiency* than those are? And if those are not sufficient to ground our doctrine upon, what can we think of *sacred Writ*, (with reverence be it spoken,) but as of a book overspread with traps and snares, to deceive the Christian world? It is true, there are tropes, figures, and metaphors in holy Scripture, as when Christ is called a *door*, a *vine*, a *way*, and the like; or when God is said to have *eyes*, *hands*, *mouth*, *heart*, &c. And, in such cases, every sensible man knows, that a *literal* construction would be absurd: but in the instance now before us, here is no mark at all of any trope, figure, or metaphor, nor any reasonable objection against interpreting up to the *letter*. So far from it, that the whole tenor of Scripture confirms us in it, that Christ is *Jehovah*, and properly *Creator*: and the *worship* ascribed to him is another concurring circumstance to complete

^b Vid. Athanas. Orat. i. p. 430. Orat. ii. p. 498.

ⁱ Basil. de Spir. Sancto, Opp. tom. iii. c. 5. p. 6, &c. edit. Bened. Taylor's True Script. Doctrine, p. 347. Alexander's Essay on Irenæus, p. 148. Franck's Nucleus, p. 118.

^k Hebr. i. 10. Compare Psalm cii. 25.

^l See my Defence, vol. i. p. 67. Sermons, vol. ii. p. 37. Compare Ball. Judic. Eccl. c. v. s. 8. p. 319. Dr. Knight's Sermons, p. 51, &c.

the demonstration. In short then, those Arian salvos come too late: the text itself has, in *express* words, precluded them.

The author goes on to object: "Upholding all things, " but by the word of God's power." Dr. Clarke interprets it *Father's power*: which is a possible, not a certain construction. The text may as probably, or more probably, be understood of the Son's *own* power. However, be it Father's or Son's, it is all *one power*, and he and his Father are *one*. The author ^m adds, "Seating himself " not in God's throne, but at his right hand ⁿ." And what then? Is he not a *second* Person? But, it seems, that if he had been seated in the *same throne*, the author would then allow the *equality*. Turn we therefore to the book of Revelations, and there we find them both in one throne. It is THE THRONE (not thrones) OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB^o: and Christ himself declares that he was in his *Father's* throne ^p.

It is asked, why should angels be called upon to worship him, if he were God *equal* to the Father? "Can " they be supposed ignorant, if that were the case?" To which I reply, that though *angels* were fully apprised of his high perfection and dignity, yet as to the particular *times, places, and circumstances*, when, and where, and in what manner, they should pay their homage or devotions, they might wait for *special* orders. The Father's manifesting his Son to the world was a new and extraordinary occasion: and how should the *angels* know in what manner they were to behave upon it, without particular direction? They were ordered thereupon to repeat or renew their solemn exercises of devotion towards the Son, now become man, and clothed in flesh: as they had

^m Sober and Charitable &c. p. 69.

ⁿ What the phrase of *sitting at God's right hand* imports, is very judiciously and carefully discussed by Vitringa, *Observ. Sacr. lib. ii. c. 4, 5.*

^o Revel. xxii. 1.

^p Revel. iii. 21. Compare Zechar. vi. 12, 13. and Vitringa, *ibid. c. 5. p. 310.*

^q Sober and Charitable &c. p. 70, 71.

also special directions for celebrating his nativity, or incarnation, in devout doxologies †.

It is further pleaded, that the words, GOD, EVEN THY GOD, argue some *inferiority* of God the Son. Yes, of the Son considered as *man*² and in his state of humiliation, in which God the Father *anointed* him *with the oil of gladness*, with the unction of the Spirit, *above his fellows*; his *partners* in the same nature †, partakers of the same flesh and blood; on which account “he is not “ashamed to call them brethren.”

The author asks, *why should* not the Apostle *roundly assert* that Christ was *Jehovah*, if it were *his purpose to set* him forth as such *? Had he done it ever so roundly, a contentious adversary might still have found fault, and might have required somewhat further. The Apostle has said what is *sufficient* for the conviction of any *reasonable man*, by applying what is directed to *Jehovah* in the Psalm, to God the *Son* in this chapter. This is saying the thing roundly enough: and we are not obliged to give reasons why he has said no more, if he has said what may suffice with men of ordinary discernment. But I may hint further, that a very probable reason may be assigned why he did not take that precise method which the objector fancies he should have done. It was the Apostle’s direct design, as it seems, to prove that the *Son* was above the *angels*, in opposition, very probably, to the Simonians or Cerinthians of that time, who attributed the creation of the world to *angels*, and who looked upon *Jesus* as a mere *man*, and as such *inferior* to angels †.

† Luke ii. 13, 14. Compare Rev. xii. 11, 12.

² Ἡ θεία ἐν χρίσματι, ἀλλ’ ἡ ἀνθρώπινη. Ἰσα παρὰ τοῖς μισοχοῦς σου φησί. *ὁ* ἰσὺς δι’ ἰσὺς οἱ μισοχοῦς, ἀλλ’ ἡ οἱ ἀνθρώποι; τούτοις ἐν πνεύματι οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ ἐκείνου ἐκείνου. *Chrysost. in loc.* And so other Greek Fathers, Basil, Theodoret, Theophylact, Œcumenius.

† See Dr. Bennet on the Trinity, who explains the text at large, and very justly; excepting that he dialikes the ancient notion of the unction of the Spirit, which yet seems to be the true one, p. 31—35.

² Hebr. ii. 11.

* Sober and Charitable &c. p. 73.

† Vid. Bull. Judic. Eccl. c. v. s. 8. p. 320.

Therefore the Apostle chiefly labours these two points, namely, to prove that Christ was really *Creator*², and that he is vastly *superior* to *angels*. What he further insinuates of his being *Jehovah* comes in by the bye: and it would not have been directly to his purpose, to have insisted more particularly upon it: because even that would not have proved him (in the opinion of the heretics then prevailing) superior to *angels*, since they looked upon *Jehovah*, the God of the Old Testament, as no more than *angel*^a. However, though I assign a reason, which appears not improbable for the Apostle's saying no more, yet we have a right to insist upon it, that there is no need of assigning any reason at all for his not saying more than was *sufficient* for every purpose. There is no end of cavils when men are disposed to indulge them. The Jews sought after a *sign*, but had none more given them, after they had had *enough*. They demanded that Christ should come *down* from the *cross* for their satisfaction: but infinite wisdom would not condescend to satisfy them in *their* way, when they would not submit to other very *sufficient* and better evidences. The question therefore is not, whether the Apostle in this place has said all that *could have been said*, but whether he has said as much as was *needful*. We conceive that he has; and let those who think otherwise, consider how they can fairly evade the force of what they here find, before they require more. Let them think how it is possible to elude what St. Paul has here said to prove that Christ is *Jehovah*, though he has proved it only by the bye, and has not largely or directly insisted upon it.

I shall only add, that if the point is to be decided by the asking of *questions* in this way, let leave be given

^a Hebr. i. 2, 10.

^b Post hunc Cerinthus hæreticus erupit, similia docens: nam et ipse mundum institutum esse ab illis [angelis] dicit: Christum ex semine Joseph natum proponit, hominem illum tantummodo sine divinitate contendens; ipsam quoque legem ab *angelis* datam perhibens; *Judaorum Deum*, non Dominum, sed *angelorum* promens. *Pseudo-Tertull. Præscript. c. xviii.* Conf. Epiphani. Hæc. xxviii. 1.

to the orthodox also, to ask a few questions in their turn. If Christ be a *creature*, why is it not *roundly asserted* either in Old or New Testament? And if he and the Father be *two Gods*, supreme and inferior, why is not that also *roundly asserted*, in some part of Scripture at least? We have the more reason to expect it should, because otherwise the *contrary* doctrine hath so many and so plausible appearances of *truth*, that the most serious and conscientious persons are under *inevitable* danger of deception by them. And therefore, if we may be allowed to reason and argue with the tremendous Deity, upon the subject of his revelations, or dispensations towards mankind, none, we imagine, can with more justice, or with better grace, ask; why has not Scripture somewhere or other dropped a hint or two about Christ's being a *creature*, or about his being an *inferior* God, admitting *two Gods*, two *adorable* Deities, to prevent our falling into an otherwise unavoidable delusion? I doubt not, if that were the *truth*, but that our *Lord* himself, (whose humility is so justly celebrated,) and his *Disciples* after him, would have openly proclaimed it; and that we should have as plainly found it in the New Testament throughout, as now we find the reverse. Can we imagine that a truth of that moment (if it were a truth) should be left in obscurity, to be drawn out, at length, after more than 300 years, by Arius, Aetius, and Eunomius^b; and that by the help chiefly of *logical* conceits and *metaphysical* speculations, far above the reach

^b Clarissimis Scripturæ testimoniis argumentationes metaphysicæ argutis opponere, Eunomii est, qui ab Aetio magistro edoctus, essentiam divinam penitus ac perfecte scilicet cognitam sibi habere persuadebat. *Tam perspicue Deum quæ sit novi, ut tantam illius notitiam sum consecutus, ut ne me ipsum quidam melius quam illum noverim.* Aetius apud Epiphanium lxxvi. p. 916, 989. Eunomius ipse, majore etiam insolentia apud Socratem, iv. 7. *De sui ipsius essentia, Deus nihil amplius scit quam nos: nec illa ipsi quidem notior, nobis autem obscurior.* Fabric. Bibl. Græc. lib. v. c. 23. p. 272. Conf. Basil. contr. Eunom. lib. i. p. 224. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. lib. iv. c. 3. Cyrill. Alex. Thesaur. p. 260. Chrysost. Hom. xxvii. tom. i. p. 307. Philostorg. lib. i. p. 468, 470. ed. Valea. Gregor. Nazianz. Orat. xxxiv. p. 539.

of common capacities? Certainly, Divine Wisdom could not be so much wanting to the bulk of mankind, but would have provided better for them, in a *scriptural* way; and by plain words, that so they might be more beholden to *Christ* and his *Apostles* for their *faith*, than to the Dialectics of Aristotle, or Chrysippus's subtilties^c. But I forbear to press this further: and having briefly run through all that the author of Sober and Charitable Disquisition had to urge in favour of the Arian interpretation, both of John i. and Hebr. i. I must now leave it to the impartial readers to judge, whether any thing has been offered on that side, which can be thought sufficient to counterbalance our plain and direct evidences brought from *express* words, fixed to a certain meaning by all the approved rules of *grammar* and *criticism*, and confirmed by the *universal* suffrage of the *first* and *purest* ages. Thus far I was obliged to enter into a small part of the other controversy, which affects the *truth* of the doctrine, rather than the *importance*; because, as I hinted in the entrance, the author I am concerned with, had mingled them in some sort together. But they who desire fuller satisfaction in that other question may please to consult those treatises which are professedly written upon it. What comes in here amounts only to slight touches, and so far only as related to the texts mentioned: which though justly reckoned *definitive* on our side, are yet but a very slender part of what the whole Scripture affords us in that cause.

^c Vid. Basil. contr. Eunom. lib. i. p. 214, 221.

A D D E N D A.

Additional Illustrations referring to the respective Pages above.

Page 14. *I*DEAS of intellect, &c. The distinction between ideas of *intellect* and ideas of *imagination* is much insisted on by Des Cartes in his *Metaphysics*^a, and is explained more clearly and to better advantage in a late judicious treatise written by Mr. Crousaz in French, and now rendered into English^b.

P. 57. *The same with denying his eternal existence.* I should have omitted the word *denying*, or else have said, *the same with denying* the necessity of believing *his eternal existence*. All I meant to say was, that Episcopus (which is true also of Limborch) did not distinguish in that instance between the *eternal generation* of the Logos and the *eternal existence*; as some of the *ancients* did^c.

P. 80. *Such effects might last beyond the apostolic age.* I might have expressed myself with greater assurance, and said, that they actually did last as far down as to the *Cyprianic age*^d: nay, and if we may believe Paulinus^e, who reports it as an eye-witness, they con-

^a Cartesii Meditat. vi. p. 36. Object. v. p. 45. Respons. v. p. 78.

^b Crousaz, *New Treatise of the Art of Thinking*, vol. i. p. 16, &c.

^c See my *Defence*, vol. i. Q. viii. p. 116, 117. *Second Defence*, vol. iii. Q. viii. p. 296.

^d See Dodwell. *Dissertat. in Iren.* ii. 54. p. 191—194.

^e Quem cum interrogasset [Ambrosius] et deprehendisset autorem tanti flagitii, ait: Oportet illum *tradi Satanae in interitum carnis*, ne talia in posterum audeat admittere: quem eodem momento, cum adhuc sermo esset

tinued down to the latter end of the fourth century. From whence may fairly be accounted for, the long continuance of the phrase of *delivering over to Satan* in excommunications^f. Indeed, the use of the form remained afterwards, when such *miraculous* effects had entirely ceased: because the form had been customary from the beginning; and because it might still be understood in a sense not altogether foreign to its first intention, such as I have expressed above.

P. 90. *He may be in some measure hurt in his reputation by it, and that is all.* I would be understood here of the *general* case only^g, abstracting from particular cases and circumstances; as of *ministers*, suppose, whose *maintenance* also may be accidentally affected by it. An inconvenience common to *ecclesiastical* offices or *civil*, as often as men disable themselves from serving, either by refusing to give the legal securities, or by opposing the public measures.

P. 91. *Or to pay them so much as common civilities.* That is to say, when such civilities were likely to be interpreted as an approbation of the men and of their principles. But see this rule of the Apostle considered more at large, under its proper restrictions and limitations, by an able hand^h.

P. 110. *A wicked life the worst heresy, which is scarce sense, &c.* At the best, it is a *strong figure*, or a turn of wit, and the thought *not just* upon the whole.

in ore sacerdotis, spiritus immundus arreptum discerpere cepit. Quo viso, non minimo timore repleti sumus et admiratione. *Paulin. in Vit. Ambros.* p. 9.

^f See Bishop Hare, *Scripture Vindicated*, p. 69, 70.

^g Denique bono aut æquo non contraria est *excommunicationis* pœna, qua nulla mansuetior. Non admovet *flagra* corporibus, non aptat *vincula*, non denuntiat *mortem*, non eripit *bona*, non abdicat *dignitates*; indignis abnuit sacramenta quibus in perniciem suam abuterentur. Itaque tota et ad Dei gloriam et ad peccantis salutem est comparata. *Sam. Barnag. Annal.* tom. ii. p. 481.

^h Dr. Berriman's Sermon, in the Appendix to his *Boyle's Lectures*, vol. ii. p. 339.

But something of it may be traced up as high as to St. Bernard of the twelfth century, who argued that vicious persons were *seducers* by their bad example, and therefore were a kind of *heretics* in practice, corrupting more by their *ill lives*, than heretics, properly so called, could do by their *bad doctrines*ⁱ: and he applies it particularly to vicious clergymen; not to extenuate the guilt of *heresy*, but to enhance the guilt of such *bad example*. The thought was not much amiss, if he had not carried it too far. He should not have suggested, that bad example is *worse* than *heresy*, properly so called. It is true, that bad example commonly will do more harm than sound preaching will do good; because such example runs in with *corrupt nature*, and the other is *contrary*: but if the doctrine be on the same side, it will do infinitely more mischief; and one *loose casuist* will debauch more than a hundred others shall do who are only *loose* in their *lives*. Bad example under the check and discountenance of *sound doctrine* taught by the same person, carries its antidote along with it. But bad doctrine is a very dangerous snare: it is not merely breaking a law, but loosening the *authority* of all ^k.

ⁱ Multi sunt Catholici *prædicando*, qui hæretici sunt *operando*. Quod hæretici faciunt per *prava dogmata*, hoc faciunt plures hodie per *mala exempla*: seducunt scilicet populum et inducunt in *errorem*; et tanto graviores sunt *hæreticis* quanto prævalent opera verbis. *Bernard. Serm. ad Pastores*, p. 1732.

^k “ Who will maintain that a prince would do better in *changing* the laws “ according to his present passions, than to let them subsist, and *break* them “ every hour? Nobody. For if he observes not the laws as he should, he “ leaves them their *authority* however, with respect to his subjects and such “ other princes as are willing to observe them; which is absolutely necessary “ to society.—If it be asked then, which carriage is most *dangerous* and “ *blameable*, that of such as *violate* the laws of the Gospel which they believe “ to be divine, or that of the incredulous who *reject* the Divinity of those “ laws, because they have no mind to obey them; it is plain that the latter “ is much *worse* than the former, supposing the laws of the Gospel to be beneficial to society, which cannot be doubted.” *Le Clerc, Causes of Incredulity*, p. 88, 89.

The case which Le Clerc here puts is not precisely the *same* with the other, but the *reason* is the same for both.

Therefore Bernard strained the thought too far : and so did Dean Colet after him¹; who is the first man I have met with, that ventured formally to say (for Bernard had not expressed the figure so boldly) that a *bad life was a heresy*, and the *worst* heresy. However, neither of them intended to extenuate the guilt of *heresy* at all, but to magnify another kind of guilt, as still *greater* according to their way of reasoning, or rather rhetorizing.

Archbishop Tillotson glances upon the same thought^m, but gives a very different turn to it ; and cannot, I think, be reasonably understood of heresy *strictly* and *properly* such, but of what some have wrongfully *called* so. Bishop Taylor, a very moderate man, in a treatise written on the side of *liberty*, may be a very proper arbitrator, to clear and determine the whole dispute.

“ Men think they have more reason to be zealous against *heresy* than against a *vice* in manners, because it is *infectious* and *dangerous*, and the *principle of much evil*. Indeed, if by heresy we mean that which is against an *article of the Creed*, and breaks part of the *covenant* between God and man by the mediation of Jesus Christ, I grant it to be a *grievous crime*, a calling God’s veracity in question, and a *destruction* also of a *good life*; be-

¹ “ He sheweth plainly, that there be two kinds of heresies, one arising from *perverse teaching*, and the other from a naughty life : of which two this latter is far *worse* and more perilous, reigning now in priests.” *Colet’s Sermon before the Convocation, A. D. 1511*. Reprinted in the *Phoenix*, vol. i. p. 7.

^m Tillotson’s *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 402. fol. edit. His reflection upon those who were too censorious in charging *heresy* upon others, and at the same time too indulgent to their own *vices*, runs thus :

“ Deluded people ! that do not consider, that the *greatest heresy in the world is a wicked life*, because it is so directly opposite to the whole design of the Christian faith and religion ; and that do not consider, that God will sooner forgive a man a hundred *defects of his understanding*, than one *fault of his will*.”

N. B. Heresy, justly so called, is not a mere *defect of understanding*, but a *fault of the will* : and it is more *directly opposite* to religion than common offences ; as overturning the *authority* of a law is worse than *transgressing* it, or as *mutiny, sedition, and rebellion* are worse than common felonies.

“ cause upon the articles of the Creed *obedience is built,*
 “ and it lives or dies as the *effect* does by its proper *cause* :
 “ for *faith* is the moral cause of *obedience*. But then *he-*
 “ *resy*, that is, such as this, is also a *vice*, and the person
 “ *criminal*, and so the sin is to be esteemed in its degrees
 “ of *malignity*. And let men be as *zealous* against it as
 “ they can, and employ the whole arsenal of the *spiritual*
 “ armour against it. Such as this is *worse than adultery*
 “ or *murder* ; inasmuch as the *soul* is more noble than the
 “ *body*, and a false doctrine is of greater dissemination
 “ and *extent* than a single act of *violence* or *impurity*.
 “ Adultery or murder is a *duel*, but heresy (truly and
 “ indeed such) is an unlawful *war*, it slays *thousands*.
 “ The losing of faith is digging down a *foundation* : all
 “ the *superstructure*, of hope and patience and charity
 “ fall with it.—But then concerning those things which
 “ men now-a-days call heresy, they cannot be so for-
 “ midable as they are represented. And if we consider
 “ that *drunkenness* is certainly a damnable sin, and that
 “ there are *more* drunkards than heretics, and that drunken-
 “ ness is the *parent* of a *thousand vices*, it may be better
 “ said of this vice than of most of those *opinions* which
 “ we call heresies, it is *infectious* and *dangerous*, and the
 “ *principle of much evil*, and therefore as fit an object of
 “ our pious *zeal* to contest against^a,” &c. Thus far Bi-
 shop Taylor.

In the sum of the matter, I entirely agree with him.
 The result, I think, is, that *nominal* heresy, or an *error*
 in slight matters, not affecting the *foundation*, not hurting
 the *vitals* of Christianity, is not so bad as *real* immo-
 rality : and it is equally true, on the other hand, that
nominal immorality is not so bad as *real* error in religion,
 though in the slighter doctrines. But supposing the error
 and the maintaining of it to amount to *real* heresy, it is
 then a *vice*, and the *greatest* of vices : so the whole will
 turn upon the nature, quality, and tendency of what is

^a Taylor's Liberty of Propheying, Dedicat. p. 42, 43.

charged as an *heresy*. *Invincible ignorance* will equally excuse any *other* vice; and so is wide of the purpose.

P. 139. *All parties are for creeds under one shape or other*. It may be asked perhaps, what *creed* the Sceptics are for, who profess to *doubt* of every thing? I answer, that their pretended *scepticism* is mostly *affectation*, and they generally are as *credulous* as other men; frequently more so. If they believe less of *religion*, as some of them perhaps may, yet they are easy of belief as to any thing else. They have their *systems*, their *maxims*, their *probabilities*, (as they are pleased to call them,) which make up as long and large *creeds* as our *certainties* do: only there is this difference, that they commonly prefer a *creed* of *paradoxes*, and sometimes glaring *absurdities*, before a *rational* faith. And while we believe as much as we can *prove*, and no more, (which is believing like *wise* men,) they believe what they have a mind to, *proving nothing*, by their own confession; which is resolving all into fond persuasion and credulity.

The most considerable writer I know of, that ever appeared in behalf of general *scepticism*, (matters of faith only excepted,) is the celebrated Huetius, in a posthumous treatise^o, written, I suppose, for an exercise of wit, to divert himself and friends; unless he had some further latent view to serve the Romish cause. I may remark, that one article of his sceptical creed is, that the certainty of faith is superior to that of *sense*: a second is, that it is superior even to that of the *first principles* and *axioms* of *Geometry* P. One cannot desire any two plainer instances of the *credulity* of a sceptic. I mention not, how often he forgets the part he was to act, talking in the style of a *dogmatist*: *Sure it is*, or *It is certain*^q. Sometimes, he is *fully persuaded*^r, or *fully convinced*^s, or *certainly*

^o A Philosophical Treatise concerning the Weakness of human Understanding. Printed in English, London, 1725.

^p Huet. Philosoph. Treatise, &c. p. 15.

^q Page 28, 30, 34, 68, 75, 98, 150. ^r P. 7. ^s P. 33.

*knows*¹: at other times, he speaks of *evident proof*^u, and *irrefragable argument*^x, and *demonstration*^y, just as any *dogmatist* would do. So hard a thing is it for the finest wit even to *personate* a *sceptic* with any tolerable grace, or without perpetual inconsistency: for which reason I before hinted that I look upon *scepticism*, so called, to be little else but *affectation*. Or if there really be any such kind of men who *believe* that they *believe nothing*, that very instance is an undeniable argument of their more than common *credulity*. Indeed, for a man to fall to *arguing* and *proving* that there is no such thing as *proof* or *argument*, is much the same as if one should make an eloquent harangue, lamenting that mortal men have not the faculty of *speech*, loudly complaining that all mankind are *mutes*.

P. 141. *Our way supposes that men ought to examine (if capable, and as far as capable) in order to know that the doctrine proposed is true.* If it should be asked, what *need* of examination after so many wise and good men, and all morally *certain*; I would ask again, what need is there of studying the demonstrations of Euclid, which all the world agree in, as containing *certain* truth? A man might safely enough take them for granted, and by so doing might as soon become a *sound Geometrician*, as by the like method, in the other case, he might commence a *sound Divine*, or a *confirmed Christian*. At best, it would be resting faith upon mere *human* authority, which would be resting it on a *wrong* bottom; and, besides, would be neglecting the due improvement of the heart and cultivation of the mind.

But may there not be *danger* in examining, danger of being led to *dissent* from what is *right*, and to embrace some *error*? Undoubtedly there may. And what *conveniency* is there without some *inconveniency*? Such danger must be risked, rather than found our faith upon a wrong principle, to render it worthless or contemptible:

¹ P. 14. ^u P. 46. ^x P. 52. ^y P. 99. comp. 100, 104.

and it is better to hazard the *chance* of falling into some *error* in *faith*, than to be *certain* of committing a *greater* error in *conduct*. However, if men come with *humility*, *modesty*, and *circumspection* to the examination, and have patience to stay till they are *clear*, before they formally *dissent*, or before they declare it *openly*; there will be no great *danger* in examining every thing with the utmost severity.*

P. 142. *The phrase of having dominion over one's faith, is of obscure meaning, &c.* I did not then call to mind how well the meaning of that phrase had been lately cleared up by a very learned hand †.

P. 183. *The darkness cometh not upon it.* I referred to a very judicious critic, Lambert Bos, for the justifying my rendering of this text. I find since, that the learned Wolfius disapproves of what Bos had offered †: but I abide by Bos notwithstanding, who plainly has reason on his side. He did not insist merely upon the force of the word καταλαβῆν, but upon the *phrase*, upon the verb as joined with σκότος, or σκοτία. The examples which he gives from *sacred* and *profane* writers, of the use of the *phrase*, are all clear and full to his purpose. And if there be need of additional examples from *ecclesiastical* writers, there are several; as Origen^b, Cyril of Alexandria^c, and Theophylact^d. Clemens of Alexandria, in his comment, (if it be his,) seems to take in both the senses of that verb

* Bishop Hare, Scripture Vindicated, p. 60—63.

† Ingeniosior quam verior hęc est Lamb. Bos interpretatio—quod natura Αἰῶν sanctissima et purissima sit, nec minimam cum impuritate habet communionem. Quę notio quamvis in N. T. et apud ipsum Joannem nostrum, cap. xii. 35. occurrat, ab hoc tamen loco *aliena* merito censetur, in quo non tam quid *tenebrę* in Christum molitę sint, aut moliri potuerint, quam quid Christus in *tenebras* molitus sit, exponitur. Conf. v. 10, 11.—Itaque rectius notio illa vocis καταλαβῆν hic tenetur, quę *receptionem* aut *agnitionem* infert. Hanc enim N. T. Scriptoribus imprimis familiarem esse patet ex Actor. v. 13. Rom. ix. 30. *Wolfii Curę Philolog. et Crit. in loc. vol. i. p. 784.*

^b Origen. Comment. in Johan. edit. Huet. p. 73, 74.

^c Cyril. Alex. Comment. in Johann. p. 23.

^d Theophylact. in loc. p. 561.

into his construction of the text^e. As to the allusion to the *Gnostic* principles (I use the word *Gnostic* in the larger sense) which I suppose in the words of St. John, neither Bos nor Wolfius take notice, nor seem to have been aware of it. But if the observation be *just*, as it appears very *probable*, (and I shall say more of it presently,) that also is a confirmation of such sense of the phrase as Bos pleads for; and the two considerations taken together answer very aptly to each other, which is an argument that both are right.

183. *The ancient Magian notion of a good God and an evil God, the first called light, and the other darkness, &c.* A brief account of that ancient notion may be seen in Dean Prideaux^f, and a large history both of its rise and progress among the Pagans, in Wolfius^g. And how the same notion was revived, or augmented with new fooleries, among the heretics of the apostolical times, may be understood from a noted fragment of Basilides, preserved by Archelaus, of the third century, in his account of his Disputation with Manes^h. Now, considering that Cerinthus was among those who had adopted the old notion of a *good God* and an *evil God*, (as Epiphanius has informed usⁱ;) and so of course must have fallen in with the old Magian principles; Basilides may reasonably be allowed

^e Clemens Alex. Excerpt. Theodoti, p. 969. edit. Ox.

^f Prideaux's Connection, vol. i. p. 179. 8vo. edit.

^g Wolfii Manichæismus ante Manichæum, sect. ii. p. 48—174.

^h The fragment of Basilides is as follows,

“ Desine ab inani et curiosa varietate; requiramus autem magis quæ de
 “ *bonis et malis* etiam barbari inquisierunt, et in quas opiniones de his om-
 “ nibus pervenerunt. Quidam enim horum dixerunt, *Initia* omnium *duo*
 “ esse, quibus *bona* et *mala* associaverunt, ipsa dicentes *initia* esse et in-
 “ genita: id est, in principiis, *lucem* fuisse ac *tenebras*, quæ ex semetipsis
 “ erant, non quæ esse dicebantur. Hæc cum apud semetipsa essent, pro-
 “ prium unum quodque eorum vitam agebat quam vellet, et qualis sibi com-
 “ peteret: omnibus enim amicum est quod est proprium, et nihil sibi ipsi
 “ malum videtur. Postquam autem ad alterutrum agnitionem uterque per-
 “ venit, et *tenebræ* contemplatæ sunt *lucem*, tanquam melioris rei sumpta
 “ concupiscentia, *insectabantur* ea commisceri.” *Archel. et Manet. Disput.*
 p. 194. Fabric. Conf. Wolf. Manich. p. 177. Grab. Spicileg. vol. ii. p. 30.

ⁱ Epiphanius. Hæres. xxviii. 2. p. 111.

of as a good interpreter of Cerinthus in those articles : and since St. John very manifestly struck at several other tenets of Cerinthus, in his divine proeme, it is more than probable that what he says in verse the fifth about *light* and *darkness* alludes to the *Gnostic* notion then prevailing, and is a confutation of it^k. They pretended that the evil God Darkness *pursued* the Light, and came up to it : he asserts, that the Darkness *came not upon it*, never laid hold of it, never approached to obstruct or obscure it, but was irradiated and illuminated by it. It may further be considered, that Basilides probably flourished in the *first century*, and might be contemporary with St. John, as both Jerome^l and Epiphanius^m seem to assert : and though learned men have disputed it, yetⁿ Massuet appears to have well cleared up the point against the most material objections. Now, if Basilides himself was so early, it is so much the more likely that St. John, writing at that time, might have an eye to the pernicious doctrine then propagated by him, and by the whole set of *Gnostics*. By *Gnostics* I understand all that sort of men who derived their principles from Simon Magus, and lived in the apostolic age ; though I am aware that in a stricter and more special sense^o, the *Gnostics* may be said to have risen up in the *second* century.

^k Accordingly, Archelaus (in his dispute with Manes) confutes that hypothesis from this very text ; which is a great confirmation, not only of the construction of the phrase before given, but likewise of such application of the text as I have been pleading for. His words are :

“ Quomodo et ipse [malus Deus] cum sit omnino totus *tenebræ*, luci supervenit et comprehendit, Evangelista testimonium ferente, quia *lucet in tenebris, et tenebræ eam non comprehenderunt* !”

“ How could it be that the *evil God*, being that he is all darkness, should *come upon* the light, and *compass* it, when the Evangelist declares, that *the light shined through the darkness, and the darkness compassed it not*.”

^l Hieronym. contr. Lucifer. p. 304. Opp. tom. iv. Bened. ed.

^m Epiphani. Hæres. xxxi. 2.

ⁿ Massuet. Dissertat. Præv. in Irenæum, p. 60.

^o See Wolfius, Manichæismus, &c. p. 206. Buddæus, Eccles. Apostol. p. 344, 345, 571, &c.

P. 213. *Irenæus born in or near the Apostles' times, and was advanced in years when he wrote.* I here follow Dodwell in a matter which requires not, and indeed admits not, of a scrupulous or critical exactness. However, since Dodwell has been blamed by more than one, for his chronology in that article, I may just mention how the different accounts stand in relation to the year when Irenæus was born. According to Dodwell, A. D. 97. Grabe chooses the year 108. Tillemont, the year 120. others, 135. Massuet sets it the latest of all, A. D. 140. According to which different computations, Irenæus must be supposed either *older* or *younger* when he wrote, if he wrote in 176, or thereabouts, as most agree that he did: though some differ also as to that, setting the date of his writings ten or fifteen years lower.

P. 312. *In strictness they were not interpretations of Scripture, but rather pious meditations upon Scripture: I am sensible that some of them were intended as strict interpretations: but in the general, &c.*

To confirm and illustrate what I have here said, it may be observed, that St. Austin took into the *allegorical* way of interpreting, when he was yet but a *new convert*, because he thought it much *easier* than the *literal* way, which he was not then so well prepared for. He had not at that time (so he tells us himself^p) sufficient leisure or abilities to undertake so hard a province as the unfolding the *literal* sense, and therefore contented himself with giving only the *mystical* or *allegorical*. Could a sensible man so speak, and at the same time imagine that the

^p Et quia non mihi tunc occurrebant omnia quemadmodum *proprie* possint accipi, magisque non posse accipi videbantur, aut vix posse, aut difficile; ne retardarer, quid *figurate* significarent ea *quæ ad literam non potui invenire*, quanta valui brevitate et perspicuitate explicavi, ne vel multa lectione vel disputationis obscuritate deterriti, in manus ea sumere non curarent. *Augustin. de Gen. ad. Liter.* lib. viii. c. 2. p. 227. tom. iii. Bened.

Note, that St. Austin in the year 389, then a *new convert*, ventured no farther than the *allegorical* exposition of Genesis: but in the year 401 he undertook the *literal* explication also, in twelve books, [*de Genesi ad Literam,*] which he finished about 415.

mystical construction he pretended to give was the true mind of the Holy Ghost? Or could he conceive that he had any *certain* foundation for the *mystical* sense (so considered) before he had found out the *literal* one to ground it upon? No, surely. But thinking himself at liberty to raise any *true* and *instructive* moral from the text, he gave it as a *good lesson* to ruminare upon, rather than as a *strict interpretation* of the words before him. He, and other allegorizers like him, might apprehend that dry history, or a mere narrative of facts, would be unentertaining or unedifying to common readers or hearers, and therefore they had a mind to furnish them with proper meditations, *moral* and *religious*, to graft upon such parts of sacred Writ; that so whenever they should hear or read any Scripture history, such reflections also might occur to their minds, for improving the same to *spiritual* uses⁹. And whether such spiritual uses were really intended in such place by the sacred penman or no; yet if the words might be but aptly accommodated thereto, and were but pertinently and soberly applied, and the analogy of faith preserved, a good end was answered thereby, and true *doctrine* at least kept, if not true *interpretation*^r.

Nevertheless it must be owned that the *allegorizing*

⁹ *Eo minus vero mirandum, quod veteris Ecclesie doctoribus hæc ipsa (allegorica) scripturarum explicandi ratio placuerit, quod et illi crederent, in Scripturæ lectione unice hoc agendum, ut quæ fidem alere ac fovere, vitamque instruere possunt, inde hauriamus, reliqua non magnopere ad nos pertinere.—Prævaluit fere mystica illa et allegorica interpretandi ratio; pluribusque, ob insignem quem in vitæ fideique praxi habere videbatur usum, se commendabat. Buddæi Isagog. vol. ii. p. 1786.*

^r *Cum divinos libros legimus, in tanta multitudine verorum, intellectuum qui de paucis verbis eruuntur, et sanitate Catholicæ fidei muniuntur, id potissimum deligamus quod certum apparuerit eum sensisse quem legimus. Si autem hoc latet, id certe quod circumstantiæ Scripturæ non impedit, et cum sana fide concordat. Si autem et Scripturæ circumstantia pertractari ac discutî non potest, saltem id solum quod fides sana præscribit. Aliud est enim quid potissimum scriptor senserit non dignoscere, aliud a regula pietatis errare.—Si voluntas scriptoris incerta sit, sanæ fidei congruam non inutile est eruisse sententiam. Augustin. de Gen. ad Literam, lib. i. cap. 41. p. 132.*

Fathers did sometimes intend such comments as strict and proper *interpretations*; particularly, where they thought that the obvious *literal* meaning carried some *absurdity* in it, or else was too *low* and *trivial* to be the *whole* design of the sacred writer, or Spirit of God. They had St. Paul's example to go upon: "Doth God," says he, "take care for oxen?"^s Intimating that such *literal* interpretation, *singly* considered, was too *low* and *jejune* a sense to fix upon the law in Deuteronomy^t, and that therefore there was a necessity of supposing some *higher meaning*, and good reason for looking out for one. The like might be the case with other passages of the Old Testament, and very probably is: and so the *Fathers* endeavoured, wherever they apprehended any necessity of rising above the *letter*, to search out the *mystical* intendment; and in their searches of that kind they sometimes indulged their fancies too far, giving their own conjectures (but modestly, and within the analogy of faith) for the sense of Scripture. And what *commentator* is there that may not sometimes, or often, mistake in interpreting the *obscure* places of sacred Writ? A *good sense*, that is to say, a sense consistent with *sound doctrine*, every wise man will be sure to make choice of: but as to the *true sense* of the place, in such instances, it is what the wisest cannot often be sure of, or take upon them to warrant.

I shall only add, that in order to form a more distinct idea of the *ancient* ways of interpreting, it may be proper to bear in mind that *threefold* method of commenting which St. Jerome lays down^u; namely, the *historical*,

^s 1 Cor. ix. 9.

^t Deuteron. xxv. 4.

^u Triplex in corde nostro descriptio et regula Scripturarum est. Prima, ut intelligamus eas juxta *historiam*: secunda, juxta *tropologiam*: tertia, juxta intelligentiam *spiritualem*.

1. In *historia*, eorum quæ scripta sunt ordo servatur:
2. In *tropologia*, de litera ad *majora* consurgimus; et quicquid in priori populo carnaliter factum est, juxta *moralem* interpretamur locum, et ad animæ nostræ emolumenta convertimus.
3. In *spirituali* *Diapicn*, ad *sublimiora* transimus, terrena dimittimus, de

tropological, and *theoretical*: or, in more familiar terms, the *literal*, *moral*, and *sublime*. The first of the three looked only to the *grammatical* meaning of the words, for the information of the hearers: the other two aimed at *improving* their *morals* and *elevating* their *affections*: which ends might be, in a good measure, answered by apposite meditations upon the text, though they should not happen to be *true* interpretations. And it was that consideration chiefly, as I conceive, which made the *Fathers* take the more freedom in *moralizing* and *spiritualizing* (if I may so speak) the *letter* of sacred Writ. See the last passage which I quoted from St. Austin, intimating as much.

P. 334. *Men of as great sense, learning, and piety, to all outward appearance, as any in their times, have sometimes fallen into heresy.* I might mention Tertullian, Apollinaris, and several more^x. But it has been suggested by some persons, that according to the Scripture account of *heresy*, none were chargeable with it, but men who *knowingly* espoused *false* doctrine, who were directly *self-condemned* as teaching what they *knew* to be *wrong*, men of *vile* and *dishonest* principles, and of a *flagitious* character; in short, *monsters* of lewdness or impiety. And all this is grounded upon the scattered descriptions given of several kinds of *heretics*, in several parts of the New Testament. I have not here room to consider this whole matter at large; nor is it necessary I should, since I have obviated the main of it in the preceding sheets: but to prevent any person's being imposed upon by such suggestions, I may here throw in a few brief, and, I hope, pertinent considerations.

1. All heresies mentioned in Scripture were not of *equal* malignity. It is not right to apply to *all* what was true of *some* only; or to draw together all the ill features of several sects, or men, into one picture of deformity, and to make it serve for the picture of every individual.

futurorum beatitudinæ et cælestibus disputamus, ut præsentis vitæ meditatio umbra futuræ beatitudinis sit. *Hieronym. ad Hedib.* tom. iv. p. 186. edit. Bened.

^x Vid. Vincent. Lirinens. cap. xv. xvi. xxiii. xxiv.

2. The Apostles do not charge all the false teachers with *flagitious*, or openly *scandalous* lives, and *lewd* doctrines, but the Nicolaitans chiefly, if not solely.

3. Some others are charged with *secularity* and *selfish* views, but not all. The Apostles, having the gift of *discerning spirits*, and writing by the *Spirit of God*, might justly so charge them: otherwise many of them might have passed, and would have passed, as persons of a *fair character*, full of *godly zeal*, and *ministers of righteousness*². It was to prevent their passing for such, that the Apostles took the advantage they extraordinarily had, to *expose* the *secret* views of the men, lest they should deceive whole churches by a fair outward deportment.

4. As to those whom the Apostles so charged with *sinister views*, or *corrupt motives*, it cannot be proved that they taught what they *knew* to be *false*, or *believed* to be *wrong*: but their *inclinations* governed their *faith*, and they easily *believed* what their *passions*, *pride*, *vanity*, or *popularity* suggested to them; which is a very common case³. So that it does not appear that those false Apostles were formally *self-condemned*, or any otherwise than as all false teachers and evil doers are self-condemned, when they *might* know and do better; though many of them enjoy great *self-satisfaction*.

5. Whatever the motives of such men were, the Apostles did not anathematize them for their *corrupt motives*, but for their *corrupt doctrines*; which would have deserved the same *anathema*, though taught with the *best intention*, and most upright views, either by the *Apostles* themselves, or by an *angel* from *heaven*^b. St. John, in particular, does not say, whosoever upon *ill motives* abideth not in Christ's doctrine, or bringing not this doctrine,

¹ Gal. iv. 17.

² 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14, 15.

³ "Men are apt to *believe* what they *desire*: and the *weakest* reasons "which persuade them appear like *demonstrations*." See *Le Clerc's* whole chapter on this head, in his *Parrhasiana*, chap. vii. p. 226. Compare Causes of Incredulity, part i. c. 1, 2, 3.

^b Gal. i. 8.

“ receive him not;” but simply, “ whosoever transgresseth, “ and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, or bringeth “ not this doctrine^c :” there lay all the stress.

6. *Ill motives* would corrupt even the *best works* : so the throwing all the malignity of heresy upon the *ill motives*, is making no *fault* of the heresy at all, nor specifying any difference, in moral account, between preaching the *truth* of the Gospel, and *subverting* it : for to do either upon wicked motives is undoubtedly a *wicked thing*.

7. The design of the Apostles in exposing the *corrupt views* of heretics, was not to *justify* their *anathema*, or *censure*, (which was *just* without, because of the *corrupt doctrine*,) but to prevent the deception of the simple, who were in danger of being beguiled by flattering professions of *love* and *tenderness* towards men, and of *zeal* and *conscience* towards God : as is plain in the case of the *Judaizing* heretics, who were believing *Pharisees*, and who plausibly pleaded the *law of God*^d. To obviate such plausible and ensnaring pretences, it was very proper to acquaint the unwary, that those false teachers were really men of *selfish* views and *secular* aims^c, and were not to be implicitly *trusted* upon ever so many smooth speeches, or artful professions, whether of *friendliness* or *godliness*.

8. Lastly, let it be noted, that open declared *libertines* are not the most *dangerous* of heretics ; neither are the *wildest* heresies, though worst in quality, the most *destructive* in their consequences. Some things are too *gross* to deceive many, and too *shocking* to prevail much, or long. There is vastly greater danger of the Christian world’s running into an *half religion*, than there is of their taking up with *none*, or with one that is plainly *scandalous* : and infinitely more, in all likelihood, will at length perish for not being *good enough*, than for being *monsters* of lewdness or impiety.

^c 2 John 9, 10.

^d Acts xv. 5.

• Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

REMARKS
UPON
DR. CLARKE'S EXPOSITION
OF THE
CHURCH CATECHISM.

1 1 2

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DOCTOR Clarke's Exposition of the Church Catechism is a book which will fall into many hands, both of clergy and laity; and into some, very probably, that will not readily distinguish between the sound and the unsound parts of it, as it is a mixture of both. My design therefore is to point out such places of it as are most ensnaring, to prevent the deception of unwary readers; that so the useful parts of it may be rendered more useful, when carefully separated from such as would do harm.

Had the author expounded our Church Catechism, throughout, according to the known doctrine and principles of our Church, and according to the plain and full meaning of the Catechism itself, he might have done good service to religion in general, and to our Church in particular: and there could not have been any thing more seasonable at this juncture, when our most holy religion is so boldly insulted by profane men, and seems to want the friendly assistance of every pious and learned hand. But if this Exposition, while it contains many excellent things, is itself very defective and faulty in others; and while it aims to support natural religion and Chris-

tian morality, gives up, or too slightly maintains the most essential parts of Christian faith and worship : if in some of the most fundamental articles the author has either dropped the true sense, or disguised it, or, under colour of expounding, has been confronting and contradicting it ; then it may highly concern every faithful Minister of Christ, to remonstrate against such artifices, and to caution the less discerning readers, that they be not imposed upon by them. I have no design to detract from the just reputation of the learned author in his grave, nor to undervalue what he has now, or at any time, well written for the real service of religion : but the better he has performed in some points, the more necessary is it to take notice where he has deserved censure ; lest truth and error, good and bad, so mingled, should be imbibed together, and one should serve to recommend and ingratiate the other.

I consider further, that the very name of an Exposition of the Church Catechism carries an awful sound with it, and commands respect ; and when put to a book, that does not really answer the title it pretends to, is a dangerous snare, and may deceive many. We can never be too careful to preserve the purity, and keep up the dignity, of our Church's forms, such as our Articles, Liturgy, Creeds, and Catechism. Any foul play here, in wresting the words, and perverting the meaning, is corrupting the sincere milk, and poisoning the fountains. The Baptistal Creed in particular, which is included in the Catechism, and is expounded, as to the chief articles, in the Catechism itself, ought to be kept sacred and inviolable against all attempts, either to disguise the sense, or to elude the truths wrapped up in it. If any persons have new articles of faith, or new catechisms to produce, let them be produced as *new*, and not imposed upon us as expositions of the *old*. Let the old ones retain their *own* meaning, and their *full* meaning, and let the new ones have theirs : and so let both be tried by the Scripture-rule, to see whether the new or old be better. But

enough hath been hinted by way of preface : I now proceed directly to the matter in hand.

I.

I pass over the first twenty-four pages of the Exposition, which have several good things in them, and nothing offensive, so far as I have observed. But in page 25, the author has an observation about *worship*, which must be carefully examined. In explaining that part of the Catechism, which concerns the RENOUNCING THE DEVIL AND ALL HIS WORKS, he enumerates the *works* of the Devil, emphatically so called, namely, *lying, pride, murder, &c.* and last of all, *idolatry*. Under the head of *idolatry*, he very justly condemns the Popish practices in worshipping *images* and *consecrated elements*, and in “ setting up and praying to imaginary intercessors, angels and saints, and the blessed Virgin, instead of praying in the name of him who is the one Mediator between God and man, even our Lord Jesus Christ.” He might better have said, *instead of praying to God*: for the fault of the Romanists is not barely their offering-up prayers *in the name* of those imaginary intercessors, or their praying to God *through* them, but their praying directly *to* them, as the author himself, in the words but now cited, acknowledges. So that the latter part of the sentence does not well answer to his former, but seems rather to be oddly brought in, only to countenance a favourite groundless notion of the author^a, that their idolatry consists not in setting up *idol gods*, (the only true and Scriptural notion of idolatry^b), but in setting up *idol mediators*. He goes on: “ All which practices are manifest idolatry, worship paid to idol gods, and idol mediators.” He might have spared the latter, because *idol mediator* is a mere fiction, and the word has neither sense nor signifi-

^a Clarke's Script. Doctrine, p. 344. edit. 2. with which compare Emlyn of the Worship of Jesus Christ, p. 113.

^b See my Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 345, 346.

cancy. The worshipping of any thing, either as a medium or otherwise, is making a *God* of it, and the paying any religious worship to an idol is setting up an *idol god*. But now comes in the offensive passage, and for which the author hitherto had been only paving the way. "And indeed," adds he, "every thing is faulty of this kind, beside the worship of him alone who created the world by his power, who redeemed mankind by his Son, and who sanctifies all good persons by his Holy Spirit." Is not this as much as saying, that all religious worship is *faulty*, except the worship of the Father only? And he seems farther to insinuate the reason why the Father *alone*, in opposition both to the Son and Holy Spirit, is to be worshipped: it is because they do not of themselves redeem or sanctify, but the Father does all *by* them, and they are as *instruments* only in his hand: to him therefore, and not to them, is all glory and worship to be ascribed. The thought appears to be much the same with what another gentleman ^c has elsewhere plainly enough expressed, though speaking indeed only of God the Son. "Though the world was created by the Son, yet no adoration was due to him on that account, either from angels or from men, because it was no act of dominion, and he did it merely *ministerially*; just as no adoration is now due from us to angels, for the benefits they convey to us, because they do it merely *instrumentally*." Such, I say, seems to be the drift and purport of the author of the Exposition, in the passage above recited. He appears to have *excluded* the worship of two of the divine Persons, considering them as *instruments* only. But because I would be tender of charging any man with positions which possibly might not be his, I am content to say, that he has, at least, *dropped* the worship of two of the divine Persons, has inserted no provision, or salvo, so far as appears, which ought to have been done. This

^c Collection of Queries, p. 84.

omission of the author seems not to have been any chance slip, or occasioned by any forgetfulness, but to have been owing rather to contrivance and design: for I observe, that he is constant and uniform in the same neglect, quite through the book. In page 230, where he is professedly treating of the object of prayer, he expressly confines it to the person of the Father, taking no notice either of *Son* or *Holy Ghost*. Again he observes, page 233, that “the supreme power and perfections of God are just and *unexceptionable* reasons of praying to him;” intimating, as I conceive, that praying to any persons who are not vested with *supreme* power and perfections is not *unexceptionable*: and it is very well known that he does not ascribe *supreme* power or perfections to the *Son* or *Holy Ghost*. So that here again he seems to have *excluded* them from *worship*, and has manifestly *dropped* their claim and title to it. In like manner, page 293, speaking of the form of baptism, he interprets it of dedicating ourselves to the *service* and *worship* of the Father, but to the *obedience* and *imitation* only of Christ, and to the *direction* and *guidance* of the Holy Spirit: so that here a fourth time he has *dropped* the worship of two of the divine Persons, where it ought to have been mentioned. He speaks indeed of worshipping God the Father, “through the one *“Mediator^d,”* and “through the mediation of Jesus *“Christ^e.”* And he repeats some texts, such as Phil. ii. 10, 11 *f.* and Heb. i. 6 *g.* which are express for the *worship* of Christ, according to the common way of construing them: but he barely repeats them, not telling us whether he understands them of proper *worship*, or otherwise. This so remarkable reservedness and shyness of the author in so important an article, looks, at least, as if the intent were to throw off the worship both of the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*. But perhaps we may be able to judge more certainly of his sentiments from his other writings.

^d Page 153.

^e Page 152.

^f Page 57.

^g Page 59.

In Scripture Doctrine, published 1712, he observed^h, as from Bishop Wakeⁱ, that "we should pray to God only, and to him as our Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord." But then he subjoined a provisional salvo for the worship of God the Son, in these words: "The meaning is not, that prayers may not at all be offered to the Son, but that they must always ultimately be directed to God only, as our Father, through Christ." This *salvo*, however, was dropped in the next edition of Scripture Doctrine^k, in 1719. By which it may seem that the author had then changed his mind, as to the article of *worship*. And indeed in Modest Plea, published that same year, he contends^l for the manner of worshipping the Father *through* Christ, in opposition to every other mode or form of worship, or in opposition to the direct worship of any Person beside the Father only. The reader, I hope, will not think it a digression from my purpose, if I here examine all that has been urged upon that head in Modest Plea, since it may reasonably be presumed, that the Exposition, made by the same author, had the same views, and was drawn up according to much the same principles.

1. He pleads, that our Saviour's direction to his Disciples was, "When ye pray, say, Our FATHER." Which if he understands with utmost strictness, laying an emphasis upon *when*, as if we were never to pray otherwise, he will thereby exclude the use of all prayers but the Lord's Prayer. For undoubtedly, *when ye pray, say*, belongs as much to the whole prayer as to the two first words, and leaves as much room for a different direction (if otherwise proper) as for different prayers. But I humbly conceive,

^h Clarke's Script. Doctr. p. 362. edit. 1.

ⁱ Archbishop Wake's words are, "through faith in Christ Jesus;" referring to Gal. iii. 26. which shews that he is there speaking of a different matter, and not determining the object of prayer to the Father only. *Comm. on the Catech.* p. 130. edit. 3.

^k See Clarke's Scripture Doctrine, p. 297. edit. 2.

^l Clarke's Modest Plea, p. 177.

that our Lord's command about praying (*when ye pray, say*) will be abundantly answered, if the Lord's Prayer be but constantly joined with our other prayers, and never omitted in our solemn devotions.

2. He further pleads, that "the practice of the primitive Church, in the three first centuries, (as appears by the passages cited in Dr. Clarke's Scripture Doctrine^m, to which may be added that of Irenæusⁿ,) was to direct their prayers uniformly to God the Father, through his Son Jesus Christ." To which I answer,

If he means by *uniformly*, constantly and invariably, so as to exclude every other kind or form of worship, or prayer, the report is not true, but notoriously false. St. Thomas addressed himself directly to our Saviour, in a high rapture of devotion, calling out to him, "My Lord and my God^o." The Disciples all worshipped Christ directly as he went up into heaven^p. St. Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, prayed to Christ with his dying breath, and in as solemn a prayer as our Lord's upon the cross^q. St. Paul frequently wished and prayed for grace, peace, mercy, direction, and comfort; not from the Father *by* or *through* Christ, but from both jointly; from God the Father *and* the Lord Jesus Christ, or from Christ singly^r. Thrice he prayed solemnly to Christ, that he might be delivered from the "thorn in the flesh": once he devoutly addressed himself to all the three Persons jointly^t: some devotional acts he performed towards the *Holy Ghost*

^m Part ii. sect. 44.

ⁿ Lib. iv. c. 33.

^o John xx. 28.

^p Luke xxiv. 51, 52.

^q Acts vii. 59, 60. "Lord Jesus receive my spirit. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Compare Luke xxiii. 46. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Luke xxiii. 34. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

^r 1 Thess. i. 1. iii. 11. v. 28. 2 Thess. i. 2. ii. 16, 17. iii. 16, 18. 1 Cor. i. 3. xvi. 23. 2 Cor. i. 2. Gal. i. 3. vi. 18. Rom. i. 7. xvi. 20, 24. Ephes. i. 2. vi. 23. Philipp. i. 2. ii. 19, 24. iv. 23. Coloss. i. 2. Philem. iii. 25. 1 Tim. i. 2, 12. Tit. i. 4. 2 Tim. i. 2. iv. 17, 18, 22.

^t 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9.

^u 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

singly^u; and a noted doxology to *Christ*, as “over all God blessed for ever^x.” St. Peter also put up his doxologies to *Christ*^y. St. John also prayed for *grace*, *mercy*, and *peace*, from God the Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus *Christ*^z, not merely *through* *Christ*. And he begged the like from all the three Persons jointly^a. The Psalmist, of old time, worshipped *Christ* as *God*, and as the “Lord that laid the foundation of the earth,” the *Jehovah*^b. The holy angels of God worship him^c. The whole creation join in the same common doxology to the Father and the Son^d; not to the Father *through* the Son. So stood the practice according to Scripture accounts. As to primitive practice, in the ages next succeeding the Apostles, there are many instances of the martyrs and others praying directly to *Christ*, and abundant proofs of the worship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The testimonies have been collected by several hands, and may be seen in English, with proper remarks upon them^e. To which may be added, one general argument from what passed in the Praxean, Noëtian, and Sabellian controversies; in which the Catholics were charged with *worshipping three Gods*, and never denied the fact, as to their worshipping Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but disowned the charge of worshipping *three Gods*, asserting the unity of the Godhead in three Persons.

Now as to what the Modest Plea pretends from Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Origen, it is indeed plain enough, and no one denies, that the primitive Christians often, or generally, offered up prayers to the Father *through* *Christ*, (and *through* the *Holy Ghost* too) but it does not appear that they were *uniform* in the practice, or that *all* prayers

^u Rom. ix. 1. xv. 30.

^x Rom. ix. 5.

^y 1 Pet. ii. 3, 4. iv. 11. 2 Pet. iii. 18.

^z 2 John 3.

^a Rev. i. 4, 5.

^b Heb. i. 8, 10, 11, 12.

^c Heb. i. 6.

^d Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.

^e Bingham's *Antiquities*, book xiii. c. 2, 3. Berriman's *Review*, and *Second Review*. *Sermons*, p. 155, &c. Mangle's *Defence of Doxologies*. *Abrah. Taylor's True Scripture Doctrine*, p. 79, &c. 374, &c.

ran in that form : the contrary is evident. If any thing can be justly pleaded as to Origen's opinion, from one book *supposed* to be his, about *prayer*, it was his *opinion* only, and not his *constant* opinion, against the judgment and practice of the whole Church, and corrected afterwards by his own better thoughts in his books against Celsus, as has been often proved ^f.

3. Modest Plea goes on : " Even in the former part of " the fourth century, it does not appear (notwithstanding " the growing disputes about speculative matters) that " there was yet any thing more put into their public Li- " turgies than the general doctrines of Christianity, in " which all agreed." To which it is sufficient to answer, that it does not appear that there ever was any public Li- turgy of the Christian Church that directed all prayers to the Father only, or that did not offer up worship to Fa- ther, Son, and Holy Ghost : so that if nothing was in- serted more than the general doctrines of Christianity, we shall then have a fair and good proof from the early Litur- gies, so far as we have any accounts of them, that the faith in, and the worship of three divine Persons, were the general doctrines of Christianity in the purest and best ages.

4. Modest Plea farther urges, that " in the third Coun- " cil of Carthage, to prevent innovations then arising, it " was decreed, that when the priest stands at the altar, " he should direct his prayer always to the Father."

Yes, " when the priest stands at the altar;" and there were particular reasons for it ^g. But that very restriction shows, that in other parts of their service they were not confined to any such rule : besides that even there the glorification in the close was in common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That Council was held under Aurelius,

^f See Bingham's Antiq. book xiii. c. 2. My Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 69, 106, 366, &c. See also the late learned editor of Origen. *ωπερ εἶπε*. p. 78, 81, 82.

^g See Petavins de Tria. lib. iii. c. 7. sect. 15. Bingham's Antiq. book xiii. c. 2.

Bishop of Carthage, in the year 397, and St. Austin, Bishop of Hippo, was assisting at it. It is not very likely that such men as they should have any design to throw off the worship of the Son or Holy Ghost. St. Austin well understood the manner of praying *through* Christ, but never thought it any objection against praying also directly *to* Christ: *Oramus ad illum, per illum, in illo*^b. "We pray," says he, "to him, through him, in him."

5. Modest Plea says farther; "At this day the Church, in her solemn exhortation to priests at the ordination, directs them to pray continually to God the Father, by the mediation of our only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost." Very right: it is the ordinary rule and method of praying; but neither our Church, nor any church, ever intended to omit or set aside direct prayer to the other two Persons.

6. "The same direction is actually observed in much the greater part of the whole Liturgy, that is, in every part where either the composition or expressions are ancient." But upon due inquiry it will be found, that the *ancient* way was, to take just such a method as our Church has taken, namely, to contrive that the prayers, for the most part only, shall be directed to the Father, and not the whole Liturgy.

7. Bishop Bullⁱ "takes notice, with great approbation, that in all the Liturgies of the Catholic Church, most of the prayers are directed to God the Father." Right again; *most* of the prayers, not *all* the prayers. So it is in Scripture, so in the primitive Liturgies, and so in all Christian Liturgies. *Generally* the prayers so run, but not *uniformly*.

8. The Modest Pleader adds; "It is to be observed, says Bishop Bull, that in the Clementine Liturgy, so called, which is by the learned on all hands confessed

^b St. Augustin in Psal. lxxxv. tom. iv. p. 901. ed. Bened.

ⁱ Bull. D. F. sect. ii. c. 9. s. 15.

“ to be very ancient, and to contain the order of worship
 “ observed in the churches before the time of Constan-
 “ tine,—all the prayers are directed to God, in the name
 “ of his Son Jesus Christ, as they are, says he, God be
 “ praised, in our Liturgy.” The last words show, that
 Bishop Bull did not mean it of *all* the prayers, but of the
most only, as is the case in our Liturgy, which he men-
 tions as parallel. Indeed, Bishop Bull’s thoughts were
 intent upon quite another matter than what he is here
 cited for; designing only to say, that *no* prayers were an-
 ciently offered up to *angels*; which made him say *all*, in
 opposition to that only. His words are these:

“ In the Clementine Liturgy, so called, which is, &c.
 “ —there is not one prayer to be found, from the begin-
 “ ning to the end of it, made either to angel or saint, (no,
 “ not so much as any such prayer as this; O Michael, O
 “ Gabriel, O Peter, O Paul, pray for us,) but *all* the
 “ prayers are directed to God, in the name of his Son
 “ Jesus Christ, as they are (God be praised) in our Li-
 “ turgy ^k.” However, if the Modest Pleader had not
 been too much in haste, he might himself have looked
 into the Clementine Liturgy, and there have seen, with
 his own eyes, one very solemn and pompous prayer ^l, di-
 rected entirely to God the Son, and part ^m of another, be-
 sides many doxologies directed to God the Father, Son,
 and Holy Ghost ⁿ, not to the first Person only *through*
 the other. And now, if all this may be met with in that
 very Liturgy, though it is generally supposed to have gone
 through Arian hands, and to have suffered corruption by
 them, what might we not have expected more to our pur-
 pose in the same Liturgy, had it come down to us entire,
 as at first drawn up by the orthodox compilers.

9. There is one plea more which is much insisted upon

^k Bull’s Posthumous Works, vol. ii. p. 476.

^l Constitut. Apostol. lib. viii. c. 7.

^m Ibid. lib. vii. c. 43.

ⁿ Ibid. lib. viii. c. 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 29, 38, 39, 41.

through several pages °, to this effect; "Whether the
 " Son and Holy Ghost be equal or not equal to the Fa-
 " ther;—whether consubstantial or not consubstantial,
 " yet to worship uniformly the one God the Father
 " through Christ,—to direct all our praises, prayers, and
 " petitions, primarily to the Father, through the merits
 " and mediation of the Son, is undoubtedly, upon all
 " hypotheses, right and sufficient in practice, without
 " any danger of error or mistake; being what all sin-
 " cere Christians might easily and most safely agree in,
 " and indeed all that they promise at their baptism."
 This reasoning is fallacious, and goes upon several weak
 and false suggestions. How can the throwing out the
 Son and Holy Ghost from direct worship be *right* and
sufficient upon all *hypotheses*, when upon the hypothesis
 that the three Persons are *equal*, and are all together the
one God, (which is something more than an *hypothesis*,)
 they have all an equal claim to divine worship, and ought
 to be honoured accordingly? But Christians may safely
 join in prayers made to the Father only! Very true, and
 they may safely join also in some prayers, particularly in
 the Lord's Prayer, where no mention at all is made of
Jesus Christ. And might not a Deist argue, from parity
 of reason, for the throwing out Christ *Jesus*, that so both
 Christians and Deists may agree in one Liturgy, directing
 all prayers to the one eternal God? If it be said that nei-
 ther the precepts nor examples found in Scripture will
 permit Christians thus to curtail their prayers to oblige
 the *Deists*, the same I say as to orthodox Christians,
 that neither will the Scripture rule, or apostolical prac-
 tice, or the very reason of the thing permit, that they
 should totally lay aside the direct worship of God the
 Son or God the Holy Ghost. It is in vain to cast about
 for any far-fetched reasons, colours, or pretences in a
 plain case. Supposing it not necessary that all doc-
 trines, even though very important, should be expressed

• Modest Plea, p. 178—182.

in a public Liturgy, (though if they were, I should not think it at all improper or amiss;) yet certainly the Liturgy should be so contrived, as effectually to point out the *object of worship*. If the supplicants cannot agree about the very object of worship, I do not see how they can at all unite in one common Liturgy, or so much as hold communion with each other. Indeed all should agree to take Scripture for their *rule*, and the practice of the three first centuries for the *model* of their worship. This is the shortest and best way of composing all differences: they that refuse it are justly blameable, and are the dividers of the Christian Church; and be it at their peril who do so, as they will answer it at the great day of accounts.

I have now run through every thing that carried any face of argument in Modest Plea, for worshipping *uniformly*, as he calls it, God the Father through Christ. Upon the whole, it may appear, that there is no such *uniform* method prescribed by Scripture, or apostolical practice, or the custom of the Church of Christ in the first and purest ages. If our paying worship *to*, as well as *through* the Son or Holy Spirit, be what the author of the Exposition condemns as *faulty*, then, say I, *faulty* were all or most of the primitive martyrs in their dying breath; *faulty* all the ancient churches of Christ; *faulty* St. Stephen, St. Paul, and St. John; *faulty* our blessed Lord himself, (with reverence be it spoken,) who has commanded us not barely to worship the Father *through* the Son, but to "honour the Son even as we honour the "Father P;" and has also instituted the form of Baptism in the name "of the Father, and of the Son, and of the "Holy Ghost:" not in the name of the Father only, *through* the Son, and *in* the Holy Ghost, as some of the ancient Arians would gladly have turned it^q. I hope the reader will pardon me for dwelling so long upon this high article: it is no *speculative* matter, but strictly *prac-*

^p John v. 23. See my First and Second Defence, vol. i. and iii. Qu. xix.

^q Vid. Theodor. Lect. Eccl. H. p. 576. edit. Cant.

tical, and of the greatest concernment. To rob our blessed Lord and the blessed Spirit of all religious worship is blasphemy and sacrilege. It is what the ancient Arians durst never venture upon; so strong was the force of Scripture and universal practice, as to make them act even against principle. The Socinians themselves, most of them, driven to it by plain dint of Scripture, plead warmly for the divine worship of Christ, and give no quarter to them that disown it. The Racovian Catechism itself is express both for *adoration* and *invocation* of Christ, and does not allow them to be *Christians* that reject it^r. So essential to Christianity is the worship of Christ, in the judgment even of adversaries, who, if they are therein less consistent than others, yet appear more pious, and have a greater reverence for *Scripture*. However, all that I positively charge the Exposition with is, *dropping* the worship of two of the divine Persons, and taking no care (where it ought to have been taken) to enforce and secure it, or so much as to make mention of it. Having done with this important article, I shall be shorter upon the rest.

II.

I have nothing further to observe of the Exposition, till we come to page 40, where the reader will find these words of the Catechism :

Q. What dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy Belief?

A. First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world.

^r Quid vero sentis de iis hominibus qui Christum nec invocandum, nec adorandum censent?

Quandoquidem illi demum Christiani sunt qui Jesum agnoscunt esse Christum, seu caelestem illum populi divini Regem, ac porro eum divina ratione colunt, ejusque nomen invocare non dubitant, qua de causa supra vidimus Christianos ita describi, quod nomen Domini Jesu Christi invocent; facile intelligitur, eos qui id facere nolunt, Christianos hactenus non esse, quamvis alioqui Christi nomen profiteantur et doctrinae illius se adhaerere dicant. *Cateches. Eccles. Polon.* p. 172, 173.

Secondly, In God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind.

Thirdly, In God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God.

I take the more notice of this part of the Catechism, because the author has neglected it. He has transcribed it, as he found it, placing it at the end of the Creed, but we see no more of it. He goes on afterwards to expound the Creed in his way, but says nothing of *God the Son*, or *God the Holy Ghost*; that is, you hear no more of their *Godhead*. He never asserts the Divinity of either, never so much as gives them the title of *God*. What the compilers recommended *chiefly* to our faith, he silently passes over; and instead of recommending the same doctrine, seems to throw it quite out. This is not doing justice to our Church Catechism, nor answering the title of the book: expounding is one thing, expunging is another. Since this was the design, the fairer way would have been to have said, the *Church Catechism explained and corrected*, rather than to have given the title of an *Exposition* to the *whole*, which belongs only to a *part*. I thought it not improper to take notice of this, though it may appear slight, because it is really of weight: for great impositions often arise only from words and names. But I pass on.

From page 42 to page 49, the author has some previous observations, to prepare his way for what he intended upon the Apostles' Creed. The sum is, that he is to interpret the Creed by *Scripture*, that is, by his own sense of Scripture; not considering that he had undertaken to expound the Catechism, which had interpreted the Creed to quite another sense, and thereby precluded all further tampering with it; unless an expositor's business be to set one part of the Catechism against the other, and to contrive that the whole may hang loosely together. It is impossible to reconcile the principles laid down in the Exposition, with what the Catechism plainly means by *God the Son* and *God the Holy Ghost*, as

taught in the Creed. The Church Forms ought most certainly to be interpreted according to the mind of the Church that made them: and if so interpreted they appear not to agree with Scripture, they are to be rejected as *false*, and not strained to a sense not their own, in order to make them *true*. The Scriptures in this case are indeed the *rule of truth*, but not the *rule of interpretation*. They are the rule for *receiving* any forms, but not the rule for *understanding* them. Their *meaning* is first to be judged of, from the natural force of the words, the intent of the compiler, and the laws of true criticism: and then indeed after that, their *truth* is to be judged of by their conformity to Scripture^s. But to proceed.

Page 45, the Exposition says, "In things fundamental, "in things required as of necessity to eternal salvation, it "is evident this rule (of Scripture) ought to be so plain, "that no honest careful mind, even of mean capacity, to "whom the sermons of Christ and his Apostles have "been distinctly rehearsed, can be in any danger of mis- "taking." This is plausible talk, and it is obvious enough to perceive for what purpose it is brought. I shall examine further into it presently: but in the mean while, let me observe what will follow on supposition that this principle is true and just. First, it will follow, that it is not necessary to salvation to believe that the Father *alone* is necessarily existing, since innumerable very *honest* and *careful* minds, and of no mean capacities, ever since the days of the Apostles, have been in such danger of mistaking here, (if it be a mistake,) that they have lived and died in a disbelief of it. Secondly, it will further follow, that it is not necessary to salvation to believe that the Father *alone*, or absolutely speaking, is the God of the universe, exclusive of the Son and Holy Spirit: for this also is a doctrine, which the Christian world in a manner, of very *honest* and *careful* minds, never could be convinced of. Thirdly, it will farther follow, that none of

* See Case of Arian Subscription, vol. ii. p. 294, 295.

the propositions in *Scripture doctrine*, so far as they are contrary to our Church's doctrine, are of necessity to salvation, for the reasons before assigned. Fourthly, it will likewise follow, that it is by no means necessary to salvation to believe that all religious worship, or all prayers are to be directed to the Father: for innumerable good Christians, martyrs on earth, and now saints in heaven, were of a very contrary persuasion. Fifthly, it will follow, that the belief of the Apostles' Creed, as interpreted in the Exposition, (and of which we shall treat in its place,) is not necessary to salvation, because it was never before so interpreted, or so understood by the generality of Christians, ancient or modern, of the most *honest* and *careful* minds. These several corollaries seem naturally to follow from the principle laid down in the Exposition; and they appear to be full of comfort and consolation to as many as reject the new schemes. Nevertheless, I must own, that I have not confidence enough to trust in the principle itself; nor do I take it to be either a *safe* or a *true* principle. It is a wrong way of judging of *fundamental* doctrines, and will not help us at all in it. 1st, Because there is no truth whatever so *plain* and evident, but it may be obscured and darkened to such a degree, that common Christians may be puzzled and confounded, and no longer think it *plain*. I except not the doctrine of the existence of a God, the plainest of any, provided common Christians be but admitted to atheistical disputations, or to the reading of pamphlets written by profane men. 2dly, I dislike the principle the more, because any Jew or Deist may proceed upon it, and say, that the proofs upon which the Christian revelation rests (*miracles* and *prophecies*) ought to be so plain, that no honest and careful mind, though of mean capacity, can be in danger of mistaking; and may farther urge, that Deists, Jews, Pagans, and Mahometans, (some of them sure of honest and careful minds,) have attended to and considered those supposed proofs, and yet have rejected them. 3dly, If Christianity were thus thrown off, and every

other religion but *natural religion*, I know not how much even of that might go off next, upon the same principle, and by the same rule, as soon as artful disputers have contrived to puzzle and perplex whatever they dislike, that it shall be no longer *plain* to common capacities, though of honest and careful minds. Suppose, for instance, *freedom of will*, and the *immortality of the soul*, and a *future account*, to be fundamentals all in natural religion; yet let but an artful disputant once take those subjects in hand, and do what in him lies to darken and perplex them, and I do not say that many an honest countryman, but many a half-scholar too, may not know what to think of those supposed *plain things*, but may be quite confounded. 4thly, In the last place, I dislike the rule, because I think it will leave every man just where he was before, and not at all the wiser as to pitching upon fundamental doctrines. For every one will choose according to his own taste, and will be sure to leave out whatever he takes to be obscure. The author of the Exposition, no doubt, intended to leave out the real *divinity* of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, because not plain to him: and it is for that very purpose his rule seems to have been calculated. A Sabellian would strike out their *personality*, because not *plain* to him; and so others, other articles, for the like reason. One is not clear about the doctrine of *works*, inclining rather to the *Solifidian* or *Antinomian* principles; another is not satisfied about the possibility of a *resurrection*; a third is doubtful about *hell torments*, and so on. Was there ever any man of any persuasion that would allow the contrary persuasion to be *plain* to honest and careful minds? A plea which will equally serve in all cases will serve in none; nor will it be of any use to shorten or decide disputes. Upon the whole, I should think it much better to say, that whatever can be proved to be taught in Scripture, and in the first and purest ages, as of necessity to salvation, is now also necessary to all Christians, but in such a degree as they are capable of knowing or doing it. Allowances

must be always made for want of capacity or opportunity, and for insuperable prejudices; as to the strength of which, and how far they are pleadable at the bar of judgment, before a merciful Judge, we are not commissioned nor qualified to determine, but must leave to an all-knowing God. As to marking out any particular catalogue of fundamentals, or prescribing such a certain quantity of faith^t, as sufficient for salvation, it would be an idle attempt, and very solemn trifling: for the same fundamentals would no more suit every man, where capacities and circumstances are so different, than the same quantity of food every stomach or constitution: but there are some truths, both in natural and revealed religion, of greater importance than others, and more obvious also to be known; and these we are more especially bound to believe and maintain, not rejecting or despising the other, but paying them the respect due to their weight and worth, be it less or more. And when I say *we* are bound, I would be understood to mean it, in different proportion and degree, according to the almost infinite variety of men's capacities, opportunities, or outward circumstances. And as to the *importance* of any article, that may be judged of according as it more or less affects the whole system of the Christian religion, (as there is a difference between the main *beams* and the *rafters* in a building,) or as it is more or less connected with the two great commandments, the *love of God*, and the *love of our neighbour*. I had almost forgot to take notice of the author's saying, "to whom the sermons of Christ and his Apostles *have been rehearsed*," instead of saying, to whom *the Scriptures of the New Testament have been made known*. I hope he was not in the sentiments of those who are for fixing the *fundamentals* from the Gospels and Acts only, setting aside the Epistles as of no weight in the case, because *occasionally* written, after every thing material had been settled and established. I see no sense

^t See my *Critical History of the Athanasian Creed*, vol. iv. p. 309.

or truth in that principle, nor why we are to make a distinction where God has made none.* Every part of the New Testament is equally *inspired*, and the whole taken together is our rule of necessary faith and practice. I know not why men should single out a part only, preferring it to the rest, except it be that they care not how little religion they embrace, and are afraid of being overburdened with revelations from God. I do not charge the author of the Exposition with making any such distinction; I am persuaded he does not; only as his manner of expressing himself might seem to give some countenance to it, it could not be improper to enter a remark upon it against those that do.

In page 48, 49, the author has a fling upon Creeds, which deserves some notice. He says, "Into the Form" (Office he means) "of Baptism, and into the Catechism, "and into the Order for the Visitation of the Sick, the "Apostles' Creed only has very wisely been put, as being easy, and clear, and intelligible to all, and not mixed with any matters of doubtful disputation." It is a narrow and a partial way of thinking, to judge of the *wisdom* of every thing, or any thing, only by its falling in with one's particular taste or favourite opinion. No doubt but his compliment upon what has been so *wisely* done means no more than this, that it was *wise* to choose a creed which is shortest and least explicit on the doctrine of the *Trinity*. Happy for us that we live in the west, and were once in communion with the Church of Rome, to which we are obliged for this Creed. Had we happened to be of the Greek Church, we might have had the Jerusalem Creed, or Nicene, in those Offices, both older than the Roman, (as it now stands,) and both more explicit upon the doctrine of the *Trinity*. The Creed called the Apostles', or Apostolical, has had a particular respect paid to it, because, by a *vulgar error*, derived from the fifth century, it had been conceived to have owed its birth to the Apostles themselves; though it is really nothing else but the Creed of the Roman Church,

and called Apostolical, because the Roman see has had the name of Apostolical^u. Our Reformers, who compiled our Offices, were scarce yet free from the prejudices of the vulgar error that had long obtained, though Valla and Erasmus had before smelt it out. Later critics, as Gerard Vossius, and many more, have demonstrated the fabulousness of that ancient tradition. Had our reformers been *wise* enough at that time to see it, it may be doubted whether they would have paid so much respect to this Creed: so that it is wrong to commend their *wisdom* in it, when it might be more owing to their *simplicity*, and to the then infant state of *criticism*. However, in the Communion Office, which is as sacred and solemn an office as any, the Nicene (Constantinopolitan) Creed has been *wisely* inserted, after the example of the Spanish, Gallican, German, and lastly, Roman Offices: and the Athanasian also has been as *wisely* honoured with a place in our Liturgy, after the like precedents. I must observe further, that as Creeds were at first chiefly contrived to be as *tests* against heresies, and to guard the essentials of faith, it is no commendation of a Creed that it runs in *generals* only, if there was any occasion or necessity for being more *particular*; for then the Creed would not answer its principal aim and end. The Roman Church having been less disturbed with heresies than the eastern churches, was content with a shorter Creed: had circumstances been different, we should have found their Creed more *explicit*, like the eastern. It would not be a wise thing in any church to choose the shorter and more general Creeds, when the ancient faith is endangered by heresies, and wants more *explicit* professions to secure it. Novelists, without question, will commend the *shorter* Creeds, as standing least in their way; but they that value the *ancient faith* must for that very reason prefer the *larger*. What one thinks *wisely* done, as most suit-

^u See Wall's History of Infant Baptism, part ii. c. 9. p. 507; also my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 196.

ing his purpose, if he judges right, does as good as tell the opposite side, that it was *not wisely* done for them, and may be a hint sufficient to awaken their caution. As to the pretence about a shorter Creed being more *easy, clear, and intelligible* to all, it is colour and appearance only. The shorter generally a Creed is, the more *obscure* and *ambiguous*, and the harder to fix the sense, or to know precisely what the words mean. To determine, for instance, what the words *only Son, or Lord*, means in the Roman Creed, is not so easy or obvious, as in the eastern Creeds, which are larger and more explicit. But it is indeed easier to *pervert* the sense of a short Creed, and to wrest it to a foreign meaning, or to what the interpreter pleases to call *easy, clear, and intelligible*; that is, to his own favourite hypothesis, *clear* to be sure, and *easy* to himself; for who ever suspects his own judgment, or does not think his own notions clear and intelligible? However, I must observe farther, that what we are chiefly to consider in such cases, is not so much what lies level to the imagination, or is easy to conceive, as what may be *clearly* proved to be *true*. There may be *mysterious* truths, which are not therefore to be rejected because *mysterious*, unless we reject *eternity, immensity, self-existence, omniscience*, and the like; because not so easy to conceive as a definite time, or a limited presence, or a being that had a beginning, or finite knowledge. Every wise man would choose a doctrine the rather for being *clear* and every way intelligible, other circumstances being equal; but still the first and best recommendation of it must be its *truth*. But to return to the Apostolical Creed, so called; what I affirm of it, and shall show presently, is, that it contains the same truths briefly wrapped up, which the larger Creeds express in more direct terms. It is not at all clearer, or less mysterious as to the *things* themselves; and as to the *words* of it, it is, because short, more ambiguous and obscure, not so easily seen into at first view: so that, after all, its boasted clearness amounts only to this, (as before hint-

ed,) that its real sense is not so fully and plainly expressed, but is the most liable of any to be misconstrued and misunderstood.

III.

In page 49, the author enters upon his exposition of the Creed. He tells us, p. 52, that the "reason why *God*, "in the first article, is styled *the Father*, is to denote that "he is the original Author or Giver of life to all the intelligent beings in the universe." And he adds, p. 53, "This is the sense first and principally intended in this "first article of the Creed." But this, with submission, is a very great mistake, and is setting out with an error: for *Father*, in the first article, principally means Father of his *only Son*, and has reference to it. I am unwilling to suspect that the author here had any covert design to *exclude* the Son and Holy Ghost from being, with the Father, *Author or Giver of life* to all intelligent creatures, or to *include* them among the other *beings* of the *universe*, to whom the Father is *Giver of life*. However that be, his construction of *Father* in this place is wide and foreign. Cyril and Ruffinus, the oldest expositors we have extant, understood better. "When you hear the (name of) *Father*," says Ruffin, "understand Father of a Son, which "Son is the image of the substance aforesaid *." Bishop Pearson, speaking of such paternity as the Exposition mentions, says, "It is not the principal or most proper explanation of God's paternity; for as we find one Person in "a more peculiar manner the Son of God, so we must "look upon God as in a more peculiar manner the Father "of that Son.—Indeed I conceive this, as the most eminent notion of God's paternity, so the original and "proper explication of this article of the Creed †." His

* Patrem cum audis, Filii intellige Patrem, qui Filius supradictus sit imago substantiæ. *Ruffin. in Symb.* p. 18. edit. Ox. Οὐ γὰρ δι' ἑνὸς εἰς ἓνα Θεὸν πιστεύομεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ, κατέφα τῶντων ἵνα μοι γινῶσι, κ. τ. λ. *Cyrril. Catech.* vii. c. 1. p. 113. edit. Bened.

† Pearson on the Creed, article i. p. 30, 31.

reasons are, 1. Because the ancient Fathers deliver no other exposition of it. 2. Because the first occasion, rise, and original of the Creed itself requireth this, as the proper interpretation. He refers to the form of Baptism, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," where Father and Son are plainly correlates. 3. I shall only add, what is hinted by that most learned and judicious expositor, that God was undoubtedly Father of his Son before he was Father of the universe, and therefore that paternity, as the first and highest, must be principally, if not solely, here intended: no one that had not an hypothesis to serve could possibly mistake in so plain a case.

He proceeds, p. 53, to explain the title *Almighty*, ascribed to God the Father in the Creed; which he understands of supreme dominion and absolute sovereignty; and that not only over *creatures*, as other interpreters do, but over the *Son* himself in his highest capacity: and for fear it should not be understood, he expresses it very emphatically in these words, p. 54. "That sovereignty by which the Son himself, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, even the fulness of the Godhead bodily, was sent forth to recover, &c." This is a novel and strained sense of the Creed, unknown to the ancients, and for which there is no proof in Scripture, nor indeed colour. The author's principles, as to this article, may be seen more at large in a polemical treatise of his formerly published^z. There he contends warmly for a *natural* superiority of *dominion* over the Son in his highest capacity, and over the Holy Ghost of consequence: a doctrine opposite to all Christian and Catholic antiquity for the first three hundred years and more^a. All ancient interpreters of the Creed take care to except the Son and Holy Ghost out of the number of those things that the

^a See Dr. Clarke's Observations on my Second Defence.

^z See my Third Defence, vol. iv. c. 5. p. 64, &c.

Father bears rule over, as he is *Almighty*; or they take the Son and Holy Ghost into partnership in that rule, inasmuch as the Father rules over all things with and by them. Now might one not justly wonder that the Apostles' Creed should be thought so very *plain* and *intelligible*, and yet the expositor should mistake the meaning twice in the very first article, in *Father* and in *Almighty*? It never was the intent or meaning of the Creed, that the Father should be here called *Almighty*, or *Ruler over all*, in opposition to, or derogation of, the *natural* sovereignty of God the Son. For it is certain from Scripture^b, and acknowledged by all antiquity^c, that God the Son is *Almighty*, (is παντοκράτωρ,) *Ruler over all*, as well as God the Father, and holds the same natural sovereignty and supreme dominion in common with him. And it is somewhat peculiar that the author should mention the title of "King of kings, and Lord of lords^d," as applied to Christ, which is a distinguishing character of God supreme, and yet endeavour to subject him in his highest capacity to a higher dominion. I may take notice also, by the way, of the author's being misled here, and again, p. 60, by the translations to say, that it "pleased *the Father* that in "him should all fulness dwell^e," when the Greek is, *in him all fulness pleased to dwell*, or *it seemed good that in him should all fulness dwell*; which is elsewhere interpreted, "all the fulness of the Godhead *bo-dily*^f;"—very strong expressions to signify his true and eternal Godhead^g, and his absolute exemption from any natural or necessary subjection, which can belong to creatures only. But I must not forget to take notice of the author's citing 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. to insinuate his

^b See my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 136, 137, &c. First Defence, vol. i. p. 319. Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 227.

^c See my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 138. Third Defence, vol. iv. c. 5.

^d Rev. vii. 14. xix. 16.

^e Coloss. i. 19. Ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἠθέλησεν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα κατοικῆσαι.

^f Coloss. ii. 9.

^g See my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 156, &c. Abr. Taylor's True Script. Doctr. p. 171, &c.

notion of the Son's *subjection* in Scripture phrases : " Shall " again," says he, " at the end deliver up the kingdom " to God, even the Father, and be himself subject unto " him that put all things under him, that God may be all " in all." The easy, obvious, and natural construction of the place is this : that as all things descend from the Father by the Son ; so by the same Son do all things ascend up to the Father. The Father draws all his elect unto himself by and through Christ their head : as soon therefore as all things are put under Christ, and become his, they will of course become the Father's also, because Christ himself, as a Son, is referred up to the Father, and is subordinate to him as Head. I say, *subordinate*, rather than *subject*, (for the Greek *υποταγῆσθαι* will express either,) because the creatures will be subject in quite another manner and degree than Christ can be. They will be subject as *servants* to their *Lord*, as *creatures* to their *Creator* : he will be subordinate only, as a *Son* to a *Father*, and as partaking of the same common dominion with him over the whole creation. The Son therefore is represented in the heavenly Jerusalem, as making but one *temple*^h with the Father, and one lightⁱ, and seated on the same *throne*^k. It is absurd to imagine, that the Son will then be more subject than he is now, that his *triumphant* state shall come short of his *militant*, and that he is to *decrease*, when all his saints and servants are to *increase*. No : but as he was always subordinate to the Father as a Son, so will he *then* be also^l, when he shall have subdued all enemies, and shall bring all his friends with him, uniting them by himself, the band and cement of union with the Father. Then shall he reign in peace, and of his kingdom shall be no end. His Father also

^h Rev. xxi. 22.ⁱ Ibid. xxi. 23.^k Ibid. xxii. 1, 3.

^l 'Υποταγῆσθαι δὲ ὅχι ἔστι τότε ἀρχεται σὺνδραχῶν τῷ πατρὶ, (αὐτὸ γὰρ τὰ ἀριστὰ αὐτῷ καὶ πάντοτε) ἀλλ' ἔστι καὶ τότε ὁ πατὴρ, ὃν ἀναγκασθὲν ὁ υἱὸς ἔχει, ἀλλ' αὐτοπραξίῃσιν ἐπιτιμιῶν ἢ γὰρ δούλος ἐστίν, ἢ ἀνάγκη ὑποταγῆ· ἀλλὰ υἱὸς ἐστίν, ἢ αἰμαρίῃ ἢ φιλοστοργίᾳ πισθῆ. *Cyrrill. Hierosol. Catech.* xv. cap. 30. p. 240. edit. Bened.

shall reign by him and with him, and be acknowledged still as his Head and Father to whom he is referred. The Son will then be "all, and in all," and "God over all," as well as he is now^m, and the Holy Ghost with him; and the Father yet more emphatically and eminently so, as *first* in order, and head of both. Such is the scale of existences, such the order and economy by which all good men, and good angels too, ascend up, in the Holy Ghost and by the Son, to the supreme Father, and so have their union with him, and life from him. There is nothing in all this, that intimates any *natural* or *necessary* subjection of two of the Divine Persons to one; nor any *inequality* of nature or perfections amongst them: but there is a natural supremacy of *order* belonging to God the Father; and to him, as Fountain of the Deity, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from him, are referred.

The Exposition proceeds, p. 56, to the second article of the Creed: AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD. And here the author tells us, (p. 68.) that "Christ is in a singular, in a higher and more peculiar manner, (than angels, Adam, or good Christians,) the Son, and therefore the only Son of God." Here is some confusion in this account, making *Son* and *only Son* equivalent and tantamount, as we shall see in the sequel. But the author goes on: "and that likewise upon different accounts: first upon account of his being conceived of the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner, and THEREFORE (said the angel to the blessed Virgin) HE SHALL BE CALLED THE SON OF GOD. Luke i. 35. To which I answer, that supposing the truth of the fact, that he is called *Son of God*, on that account, yet he is not therefore called *only Son*, as in the Creed, which answers to *only-begotten*, (*μονογενής*;) as appears by the Greek copies. In the respect here mentioned, Christ was not Son of God in a *higher* or more *peculiar* manner than *angels* or *Adam*. But besides that, I may, upon the authority of many of

^m Coloss. iii. 11. Rom. ix. 5.

the *ancients*, assert, that the *Power of the Highest* (δύναμις ἰψίση) is a name of the *Logos*, who before his incarnation was *Son of God*; and therefore also that *holy thing*, after the incarnation, was called, and was *Son of God*. This construction prevailed for many centuries, and may be met with in Christian writers, as low as Damascene and Theophylact; and how much lower I need not inquire. If this interpretation takes place, then the pretence of Christ's being called *Son of God*, on account of his being miraculously born of a virgin, falls of course ^a. Now we may go on with the Exposition.

The *second* reason assigned by the author for calling Christ *Son of God* is, "his being appointed to the special office of Messiah," according to John x. 36. To which I again answer: Supposing the fact, yet he is not on that account called *only Son*, as in the Creed. But it cannot be proved that in John x. 36. he called himself *Son of God*, on account of his being appointed Messiah, but on account of his having come from heaven, from thence *sent into the world*, referring to his antecedent dignity, as Bishop Bull has observed at large ^o. Or if the Father's *sanctifying* in John x. 36. be understood of the sanctifying the human nature of Christ, by the *Word*, the pretence from that text is thereby further obviated ^p.

A *third* account of our Lord's Sonship assigned by the author is, "his being the first-begotten from the dead," according to Acts xiii. 33. and Rom. i. 4. But neither could this be a reason for calling him *only Son* of God, (if it might for *Son*,) because in that respect he has many brethren *children of God*, as being "children of the resurrection." Luke xx. 36. However, it cannot be proved that he was called so much as *Son of God* on that account. Rom. i. 4. says, "declared to be the Son of God

^a See also another construction of the text, maintained by Dr. Sherlock, in his *Scripture Proofs of Christ's Divinity*, p. 162, &c.

^o Vid. Bull. *Judic. Eccl. Cath.* 316, 317. Sherlock, *Script. Proofs of Christ's Divinity*, p. 173.

^p See Dr. Knight's *Sermons*, p. 209.

“with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;” that is to say, manifested to be the eternal Son of God, according to his holy, spiritual, divine nature, by his resurrection⁹. His resurrection, as he raised himself^r, was a demonstration of the *Divinity* of his Person, and which accordingly convinced St. Thomas, and made him own him for his *Lord* and *God*^s. As to St. Paul’s quoting Psalm ii. 7. “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” Acts xiii. 33. it is best explained by himself in Rom. i. 4. whereof we have been speaking; for by an easy figure of speech, not unusual in Scripture, a thing is then said to be, when it appears^t. And as to *first-begotten* from the dead, it is not said first-begotten *of God* from the dead, so that the text is not pertinent: besides, that were he a *Son* of the Father in that respect because the Father raised him, he would be his *own* Son also, for the like reason, because he raised himself.

A fourth ground or reason assigned of our Lord’s Sonship, is “his having all judgment committed to him,” according to John v. 22. “ruling as a Son over his own house,” Heb. iii. 6. “being appointed heir of all things,” Heb. i. 2. But the answer is easy: he is not God’s Son on account of all judgment being committed to him, being a *Son* before, and therefore all judgment was committed to him: and he does not commence a Son by being appointed *Heir*, but he was appointed *Heir*, because he was antecedently *Son* of God^u.

Upon the whole then we see, that none of the reasons assigned, sufficiently or certainly account for Christ’s being called *Son of God*, much less for his being called *only*

⁹ See Bull. Judic. Eccl. Cath. p. 318. Sherlock’s Scripture-Proofs of Christ’s Divinity, p. 162.

^r John ii. 19. x. 18.

^s John xx. 28.

^t Vid. Bull. Judic. Eccl. Cath. p. 318. See also Sherlock’s Script. Proofs, p. 178, &c.

^u See Bull, *ibid.* p. 318. Sherlock, *ibid.* p. 182.

Son, or *only-begotten*, as here in the Creed. In truth, there is but one account which will *fully* answer for either, or *at all* answer for the latter; and that is, his being begotten of the Father before the world was. This the Exposition at length comes to, expressing it faintly, in low and lessening terms; "having been from the beginning, in the bosom of the Father, a Divine Person." But St. John was not thus shy and reserved; he said plainly, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," John i. 1. The Son therefore from the beginning was *God of God*: and this is that *peculiar*, that *high*, that *singular* and Divine Sonship which the Creed speaks of under the title of *only Son*, and on account of which he is as truly God, as any son of man is truly man.

The author proceeds, p. 62, to account for the name *Christ*, which he does very justly: but in the sequel he says, "He was sent to reveal to us the whole will of his Father, and bring us back unto God," referring to Luke iv. 18. Acts x. 38. "And upon this account he is called the Word, the Way, the Truth, and the Life," viz. "that Prophet that should come into the world, to show unto men the way of salvation," &c. The account here given of the name *Word* is low and flat, and suited only to a Socinian hypothesis. It is evident that St. John meant more by it, (chap. i.) since he speaks not of the Word being incarnate, till afterwards: and what he says of the *Word's* being in the beginning, with God, &c. is not to be understood of the incarnate Word, but of the *Word* antecedent to the incarnation. *Word* then is a name for the Divine preexistent nature of Christ. It would be tedious to enter into the detail of this matter, and therefore I shall content myself with referring to juster accounts * of the name *Word*. Only I may note

* Bishop of Litchfield's Sermon on John i. 14. Vitringa in Apocalyp. xix. 13. My Sermons, vol. ii. p. 3, 4.

that the ancients in general, and St. Ignatius γ in particular, (who was St. John's disciple,) had much higher thoughts of what the name *Logos*, or *Word*, imports, than the expositor here mentions.

Next, as to the title *Lord*, he tells us, p. 63, that "it denotes his having a right of dominion over us, by virtue of his having redeemed and purchased us with his blood," quoting Heb. i. 2. Matth. xxviii. 18. Ephes. i. 17, 21. 1 Cor. xv. 27. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. Luke i. 33. Rev. xix. 16. But this is not the sense, or at least not the *whole* sense of *Lord* in the Creed; but it is low and lessening, as usual, detracting from the honour due to our blessed Lord. The Exposition says nothing of Christ's being *Jehovah* ζ and *God*, before the world was; nothing of his being *Lord* in right of creation, the *Lord* that "in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth^a," and by "whom all things were made^b;" and who coming into the world, the world that was made by him, "came unto his own^c." It is observable, that the eastern Creeds, in this place, have *one Lord*, as they have *one God* in the first article. The form was taken from 1 Cor. viii. 6. "One God, the Father, of whom are all things—and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things." Now it is evident, that *Lord* in that text, and therefore in the Creed also, has respect to Christ's dignity, antecedent to the redemption, and antecedent to the creation itself, as he was "the image of the invisible God, begotten before the whole creation: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, 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

γ Ὁς ἐστὶν αὐτῷ Λόγος, ἀίδιος, ὃν ἀπὸ σιγῆς προσελάθον. *Ignat. Epist. ad Magnes.* c. 8. Of this place of Ignatius, see Bull, D. F. sect. iii. c. 1. Dr. Berri-man's Sermons, p. 49.

^a See Pearson on this second article, p. 148.

^b Heb. i. 10. ^c John i. 3.

^c John i. 10. See my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 29.

“all things consist.” To his high, antecedent, super-eminent dignity, belongs the title of *Lord* in the Creed. For as to what Christ did in redeeming mankind, and his new dominion and glory accruing from it, that comes afterwards in the following articles: and it stands to sense, that *Lord* in this place, spoken of as prior to the incarnation, should be understood of what was antecedent to it. It is the constant manner of all the ancient Creeds, first to set forth the Θεολογία, the doctrine of our Lord's *Divinity*, and then to descend regularly to the Οικονομία, his *Incarnation*, &c. And so if we look into ^d Ruffinus, or other ancient expositors ^e, we shall find it to be a ruled case, a fixed and settled method with them. It is not justly interpreting a Creed, to put a sense upon it only to serve an hypothesis, against the known, certain intention of the compilers, and against the very form, structure, and composition of the Creed itself: this is not showing what meaning the words of the Creed really bear, but what they may be violently wrested to, to serve a cause.

The next article of the Creed begins with the words, WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST. Under this and the eighth article, (which we shall consider both together,) the author has expressed his sentiments of the *Holy Ghost*, as far as he thought proper. The subject is important, and will deserve considering. The Expositor says, (p. 113.) “What the metaphysical nature of the “Holy Spirit is, the Scripture has no where defined.” He made the like observation of the *Holy Spirit* formerly in Scripture Doctrine, prop. xxi^f. and of the *Son* in prop. xiii^g. and of all the *three* Persons in prop. iv^h. However, what Scripture has not done, the author himself has presumed to do; for he has not scrupled to determine, that the

^d Ruffin. in Symb. p. 20. edit. Oxon.

^e Cyrill. Hierosol. Catech. x. c. 4, 5, 6, &c. See also Bull. Judic. cap. 5. p. 321.

^f Clarke's Script. Doctrine, p. 290, first edit. p. 258, second edit.

^g Ibid. p. 272, first edit. p. 239, second edit.

^h Ibid. p. 243, first edit. p. 210, second edit.

Father *alone* is *self-existent*ⁱ; and that neither the Son nor Holy Ghost are *self-existent*^k; and he understands by self-existent, necessarily existing^l; so that he has defined and determined (with or without Scripture) that the metaphysical nature of the Holy Ghost is not necessarily existent, but contingent, precarious, or in a word, created. And, indeed, nobody can now make any doubt of his making both *Son* and *Holy Ghost* creatures, since he has plainly excluded, or however dropped, the *worship* of both. Such being the principle he sets out with, it is obvious to imagine what kind of colours he must lay upon all such texts of Scripture as speak highly and honourably of the Holy Ghost, above what belongs to creatures. He begins with the famous text before mentioned, of Luke i. 35. interpreting it after the common way, and maintaining that Christ is called *Son of God*, because conceived by the Holy Ghost, but not admitting the inference from thence, that the Holy Ghost is *God*. I have intimated another construction of the text above: but if the common construction be thought preferable, I may here insist upon it, that the inference drawn from thence for the *Divinity* of the Holy Ghost is right and just. I shall express it in the words of Bishop Pearson^m.

“ He by whose operation Christ was conceived in the womb of the Virgin, was no created Person; for by virtue of that conception, he was called the Son of *God*; whereas, if a creature had been the cause of his conception, he had been in that respect the Son of a *creature*.” Now the turn which the author takes (p. 67.) to evade the force of this, and other yet more express Scripture texts, is as follows; “ Whatsoever God does of this kind, from the beginning to the end of the whole dispensation, the Scripture generally represents as being done by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven: and be-

ⁱ Script. Doctrine, prop. v. Modest Plea, p. 5.

^k Ibid. prop. xii. xix. Modest Plea, p. 6.

^l Clarke's Modest Plea, p. 216, 217.

^m Pearson on the Creed, art. viii. p. 315.

“ cause what God does thus by his Holy Spirit, is in
 “ event the same as if he had done it immediately by
 “ himself, in his own Person, hence the same individual
 “ works are frequently ascribed both to God himself,
 “ even to the God and Father of all, who works them by
 “ his Spirit, and at the same time they are ascribed also
 “ to the Spirit by which God works them.” This is
 easily said, but comes not up to the purpose. Admit
 that the Father acts in and through his Holy Spirit;
 (which indeed is a principle that the Catholics themselves
 allow and contend for,) the more and oftener he is repre-
 sented in Scripture as so acting, the less likely is it that
 the Holy Ghost should be a *creature*. The Father acts
 by angels, and by men, *sometimes*, and often changing
 hands: but when or where has he ever acted without his
 Holy Spirit? Wherever he is present, (and he is present
 every where,) he is present by his *Spirit*ⁿ. And when-
 ever he performs wonders, or does any mighty works, he
 does them by his *Spirit*^o. Whatsoever he knows, (as he
 knows all things,) he knows them in and with his Spirit:
 “ For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things
 “ of God; and what man knoweth the things of a man,
 “ save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the
 “ things of God knoweth no one, but the Spirit of God^p.”
 What kind of a *creature* can this be, that is *in God*, as
 much as the spirit of man is in him, and which as inti-
 mately knows the mind of God as any man knows his
 own mind? What kind of a *creature* can that be, which
 always is where God is, knows what God knows, does
 what God does? Indeed, when we consider the Scripture
 representations of this matter, the first and most natural
 thought a man might have is, that *God* and the *Spirit of*
God are only different names or phrases for the same
 Person, and that God's acting by his Spirit, is only an-

ⁿ Psalm cxliiii. 7, 12. See Dr. Knight's Sermons, p. 277.

^o Acts ii. 4, 17, 18, 33. Rom. xv. 19. 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. xii. 4, 8, 11. Heb.
 ii. 4.

^p 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. See Dr. Knight's Sermons, p. 282.

other way of saying that he acts by himself: but then as there are some very express and uncontestable texts to prove the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit, there is no other way left of coming up to the Scripture account, but by acknowledging that the Holy Spirit of God, which is always and every where with God, and in God, is essential to God, and is God: and this indeed is the plain doctrine of Scripture in several other texts, besides what has been already mentioned. The Holy Spirit is expressly called *Lord* by St. Paul^q, and that *Lord* is *Jehovah*^r: he is also *Lord of hosts*, as is proved by another application made by the same St. Paul of a text of the Old Testament to the Holy Ghost in the New^s. I know that some artificial elusions have been contrived in answer to these texts; and they have as often been replied to and confuted. In truth, the very style of the Holy Ghost shows him to be Lord both of heaven and earth. “The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them^t.” Is this the style of a creature? Then again; “All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will^u.” Should it not have been as *God wills*, rather than *he will*, were the Holy Spirit a creature? Would it not be too familiar for any creature whatever to take upon him to distribute the choicest gifts of God according to his own pleasure? The Exposition somewhere says, that “to pray to inferior beings is evidently needless, because God, we are sure, is always near, being himself every where present^x.” And may we not with as much reason argue in this case, that for God to bind himself up to the constant use of any creature, so as never to abide any where, nor to do any thing but by him and with him, is evidently needless, being himself

^q 2 Cor. iii. 17.

^r Exod. xxxiv. 34. See Pearson on this argument, art. viii. p. 316, 317.

^s Acts xviii. 25, 26. compared with Isaiah vi. 9.

^t Acts xiii. 2. ^u 1 Cor. xii. 11.

^x Clarke's Exposit. of the Catech. p. 233.

every where present, and able to do all things? But that such a *creature* should not only be thus constantly employed, but should act also with authority paramount, and do as *he pleases*, in the high dispensations of God, is altogether unaccountable. I shall only add further, that our Lord's joining the Holy Spirit together with the Father and himself in the form of Baptism, that sacred form which is the Christian rule, both of *faith* and *worship*, and which from the infancy of the Church was so received, and universally complied with; this alone, were there nothing else, abundantly proves both the *Divinity* and worship of the Holy Ghost. These things premised, I now return to the author of the Exposition, and to Luke i. 35. of which we were treating. If the common construction be insisted upon, that Christ is called *Son of God*, because conceived by the Holy Ghost, then the consequence is plain, that the Holy Ghost is *God*, as I before intimated. And if it be hereupon asked, why then is not Christ in his human nature called the Son of the Holy Ghost? The answer is, because Scripture has not so called him. And if it be further asked why Scripture has not? It may be answered, because Scripture by calling him rather *Son of God*, thereby intimates to us, that the Holy Ghost is *God*, which is one good reason: and another is, because Christ being *Son of God* (the Father) in a higher capacity, it was the more proper to express both the Sonships by one and the same name. This, I say, on the supposition that the common interpretation of Luke i. 35. be admitted; though, as to my own part, I incline rather to the ancient construction above mentioned: which though it deprives us of this argument for the *Divinity* of the Holy Ghost, yet accounts better for the name of *Son of God*, and makes Scripture more *uniform*, as to the giving that appellation to our Saviour Christ.

I now proceed to some other texts which are express for the *Divinity* of the third Person, and which the Exposition has been endeavouring to elude. One is, Acts v. 3, 4. of which the Expositor observes, p. 68, that "Ana-

“nias and Sapphira are charged with lying unto God when they lied to the Holy Ghost, and with lying to the Holy Ghost when they lied to men inspired with the Holy Ghost, because lying to the Spirit by which God speaks, is in effect and in reality lying to God himself.” But why not rather, because the Holy Ghost is God, and so lying to the Holy Ghost is lying to God. The train of the argument is thus excellently well deduced by the judicious Bishop Pearson. “To lie unto the Holy Ghost is not to lie unto men, because the Holy Ghost is not man; and consequently not to lie unto any angel, because the Holy Ghost is not an angel; not to lie unto any creature, because the Holy Ghost is no creature; but to lie unto God, because the Holy Ghost is God.” This is the obvious, natural construction of the text, and therefore the true one: the other is forced and unnatural, and does not answer to the antithesis or opposition of the text between *men* and *God*. Let us put the name of a created angel, Gabriel, in the place of Holy Ghost, (supposed by our adversaries to be a creature,) only to show the flatness and impropriety of their construction. *Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the angel Gabriel? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. Should it not have been, Thou hast not lied unto Gabriel, but to God; or else, Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto Gabriel, nor to Gabriel, but to God?* In the other way the sentence is plainly imperfect, and the sense flat: and there is no necessity at all for admitting it, excepting only that some cannot endure that the Holy Ghost should be here called *God*, though he is abundantly proved to be *God*, from other places of Scripture, and has been universally believed in and worshipped as *God*, by the ancient Christian churches.

Another text of the like kind is, 1 Cor. iii. 16. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” To which may be

† Pearson, art. viii. p. 318.

added, 1 Cor. vi. 19. "Know ye not that your body is
 "the temple of the Holy Ghost in you, which ye have
 "of God?—Therefore glorify God in your body, and in
 "your spirit, which are God's." Now if we are the
 temple of God by the inhabitation of God's Spirit, then
 is the Spirit of God himself also God. The reason is
 plain; because no inhabitation of a *creature* can make the
 house inhabited a *temple*; for a temple is the house of
 God, not the house of a creature as such. To this the
 author of the Exposition replies; that "our bodies are
 "styled temples," (temple, he means,) "because they are
 "temples of the Holy Ghost, and God dwells in us by
 "his Holy Spirit." This solution might have served
 tolerably, had the texts said only that our bodies are the
 temple of *God*, and not the temple of the *Holy Ghost*
 too; which the author perhaps did not consider. For
 let us suppose God the Father and any *creature* to inhabit
 the same person, that person would indeed be the *temple*
 of the Father, because he is *God*, but would be the *dwelling*
 only, not the temple of the *creature*, because he is
 not God. Seeing then that the texts make us the temple
 of God, and the "temple of the Holy Ghost" too, it is
 manifest that the Holy Ghost inhabiting us, as *his temple*,
 is God, as well as the Father.

The Exposition goes on to elude several other texts,
 observing that "the miracles which our Lord himself
 "worked, during the course of his ministry, are ascribed
 "sometimes to the Father, which dwelt in him; and
 "sometimes to the Spirit, which God gave not by mea-
 "sure to him," p. 68. Yes; it is more than once inti-
 mated in Scripture that the Father himself constantly
 dwelled in Christ^z, and did the works which Christ did.
 Now I should be glad to know of those that make the
 Holy Ghost a *creature*, what occasion there could be for
 any other invisible agent to work miracles, when the Fa-
 ther himself, who could do infinitely more, and who really

^z John x. 38. xiv. 10, 11, 20. xvii. 21, 23.

worked all, was there working. And what sense is there in God's giving the Spirit, a *creature*, without measure, as if any creature could be infinite, or, as if the Father himself, working at the same time, might not infinitely supersede all creaturely assistance. Our blessed Lord somewhere ^a says, "If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we (the Father and he) will come unto him, and make our abode with him." In the same chapter he speaks also of the Holy Ghost, as of *another Comforter*, to *abide* with the same *for ever*. Three Persons in all, all abiding, all comforting invisibly, and all inhabiting the same temple. But what occasion could there be for either the *second* or *third*, if they be *creatures*? Or what *comfort* in them, while the *first* alone, the *God of all comfort*, both could and would supply every thing, and the other two, in reality, nothing? These and other the like Scripture texts are easily accounted for, upon the principles of the Christian Church: but what to make of them on any other principles I see not. If it be said, that God may employ what agents, or what instruments he pleases, angels or men, and need not always act *immediately* in person, that is true, but not pertinent to the point in hand: for in the cases I have been speaking of, God the Father is supposed to be present in person, and to act immediately by himself, and yet others are represented as assisting and acting with him.

We may now take leave of these two articles of the Creed, and of the Creed itself. For as to other articles of slighter moment, the Exposition, I think, has done justice to them, and may be read with instruction and pleasure. Yet for fear of imbibing false doctrines along with true, it would be the safer way to read Bishop Pearson's Exposition of the same Creed, which is sound, learned, and judicious quite through, and one of the best books in our language. And as to those who have less

^a John xiv. 23.

^b John xvi. 16, 26.

time to spare, or who may desire to be competently instructed in the Creed at an easier and cheaper rate, I would particularly recommend to them Dr. Bishop's very useful Abridgment of Bishop Pearson, now lately published, for the benefit of common readers.

IV.

The Exposition passes on from the Creed to the Ten Commandments. And under Commandment the first, he observes, p. 150, "that it supposes it as a thing known by the light of nature and reason, that there is but one God, one eternal, omnipresent, self-sufficient Being,—who in the New Testament is set forth to us under this still more particular character, that he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here very distinct things are, by too artificial a confusedness, mixed and blended together. That there is a God, is certainly known by the light of nature and reason: that there is but *one God*, is *probably* argued from reason and ancient tradition, and is *certainly* proved from Scripture. But that the one God is the Father *only*, exclusive of all other Persons, is not known by the light of nature to be *true*, but is known by the light of Scripture to be *false*; and is by all the ancient churches accounted *heresy*. It is *Judaizing*^c, after Praxeas, Noëtus, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Arius, and Eunomius; and is not Christian doctrine^d. Reason tells us there is a God, without saying who is: Scripture determines it to the *Jehovah*: and the same Scripture abundantly declares that the *Jehovah* is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The knowledge of this we owe to revelation only, which contradicts not *reason*,

^c *Judaicæ fidei ista res, sic unum Deum credere, ut Filium annumerare ei nolis, et post Filium, Spiritum. Quid enim erit inter nos et illos nisi differentia ista? Quid opus Evangelii, quæ est substantia Novi Testamenti statuens legem et prophetas usque ad Johannem, si non exinde Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus, tres crediti, unum Deum sistunt? Tertull. adv. Prax. sub fin.*

^d See my First Defence, vol. i. p. 249, 251, &c. Second Defence, vol. iii. p. 423, &c.

but advances beyond it, and makes much larger discoveries. The light of nature and reason can go but a very little way in *divine* things, with any certainty. The Bible is our best metaphysics, and what alone can give us any reasonable satisfaction about the object of our *faith* or *worship*. Had we no revelation to go to, we might be allowed to sit down and guess, and might guess as wide as the ancient Pagans did. But to advance natural light, that is, Pagan darkness, in opposition to Scripture evidence, is setting up *human* conjectures against *divine* truths; lighting up a candle in the face of the sun. The introducing false maxims of philosophy into religion has done infinite mischief to the Church of God^e. It is making Scripture bend to human inventions, and is contriving a kind of motley religion, part Pagan and part Christian, instead of the religion of Christ. If any man imagines he can by *natural* light (which in this respect is no light) determine the question about the plurality of Persons in the Godhead, he will be widely mistaken. Scripture alone, with proper helps to understand Scripture, must decide this great question. All wisdom here, going above what is written, or what is evidently deduced from it, is vain wisdom, and will prove no better than an illusion or an infatuation to every man that trusts to it. But I pass on.

He concludes what he had more to say under the *first Commandment*, with some reflections upon idolatry. And in p. 154. he speaks of some that have “taught men to “apply themselves to angels—and to the blessed Virgin, “whom, (as he says,) by a profane ambiguity, they affect “to style the mother of God.” Had he levelled his rebuke against the Romish abuses of that style and title, and against the extravagant honours thereupon paid to the blessed Virgin, all had been right. But he has so worded his censure, as to charge the title itself with a *profane ambiguity*, and so through the sides of the Romanists, as

* See Dr. Berriman's Sermons, p. 93, &c. My First Defence, vol. i. p. 231, &c.

I conceive, reflects unhandsomely upon all the churches of Christ. His quarrel is with the very name and title of *θεοτόκος*, *mother of God*, which accordingly he changes, p. 70, into *κυριοτόκος*, *mother of Lord*; for no reason that I can see, except it be that he had rather Christ should be called *Lord*, than *God*; interpreting *Lord* in a low and puny sense, as observed above. However, as to *θεοτόκος*, or *mother of God*, (which he is pleased to charge with *profane* ambiguity,) he should have considered that it is no piece of Popery, but much older, being indeed pure and primitive Christianity. It is expressive of a very great and important truth, that Christ who is Son of God in one nature, is Son of Mary also in another, and is both *God* and *man*, while one Christ. The phrase itself, of *mother of God*, or word *θεοτόκος*, thus applied, was the common language of the Church about the middle of the fourth century: and it may be run up higher by Eusebius, and Alexander of Alexandria, and Origen, to the year 245, or the middle of the third age. And equivalent expressions may be carried up through ancient writers to the Gospel times. Irenæus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, who was scholar to the Apostles, scruples not to say of the Virgin, that she *bare God*^f within her, which is as strong an expression as *mother of God*. And Ignatius, St. John's disciple, says plainly, "Jesus Christ our *God* was conceived of Mary^g," which is tantamount. But Isaiah and St. Matthew^h were before them all, in affirming that the Virgin should bring forth *Emmanuel*, that is, *God with us*, God incarnate; which comes to the same with calling her *mother of God*, and is cited for that purpose by Eusebiusⁱ, where he gives her that title. Attempts have been made to elude the true and ancient meaning of these texts, but

^f Portaret Deum. *Iren.* lib. v. cap. 19. p. 316.

^g Ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς ἐκ χειρὸς ἰουδαίου ὑπὸ Μαρίας. *Ignat. ad Ephes.* cap. xviii. p. 18.

^h Isa. vii. 14. Matt. i. 23.

ⁱ Euseb. de vit. Constant. lib. iii. cap. 43.

to little purpose^k. The same sense may most probably be assigned to Luke i. 43. as Bishop Bull has observed^l. For *mother of Lord* there may mean *mother of God*, since the title of *Lord* belongs to Christ chiefly as he is our *God*; and so St. Thomas joined both together. In short, I see no reason why any one should be offended at the title of *mother of God*, unless he be offended also at calling Christ *God*, for that implies it. Julian indeed was pleased to deride the Christians for using it^m. But then, very consistently, he blamed them as much for believing in and speaking of Christ as *God*. I observe, that the author of the Exposition studiously avoids giving the name of *God* to Christ, substituting *divine Person* every whereⁿ, where he should have said *God* according to the text. If he was afraid of committing a *profane ambiguity* in calling Christ *God*, I should not wonder at it: his own good sense might lead him to think, that it would be profaning the *high name* to call any one *God* in such a manner, and to mean no more by it than his principles allowed him to do. But if this was his thought, as is not improbable, I cannot but admire still, that the same good sense did not lead him to reflect, that the holy Prophet Isaiah, St. John, and St. Paul, (men of excellent sense, and inspired too,) had very solemnly called Christ *God*, and would have been as much afraid of any *profane ambiguity* as others can be. Wherefore I may have leave to conclude, that they really understood Christ to be *God* in the same high sense that the Father himself is. But this by the way.

I meet with nothing farther that wants a remark, till I come to p. 293. of the Exposition, where the author lays down his sentiments of the solemn form of Baptism, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” not in the name *God*, and *Christ*, and the

^k See Pearson, art. ii. p. 130. Vitring. in Isa. vii. 14. My Sermons, vol. ii. p. 120. Dr. Knight's Sermons, p. 150.

^l Bull. Oper. Posth. p. 156.

^m Julian in Cyrill. lib. viii. p. 262, 276. edit. Lips.

ⁿ Page 59, 64, 65.

Spirit, as if *God* belonged to one only. "By this form," says the Expositor, "we dedicate ourselves solemnly to "the service and worship of God our Father, who created "us." Why not God *the* Father, as the form itself directs, to show the relation *Father* has to *Son* presently following? But this is slight. What is more material, since he owns Baptism to be the dedicating ourselves to the *service* and *worship* of one of the Persons, why so partial, as not to admit the same meaning and significancy of the same rite in respect of the other two Persons joined with him? Certainly, our blessed Lord, who was always exceedingly tender of his Father's honour, could and would have made such a distinction as this author does, had there been ground for it, or had he not intended that "all men should honour the Son even as they honour the "Father;" not excluding the third Person from the like honour, being the *Spirit of both*°, and with whom they are as intimate as *man* with his own mind^p. Why should we separate what God has not separated? And why should we distinguish where our Lord has not distinguished? The Exposition adds: "to the obedience and imitation of "Christ the Son of God who redeemed us: and to the "direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, which sancti- "fies us." Low and lame: truth so far, but not the whole truth. What follows is a mistake. "And accordingly all "the ancient baptismal Creeds, in the primitive Church, "were paraphrases upon this form." The ancient Creeds, generally, were not paraphrases upon this form, but supplements to it^q, by the addition of other articles over and above that of the Trinity. Or when they had any thing of paraphrase upon the form itself, they did not paraphrase *accordingly*, not according to the sentiments of this writer. But explications and paraphrases upon the *form* of Baptism, and upon the *Creeds* too, are to be sought for in the

° Rom. viii. 9. Gal. iv. 6. 1 Pet. i. 11. Act. xvi. 7. Phil. i. 19.

^p 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

^q See my *Sermons*, vol. ii. p. 193, &c.

remains of the primitive writers, who recite the form and the Creeds, and declare the faith of all the churches in their time. The oldest writer extant who takes notice of the form of Baptism is Justin the Martyr, who lived and wrote within forty or fifty years after St. John. He in answer to the charge of *Atheism*, a charge made against the Christians, as owning no God at all, twice affirms and solemnly testifies of the Christians at large, that they worshipped the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*. In other parts of his writings he as expressly declares and testifies that they worshipped *God* only^r. Put those two positions or facts together, and they make a complete *paraphrase* or comment on the form of Baptism; showing that *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, into whom Christians were baptized, were understood to be the one God of the Christians. The like might be shown of the Christian writers (besides other collateral testimonies) all along downwards, and has been often shown; so that I choose rather to refer^s than to repeat. Much also may be pleaded from the form itself, the design and circumstances of it^t. But all taken together with the other Scripture proofs of the Divinity of the three Persons, and the immediate doctrine and practice of the ancient churches, all confirming the same thing, make so complete a demonstration of what we contend for, that nothing plainer or fuller can be rationally desired. It is a weak way of reasoning to argue only from the simplicity and brevity of ancient Creeds, as if there were a necessity of explicitly opening every important Scripture doctrine in a short memorandum. Creeds were only brief notes, hints, or minutes of the faith of the Church, which the *catechists* were to unfold and explain at large. St. Austin has given a good account of this mat-

^r See my Sermons, vol. ii. p. 180, &c. Berriman's Sermons, p. 66, 67.

^s Stillingfleet's Vindication of the Trinity, cap. ix. p. 177, &c. My Sermons, vol. ii. p. 179, &c. Taylor's True Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 100, &c.

^t See Stillingfleet, *ibid.* p. 219, &c. My Sermons, *ibid.* p. 176, &c. Taylor, *ibid.* p. 93, &c. Vitringa, *Observ. Sacr.* tom. ii. cap. 22. p. 813, &c.

ter, whose words I have thrown into the bottom of the page, for the satisfaction of the learned reader^u.

After treating of the Sacrament of *Baptism*, the Exposition proceeds (p. 299.) to speak of the other Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*. Under this article he gives some account of the *satisfaction* made by the death of Christ for the sins of mankind, as he had before also done in his comment upon the fourth article of the Creed, p. 74. The sum of his account of the high and great atonement is, that "Christ was himself without spot, and sinless; and therefore his *voluntary* offering of himself was acceptable to God, and efficacious to procure pardon to penitents." Now, supposing Christ to be a *creature* only, it is not conceivable how he could have such a degree of merit, by any thing he could do or suffer, as thereby to purchase pardon for a whole world of sinners. Can a creature have any merit at all with God? or could he modestly presume so far upon it, as to offer himself as a satisfaction to divine justice for sinful men? As to his being *sinless*, it was his bounden duty to be so; for every creature, for his own sake, is strictly obliged to abstain from *sin*. As to his making himself a *voluntary* offering, how could he refuse what God had *appointed*, and therefore *commanded*? It could be *voluntary* only as cheerfully obeying what was

^u Est autem Catholica fides in symbolo nota fidelibus, memoriæque mandata, quanta res passa est brevitate sermonis: ut incipientibus atque lactentibus eis qui in Christo renati sunt, nondum Scripturarum divinarum diligentissima et spiritali tractatione atque cognitione roboratis, paucis verbis credendum constitueretur, quod multis verbis exponendum esset proficientibus, et ad doctrinam certa humilitatis atque charitatis firmitate surgentibus. Sub ipsis ergo paucis verbis in symbolo constitutis, plerique hæretici venena sua occultare conati sunt: quibus restitit et resistit divina misericordia per spiritales viros, qui Catholicam fidem non tantum in illis verbis accipere et credere, sed etiam domino revelante intelligere atque cognoscere meruerunt. Scriptum est enim, *nisi credideritis, non intelligetis*. Sed tractatio fidei ad muniendum symbolum valet: non ut ipsa pro symbolo gratiam Dei consequentibus memoriæ mandanda et reddenda tradatur; sed ut illa quæ in symbolo retinentur, contra hæreticorum insidias auctoritate Catholica et munitiore defensione custodiat. *Augustin. de Fid. et Symbol.* cap. i. p. 151. tom. vi. ed. Bened.

laid upon him, and what he could not without sin decline. Besides, that since the reward for this service was to be so exceeding high and extraordinary, inasmuch as he was to be preferred before angels and archangels, before all other creatures whatever, and even to be adored and worshipped by them all for doing it; it seems that his submitting to some light and short afflictions could have no such exceeding merit in it, as over and above his own rewards, to purchase also rewards for a whole sinful world. But the author of the Exposition observes, and insists upon it, that "the method wherein, and the terms upon which God will extend his mercy and compassion towards sinners, this depends entirely upon the good pleasure and wisdom of God," p. 300. which is as much as to say, that God has appointed and has accepted of this method of salvation by Jesus Christ: but that this method (so understood) carries any proper *satisfaction*, *merit*, or *atonement* in it, appears not. It is admitting indeed the *name* of satisfaction, but is denying the *thing*. The question is not what God might do in the right of his absolute sovereignty, as to pardoning of sinners; neither is it about what infinite Wisdom might have found out, as to any other methods of doing it: but the question is, whether, when God has pitched upon a method of *expiation*, which according to Scripture accounts does carry real merit and satisfaction in it, it may be right so to understand and interpret that method, as to take from it the very foundation upon which the true notion of satisfaction or merit is built. It is very easy to say, that God has accepted, and is satisfied; for the same persons would say, that God might be appeased or satisfied without any offering for sin at all, if he so pleased: but the Scriptures seem to lay a particular stress and emphasis upon the *propitiation* made by the blood of Christ, as if there were some intrinsic merit, both real and great, in it; which is what wants to be accounted for, upon the principles of the Exposition. But leaving this matter, which has fallen in only by the way, I proceed to

note some things of what the author has said more directly upon the subject of the Eucharist.

He observes, p. 304. that "the reason why ancient Christian writers called the Lord's Supper frequently a sacrifice, and an unbloody sacrifice, is not because they imagined it to be literally a sacrifice, but because it was an act of Christian worship, succeeding in the place of Jewish sacrifices. By the same figure of speech, praise and thanksgiving are likewise called a sacrifice." This is not a true account of the *ancient writers*, nor of the reason of the name *sacrifice* given to the Eucharist. Bishop Burnet is more accurate, who after mentioning the reason here assigned as one, presently adds: "In two other respects it may be also more strictly called a *sacrifice*: one is because there is an *oblation* of bread and wine made in it, which being sanctified are consumed in an act of religion: to this many passages in the writings of the Fathers do relate.—Another respect in which the *Eucharist* is called a *sacrifice* is, because it is a commemoration and a representation to God, of the sacrifice that Christ offered for us on the cross; in which we claim to that, as to our expiation, and feast upon it as our *peace-offering*, according to that ancient notion that covenants were by a *sacrifice*, and were concluded in a feast on the sacrifice. Upon these accounts, we do not deny but that the *Eucharist* may be well called a *sacrifice*: but still it is a commemorative sacrifice, and not propitiatory, &c. x"

The learned Pfaffius having well considered and examined this matter, declares, or rather confesses it ridiculous to imagine that the ancients by their oblation and sacrifice meant no more than prayer y. But a full discussion

x Bishop Burnet's *Exposit. of the Articles*, art. xxxi. p. 350.

y *Dicere etiam, veteres per oblationem et sacrificium nihil intelligere aliud quam preces, oppido esset ridiculum, ostenderetque animam aut veritati non cedentem eandemque dissimulantem, aut nulla ecclesiasticæ antiquitatis notitia imbutum. Pfaff. de Oblat. Consecr. Euchar. p. 50.*

of this question may be seen in Johnson's Unbloody Sacrifice, where the testimonies of the ancients, relating to this matter, are produced and considered at large.

The Exposition rightly interprets *verily and indeed taken*, &c. of a real "participation of the benefits purchased by Christ's death," p. 311. The body and blood of Christ are taken and received by the faithful, not *substantially*, not *corporally*, but *verily and indeed*, that is, *effectually*. The sacred symbols are no bare signs, no untrue figures of a thing absent: but the force, the grace, the virtue, and benefit of Christ's body broken, and blood shed, that is, of his passion, are really and effectually present with all them that receive worthily. This is all the *real presence* that our Church teaches. The Exposition says, in the same page, that when our Lord "was discoursing about men's imbibing, digesting, and practising his doctrine, he even then called it eating his flesh and drinking his blood," according to John vi. 35, 56. But there, as I conceive, the author is mistaken; though it must be owned that some very judicious moderns have gone before him in it. Whoever will attentively read that chapter over, may easily enough perceive that our Lord is not there speaking either of his *doctrine* then taught, or of the *Eucharist* to be instituted, but of the great *atonement* to be made by his passion. The *eating his flesh* and *drinking his blood* there mentioned, mean the having a part in that atonement, being partakers of the benefit of Christ's death and satisfaction. By this and this only we live; without it we die. It is by our Lord's meritorious death and passion that men are saved, as many as are saved: and were it not for that, no flesh could be saved. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood," except you participate of the virtue and merit of his body broken, and blood shed, that is, of his passion, "you have no life in you." Such as receive *worthily* and *perseveringly* the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, thus participate, but not they only: for all that have ever lived and died in God's favour, from the begin-

ning of the world, have eaten and drank Christ's flesh and blood, have participated of the benefits of his passion ; and in that they yet live and stand, and not in any works or merits of their own. This I take to be the doctrine of John vi. which, out of figure, comes plainly to this, that there is no salvation given unto men but in and through the satisfaction of Christ. The Exposition proceeds (p. 312.) to explain the BENEFITS of the worthy receiving the Lord's Supper, thus expressed in the Catechism: THE STRENGTHENING AND REFRESHING OF OUR SOULS BY THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST, AS OUR BODIES ARE BY THE BREAD AND WINE. The comment hereupon is, "As impenitency is the death, and sins are "the diseases of the soul, so a habit of virtue is its health "and life, and religious acts are its food and nourishment." True in a certain sense, but not very well fitted to our present purpose : for the Catechism is here speaking, not of the efficacy of habits of virtue to salvation, (which after all are *conditions* only, and have no proper *efficacy*,) but of the force and power of the great atonement. The Expositor therefore should rather have said thus : "As the being excluded from having a part in the "merits of Christ's passion is the *death*, and the neglect "of the means of grace is the *disease* of the soul ; so the "participating of the merits of Christ's passion is its "health and life, and the use of the proper means is its "food and nourishment." And thus we come to the use of *worthy receiving*, the means instituted, and one of the most effectual and most direct of any. It supposes, or takes in virtue, moral virtue, with it, and goes far beyond it, uniting us to Christ, which moral virtue alone never can do ; for it is by *faith*, by *grace*, that we are saved.

I wish the author had here spoken a little more plainly of the divine graces going along with the worthy reception of the holy Communion, that so persons coming to it might have the more suitable idea of it, and veneration for it. He speaks of religious acts having the "promise of "procuring blessing and assistance from God;" which is

too dry and general. Our 25th Article, speaking of both the Sacraments, says, **THEY ARE EFFECTUAL SIGNS OF GRACE, AND GOD'S GOOD WILL TOWARDS US, BY THE WHICH HE DOTHTH WORK INVISIBLY IN US, AND DOTHTH NOT ONLY QUICKEN, BUT ALSO STRENGTHEN AND CONFIRM OUR FAITH IN HIM.** The author of the Exposition justly condemns those, who think "that at the receiving of the Sacrament their sins are in course pardoned, to the commission of which they return regularly again." But such as these are *unworthy* receivers, not receiving with a true penitent heart or lively faith. Something should have been added about the real remission of sins conveyed and sealed to the *worthy* receiver, notwithstanding. For though the grant be revocable, in this case, upon the person's returning to his old sins, yet it is a real and a present grant; like as the lord, in the Gospel, really *forgave* his servant all his *debt*, but revoked the grant upon that servant's new misbehaviour. The author also justly condemns the "unintelligible notion of a certain grace or virtue annexed to the material elements, or to the mere external participation of them, rather after the nature of a charm, than of a religious action." But then, to avoid or obviate another as dangerous an extreme, something should have been inserted to signify that when the *recipient* is fitly qualified, and duly disposed, there is a salutary *life-giving* virtue annexed to the Sacrament; which in one of our Church's Homilies is thus expressed: "In the Supper of the Lord there is no vain ceremony, no bare sign, no untrue figure of a thing absent; but as the Scripture saith, the table of the Lord, the bread and cup of the Lord, the memory of Christ, the announcement of his death; yea, the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, in a marvellous incorporation, which by the operation of the Holy Ghost, (the very bond of our conjunction with Christ,) is through faith wrought in the souls of the faithful; whereby not only their souls live to eternal life, but they surely trust to win

“ their bodies a resurrection to immortality ².” The author of the Exposition has taken a commendable care in recommending *virtuous* dispositions as qualifications proper for the receiving the Sacrament; but then he seems to have been too sparing in setting forth the spiritual advantages and blessings coming down from above through this channel of grace and pardon, upon the *worthy* receiver. He says, (p. 314,) that thereby *we* renew our part in the Christian covenant, *we* strengthen our faith, *we* increase our hope, *we* enlarge the bond of universal love: and all this he seems to account for in a *natural way*, according to what he had observed, p. 312. of religious acts, that they “ naturally improve and establish men in virtuous “ practice:” as if virtuous practice were all, and the Sacraments were to be considered only as a *means* to that *end*. But in reality the Sacraments are additional improvements upon virtuous practices, and are of nearer and more *immediate* efficacy for the uniting us to God and Christ. They supply where the other falls short; they relieve where the other cannot; they finish what the other but begins, our justification and salvation. I know not how to approve what the Exposition says, p. 182. of the two *Sacraments*, in common with other positive institutions, that “ they have the nature only of *means to an end*, and that “ therefore they are never to be compared with moral “ virtues.” I cannot understand why positive institutions, such as the two Sacraments especially, should be so slightly spoken of. *Moral virtues* are rather to be considered as a *means* to an end, because they are *previous* qualifications for the Sacraments, and have no proper efficacy towards procuring salvation, till they are improved and rendered acceptable by these Christian performances. By *moral virtues* only we shall never ordinarily come at Christ, nor at heaven, nor to the presence of God: but by the help of the *Sacraments* superadded, to crown and finish the other,

² Homily on the Sacrament, part i.

we may arrive to Christian perfection, that then we “dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we are one with Christ and Christ with us;” as our Church Offices express it. And what can be meant by saying, or intimating, that the worthy receiving of the holy Communion is “never to be compared with moral virtues?” What is the exercise of *moral virtue*, but the exercise of *obedience* to some law, suppose of charity or justice? But the worthy receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is at once an exercise of *obedience* to the law of Christ, and of *faith*, of *worship*, and of *repentance*, and carries in it the strongest incitement, not only to all *moral virtues*, but all *Christian graces*. Besides, I see but very little reason for slighting *positive institutions* in the general, in comparison of *moral virtue*. It was the breaking a *positive precept* that turned the first man out of Paradise, and entailed mortality upon the whole kind. Abraham was a man of great *moral virtues*, and yet they were not the things that he was chiefly celebrated for. One instance of his obedience to a *positive command* has made his name more famous both in heaven and on earth, than all his *moral virtues* put together. The truth of the case, as I conceive, lies here: the *love of God* is the *first and great commandment*: and obedience to his *positive institutions* is an *exercise* of that love; and it is sometimes the *noblest and best* exercise of it, showing the greater affection and prompter resignation to the Divine will. He is a proud and a saucy servant that will never obey his master, but where he sees the *reason* of the command. It is reason enough for obeying, to every modest and humble servant, that his Lord, so much wiser than he, and to whom he owes all his service, has commanded it. On this account there may be, in some cases, greater excellency and more real virtue in obeying *positive precepts*, than in any *moral virtue*. In short, if the love of God be *moral virtue*, such obedience, being an act of *love*, is an act of moral virtue, and then there is no ground for the distinction: but if there must be a distinction made, then let one be called *moral virtue*, and the other *Christian*

perfection, and let any man judge which should have the preference. Indeed they should not be opposed, since both are necessary, and are perfective of each other. But if they must be opposed and compared, I say, *moral virtue* is but the handmaid leading to the door of salvation, which the *use* of the *Sacraments* at length opens, and lets us in. Thus much I have thought proper to plead in behalf of the two venerable Sacraments of our most holy religion; and shall only add, that any contempt of them will be as much a bar to salvation as the contempt of *moral virtues*, and may, for any thing I know, be more provoking to God, as carrying greater defiance in it, and having less temptation to it. The Exposition observes justly enough, that the Sacraments are of "no use or benefit without *moral virtues*, nor can be in any degree equivalent for the want of them." Which is a proper caution to such as are weak enough (if any such there be) to trust to the outward performance, to *unworthy* receiving. But there is another sort of persons, who valuing themselves, as being in the main good *moral* men, are apt to slight and disesteem this positive institution, this most sublime ordinance, this most excellent worship, and hold themselves safe without frequent communion, or perhaps without ever communicating. And they should be told, that their *moral virtues*, be they real or otherwise, can be of *no use* or *benefit* without this Sacrament, nor in any degree *equivalents* for the want of it. But to pass on.

It is but a very obscure and insufficient account which the Exposition gives of a famous text, 1 Cor. x. 16. THE BREAD WHICH WE BREAK, IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, *the communion of all the members of Christ's body one with another?* So stand the text and comment in the Exposition. But then what shall we make of the words immediately preceding, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" The plain meaning is, that there is in the Eucharist a real communication or participation of Christ's broken body, and blood shed,

that is, of his passion, that is, of the atonement made by it, in which we actually partake as often as we worthily partake of this holy Sacrament. How our Church understands this text may be seen in our twenty-eighth Article, which quotes the very text in these words; "The bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ." If we look into our older English versions, as Parker's and Tindale's, we shall there find the text thus rendered: IS NOT THE CUPPE OF BLESSYNGE WHICH WE BLESSE, PARTAKINGE OF THE BLOUDE OF CHRIST? IS NOT THE BREAD WHICH WE BREAKE, PARTAKYNGE OF THE BODYE OF CHRIST? I know not whether the Geneva translators were not the first that changed *partaking* into *communion*; thereby obscuring, in some measure, the sense. But they subjoined a note to clear it, which note is this; "The effectual badge of our conjunction and incorporation with Christ." They should have added, *by our partaking together of the merits of his death or crucifixion*: which would well cohere with the 17th verse immediately following: *Because the bread is one, we being many are one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.* So I render the text with the late learned Dr. Wells.

I have now run through the most exceptionable parts of the Exposition, such as appeared to me of greatest moment: and the reader will observe that they all relate to points of faith, worship, or pure theology. I have no fault to find with the author's *morality*, which is excellent: and I could heartily wish that his professed followers in other matters where he differs from us, would at least follow him in that which both he and we equally agree in. I must do him the justice to say, that he appears to have been sincerely well affected to virtue and Christian morality: which is more than can be said of many others who yet make a great stir about *morality*, crying it up in opposition to *faith*; not with any real design to advance either, but insidiously to undermine and

destroy both. For after all the pretended aversion of such men to the Christian mysteries, it is not to be doubted but that they have a much greater aversion to Christian practice. They run greedily in with any new schemes of belief, not as containing *true* religion, but as carrying *less* religion in them, and approaching nearer to irreligion. For they judge very right so far, that lopping off the main branches first is a great point gained, and will make it easy afterwards to strike at the root. In the mean while, they can be content, for decency sake, to cry up *virtue* and *morality*, so long as inroads are making upon *faith*, and *Scripture* is thereby struck at; which, as they very well know, is the only sure and solid foundation both of *faith* and *morality*. If *Scripture* is once depreciated, and sunk in esteem, what will become of our *morality*? Natural *religion*, as it is called, will soon be what every man pleases, and will show itself in little else but natural *depravity*: for supposing the rules of *morality* to be ever so justly drawn out, and worked up into a regular system, yet as there will be no certain sanctions (*Scripture* once removed) to bind it on the conscience, no clear account of heaven or hell, or future judgment to enforce it, we may easily imagine how precarious a bottom *morality* will stand upon.

The result then is, that *Christian* morality is the only one that will in all points answer; and this must be supported by preserving the just authority of the *Christian law*: and this can no otherwise be kept up, but by maintaining the veneration due to sacred Writ, both as to matters of *faith* and *practice*. If we weaken its authority in respect of either, we do it in both, and endanger the whole. There is therefore no effectual way of repairing the breaches already made, but by returning to our old and well-tried principles, and there making our stand. If we once yield to go farther than is reasonable, or warrantable, in the subversive way, there is no knowing where or when to stop. All beyond that, is wandering in uncertainty, and steering without mark or compass.

The first Reformers, here and abroad, proceeded like wise men, reducing religion, as near as could well be, to its pure and primitive state: they went by *rule*, and so knew when they had done enough. There is an absolute necessity of fixing a certain rule, to prevent the endless excursions of flight and fancy. That rule is *Scripture*, but taking *antiquity* along with it, as the best comment upon it. It was wise and excellent advice given in one of our Canons in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in the year 1571. "That the Clergy should teach nothing from the pulpit, "as being of religious obligation to the people to believe, "but what should be consonant to the doctrine of the "Old or New Testament, and what the Catholic *Fathers* "and *ancient Bishops* had collected or concluded from "thence^a." How would both *truth* and *learning* flourish, were but this rule carefully observed? Men that know little of the *Fathers* will of course speak with contempt of them. They were *men*, it is true; but they were withal *great* and *good* men: a character which those will never arrive to, who presume to flout or despise them. But to proceed: the rule I have already mentioned: there ought we to abide, and there to fix our firm footing. Every departure from it will be a departure, so far, from truth and sobriety; which if carried on but a little way will do mischief, but if pursued to the utmost (as it is natural for a spirit of error to be restless) can end in nothing else but the most deplorable confusion.

I doubt not but those who first began to divide upon the article of the Trinity might have truth and godliness at heart, (as they understood them,) and might design well, not aware of the wild distractions they were bringing us into. And though they have some of them lived to see and observe the deluge of infidelity flowing in upon

^a Imprimis vero videbunt (concionatores) ne quid unquam doceant pro concione, quod a populo religiose teneri et credi velint, nisi quod consentaneum sit doctrinæ Veteris aut Novi Testamenti, quodque ex illa ipsa doctrina Catholici patres et veteres episcopi collegerint. *Sparrow, Collect.* p. 238.

us, it is probable that even that will not convince them of the false step made at the beginning, to which the rest has been owing: so natural is it for most of us to be fond of our own schemes, and blind to our failings. But certainly indifferent standers-by may easily now see what should have been done at first, and what should never have been attempted. It is plain enough that *Arianism* is but the dupe to *Deism*, as *Deism* again is to *Atheism*, or *Popery*: time will show which, unless we can yet be wise enough to retreat. I shall only add, that we have (God be thanked) still an excellent Church, pure and primitive, and by conforming to it, are in as safe a way to salvation as were the ancient martyrs, or other Christians of the best and purest times. Happy might it be for us, could we but forbear tampering, and be content when we are well. Reformation is good, when reformation is wanting: but to be always reforming is no reforming at all: it is behaving as children tossed too and fro with every wind of doctrine. All errors of any moment have been purged off long ago, by the care of our Reformers, and why then are we still reforming? Physic may be proper at certain seasons: but to pretend to live constantly upon it, instead of food, is a certain way to impair, and in a little time to destroy, the best and soundest constitution in the world.

THE
NATURE, OBLIGATION, AND EFFICACY
OF THE
CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS
CONSIDERED;

IN REPLY TO A PAMPHLET,

ENTITLED,

AN ANSWER TO THE REMARKS UPON DR. CLARKE'S EXPOSITION OF THE CHURCH CATECHISM.

AS ALSO

*The Comparative Value of Moral and Positive Duties
distinctly Stated and Cleared.*

THE
NATURE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS
CONSIDERED.

I HAVE read over and considered a pamphlet, entitled, *An Answer to the Remarks upon Dr. Clarke's Exposition of the Church Catechism*, printed for Mr. Knapton. The author has superficially touched upon the several matters contained in my Remarks, and I may very probably return him a distinct reply, as soon as I have any reason to believe, that nothing more considerable is to be expected from other hands. But there is one particular above the rest, which the author seems most to triumph in, *calling*^a upon me with some earnestness, once and again, to give him satisfaction. I shall endeavour to do so, in the following sheets, and at the same time to satisfy some very worthy persons, who, having no dislike to what I asserted in the Remarks, of the comparative value of the Sacraments in respect to *moral* duties, but entirely approving the same, do yet wish to see so important a matter more distinctly drawn out, and more minutely guarded against all cavil and exception. This therefore is what, with God's assistance, I shall here undertake for the honour and service of *instituted* religion, in general, and for the

^a Page 78, 81.

preserving the dignity of the two Christian *Sacraments* in particular.

CHAP. I.

Dr. Clarke's Sentiments on this Head distinctly opened and ascertained.

AS the dispute arises from what Dr. Clarke has laid down in the Exposition, so it will be proper, in the first place, to produce his words, and to fix their precise meaning. Speaking of our Lord's command for receiving the holy Communion, he says thus*: "Since the command of Christ is *express* and *universal*, it becomes all pious persons to remove, as soon as possible, the ground or occasion of the scruple, whatever it be, and prepare themselves to comply with the command of their Lord. In the doing of which, they are still always to remember, that *this and all other positive institutions have the nature only of means to an end, and that therefore they are never to be compared with moral virtues*, nor can ever be of any use or benefit without them, nor can be in any degree equivalents for the want of them."

These are his words; and that part which I found fault with in my Remarks is here printed in Italic. His manner of expression is not exact, being indeed elliptical, but his sense will be easily ascertained. He makes a comparison between *positive institutions* and *moral virtues*; which is not accurately expressed, because the *opposition*, thus worded, is not plain and direct. *Positive institutions* should be opposed to *moral institutions*; and *moral virtues*, by which he really means *moral duties*, should be opposed to *positive duties*, to make the comparison exact. But in a quick succession of thought, it is easy to run ideas one into another, skipping over the intermediate terms which should keep them distinct. To represent this matter to the eye, let the respective oppositions appear thus:

* Exposition, p. 281, 282.

Positive institutions :	Moral institutions.
Positive commands :	Moral commands.
Positive duties :	Moral duties.
Positive virtues :	Moral virtues.

Now, in strictness, the learned Doctor should have said *positive duties* and *moral duties*, to make the comparison clear, and the opposition exact, and to express distinctly what he really means. In his Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion ^b, he has much the same thought as here, but a little more clearly expressed: “ Even those “ positive and external observances, the two Sacraments, “ which are instituted in the Christian religion as means “ and assistances to keep men stedfast in the practice of “ those great and moral duties, which are the weightier “ matters of the Law ; even those positive institutions, I “ say, are, &c.” Here he rightly has *positive observances* in the first line, and those he opposes to *moral duties*; which is justly expressed. *Moral virtues* often signify the internal habits of the mind only, abstracting from the outward acts, as when we speak of *benevolence, justice, charity*, and the like. But *moral duties* signify both the inward habits and outward acts, or the inward habits as exerting themselves in outward acts; as when we speak of *feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the oppressed*, or any thing of the like kind. Now the reader may please to observe, that when Dr. Clarke opposes *positive* to *moral* duties (for so he must be supposed to mean) he could never intend to oppose the *external* part only of positive duties to the *internal* part of moral: for if that were his meaning, he might as well have opposed the external part of any *moral* duty to the internal part of the same duty, (*outward almsgiving*, for instance, to *inward mercy*), which would have been entirely foreign to his purpose: but he must have intended that *positive duties* taken in the whole, including both the outward and inward parts of them, are never to be compared to *moral*

^b Page 227. edit. 4.

duties taken also in the whole, including both their outward and inward constituents. The opposition then intended by Dr. Clarke does not lie between outward acts and inward habits, (which would be altogether foreign,) but between *positive* duties and *moral* duties; that is to say, between obedience both outward and inward to *positive* laws or rules, and obedience both outward and inward to *moral* commandments.

Such being the case, the Doctor's true sense, and full sense as laid down or intimated in the Exposition, appears to me to resolve into the several propositions here following :

1. That *positive* institutions, or commands, as *positive*, are always of slighter obligation than *moral*. He speaks in the general of "all positive institutions," that they are "never to be compared with moral."

2. That obedience to positive commands or institutions is *instrumental* only to moral virtue, and is not moral virtue: for he says, that "positive institutions have the nature only of means to an end," by the *end* meaning moral virtue. And if such be the case of *positive* commands, then *positive* obedience must by analogy and parity of reason be understood as *means* only to *virtue*, not virtue direct.

3. That obedience to positive commands is *never to be compared* with obedience to moral commands. I need not nicely distinguish between *institutions* and *commands* in this case, since the reason is the same in both, and *institutions* are nothing else but standing and permanent commands.

4. That, in particular, the two Christian Sacraments are merely *positive* institutions.

5. That *obedience* to Christ's law concerning them, or the *use* of the Sacraments, is not moral virtue, but *instrumental* only to moral *virtue*.

6. That therefore the use of the Sacraments is *never to be compared* with obedience to moral duties, with acts of moral virtue.

These propositions contained in the Doctor's notion appear to me all, or most of them mistakes: and it will next be my business thoroughly to examine and discuss them. I take no advantage of the Doctor's phrase of *moral virtues*, by which I shall presume he meant *evangelical virtues*, or *Christian graces*: only I could have wished he had expressed himself more accurately, lest from the ambiguous name of *moral virtues*, given sometimes to mere Pagan virtues, any weak persons should think that this high commendation might be passed upon *them*, when they are far from meriting any thing like it, being mean and low things in comparison, and *having* indeed, according to the true and express doctrine of our excellent Church^c, "the nature of sin," as being defective in principle and in direction, and wanting the grace of God^d. On this account it were better to say *Christian virtues*, when we really mean such, than to make use of the lower and more ambiguous name of *moral virtues*. But so long as the ideas are kept distinct and clear, I shall not contend with any man about names or words only. Having premised as much as seemed necessary for the clearing and ascertaining Doctor Clarke's sense, I may now proceed regularly to the points in debate.

CHAP. II.

Of the Distinction between moral and positive Duties.

CUSTOM has, in a manner, authorized this distinction in these terms, though the terms are none of the most proper. Every law, properly so called, is *moral*, is *regula moralis*, or *regula morum*, a moral rule, regulating the practice of moral agents. But *moral law* in a more restrained sense signifies the same with *natural law*, a law derived from God, consonant to the *nature* and reason of

^c Article xiii.

^d See Bishop Burnet on the Articles, p. 131, 132. Norris's *Miscellanies*, p. 293. Vitring. *Observat. Sacr.* tom. ii. l. 3. c. 12.

things, and therefore of as fixed and unmoveable obligation as the nature and reason of things is. *Positive* divine law, in contradistinction to the other, is not founded in the fixed nature or reason of things, or at least not known to be so; being considered only as *prescribed*, and as depending on God's good pleasure either to remove or continue it. There may be some perplexity in determining of several laws appearing in Scripture only, whether to call them *natural* or *positive*. Certain it is, that we are bound to several duties, of natural and eternal obligation, which yet are not commonly referred to the law of nature, nor placed among the moral duties or virtues. Scripture has discovered to us another world, in which God the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, archangels, angels, and saints, make one blessed society, to which every good Christian bears a relation, as a citizen of heaven. By the first principle of the law of nature, "universal and "active benevolence towards the whole rational system," (as Bishop Cumberland has justly stated it,) all the social duties we owe to the several persons making up that blessed society, must be duties founded in the nature and reason of things, (discovered by revelation,) and of as fixed and unchangeable obligation as any social duties we owe to our own species. Whether our duties to God the Father as Father, and to God the Son in his several capacities, and to God the Holy Ghost, and the duties of respect and love towards angels, (when we shall come to know them,) have been reckoned among the *moral* duties or no, I know not: but sure I am, that they have as much the nature of *moral* duties, and may be as justly so styled, as any *moral* duties we owe to one another, and are of as fixed and unalterable obligation. Indeed they are in some respects of more lasting obligation than many moral or natural duties, such as *almsgiving*, *visiting the sick*, *relieving the oppressed*, &c. For these will cease with the present system of things, but the other will abide for ever. I am well enough pleased with an obser-

vation of a grave and serious writer^e, (whom I could wish to have oftener agreeing with me,) that “the faith which the Christian revelation requires in its great Revealer—as importing our acceptance of him for our supreme Lord, is *what* we were antecedently obliged to by the very *law of nature*, on supposition that his real Divinity was discoverable by us. In this case, he that believeth not is condemned already, *viz.* by the law of nature.” Upon this foot, and in this way of reasoning, many of the Scripture duties, which we have otherwise no knowledge of, are yet justly referred to the law of nature, since Scripture has discovered what foundation they have in the nature and truth of things. Thus, for instance, *to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*^f, *to confess Christ before men*^g, *to take up the cross*^h, *to honour the Son even as the Father*ⁱ, *to set our affections on things above*^k, *to pray without ceasing*^l, *to resist the Devil*^m, *to contend earnestly for the faith*ⁿ, with many more of like kind, are *natural* and *moral* duties, of universal obligation to as many as know them, and in their very nature immutable, and eternal as any other *moral* duties. The same may be observed of the negative Scripture precepts, such as these following: *not to deny Christ before men*^o, *not to blaspheme the Holy Ghost*^p, *not to defile the temple of God*^q, *not to communicate unworthily*^r, *Quench not the Spirit*^s, *Love not the world*^t. These are precepts of unalterable obligation, fixed in the very nature and reason of things, according to the discoveries Scripture has made of them. They cannot justly be called *positive* precepts, because unchangeable, and because they naturally and necessarily flow from the prime fundamental law of nature, *universal benevolence*, and are essential to

^e S. Collier of Revealed Religion, p. 154, 155.

^f Matt. vi. 33.

^g Matt. ix. 13.

^h Matt. x. 38. xvi. 24.

ⁱ John v. 23.

^k Coloss. iii. 3.

^l 1 Thess. v. 17.

^m James iv. 7.

ⁿ Jude 3.

^o Matt. x. 33.

^p Matt. xii. 32.

^q 1 Cor. iii. 17.

^r 1 Cor. xi. 27.

^s 1 Thess. v. 19.

^t 1 John ii. 15.

the common happiness of the whole system of intelligent beings.

These things considered, I should choose to divide our several duties into their proper classes, somewhat differently from the common divisions. Let them first be divided into *natural* and *supernatural*; by *natural*, meaning those discoverable by the bare light of nature; and by *supernatural*, meaning those that are discovered by revelation. Then as to *supernatural* duties, let them again be distinguished into *constant* and *occasional*, or, if you please, into *moral* and *positive*; meaning by *constant* or *moral*, such supernatural duties as are of eternal and immutable obligation; and by *occasional* or *positive*, meaning such as are temporary or changeable. And here I would observe of the *supernatural* moral duties, that though many of them are *materially*, or in the outward act, the same with the duties of natural religion, yet *formally* they are not the same, as being founded in higher principles, and upon better promises, and wrought out by the Spirit of God. *Faith*, *hope*, and *charity*, for instance, are *natural* duties, or virtues: but the correspondent *supernatural* duties or virtues, bearing the same names, are of a much more excellent kind, and so are not *formally*, or precisely, the same with the other.

As to supernatural *positive* precepts, or duties, some may be called *transient*, and some *permanent*. Of the transient sort was the first law given to Adam, and of like kind were several occasional precepts given by God to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Saul, David, and to the Prophets. Of the *permanent* kind were the *ritual*, and some judicial precepts given to the Jews, which were to last as long as the Jewish polity should last. Of the like *permanent* kind are the precepts concerning the two Christian Sacraments, which shall continue as long as the Christian Church, or as the world shall continue. I would further observe of *positive* precepts, that though we are used to consider them merely as *prescribed*, and to resolve them commonly into the

mere will and pleasure of the Legislator, yet they are always founded upon *reasons*, known perhaps in part to us, but perfectly known to God; and so they are ultimately resolvable into infinite wisdom and goodness. Having premised these general things as preparatory to the main questions I am to go upon, I now proceed more directly and closely to what I intend.

CHAP. III.

Of the comparative Value, Excellency, or Obligation of moral and positive Precepts, or Duties.

DR. CLARKE and his followers lay it down for a rule and a principle, that *positive* precepts or duties are never to be compared with *moral*. I suppose they mean as to their value, or excellency, or strictness of obligation. I see no ground or foundation for this general rule: but it appears to rest only upon a false presumption, and to resolve at length into a want of just discernment, into an unperceived confusion of ideas. I believe it will at last be found, that the *πρῶτον ψεῦδος*, the fundamental error in this whole affair, has been the confounding *external* with *positive*, as if the words were tantamount, and the not considering that *positive* duties have both an *inward* and an *outward* part, both a *formal* and a *material* constituent, as well as *moral* duties have. To make this plainer, let us consider *almsgiving*, a moral duty. There is the outward act, or *material* part, giving to the poor: which if done for ostentation, or vanity, or without a true principle of piety and charity, is no *virtue*, is nothing worth in moral account. Next, let us consider receiving the holy Communion, a *positive* duty. There is the *opus operatum*, as the schools speak, the outward act, or material part of the duty, which if performed in hypocrisy, without faith, reverence, or repentance, is nothing worth in moral account. But if it be performed as it should be, it is as truly an act of moral obedience, and as much an exercise of virtue, as almsgiving, having all the requisites proper to

make it real virtue. It is not the material outward part of any act that makes it *virtue*; even the brutes themselves in bearing burdens, &c. do many things *materially* good, tending to the general good of mankind: but it is the inward principle, the *choosing* what is *materially* good, in conformity to a divine law, this is what constitutes the action *morally* good, and gives it both the name and nature of *virtue*. In *positive* duties, though the *matter* in itself considered is indifferent, yet the obedience is *moral*, and disobedience in such cases is *immoral*; because it is an eternal and unchangeable maxim, that God is to be obeyed in whatsoever he commands. Obedience in this case is acting for the *common happiness*, as the common happiness is nearly and deeply concerned in keeping up the reverence due to Divine authority; and disobedience, on the other hand, is acting against the common happiness, since nothing can be more destructive to the common good of the universe, than the contemning or slighting the authority of its high Lord and Lawgiver. Seeing therefore that the morality or immorality of an act, in respect even of *moral* or *natural* duties, lies in the obedience or disobedience to a Divine law; and since there is the like obedience or disobedience to a Divine law in cases of *positive* duty, and that the obedience or disobedience in either case is equally moral or immoral; it will from hence follow, that the judging of the value or the obligation of the Divine precepts merely from their *positive* or *moral* nature, is making a false estimate, and going by a wrong rule. For *positive* or *moral* makes no difference at all, either as to the weight of the command, or the morality of the action, or the obligation of the precept, which must be judged of by other rules, and measured by other circumstances, as shall be shown in the sequel. But to be a little more distinct and particular, I may draw out what concerns this matter into the following propositions.

I. *Positive* commands of God are as strictly obligatory, as any other commands whatever, for the time being.

II. There may be as great virtue (or greater) in obeying *positive* precepts, as in obeying *moral* ones.

III. There may be as great (or greater) iniquity and impiety in disobeying *positive* precepts, as in disobeying *moral* ones.

IV. The *comparative* value of any duties above other duties depends not upon their *positive* or *moral* nature, but upon their relation to or connection with the general good of the whole rational system, taken in its largest compass, both of extent and duration.

These several propositions may want some proofs, or some explication, among common readers; and therefore I shall take the pains to treat of them severally, and more at large, in their order.

I. I say, *positive* commands of God are as strictly obligatory as any other commands whatever, for the time being. All obligation arises from some law, and it is the Divine law that constitutes moral good and evil. Things may be *naturally* good or bad, that is, may have a natural tendency to promote happiness or misery, may be *materially* good or evil, that is, useful or hurtful, previous to any law: but they cannot be *formally* and morally good and evil without respect to some law, natural or revealed; for "where no law is, there is no transgression."

I know some persons, and Dr. Clarke himself^u among others, have fancied I know not what *obliging* and binding force in the nature and reasons of things, considered as previous or antecedent to all laws, natural or revealed. But it will be hard to make any good sense or consistency of such a notion. Obligation antecedent to all law is a contradiction and flat absurdity. Wherefore those who have looked deeper into the case have rightly resolved all obligation into some Divine law, natural or revealed. If the reader would see the contrary notion thoroughly examined and confuted, he may find it done to his hands in a very ingenious treatise which I refer to at the bottom

^u Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 35. fourth edit.

of the page^x. If therefore all obligation resolves into the force of Divine law, and if *positive* duties derive their obligation from the very same source that all other duties do, it is very manifest that *positive* precepts are as strictly obligatory as any moral ones can be, considered merely as moral, other circumstances being equal. The authority of the same Lawgiver is the same in both, and so the commands are alike obligatory for the time being. For though one be permanent or perpetual, and the other transient or temporary, yet it is as much the will of God that we should obey the temporary command for the term it is intended for, as it is that we should obey the other for any given duration, or for ever and ever. Upon the whole, we may affirm, that it is always our bounden duty to obey the commands of God, be the matter of them moral or positive: and it will be always sinful to disobey the commands of God, whether they be occasional or perpetual. God may, in some circumstances, insist upon obedience to a positive command, more than upon obedience to the moral: and when he does so, the positive command carries the stricter and stronger obligation. Whatever it be, moral or positive, which for the time being God most strictly requires, that is the most obligatory; and to disobey in that instance is the most heinous impiety. For the will of God in these cases is our immediate rule to go by, and is the ground and measure of all obligation. Unerring wisdom has reasons by which it constantly steers; and we cannot doubt but where God lays the greatest stress, there are the greatest reasons: but it will be enough for any creature, in such cases, to know that Divine Wisdom insists upon it, and strictly requires it: for that alone is sufficient, without knowing more, to create the strictest and strongest obligation.

^x The Foundation of Morality in Theory and Practice considered, in an Examination of the learned Dr. Samuel Clarke's Opinion concerning the Original of Moral Obligation, &c. by John Clarke, Master of the Public Grammar School in Hull.

II. The second thing which I undertake to maintain is, that there may be as great virtue (or greater) in obeying *positive* precepts, as in obeying *moral* ones. This may be made appear divers ways. If a positive command be more difficult, requiring a greater degree of self-denial: if the good intended by it be of a more excellent kind, or more diffusive, or more lasting; in all such cases there may be greater virtue in obeying the positive command than in obeying moral. I have before intimated that obedience to positive precepts is really *moral*, (though the *matter* be indifferent,) and is properly *virtue*: and now I am to show that it may be in some cases (I do not say that it always is) greater virtue.

1. If the positive command be more difficult, requiring a greater degree of self-denial. It has been sometimes the method of an all-wise God, to prove, exercise, and perfect his most faithful servants by some additional *positive* precepts, over and above what he expects or requires of common men. Thus he proved Abraham by two very extraordinary *positive* commands; one to leave his own country and his father's house, which he meekly, humbly, implicitly obeyed, "not knowing whither he went;" the other, to sacrifice his most dearly beloved son, in which also Abraham was all obedience. I need not say what a complication of virtues, and what elevated degrees of each, were shown in those two instances of his obedience, much beyond any thing that ever was or ever could be shown in the ordinary way of mere moral duties. The nature of the thing itself speaks it, and the Scripture encomiums given of Abraham's faith, hope, and resignation, abundantly confirm it.

It was with a view to Abraham's case, and any other the like cases, that I observed in my Remarks, (p. 425.) "that obedience to positive institutions is sometimes the "noblest and best exercise of the love of God, showing "the greater affection, and prompter resignation to the "Divine will." Adding these words, "He is a proud "and a saucy servant that will never obey his master but

“ where he sees the *reason* of the command. It is reason
 “ enough for obeying, to every modest and humble ser-
 “ vant, that his Lord, so much wiser than he, and to
 “ whom he owes all his service, has commanded it.” Upon
 these words, the Answerer thus comments, p. 80. “ The
 “ reader is from hence to imagine that our Saviour has
 “ required an implicit blind resignation to his will, in the
 “ institution of his Sacraments.” But what I said, refer-
 red to positive institutions or commands, *in the general*,
 as I expressly noted, p. 425, and not to the *Sacraments* in
 particular: and by *Lord*, I understood God as giving
positive precepts to Adam, to Abraham, &c. and not
Christ as instituting the Sacraments. I never said nor
 thought, that the *reasons* of the two Sacraments are not
 assigned in Scripture; I intend to show that they are,
 and that those *reasons* are as weighty and as consider-
 able as those upon which *moral* duties are founded. But
 that God may and does upon special occasions require
 an *implicit* resignation to his commands, and that the
 paying such *implicit* resignation to God (as did Abraham)
 is a noble exercise of faith, and of the love of God, I
 thought had been unquestionable. Our author by twice
 calling it “ blind resignation,” and by his signifying that
 it would be a “ real injury to our Lord’s character,” to
 represent him “ as acting in this manner,” in “ requiring
 “ such affection, such blind resignation;” I say, by all
 this, he seems to think, that God has no right to require
 any such *implicit*, or, as he calls it, *blind* resignation.
 Which if it be his principle, as I am willing to hope it is
 not, it is what he ought to repent of, for it is not only
 proud and irreverent, but indeed horribly profane.

As to what our Lord has undoubtedly *commanded* in
 the New Testament, we ought most certainly to comply
 with it, whether we know all or any of the *reasons* for
 his commanding it, or no. *Implicit* resignation is due to
 all his certain commands: and if he himself has given us
 the *reasons*, it is a favour that he has done so. But I do
 not observe that he always gave *reasons*: particularly

when he instituted the form of Baptism in the name of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, I do not remember that he assigned the reasons for joining *Son* and *Holy Ghost* with the *Father*: but he expected to be obeyed therein presently, leaving it to the Apostles afterwards to intimate the reasons by the doctrine they taught. But to proceed.

Sometimes *positive* precepts have been given by God, and not complied with, or not without great reluctance, by men that would readily have practised all *moral* duties: which shows how much greater a perfection it may be, in some cases, to comply with *positive*, than with *moral* commands. The case of Moses's being ordered to appear before Pharaoh, and that of the Prophet Jonas, and a third of the *young man* in the Gospel, are known cases. Had they all readily complied with the *positive* Divine orders given, how vastly more perfect had they thereby shown themselves, than by being merely good *moral* men?

2. If the *positive* precept aims at some benefit of a higher kind, or more diffusive, or more lasting; then also obedience to such *positive* precept is preferable to moral. The command given to the Apostles to "preach the Gospel to every creature," was, I suppose, a *positive* command: the good intended by it was the salvation of mankind hereafter, as well as their temporal felicity here. There could not be any benefit of a higher kind, or more diffusive, or more extensive in duration, reaching to all eternity: therefore obedience to such precept, though only *positive*, was of greater value and excellency than *moral* virtues; low attainments, low works in comparison. What is feeding the hungry, a few only at most, clothing the naked, relieving the widow and orphan, or the like, if compared with bringing life, eternal life and happiness, to a whole world? As to cases or instances wherein *positive* duties may be preferred to moral, that depends upon the time and place, and other circumstances. When pious Mary expressed her devout affec-

tion toward our blessed Lord by anointing his head, (a *positive* duty as I conceive,) our Lord approved and commended it above *charity* to the poor (a moral duty) at that time, giving this reason: "The poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always." When Martha desired the assistance of her sister Mary, which in common cases would have been kind and friendly, and *moral* duty, our blessed Lord commended Mary for attending rather to good instructions relating to a better world, preferring the *positive* duty, calling it, in those circumstances, the "good part," and the "one thing needful." It depends therefore, as I said, upon the circumstances, and requires good judgment and discretion to determine well and wisely, when to prefer a *positive* duty, and when a *moral* one: but enough has been offered to show that the *positive* duties are sometimes preferable, and carry more virtue in them.

III. But I further promised to show that there may be as great, or greater, iniquity and impiety in disobeying *positive* precepts, than in disobeying moral ones. There may be greater contempt of the Divine authority, greater profaneness shown in this way, than in the other. I do not say there always is, but that there sometimes, or very often, may be. When God in an extraordinary manner is pleased to send out his precepts, by an express from heaven, that is a circumstance which gives uncommon weight to the command or prohibition; and disobedience to it then carries a degree of contempt and defiance in it, more than common breaches of the law of nature does. In fact we find, as I before observed in my Remarks², (and no reply has been hitherto so much as attempted to it,) that the violating one *positive* precept first brought in sin, and thereupon a flood of misery into the world, which we yet feel at this day. I may further mention the case of King Saul, who though he was in many re-

¹ Matth. xxvi. 2. John xii. 8.

² Remarks, p. 425.

spects an *immoral* man, yet never offended so highly as in the breach of a *positive* precept, which is called *rebellion*^a, and is represented in as black colours as possible, ranked with *witchcraft*, *iniquity*, and *idolatry*, the most heinous provocations: and it was for this principally he was rejected from being king, and forfeited both his life and his kingdom^b. His disobedience, in that particular, was striking at God's authority, and treating his Maker with contempt, and therefore was highly profane. The two instances already given may sufficiently show how wicked and how dangerous it may sometimes be to violate *positive* commands. And as to *positive institutions*, which are permanent positive commands, we may see, by the penalties appointed by God in the Jewish law for the breach of them, the stress that was laid upon them. *Circumcision* was bound upon the Jews by stronger penalties than many *moral* duties: and the *gathering of sticks* on the Sabbath day was death by Divine appointment^c, while *theft*, and several other breaches of the *moral* law, were more mildly dealt with. So that if we may judge of a crime by the penalties affixed to it, we have no reason at all to suppose that God was less displeased with the breach of some *positive* institutions, than with transgressions against the *moral* ones. From all which I may now presume to draw this inference; that the distinction of *moral* and *positive* will do us very little service, as to the passing a judgment either upon the comparative value of Divine precepts, or upon the comparative iniquity or danger of transgressing them: but this important problem must be solved, this doubt decided, by quite other measures, and by other rules.

IV. I proceed then, fourthly, to observe, that the comparative value of any duties, above other duties, depends not upon their *positive* or *moral* nature, but upon their relation to and connection with the primary law of nature, the general good of the whole intelli-

^a 1 Sam. xv. 23.

^b 1 Sam. xxviii. 17, 18.

^c Numb. xv. 32, &c.

gent system, considered in its largest compass both of extent and duration. To know the value and importance of any Divine precept, ask not whether it be *positive*, or whether it be *moral*, but ask what depends upon paying a conscientious obedience to it. Charity towards men's souls, for instance, is greater charity than relieving only their bodily wants; and the converting men to the true religion, in order to bring them to heaven, is of much higher importance than procuring only their temporal felicity in this life. Moral virtues, strictly so called, look no higher than the temporal happiness of society, of the whole community of mankind: but moral virtues evangelized, or improved into Christian duties, have partly a view to promote the good of human society here, but chiefly to qualify the observers of them for a much more blessed and more enduring society hereafter. Take mankind in their whole extent, as immortal beings, ordained for eternity, and as designed to make up one society with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with angels also and archangels, and with one another; and when you have this view before you, and any duties are to be compared together, consider, upon a competent weighing of all circumstances, which is best calculated to promote the common good of the whole, and which may be omitted with least damage to the general felicity. If it be asked, whether I may *sometimes* neglect the public prayers of the Church, to be employed in relieving widows or orphans, or doing the utmost service I am capable of to my prince, or country, or to mankind; I answer, it is right so to do, upon occasion, or in some particular exigencies, because the honour of God and his ordinances would not thereby suffer, but mankind would be served in it and by it. But if the question be, whether I may *totally*, or very *frequently*, neglect the public prayers on any such pretence; I say, no. Such a profane neglect of the Divine ordinances would amount to a *contempt* of them, and the ill example therein given would do infinitely more hurt to mankind, than all the services of any single man, or any

body of men could compensate. More depends upon keeping up a face and sense of religion in the world, than upon any moral virtues. In truth, moral virtues themselves depend upon it, and can never subsist without it. So that any pretence of setting up *moral virtues* in opposition to *religious duties*, is undermining morality instead of serving it, and is defeating the very end which it pretends to secure. Enough has been said to show by what rules and measures we may, as occasions happen, judge of the comparative value of one duty above another. I have been forced to fetch a wide compass, in order to clear up this matter to common readers: and now having fixed and settled the principles upon which I proceed, if these principles be true and just, there can be no great difficulty in returning proper answers to all objections.

CHAP. IV.

Objections answered.

OBJECTIONS to the principles before laid down are either drawn from *Scripture* or from *reason*. I shall consider both in their order, omitting none that the Answer to the Remarks has hit upon, but supplying some which he has not mentioned, that the readers may have the larger view of what belongs to the question.

I. I begin with the objections from *Scripture*. The Answer to the Remarks observes, that positive institutions, when compared with moral virtues or moral duties, “are treated as mere nothings^d, as things not required at all. See,” says he, “how the prophets have treated the whole Mosaic dispensation, when compared with doing justly, and loving mercy, and walking humbly with God.” But the gentleman is much mistaken, if he imagines that this at all affects the question about the obligation of positive commands. “Walking humbly with God” is walking in the way of his command-

^d Answer to the Remarks, p. 91.

ments, in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Obeying the *positive* commands of God is walking humbly with him, and, in some cases, as in that of Abraham particularly, is more peculiarly and eminently so : and Saul never acted more *proudly*, nor ever offended more highly, than when he transgressed against a *positive* command.

God slighted sacrifices, one part only of obedience, and hypocritically performed, in comparison of whole and entire obedience. He slighted them, in some cases, not because they were *positive* duties, but because they were *part* only of what God required, and reduced to an *external* part, separate from that true and sincere piety which ought to have gone along with them. For the like reasons, and in the like circumstances, God will as much slight any *moral* duties when hypocritically and outwardly performed, upon ill principles, or upon no principles. " Though I bestow all my goods to feed the " poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing^e." A man may feed the poor for ostentation or vanity, may clothe the naked for his own interest, may visit the sick for his curiosity, may relieve the widow and fatherless for the ends of vain-glory and popularity ; and then those outward *moral* performances will be altogether as contemptible as the *hypocritical* sacrifices of the Jews were, which the Prophet so justly censures. Or if they had not been *hypocritical*, yet if they were offered only as *partial* obedience, and as a kind of composition in lieu of the whole ; in this view also they deserved to be spoken of with contempt and disdain. And the like may be said also of any *moral* duties, if amounting only to a *partial* obedience. If a man, for instance, is charitable to the poor, but yet indulges brutal lust ; or if he is sober, chaste, temperate, but exceeding *covetous* withal and extorting, such *partial* obedience is as contemptible as were the Jewish sacrifices. " Whosoever shall keep the whole

• 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

“law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all ^f.” I say then, that the sacrifices of the Jewish dispensation were not slightly spoken of on account of their being *positive* institutions, but either on account of their being made mere *outward* and *hypocritical* performances, or as being at best no more than *partial* obedience; in which cases, even *moral* services are as contemptible as *positive*. Now let us proceed.

The author objects farther, as follows: “^εThe principles laid down by the prophets of old, and confirmed by our Saviour himself in his approbation of the maxim, “*I will have mercy and not sacrifice*, are directly contradictory to those which the remarker insists upon.” To which I answer: that maxim, “I will have mercy rather than sacrifice^h,” is first applied by our blessed Saviour, by way of justification of himself for preaching the Gospel to *publicans*. Matt. ix. 11. The *ritual* laws restrained the Jews from conversing familiarly with *heathens*, or unclean persons; notwithstanding which, our blessed Lord sat down to eat with publicans in order to convert them, showing *mercy* to their souls. I know not whether this kind of *mercy* will be taken into our author’s list of *moral* virtues, nor whether he will reckon preaching the Gospel among the *positive* or the *moral* duties. If he thinks it *positive*, then this application made by our blessed Lord in that instance is not to his purpose: for all that it proves is, that one *positive* duty of great consequence is preferable to another *positive* duty of slighter consequence. However that be, I will venture to assure him, that wherever one duty is preferred to another, it is not because one is *moral* and another is *positive*, but because one is more important, in such and such circumstances, than the other. That is the rule to go by, as observed above: the other is mere imagination. I would further observe to him, that when King Saul transgressed a po-

^f James ii. 10.

^ε Answer to the Remarks, p. 71.

^h Hosea vi. 6. Matt. ix. 13. xii. 7.

sitive command, the Prophet, in that case, applied to him a maxim very like to that of Hosea vi. 6. or tantamount to it. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to "hearken than the fat of ramsⁱ." Obedience, we see, is the thing that God requires, be it in a *positive* instance or a *moral*. Only we are to judge from the circumstances, in doubtful cases, which is the precept then chiefly to be regarded, which most insisted upon, or necessary to be insisted upon, and so we may learn how to perform the most acceptable obedience.

Had the Jews of old ever been in any disposition to throw off the *legal* rites, and to abolish the *daily sacrifice*, we should have had more tragical complaints of it from the Prophets, than of any other of their immoralities or abominations. But indeed they never durst come up to that height of profaneness: for that would have amounted to an open revolt, and a total apostasy from God. Immoralities are high misdemeanours; but throwing off all *positive laws*, all *instituted* religion, is all immorality at once, is compendious wickedness, and defiance to the God of heaven. We know that the *daily sacrifice* ceased under Antiochus Epiphanes; which was a misfortune only to the Jews, and not their fault: and yet even that misfortune is described beforehand in tragical colours by the prophet Daniel^k, as a sad and dismal judgment upon the people. Such is the regard due to *positive* institutions, while they continue in force, or while they have not been repealed by the same authority that gave them. The Jews, however otherwise wicked, were never impudent enough to leave off their sacrifices and solemn assemblies: which is so far from showing the contemptible nature or slight obligation of those *positive* observances, that it rather shows quite the contrary. They are the last things that even the wickedest of men will throw off, because the so doing is downright apostasy. It is a step beyond

ⁱ 1 Sam. xv. 22.

^k Daniel viii. See also Jeremiah's Lament. ii. 6. of another like case.

common crimes or great immoralities, and such as none can take till they are mad enough to run any the most desperate lengths. Men may break through the laws of the *second* table, and there may yet be hopes of reclaiming them, while the laws of the *first* (which are of primary obligation, and the foundation of all the rest) have any hold of them: but if they throw off even the laws of the *first table* too, they are then lost and gone beyond recovery. But I pass on to what the Objector has to urge farther.

“The Prophets,” says he¹, “tell us,—To what purpose “is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I delight “not in the blood of bullocks.—When ye come to appear “before me, who hath required this at your hands, to “tread my courts^m?” Very well: and yet these very things which the Prophet here speaks so slightly of, are elsewhere styled a “sweet savour unto the Lordⁿ.” Which is a demonstration that not the sacrifices themselves, but the bad manner of preparing them, the evil dispositions defiling them, the wickedness that crept into them; these were what the Prophet’s censure was laid upon: and therefore he speaks as slightly of *prayers* in the same chapter^o, (though prayer is commonly reckoned among the *moral* duties,) for the *prayer* of the wicked is an *abomination*^p in the sight of God. But my Corrector says further, “How easy would it have been to have replied to Isaiah, upon the Remarker’s principle, that “obedience to a positive institution is at once an exercise “of obedience to the law, and of faith, of worship, and “of repentance.” Yes certainly, and so it is, when the obedience is *sincere*, and duly circumstantiated. And yet the Remarker will not scruple to speak as slightly and contemptibly of *unworthy* receiving of the Sacrament, as Isaiah spoke of the *unworthy* offering of sacrifices. Who

¹ Answer to the Remarks, p. 71.

^m Levit. i. 9.

ⁿ Prov. xxiii. 9.

^o Isaiah i. 11, 12.

^p Isaiah i. 11, 12.

has required it at the hands of *profane* men, while such, to come to Christian Baptism, or to the holy Sacrament, to defile these sacred mysteries and to increase their own damnation? Nevertheless, *worthy* receiving is literally what I said it was, and all that I said, as I shall show more distinctly in due time and place. But the Objector goes on ⁹.

“The Prophet certainly thought and acted upon a different principle, when having treated, as it were, with contempt, the positive institutions of the law, he adds moral virtues, as the things which should render them acceptable to God.—Wash ye, make ye clean^r, &c.” The Prophet, I presume, had more sense and more piety than to treat any of God’s ordinances with *contempt*. What he contemned was, the *profanation* of those ordinances, not the ordinances themselves; or to speak more strictly, the ordinances as *profaned*, and not merely as *positive* ordinances. Any *moral* performances, if outward only and hypocritical, or if otherwise cancelled by iniquity and disobedience, would have been as *worthless* as any thing the Prophet speaks of. The Prophet bids the people “cease to do evil, learn to do well.” Is not obeying God’s ordinances, whether positive or moral, *doing well*? How does this exclude *positive* institutions? But the Prophet adds, “Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” Right, he mentions the particular articles in which the Jews were most faulty at that time. At other times, they are as much blamed for profaning and polluting the Sabbaths^s, *positive* ordinances: and had any of them omitted *circumcision*, a *positive* ordinance too, they would not have been admonished only by a Prophet, but “cut off from the people^t.” However, I allow that mere *outward acts*, whether in positive or moral duties, are worth nothing in a religious account. And as soon as the Objector knows

^r Answer to the Remarks, p. 72.

^s Ezek. xx. 13, 16, 24. xxii. 8. xxiii. 38.

^t Isaiah i. 16, 17.

^u Gen. xvii. 14.

how to distinguish between *outward* acts and *positive* duties, and between slighting some positive duties, and slighting them *as such*; he may then easily answer every objection he has raised.

He goes on to St. James, who, as he observes, describing pure religion, “ puts it upon moral actions, to visit “ the fatherless and widow ^u, &c.” No doubt but the duties which St. James there mentions, if performed as they should be, and upon right Christian principles, are parts of *pure religion*: and so are many other duties both positive and moral, which he has not there named, and which yet are as necessary as the other, and necessary to complete the other; for God will not be served by halves. The same St. James exhorts his converts to “ submit “ themselves to God ^r,” which certainly includes submission to all his commandments: and he further advises them, in time of sickness, to *call for the elders of the Church, to pray over them, and to anoint them with oil*, promising them that the *prayer of faith* should *save the sick* ^r, and that *if he had committed sins, they should be forgiven him*. Surely St. James had no contemptible opinion of *positive* ordinances. I may add, that he speaks very highly of Abraham’s obedience to a *positive* precept.

But the Objector has another text, which one would not easily have thought of, and it is to show “ the efficacy “ of moral virtue beyond dispute.” It is Rom. ii. 25, 26. which runs thus: “ Circumcision verily profiteth if thou “ keep the law, but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy “ circumcision is made uncircumcision.” It is very odd to cite a text to prove the *efficacy* of the works of the law, against the whole tenor of the Apostle’s doctrine every where else. For the Apostle’s professed design, and the whole turn of his argument in several of his Epistles, is to persuade men not to trust to the *efficacy* of the works of

^u James i. 27.

^r James iv. 7.

^r James v. 14, 15.

the *law*, because indeed no man's works would be or could be *perfect* enough to trust to ; for which reason he advises them rather to trust to the efficacy of *faith*, that is, to the *grace* of the Gospel covenant sealed in the *blood* of Christ, by which alone men might justly hope for salvation. Not that good works were not *necessary* conditions, though wanting that proper *efficacy* to salvation which the alone merits of Christ's death supplied.

But to return to our Objector, and to take notice of his marvellous comment. "Positive institutions," says he, "profit, if thou keep the law," (*N. B.* the Jewish law, for that the Apostle is plainly speaking of,) "they are good means to make men virtuous, and consequently "are profitable." The truth is, the works of the Jewish law, both natural and positive, (for the Apostle takes all in, ceremonial, moral, and judicial,) those works if exactly and to a tittle performed, might have answered some purpose, because, according to promise and covenant, a Jew that should keep the law was to have *life* therein². And therefore circumcision, (considered here as the *seal of the covenant*, rather than as a *positive* duty,) which made a man "debtor to the whole law³," might be of some use, provided he should keep the *whole* law, otherwise it would be hurtful, being the taking up a burden that he should not be able to bear. Therefore since no man could wisely trust so far to his own strength, as to hope to be saved by *works*, St. Paul constantly advises to trust to the *grace* of God in Christ, which alone could supply the defective obedience even of the best men, and make it acceptable with God. But this part of the dispute may more properly come in under what I intend upon the Sacraments, and is but a kind of digression in this place: only because *positive* institutions are concerned in it, it was necessary to take some notice of it.

I have now run through all that the Objector had to

² Levit. xviii. 5.

³ Galat. v. 3.

urge from *Scripture*, in favour of *moral duties*, as being absolutely preferable to *positive*: and it does not appear that he has been able to prove his point.

II. I come in the next place to objections drawn from the nature or reason of the thing.

1. The first and principal ^b, in the words of Archbishop Tillotson, is as follows: "Natural and moral duties are approved of God for themselves, on their own account, and for their own sake, upon account of their own natural and intrinsical goodness; but the ritual and instrumental parts of religion are only pleasing to God in order to these, and so far as they tend to beget and promote them in us."

In answer to this plea, I must first observe, that the *intrinsical* goodness here spoken of, means *natural* goodness only, or beneficial tendency, such as appears in almsgiving, liberality, &c. and which is the same, though the thing be done out of vanity, or ostentation, or other worse principle: it follows the outward act. But our question is about *moral goodness*, which lies in the *obedience* to the *Divine law*, and which is *equally* seen in an indifferent matter, as in a thing which is naturally and *materially* of beneficial tendency. I must next observe, that obedience to a *positive* law, as *preaching the Gospel*, for instance, may be of more beneficial influence, and may therefore have more intrinsical goodness in it than *moral* duties, because it tends to instruct, enlighten, improve, and save mankind, and that not for the present only, but to all eternity. It must not therefore be said that *positive* duties, as to their *material* part, or outward act, have not a beneficial tendency: they generally have, and God ordains them for those outward ends and uses, besides the inward use they have upon the person practising the same, if he does it out of a good heart. As to the *moral* goodness of *positive* duties, that stands exactly upon the same foot with the moral goodness in natural duties. The obedi-

^b Answer to the Remarks, p. 75.

ence to the Divine law (which is moral goodness) is alike in both, only more or less excellent, according to the circumstances, as I have more than once observed.

I must further take notice, that it is entirely begging the question, to say that all *positive* duties are *instrumental parts* only of religion. They may be as *direct* religion, or even more direct religion, than any moral performances. So long as Adam obeyed the *positive* precept, his obedience was an exercise of self-denial, faith, hope, and the love of God. And Abraham's obedience to *positive* precepts (as I have often hinted) was an exercise of the most exalted faith in, and love to, his Maker. What other virtues could those be instrumental to? There could be no greater. I very much suspect that this *instrumentality*, as commonly stated, is mostly founded in mistake. It is true that all virtues have such a close connection with other virtues, that they may, in some sense, be said to be *instrumental* one to another. But unless we have a mind to set the *second* table before the *first*, and to confound every thing, we must allow that *piety* towards God is not so properly *instrumental* to other duties, or the *means* to them, (for the end is *nobler* than the means,) as it is the *foundation* of other virtues, which are *superstructure* only, built upon it. The *love of God* is the stock or stem, out of which all other virtues spring forth. The love of God, expanded or branched out into all its divisions and subdivisions, is the whole of virtue, the whole of religion and morality. Let us begin then at the head, and so may we set every virtue and every grace in its due order.

I cannot here help observing of Archbishop Tillotson, whose objection I am now answering, that that great and good man, and, for the most part, excellent Divine, was not altogether so accurate in his notions of the *instrumentality* of some virtues to others, as might have been wished. He has a pointed saying in one of his Sermons :
 " 'To separate goodness and mercy from God, compas-

• Tillotson, Serm. xix. vol. i. p. 206. fol.

“ sion and charity from religion, is to make the two best “ things in the world, God and religion, good for no- “ thing.” He has another near akin to it, a little lower in the same page. “ What is religion good for, but to “ reform the manners and dispositions of men, to restrain “ human nature from violence and cruelty, from falsehood “ and treachery, from sedition and rebellion ?” The thought is free and bold, and, probably, in some measure shocking to many a serious reader ; who may suspect there is something amiss in it, though it is not presently perceived where the fault lies. The truth is, there is an *ὑστέρων πρό- τερων*, there is a subjecting the laws of the *first* to the laws of the *second* table ; there lies one impropriety : and further, God the ultimate end of all, and to whom all things are to be ultimately referred, is considered here as subservient to man, or to the creatures, as if they were the *end*, and God was to be referred to *them*. I cannot say but the turn is pretty, and surprising, as an *ἀξίωμα* : but it might as well have been spared in so serious a subject, where it much concerns us to have strict and just notions, and not to confound ideas. The *love of God* is the root of all virtue, and into that all virtue resolves. *Piety* is not *instrumental* to social virtues, but it is the *source* and *fountain* from whence they flow. We are to be trained up to social virtues here, in order to a social life both in this world and the next. But the *Head* of all society is God : and the duties that directly terminate in him are the prime duties : and then social virtues towards men, springing from the other, and subordinate also to the other, follow in their place. God may in some special cases dispense with our immediate services to him, to give us leisure to serve mankind, and may accept it in such circumstances, as the most valuable service : but still, absolutely speaking, his immediate service is first in order, and first in dignity, and first in obligation, because all the rest depend upon it, and are wrapped up in it. I have spent the more pains in answering this first objection,

because it is in a manner all; for the rest are little more than several changes upon it. But I pass on.

2. It is pleaded in the Answer to the Remarks, that moral virtues are “the exact imitation of God himself^d :” and “what can make a reasonable creature acceptable to “God, but the imitation of God^e?” But there is something previous to the *imitating* of God, and more acceptable to him, which is *obeying* him: otherwise the duties of the *first table* would be set behind the *second*. We may endeavour faintly to imitate God in our benevolence towards man; but the love of God, and all the duties which a creature owes immediately to his Creator, are the prime duties: and they are more strictly and properly the business of every creature, than imitating God. To imitate his example, is paying him a dutiful respect; but submitting to his authority in all things is most highly honouring him, and shows the profoundest reverence, resignation, and humility.

3. I have met with a more direct and a closer argument for giving the preference to moral duties above positive, and it is this: that *positive* duties have *command* only to enforce them, but moral duties are founded upon *command* as well as the other, and upon *eternal reasons* too. To which I answer, that I know not whether many, or any *positive* duties are so founded upon mere *command* as the objection supposed. Indeed the command makes the obligation upon us; but who knows what *reasons* infinite Wisdom may have for it, or what weighty consequences may hang upon it? Besides, the *reasons* of many moral duties, strictly speaking, terminate in this life, as the duties themselves do, *feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, &c.* Only the *general reasons*, or duties, *love of God*, and *love of man*, abide for ever: and into these *general reasons* all obedience to *positive* as well as to *moral* precepts resolves. To this I may add, that obedience to

^d Answer to the Remarks, p. 72.

^e Ibid. p. 76.

either, equally or indifferently, qualifies a man for the enjoyment of God, equally cherishes good dispositions, equally perfects man's nature, and is fitted to raise men up to an eternal and heavenly state; so that obedience to *positive* duties is plainly founded in *eternal* reasons, though the *matter* of them be in itself indifferent. For it is an *eternal* principle that God must be obeyed in every thing.

4. Another argument of like kind occurs in a late thoughtful writer, whom I have before mentioned, and it is thus: "† Our obligation by the laws of nature and reason are founded on the nature of God and ourselves, and the necessary relation between him and us, which renders the *matter* of them necessarily good; whereas our obligation by positive precepts is founded on the free pleasure of God, commanding things which had no moral goodness in themselves, but were of an indifferent nature." But the ingenious author mistakes in thinking that any actions as to their *matter* have any *moral goodness* in them. They have a *natural* tendency to promote the common happiness, which *natural* goodness, or *use* rather, they retain when performed by hypocrites, without any *moral* goodness at all. Moral goodness is *choosing* and performing those beneficial actions upon a principle of obedience, and out of love to God. And there is just the same *moral goodness* in obeying God, though the *matter* of it be otherwise indifferent: and the eternal or unchangeable obligation that every creature lies under to obey his Creator in every thing, makes it as necessary for him to obey in one case as in the other: and then all the question is, which of the two precepts, in the present circumstances, God most insists upon, or which, upon the whole, carries the most diffusive and durable good in it. God's *authority* is a tender point; and if that may be more hurt by disobeying a *positive* precept (as in some cases it may) than by disobeying a moral one, the common good will suffer more by the

† Collier of Revealed Religion, p. 150.

former, than it would by the latter. I grant we are in all cases to be determined by the *importance of the precept*; but then, as I have often said, the *importance* is to be judged of, not by a precept being *moral* or *positive*, but by a due consideration of all circumstances, upon a serious and an extended view of what relates both to this world and the other.

Having thus finished what I intended upon the general question, relating to *positive* and *moral* institutions at large, I may now proceed to the particular questions which concern the two Sacraments.

CHAP. V.

Of the Two Sacraments considered as positive Institutions.

DR. CLARKE asserts that they are means only to an end, and are therefore never to be compared with moral duties. What I have to say upon this subject may conveniently be cast into the following method.

I. I assert that the two Christian Sacraments really are, in some sense, means to *moral*, to *Christian* virtue, and that both *naturally* and *supernaturally*.

II. The right and worthy use of the Sacraments is not only a means to virtue, but is virtue, is part of our moral and Christian holiness, piety, and perfection.

III. The two Sacraments, besides their being means of virtue and of grace, and part of Christian holiness, are further also the instituted ordinary means of applying the benefit of the great atonement to every worthy receiver.

IV. They may be compared to *moral* duties, and in some cases preferred to them, according as the circumstances direct.

I. I assert, that the two Sacraments really are, in some sense, means to *moral*, to *Christian* virtue: and I add, both *naturally* and *supernaturally*.

1. They are so *naturally*. They are in their very nature or quality aptly contrived to promote a good life. For,

besides what they are in other views, they are federal rites in which we covenant with God through Christ, binding ourselves in the most solemn manner, ever after to obey God in every article of duty, to the utmost of our power. Such sacred stipulations and engagements must, in the very nature and reason of the thing, be of great force and efficacy for the restraining men from evil, and the inciting them to every good work. Accordingly, the author of the Exposition observes of the Eucharist, very justly, “that by doing this constantly and devoutly, “in remembrance of *Christ*, and *showing forth the Lord’s death till he come*, we renew and confirm continually “*our own part* in the Christian covenant: we strengthen “*our faith* by meditating upon the object, and upon the “*grounds and motives* of it: we increase our *hope* by “*commemorating* thankfully the love of God in *Christ*, “and exhibiting and applying to ourselves these *memorials* of Divine goodness and compassion towards sinners: we enlarge and strengthen, by this *communion* of “Christians, that sacred bond of universal love, charity, “and good-will, which is the end of the commandment^ε.” All this is very right so far, and the author has here well explained and set forth the *natural force* and efficacy of the worthy receiving the holy Communion.

2. But besides this *natural effect*, there is also a *supernatural* virtue and efficacy derived from above upon the worthy receiver, which the author of the Exposition, I know not why, has silently passed over. He has told us what *we* do in it, not what the *Spirit of God* does. The Spirit of God *works invisibly* upon the worthy receivers, to assist, strengthen, and confirm them in all goodness. This is plainly the doctrine of our Church Catechism, where it speaks of the “inward and spiritual grace” going along with the worthy reception of the Sacraments. And it is the doctrine also of our Articles and Homilies, which I thought proper to observe in my Remarks^h, judging it

^ε Clarke’s Exposition, p. 314.

^h Remarks, p. 422, 423.

very reasonable that an *exposition* of our Church Catechism should be tried by the doctrine of our Church. The same doctrine appears also in our Liturgy: of *Baptism*, in these words, WE YIELD THEE HEARTY THANKS, MOST MERCIFUL FATHER, THAT IT HATH PLEASD THEE TO REGENERATE THIS INFANT WITH THY HOLY SPIRITⁱ, &c. and of the *Eucharist*, more obscurely intimated in these words, *that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood*^k. This is meant of the supernatural sanctifying graces going along with the worthy reception of the holy Communion. It is the plain and avowed doctrine of our Church. And therefore if any of our Divines following the Remonstrants abroad, have herein departed from the principles of our Church, it is high time to take notice of this falling-off, and to endeavour to call them back to our old and sound principles. Since I have mentioned the Remonstrants, if any one has a mind to see in a short compass wherein we differ from them, not only in this, but in some other important points, I refer him^l to a little book written by a very judicious Divine of our Church, Dr. William Nichols, about twenty years ago, written in Latin, and since translated into English. And indeed, while Episcopius, Limborch, and Curcellæus often come into the hands of our young Divines, who may not perhaps readily distinguish between the old and true doctrines, and some *novel* corruptions, it would be very proper for them to have some such book as Dr. Nichols's at hand, for a caution to them. But I return.

Perhaps I shall be told, after all, that though such be plainly the doctrine of our Church, yet it is no Scripture doctrine, and may be called upon for Scripture proofs. The Answer to the Remarks asks me^m, what would I

ⁱ Public Baptism of Infants.

^k Communion Office.

^l Nicholsii Defens. Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ, p. 193.

^m Answer to the Remarks, p. 76.

have had more said of the divine *graces* going along with the Sacraments, “ unless I would have had the Doctor “ (Dr. Clarke) talk enthusiastically ?” And in the next page he says, speaking of the Remarker, “ He seems to “ me to speak as if to this Sacrament were annexed cer- “ tain particular effects, which were produced, not as re- “ ligious and moral effects are produced, in a *natural*, “ *ordinary*, and *intelligible* manner, but in a *mysterious* “ *unintelligible* way, of which the Scriptures are entirely “ silent.” I hope the doctrine of our Church stands clear enough of *enthusiasm* : and I wish this gentleman would well consider, whether, on the other hand, it be not *prophaneness* thus to ridicule the doctrine of the operations of the Holy Spirit. They are *mysterious*, it is true, and the *manner* perhaps of operating *unintelligible* : for “ the wind “ bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound “ thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither “ it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit ^a.” But notwithstanding that, the notion of the Spirit’s operating upon the mind or soul of man is a very intelligible notion, and the thing a certain truth. And as it is a fact that was never doubted of by any Christian of old time, that the Holy Spirit of God sheds his blessed influences upon the *worthy* receivers of the holy Sacraments, so neither is it altogether destitute of Scripture proofs, as hath been often shown by learned and judicious Divines^o. As to Baptism, the fact is proved by the texts here following : “ Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he “ cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John iii. 5. “ Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen “ with him, through the faith of the operation of God, “ who hath raised him from the dead.” Coloss. ii. 12. “ According to his mercy he saved us by the washing of “ regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Tit. iii. 5.

^a John iii. 8.

^o See particularly Ger. Vossius de Sacramentorum Vi et Efficacia. *Oper.* tom. vi. p. 243.

It would be tedious to discuss these several texts, and to show distinctly how they prove the point in debate. I shall therefore trust them, naked as they are, with the reader, for the present at least, till I see what further occasion there may be for asserting and vindicating their construction.

As to the other Sacrament, the operation of the Spirit in it and by it may be strongly inferred from the analogy there is between the two Sacraments, and from parity of reason, and from what I shall hereafter prove under my third particular, and from the express words of the Apostle: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." 1 Cor. xii. 13. Upon which, see Dr. Whitby's comment.

But while I am asserting the invisible influences of the Holy Spirit in *Baptism* and in the *Eucharist*, upon the worthy receivers, I very well know how to guard this doctrine from the rants of *enthusiasts*. Whatever is done by the Holy Spirit is done in a way suitable to the nature of man considered as a *moral* agent, and does not exclude the concurrence of human will and endeavour. What is supernatural in it does not destroy natural agency, but helps, raises, and advances it. It cannot be expected that I should here run out into a long detail of this matter: a few hints may suffice for our present purpose. And if the reader wants to see more, Dr. Claget's excellent piece, abridged by Mr. Stebbing, is a well known treatise upon the subject, and is easy to come at. I shall proceed in my method. I have shown that the Sacraments are, in some sense, means of virtue, and that both *naturally* and *supernaturally*. I have said, *in some sense* means, because, though I have been thus far willing to comply with the common language, yet I do not forget the distinction I made above, about *foundation* and *means*. I would rather say, that this duty is *productive* of other duties, than *means* to them: unless *piety* towards God is to be called the *means* of *charity* towards man; which I think not proper. This duty of coming to the Sacra-

ments, this instance of our obedience, is a duty of the *first* table, and therefore holds the first rank. Besides, *Baptism* is the new birth, the entering upon the Christian life; and the *Eucharist* is the constant renewal of it: on which accounts, these two duties should rather be called *primary*, than *instrumental* duties; though I am sensible that both expressions will denote the same thing diversely considered. But this will better be understood by what I have to say further of the use of the Sacraments, under another head.

II. The right and worthy use of the Sacraments has not barely the nature of means to an end, (*viz.* to moral virtue,) but is virtue direct, is *part* of our moral and Christian holiness, piety, and perfection. I mean by this, that it is as much a part of virtue, as the performance of any moral duties is; as much as *feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, &c.* is virtue. Some distinguish between *virtue* and *duties*, confining the name of *virtues* to the *internal* habits and dispositions of the mind. In that restrained sense, we should never call any good works virtue, and upon that foot, all *moral* duties, as well as *positive*, would be excluded from the name and notion of *virtue*. But as it has been the more common way to call moral duties *virtues*, and I see no harm in it, since custom has authorized it, and it is well enough understood; I shall not scruple to follow the common phraseology: only I must add, that the *worthy* receiving of the Christian Sacraments is *virtue* in the same sense as any good moral action is, it is an exercise of many and great virtues.

I. First, it is an exercise of the *love of God*, shown in the *obedience* paid to his express commands. It is an act of *worship*, and of the most solemn and excellent worship that ever was ordained. It is the most peculiar and proper part of *evangelical* worship, wherein we do most show ourselves to be Christians. It is the badge of our profession, whetby we profess Christ before men, and eminently distinguish ourselves from Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans.

2. It is an exercise of *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*, all in one, and a very lively expression of all three together. I stand not to prove such plain things: nobody can doubt of it, that ever so slightly considers the nature of it. Only, I must note, that while I speak of both Sacraments together, I must be supposed to mean it in respect of *adults* only: otherwise, what I say is to be understood of the *Eucharist* only, of which none participate but *adults*.

3. The worthy receiving of the holy *Eucharist* in particular is an exercise of *humility*, such as the pride of mere *moral* virtue is a stranger to, and which such virtue wants to render it more acceptable in the sight of God. There is the greatest degree of humiliation and *self-abasement* that is possible, in thus expressing the sense we have of the all-sufficient sacrifice and atonement made by the death of Christ, and the need we had of it, renouncing our own righteousness. It is resigning up all the praise, glory, and seeming merit of our moral virtues, and casting ourselves entirely upon the merits and mediation of our great Redeemer; in whom alone, after performing all the *necessary conditions*, and being still no more than *unprofitable servants*, we at length hope for salvation. This devout exercise of *humility*, and *thankfulness*, and profound *reverence* towards God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is a degree of virtue much beyond what commonly goes under the name of moral virtue; and is so far from being merely a step to it, that it is an improvement upon it, and a refinement beyond it. But this is no more than virtue still, and so is a *condition* only; and it wants the all-sufficient merits and intercession of *Christ Jesus* to render it accepted, as all *human* virtue does.

Enough hath been said to show that *obedience* to God, in the use of the *Sacraments*, is as plainly an exercise of virtue, as any act of moral duty can be, and therefore they are not *means* only. None could ever have suggested such a thought of their being *means* only, had they not first abstracted in their minds the *outward* act

from the *inward* piety, which always goes along with the *worthy* reception of them. And were we so to abstract the outward acts from the inward piety, in any *moral* performances, there would then be no more direct virtue in them, than some suppose in these *positive* observances. All the confusion, as I am persuaded, that has perplexed this article, has arisen from the separating the *material* from the *formal* part, and not considering both in one, as is commonly done in treating of moral duties. What ! is not obeying, loving, serving, fearing, praising God ; is not all this direct duty and virtue ? What can be virtue, if this be not ? All this and more is implied in the *worthy* participating of the holy Sacraments. And if the greatest and the highest use of *moral duties* be to form in us proper dispositions of mind, such as may fit and qualify us for the heavenly society ; is there not the very same use in these *positive* performances, so aptly contrived and calculated to dispose our minds beforehand, first, to a due reverence to, and union with, God the Father, the Head of all, next, with God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, and after them, with *angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven*, with whom we join in praises and thanksgivings to God, as often as we devoutly partake of the holy Communion ? These are advances in the exercise of holiness and piety much beyond any thing in mere *natural* religion : and therefore it must be thought very strange, that *natural* duties, founded upon *lower* views, and not more *certain*, or more *unchangeable* relations, shall be called *virtues*, and these devout exercises shall not, but shall be called, by a diminutive degrading title, *means only* to virtue, and nothing more. I assert therefore, that they are direct acts of religion and piety, and are duties of the *first* table, having an immediate respect to *God* ; on which account they ought to come before, and to be placed in the first rank, above the *social* duties towards *man* ; though both must hang together, and neither can be perfect, or *sincere*, without the other. But I shall have

more to say of the *comparative* value of these *positive* duties under another head.

III. The third particular I undertook is, that the two Sacraments, besides their being productive of *virtue*, and *parts* of Christian piety, are further also the instituted ordinary means and instruments of applying the benefit of the great atonement to every *worthy* receiver. In this view, they have a nearer and more *immediate* influence upon our justification and salvation, than any of our best works can have. Good works are *necessary conditions*, without which no man shall see God: but yet they have no proper efficacy in *themselves* for the justifying us. They *merit* no recompence, they can *claim* no reward; neither are they perfect enough to be above the need and necessity of *pardon*. They want favour and indulgence, and many merciful allowances; which indeed shall be made to them; but then it is all in virtue of the meritorious death, passion, and propitiation of our blessed Lord. The author of the Answer, &c. talks in a way, upon this head, which I cannot well understand. He magnifies *moral virtues* to a strange height. He says^p, “they are “in themselves acceptable to God: and a holy, good, and “just Being, cannot but approve the man that is governed “by them. They *want nothing* to make them acceptable “able, nor can any thing make them more acceptable “than they are. They are already perfection, the *exact* “imitation of God himself; and therefore need *no aid* to “relieve them, nor any thing to improve them.” Upon the reading of this paragraph, I knew not what to think of it, nor whether to call it *Popery* or *Quakerism*. It is no *Protestant* doctrine, I am sure, unless it be the *Quaker's* sinless *perfection*. To pretend that *human* virtues (for such we are speaking of) “want nothing to make them acceptable “able,” that they are “in themselves” acceptable to God, that they are “already perfection,” and the “exact imita-

^p Answer, p. 72.

“tion” of God himself, “need no aid” to relieve them, &c. these are strange positions in any one that has either read the Bible, or has studied mankind. Alas! *human* virtues at the best, (for of those the author must be understood, or the whole talk is impertinent,) I say, *human* virtues are very short and defective; they are not *perfection* in any such sense as not to need *relief* and *pardon*: they are no *exact* imitation of God, but very far from it: they want the all-prevailing merits of *Christ* to make them *acceptable*; otherwise no flesh could stand before the high tribunal, could never enter into the kingdom of heaven. I shall not stay to prove these plain things: the New Testament is full of them; and the whole tenor of the Gospels and Epistles shows, that *human* virtues are all light in the balance, and have no *proper efficacy in themselves* for procuring salvation. Salvation is the free *gift* of God, and it is given, not for our virtues or deserts, but for the merit and satisfaction of our Saviour *Christ* ⁹. This first point being thus fixed and settled, I now proceed with what I was going to say of the Christian Sacraments. The Sacraments are the ordinary standing means by which the salutary influences of *Christ's* passion are conveyed. They are the channels of remission and pardon. Our salvation stands in the Gospel covenant: and the Sacraments are the appointed means of entering into and of renewing that covenant ^r, and consequently, of beginning and carrying on our communion and intercourse with God. Our excellent Church Catechism therefore right judges them generally *necessary*, not to *virtue* only, but directly to *salvation*. For be our vir-

⁹ The doctrine of our Church, upon this head, in Article the 12th, stands thus:

“Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment; yet are they pleasing to and acceptable to God in *Christ*.” See Bishop Burnet upon it, p. 129. Article the xith says thus:

“We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, by faith, and *not for our own works*, or deservings.”

^r This cup is the new testament, or covenant, in *my blood*, 1 Cor. xi. 24.

tues otherwise ever so many, or so great, they will still want the additional relief and improvement which the use of the Sacrament supplies. Cornelius was a man of exemplary moral virtues, “a just man, and one that feared God, “with all his house, gave much alms, and prayed to God “alway.” And yet this just and devout man, whom God himself had also *cleansed*^s, wanted to come to St. Peter in order to be *saved*^t, and after receiving the Holy Ghost, was at length admitted to Christian *Baptism*, and thereby perfected. Baptism is the ordinary means appointed for *remission of sins*, according to the express doctrine of the Nicene [Constantinopolitan] Creed: and it is so plainly the doctrine of our Church in her other Offices, that I need not now stand to prove it. As to the ancient churches of Christ, *Baptism* was ever looked upon by them as the *grand absolution*^u, a conveyance of a general pardon of sins to every worthy recipient. And the doctrine is sufficiently warranted by many Scripture texts, some of which I shall barely refer to^x, that I may hasten to what concerns the Eucharist, about which more particularly our debate is.

The Eucharist also was by the ancient churches looked upon as an instrument of *absolution*, a conveyance or channel of pardon, and was called the τὸ τέλειον, the perfection or consummation of a Christian, there being no higher mystery that an ordinary Christian could partake of^y. But because the ancients are set light by, and appeals are often made to Scripture, by such as know a great deal less of the true sense of Scripture than the ancients did, we may follow them in their appeal to Scripture, and show how that sufficiently warrants the doctrine both of the primitive churches and ours, in this article. St. Paul’s words to our purpose are as follow. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (*participation*) of the blood of *Christ*? The bread which we

^s Acts x. 15.

^t Acts xi. 14.

^u See Bingham’s Eccles. Antiq. vol. viii. book 19. chap. 1. p. 177.

^x Tit. iii. 5. Acts ii. 38. xxii. 16. 1 Pet. iii. 21. Colos. ii. 11, 12, 13.

^y See Bingham’s Eccles. Antiq. vol. viii. book 19. p. 182.

“break, is it not the communion (*participation*) of the “body of *Christ*?” I understand these words of a real application on God’s part, and a real participation on our part, of the merits or benefits of the great atonement, so far as respects every *worthy* communicant. To partake of the body and of the blood of *Christ* is to partake of his broken body and his blood spilled: which, because literally it is impossible, is by an easy figure understood to mean the partaking of our Lord’s passion, that is, of the atonement made by it. The words are scarce capable of any other sense: and therefore the most judicious commentators have generally espoused it. Some perhaps may suspect that the communion of the body and blood of *Christ*, may mean no more than having fellowship with *Christ*, or associating with him. That indeed is true doctrine with respect to the Eucharist, wherein we associate with *Christ*, but it is not all the doctrine expressed in this text. The Apostle means more, otherwise why should he so emphatically speak of the communion of the *blood* of Christ, and of the communion of the *body* of Christ, instead of saying communion with Christ? The *body* and the *blood* most certainly refer to what was *broken* and *shed* for the remission of sins^a, both which are represented in the Eucharist, and therefore cannot be so naturally understood of any thing else, as of the partaking of the benefits of Christ’s passion. The context confirms this sense. For verse the 18th, the Apostle observes that the Israelites of old, who ate of the sacrifices, were “partakers of the “altar” in such a sense as Christians now are partakers of the Lord’s table, or of his body and blood. But how were the Israelites partakers of the altar? By partaking of all the expiations of the burnt offerings and sin offerings which were offered upon the altar for the sins of the whole congregation. In like manner therefore as the Israelites then had thereby a partnership in the expiations of the altar, so Christians now (as many as come worthily) have a partner-

^a 1 Cor. x. 16.

^a Matt. xxvi. 28.

ship in the great expiation made by the body and blood of Christ. The reader that desires to see this construction of the text asserted more at large, may please to turn to Bp. Burnet's Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles^b, whose words I have here mostly used, and whose sense I have abridged. I shall thereto add Dr. Hammond's sense of this matter, where^c he tells us, that in the Sacrament "God solemnly reaches out to us, as by a deed or instrument, what was by promise due to every penitent sinner, every worthy receiver, the broken body of Christ, that is, the benefits of his death." To the Israelites of old, *manna* was spiritual meat typifying Christ; and the water of the *rock* was spiritual drink to them, as a typical representation of Christ: and they that ate of the *manna* and drank of the *rock* with faith and a good conscience, ate and drank Christ, as St. Paul intimates^d, and so fed upon him, and lived by him. In like manner, but with clearer knowledge, and a more lively faith, does every *worthy* communicant spiritually eat Christ's flesh, and drink Christ's blood. They eat them and drink them in such a sense as that can be done; that is to say, their souls or spirits receive their proper nutriment, food, and sustenance, namely, all the spiritual advantages and comforts arising from the all-sufficient atonement made by Christ upon the Cross. Such being the case, I must take leave to insist upon it, as before, that the *worthy* receiving of the holy Communion is so far from being a means only to moral *virtues*, that it is directly a means of *salvation*; and that it goes beyond and surpasses moral virtues as to its *immediate* influence in applying and sealing to us that *pardon* which the best of human virtues *want*, and cannot *claim*, and without which no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven. On this account, I observed in the Remarks^e, that "the Sacraments are additional improvements upon virtuous practices, and are of *nearer*

^b Burnet, *Exposit.* Article xxviii. p. 316, 317.

^c Hammond on the New Testament, Matt. xxvi. 28. p. 132.

^d 1 Cor. x. 4.

^e Remarks, p. 424.

“ and more *immediate* efficacy for the uniting us to God and Christ. They supply where moral virtues fall short; they relieve where moral virtues cannot; they finish what the other but begin, our justification and salvation.” The Sacraments do this; that is to say, God does it by them. These are his appointed means, his holy ordinances, in and by which he applies Christ’s merits and atonement to the *worthy* receiver, and seals their pardon. I suppose it might be with a view to these inestimable benefits that Ignatius, (who was St. John’s disciple,) speaking of the *bread* broken in the Eucharist, calls it “ the medicine of immortality, our antidote, that we should not die, but live for ever in Christ Jesus ^f.” This is expressive of something more than bare means to moral virtue. Faith and repentance are previous *qualifications* to the Sacraments; they are *conditions* of pardon, but pardon comes after. It was a stated rule of the Church, as early as we have any records or memoirs of it, that sound faith, and a good life, *i. e.* moral virtues, or Christian virtues, in some degree, though not yet perfect, should go before the Sacraments, as the necessary qualifications, without which none should be admitted to them. I shall cite only Justin Martyr, of the age next to the Apostles. “ This food,” says he, “ is with us called the *Eucharist*, which no one is allowed to partake of, but he that believes the truth of the doctrines taught by us, and has been baptized in the laver which is for the remission of sins and for regeneration, and who leads such a life as Christ has commanded ^g.” This shows how moral virtues were considered as *previous* to the Sacraments, and how they were to be improved and rendered acceptable by these Christian performances.

Against this doctrine, the Answer to the Remarks ob-

^f Ignat. ad Ephea. cap. xx.

^g Καὶ ἡ τροφή αὕτη καλεῖται παρ’ ἡμῶν Εὐχαριστία, ἧς οὐδεὶς ἄλλη μετασχῆν ἕξόν ἴσιν, ἢ τῷ πιστεύοντι ἀληθῆ ὄναι τὰ διδασκόμενα ὑφ’ ἡμῶν, καὶ λουσαμίῳ τῷ ὡςτε ἀφίσειας ἁμαρτιῶν καὶ εἰς ἀναγέννησιν λουτρῶν, καὶ οὕτως βιωῶντι ὡς ὁ Χριστὸς παρίδωκεν. *Just. Mart. Apol. i. p. 96. edit. Lond.*

jects^h, that “not one word of it is contained in Scripture.” Strange! when it has already been proved from Scripture, and might be done more largely still, that God by the Sacraments conveys both *grace* and *pardon*; which is the same thing with saying, that the Sacraments are *additional* improvements upon virtuous practices. They improve them two ways; first, as *augmenting* them; and secondly, as rendering them *saving* by the application of Christ’s all-sufficient expiation to them. The Objector asks, “Did our Saviour or his Apostles ever treat virtue in “this manner?” Yes, every where, and constantly. Our blessed Lord teaches us not to confide in our *own virtues*, but in his mercy and grace; instructs us to call ourselves “unprofitable servantsⁱ,” after we have done our best, and *all* that was commanded us: and he lets us know further, that ~~whatever~~ our moral virtues may be, yet “except we “eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, we “have no life in us^k,” that is to say, unless we partake of the benefits of his passion. The Apostle Paul, almost in every Epistle, teaches and inculcates the same doctrine; that no man shall be saved on account of his *works*, or his moral virtues, (though required as necessary conditions,) but by the blood of Christ. And St. John says, “The “blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin^l.” Can any man call these plain certain principles in question? The Objector goes on: Did our Saviour or his Apostles “ever in any one instance declare, that moral virtues have “no proper efficacy towards procuring salvation?” Yes, in the instance of Cornelius, whom I before mentioned. But besides that, the whole tenor of the New Testament declares, that the blood of Christ, and his merits, have a *proper efficacy* towards procuring the salvation of men, and that nothing else has. But the Objector wants Scripture proof for my saying; that moral virtues could only lead to the door of salvation, which the use of the Sacra-

^h Answer, &c. p. 69.

^k John vi. 53.

^l Luke xvii. 10.

^l 1 John i. 7.

ment must at length open. It would be tedious to answer at large every trifling question: it may suffice to say, in short, that let a man's moral virtues be what they will, yet unless "he be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God^m." Moral virtues may prepare the way, but *Baptism* gives entrance, and lets us in. The case is plain: our salvation stands in the *covenant*ⁿ, and the Sacraments are the seals of the covenant, the rites of initiation into it, and continuance in it, and without them the covenant either never commences at all, or is never renewed. The Answer further asks, (p. 77.) how the remission of sins "appears to be promised more to the worthy receiver in the Sacraments, than upon any act of obedience to Christ's moral laws: or in particular; how the promise of it appears more to worthy receiving, than it does to forgiving our brother his trespasses?" To which I answer, that receiving the Sacrament, considered merely as an *act of obedience*, brings no remission of sins, confers no pardon, any more than other duties, which all want pardon, and confer none. But the Sacraments considered as *seals of the covenant*, or solemnities by which it is transacted, are the instruments of pardon, or the channels of conveyance, by which God confers it. *Forgiving our brother* is a *condition* of pardon, and such as without which we have no forgiveness at God's hands: but it is no *seal* of any covenant, no *instrument* of pardon, as the Sacraments are. I have now done with the Objector, having paid a due respect to all his inquiries, as many as came under this head. There remain only two or three slight things, to be taken notice of under the next article.

IV. The use of the Sacraments may be compared to moral duties, and in some cases preferred before them, according as the circumstances direct. I should here premise, that as the commands for the use of the Sacraments are *affirmative*, not *negative*, so the comparison ought to

^m John iii. 5.

ⁿ See the additional note below, p. 493.

lie between them and the *affirmative* moral precepts only. And now the question is, whether obedience to the Divine commands in respect of these two positive duties be not as strict and as indispensable, and of as great importance, as obedience to moral duties. I maintain that it is so in the general, and shall now give my reasons. Moral precepts and positive precepts are equally *divine* precepts, so that in that respect there is no difference: obedience to positive precepts is a *moral* duty, as much as obedience to moral precepts, so in that respect also they are equal. But in order to state the comparative worth and value of any precepts, we must consider their ends and uses. All the ends and uses, as I conceive, of moral precepts, resolve in these two.

First, The disposing men to such actions as are for the present peace and happiness of mankind. And *secondly*, The forming in men's minds such good dispositions as shall qualify them for a heavenly state hereafter. Now let us consider whether, or how far, the two *positive* precepts about the Sacraments are contrived to answer the ends and uses which we have just now mentioned.

1. As the Christian religion is the best religion that ever was given for procuring the peace of society, and indeed for securing and enforcing all moral virtues; and as the *Sacraments* are the main support of this religion, and serve to keep it alive in the world; on this single account, they must be conceived as highly useful to mankind in this state: and so the same *temporal* ends and uses are served by a religious performance of these duties, as by a religious performance of moral duties. Whatever can be said in favour of the Christian religion as an *useful* religion, useful to kings and states, useful to human society, the same may be said of the two Christian Sacraments, the distinguishing badges of the Christian profession. Or if we consider them only as solemn acts of worship paid to that great and good Being, who steers the whole universe, and in whose hands all sublunary things are; and further, how much it is for the present interests of man-

kind, that all becoming awe and reverence for the Divine Majesty be kept up in the world: in this view, the devout observance of the Sacraments is as *useful* to the public happiness, as acts of moral virtue. But this is the least and the lowest part of their commendation.

2. As the Sacraments are rites of *covenanting* with God, are solemn engagements to all manner of virtue, are means of *grace*, and are themselves exercises of piety, faith, hope, charity, worship, &c. in this view they exceed any two moral duties that can be named, being more *comprehensive*, and are apt to beget all manner of good and godly dispositions, such as will qualify a person for the *heavenly* state hereafter. It is true, that these two *positive* duties will cease with this world: and so will many *moral* duties also, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, &c. But then the general habits or dispositions of love and charity, learned by the practice of moral duties, will remain: and so will all the pious and virtuous dispositions formed in the mind by the conscientious use of the Sacraments: they also will abide for ever. Many of the moral duties have an immediate respect to *man*, and to man considered as an inhabitant of this world only: but the Sacraments raise the mind higher up to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to archangels, and angels, and the whole host of heaven, tending to beget dispositions proper for living in conjunction or union with that blessed society. So that with respect at least to a life to come, the Sacraments have the advantage above other duties called moral, forming the mind to higher views, and being more perfective of man's nature. In secular duties, secularity is apt to creep in too much, and it is not very easy always, in the performing them, to keep the mind and heart intent upon God, or to perform them upon a purely *religious* principle, which is the only thing that can make them valuable: but in the *devout* observance of the Sacraments the mind is lifted up from earthly things, and is more abstracted from the world; on which account, these duties are preferable,

as to forming in us dispositions proper for a heavenly state.

But it is pleaded^o on the other side, that "the law of nature is a harder law to obey than the positive law of the Sacrament is: and if the reward be proportionate to the difficulty of the obedience required, as is reasonably to be expected, then the life-giving virtue is much more certainly annexed to an obedience which is contrary to all our affections and inclinations, and which must conquer ten thousand temptations, than it is to such *external acts* as require no difficulty or trouble at all." I imagined the Objector would discover the confusion he is under, before he ended the sentence. He thinks, I perceive, that we have been pleading all the time for *external acts*, for the *opus operatum* only, of the Sacraments; which is so far from being valuable, that we condemn it as nothing worth, yea, and as hurtful, *increasing damnation*. But let him state the case fairly and justly. The *external act* in *moral* duties is as worthless as in the other, and is as *easy* also as in the other. A man may give *alms* for the ends of *covetousness*, as easily as he may come to the Sacrament merely for an office, and be never the better man for either. But receiving the Sacrament *worthily*, with a penitent heart and lively faith, is as difficult a matter as performing any *moral* duties *worthily*, that is, conscientiously, and out of an honest and good heart. Nay, it is much more difficult than any single *moral* duty, as requiring an universal obedience, a thorough change of the heart, and the parting with all vices at once, which is more than practising any one virtue, or quitting any single vice. And this I am persuaded is the true reason of the common aversion men have for the holy Communion, and of the prejudices that are raised against it. Most persons are willing enough to practise, *in their way*, moral virtues, such as themselves would choose, retaining all the while

^o Answer, &c. p. 78.

some darling vices : but to resolve sincerely against all vices whatever, without the doing of which there is no coming *worthily* to the holy Sacrament, this is a *hard* lesson, and therefore it is that the Eucharist appears to them a cruel ordinance, and becomes their aversion. There is, I am afraid, but too much reason to suspect, that this crying up moral virtues in opposition to the use of the Sacraments is nothing but an artful fetch, among many others, to reconcile men's consciences to a *lame* and *partial* obedience, and to make as easy a composition as they can with Almighty God, giving him a *part* for the *whole*. It is very well known what a *good moral man* signifies, in common estimation ; something much below a *pious and good Christian*. And while the Sacraments are thus depreciated below moral duties, religion and piety will of course suffer, and in the end *morality* too ; that is, all true, and lively, and properly called Christian morality.

It is further objected P, that St. Peter " treats Baptism " as a low thing in itself," when he says, " The Baptism " that saves is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, " but the answer of a good conscience toward God ¶." But it seems to me that St. Peter treats Baptism as a very *high* and heavenly institution, since he expressly ascribes *salvation* to it. It is true, he expects that the *inward* principle of holiness and piety should go along with the *outward* performance, as in all other duties moral or positive ; which is not treating them as *low things*. For the purpose : would it be treating *moral* duties as *low things*, if it were said, that the *almsgiving*, the *sobriety*, the *mercy* and *charity* that saves, is the true and conscientious *almsgiving*, *sobriety*, &c. and none other ? The external part of moral duties profiteth not, the internal is the chief thing. The observation is equally true both of *moral* and *positive* duties. *Outward* religion and *outward* morality are nothing : the inward principle is the life and the spirit of both. And yet the inward principle, if it does not express itself

P Answer to the Remarks, p. 74.

¶ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

in outward acts, is nothing, or is no true principle; for "faith without works is dead." This I hint, to obviate another extreme, lest any should imagine that they may lay aside, or throw off, the *external* part, upon a fond presumption that they have the *internal*, when they really have not. In these cases, both must go together, unless there be some insuperable difficulty which disables a man from acting what he sincerely intends.

There is another objection to the value of the Sacraments, mentioned by a late writer[†], which may deserve some notice; and I shall thus far pay him the civility of an answer. Speaking of the Sacrament, he says, "These institutions are not commanded in that strict and absolute manner, nor esteemed so essential to salvation, as the duties of Christianity, as they are not so frequently inculcated upon us; and as they are not commanded in such a manner; that there is great room to doubt, whether one of them, Baptism, was ever designed by our Saviour himself should be continued in use among Christians. But however, if the end is produced without the means prescribed, it is certainly much more commendable than an observance of the means without arriving at the end for which they were appointed." To all which I answer distinctly, thus: *First*, It is wrong to say that these institutions are not commanded in that strict and absolute manner as moral virtues are. For what can be stricter than John iii. 5. and Mark xvi. 16. But the author has a restriction, *as the duties of Christianity*. By which, I suppose, he means, that if there may be a necessity for them, considered as seals of the covenant, as means of grace, or as channels of pardon, yet they are not so strictly enjoined as *duties*, only the necessity of them, as to the other respects, is declared. If this be his meaning, (or if it be not, I know not what is,) it seems to me to amount to the same thing. For the declaring their end, use, and necessity, is enjoining them. *Secondly*, As to

† A Letter to Dr. Waterland, printed for J. Noon.

their *not being so frequently inculcated*, there is a very judicious answer given to that part of the objection by the ingenious Mr. Stebbing, to which I beg leave only to refer^s, since I can say nothing better, and I have no mind to repeat. *Thirdly*, As to the doubt whether Baptism *should be continued among Christians*, first suggested here by Mr. Emlyn^t; it is a very weak one, and has been abundantly confuted by the learned Dr. Wall^u. *Fourthly*, The insinuation in the close of the objection deserves particular notice. For the argument from *end* and *means* might be carried still farther, even to the laying aside the *means* entirely, could but the *end* be secured: and no doubt but those that make the objection think that it may. I must own, it was my apprehension of this very consequence, (which too many would be ready to lay hold of,) that first moved me to enter a remark upon Dr. Clarke's doctrine in that particular, and made me think it an article of very weighty importance; especially considering the reigning humour of the present times. It was obvious to see that the *Sacraments* first, and soon after, all *instituted* religion, would be called *means* to an *end*: and as ill-disposed men would flatter themselves that they could effectually secure the *end*, by a kind of *morality* of their own contriving, the next step would be to throw aside the *means* as useless. But to return. As to the objection here made against the Sacrament considered as a *means* only, it is begging the question; it is taking for granted what can never be allowed. To call them *means* to virtue at all, is 'too low a phrase for them, and not very proper, as I have before hinted. They are duties of the foundation, covenant duties, out of which other duties, all other *Christian* duties, thrive and grow. They are *productive* of virtues, rather than *instrumental*, in strict propriety of speech. However, if they may be

^s Stebbing's Defence of the first Head of the Report of the Committee, chap. v. p. 99. fol. edit.

^t Emlyn's Tracts, p. 429.

^u Wall's Defence of the History of Infant Baptism, p. 27, &c.

called *means*, I have abundantly proved that they are more than means, and need not here repeat; and therefore that part of the objection of the Letter Writer hath been already obviated.

I have now run through all the specious pretences I have hitherto met with for setting the two *positive* duties, *viz.* of the Sacraments, below *moral* duties; and none of them appear to me of any real weight. We need not therefore hereafter be afraid to *compare* these sacred, solemn, awful, though *positive*, duties, with any other prescribed in the Law or in the Gospel. Any designed, professed *contempt* of these serious and important duties, may be as bad or worse than a contempt of the duties of the *second* table; because it will be great *profaneness*^x, and profaneness is in itself a most hideous offence, and besides naturally leads to all immoralities. Do we then destroy morality by maintaining the dignity of the Sacraments? No; we fix morality upon its true basis, and secure the branches by looking well to the root that feeds them.

Any habitual wilful *neglect* or *disuse* of the holy Communion may be as bad or worse than neglecting to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, and the like; because it is neglecting to renew our covenant and intercourse with God, neglecting to repent and resolve well, neglecting to repair the spiritual life; which neglect gradually brings on slackness and coldness in other duties, too much secularizes the heart, and in process of time disposes the mind to irreligion and immorality. Besides, the neglect of Christ's ordinances is too plainly a neglect of him; and the very example of such irreverence will have a bad influence upon the state of religion in general, and will do infinitely more mischief to the world, in that respect, than any or all the other services that the best of us are capable of doing for mankind can be equivalents for. But yet, because *frequent Communion* is a duty of some latitude,

^x *Sacramentorum vis innarrabiliter valet plurimum; et ideo contempta sacrilegos facit. Impie quippe contemnitur sine qua non potest perfici pietas. Augustin. cont. Faust. lib. xix. p. 319. vol. 8.*

and not precisely bound up to times and seasons, any more than the particular moral duties are, there may be just occasions for delaying it, or postponing it, according as circumstances require. It will be needless to put *cases* of other precepts occasionally interfering with it: there are proper times for all in their turns; and every honest and sincere Christian may, in matters of this kind, be his own casuist.

But among the supposed *cases*, I would never put the case of a negative precept, *Do not kill*, against an affirmative one, *Receive the Sacrament*, as a great man does^y: whose words are; “I had rather never administer the Sacrament, nor ever receive it, than take away any man’s life about it; because the Sacrament is but a positive rite and institution of the Christian religion, and God prefers mercy, a duty of natural religion,” &c. There is inaccuracy in the comparison, and fallacy also in the argument.

1st. It is wrong to make the opposition lie between an affirmative and a negative precept. Negative moral precepts bind *semper*, and *ad semper*, and *pro semper*, as the Schools speak; that is, universally and absolutely, and are never to be violated in any case whatever, as we are never to commit *sin*. The author might as safely have said, that he *had rather* never do any good all his life, never perform any one moral duty, *than take away life about it*, if by taking away life he meant *murder*: for *murder* can never be innocent. So that the argument concludes as strongly against all moral affirmative precepts, as against *positive*; which is overshooting the mark.

But, 2dly, if by *taking away life*, he meant *killing* only, and not *murder*, the argument is inconclusive. What would he have said to Abraham’s case, if Abraham had refused to kill his son in obedience to a *positive* command? Or what to Saul’s refusing to kill king Agag, in obedience also to a *positive* command? Would it have been a

^y Archbishop Tillotson, Posth. Serm. xlix. vol. i. p. 351.

justification for either, to have pleaded, that *God prefers mercy, a duty of natural religion, before any positive precepts*? These instances are enough to show that the foundation of the argument is wrong, as well as the comparison ill stated. And what if St. Peter had said, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, I had rather never preach the Gospel, than *take away any man's life about it*? Wrong, most certainly. What God orders to be done in all cases, must be done: and the fault only is, in destroying men at any time without a *divine* law or warrant for it, either moral or positive: and it matters not which it is. But enough of this.

THE CONCLUSION.

BEFORE I take leave of this subject, (which I judge to be of as great importance as any can be,) it may be proper to hint something of the occasion and rise of this famed distinction between *moral* and *positive* duties, or however of its being so much insisted upon, and gradually more and more, till it is at length become one of the most fashionable engines for battering down Christianity. There was a time when the Antinomians and Solifidians, being near akin, joined forces to cry up *faith* and *external* religion, in opposition to *good works*, to the great prejudice of Christian *morality*. They made a show of sanctity, and great professions of the *love of God*, while shamefully deficient in the known and plain duties between man and man. In short, many of them had a *form of goodness*, and nothing more, knowing little of the true power, or life, or spirit of it. To correct this folly, soberer men saw the necessity there was of insisting strongly upon the importance of *moral duties*, in which they certainly judged right. And had they pressed *moral* duties in opposition only to *exterior* performances, (the shell and carcase of religion,) they had done well and wisely; as it is easy to see now, though it was not so easy at that time. But unhappily confounding *exterior* with *positive*, (which is widely different,) the doctrine ran in favour of

morality, as opposed to *positive* duties, which was stating the case wrong, and following a false scent. For indeed the Antinomians were as deficient in *positive* duties, all but the *external* part, as they were in *moral*. Had they been really and truly affected with the *love of God*, and had they sincerely practised the duties of the *first table*, those duties must of course have drawn after them universal righteousness. There was no occasion at all for depreciating *positive* duties, but for recommending true, and sincere, and solid piety in all duties, both moral and positive, in opposition to hypocrisy, and mere external performances.

However, as I said, the turn then taken was to preach up *moral* duties, in opposition to *positive*. This naturally tended to bring in low and disparaging notions of the two venerable *Sacraments* of the Christian Church: which notions have prevailed too much, and have done great disservice to true piety and godliness. But what is still worse, *Deism* has sprung up out of the same doctrine about *moral* and *positive* institutions. For it was not long before men of corrupt minds took advantage of it, first to join in the same cry, that *positive* institutions were of an inferior nature to *moral*, as *means* only to an *end*; next, to look upon the whole Christian religion, or all *instituted* religion, as *positive* ordinance, and subservient only to *morality*; and, lastly, for the finishing stroke, to give broad hints that the *means* might conveniently be spared, since the *end*, they imagined, might be obtained without them. Thus *Deism* has been grafted upon the famed distinction between *moral* and *positive* duties: and this is the most prevailing topic of the Deists to go upon at this day. I have seen the *proposals* of a treatise now preparing, in two volumes quarto, with this title, The Gospel a Republication of the Law of Nature. And among several other wild positions, these are advanced: that "the religion of nature is a religion absolutely perfect," and that "external revelation can neither add to nor take from its perfection;" and that "the supposing things merely

“ *positive* to be the ingredients of religion is inconsistent “ with the good of mankind, as well as the honour of “ God.” From hence may be seen, that the fashionable plea for infidelity is to extol *morality*, and to run down all revealed religion under the notion of *external* and *positive* institutions. So from one extreme, as it is natural enough, we are tossed and driven to another. The Deists who thus extol *morality* in opposition to *faith*, are only doing the same thing, in effect, with what the Antinomians before did, in extolling *faith* in opposition to *morality*. Those are only different ways of coming at the same point. Corrupt nature is at the bottom of both: and the contrivance of both is nothing else but this, to lighten as much as possible the task which God has set them, to alter his terms, to get off from religious restraints, and, under one pretext or other, to live as they please. Be it *Antinomianism* or be it *Deism*, (as there are more ways than one of coming at the same thing,) the necessity of living a good Christian life is equally defeated by either: and however the two extremes may seem to be at odds upon their first setting out, they can amicably meet at last, for the destruction of all true and solid piety.

Had those good men who first opposed *Antinomianism* by extolling *morality*, lived to see the turn that has been since taken, they would now have extolled *positive* institutions as much, were it only to secure true *morality*: for it is demonstration to every thinking man, that *morality* can never stand in *practice*, but upon a Scripture foot. This I took notice of before, in the close of my Remarks ^a. And my correspondent ^b is so sensible of the truth and justice of it, that he violently forces a sense of his own upon me, only to have something to say by way of reply. That I may not be again misconstrued, I now say, that however *morality* might subsist in *theory*, (which I allowed before,) it can never subsist in *practice*, but upon a Scripture foot. And the reason which I before

^a Page 428.

^b Answer to the Remarks, p. 82.

gave, and now repeat, is a very plain one, *viz.* that Scripture once removed, there will be no *certain* sanctions to bind morality upon the conscience, no clear account of heaven or hell, or a future judgment, to enforce it: from whence we may easily infer how precarious a bottom morality will stand upon, and that *natural religion*, in *practice* at least, will soon be what every man pleases, showing itself in little else besides *natural depravity*. They therefore that pretend to be advocates for *morality*, in opposition to *instituted* religion, are really betraying it. It is like extolling *liberty* in opposition to law and government, the best securities of it: which is betraying liberty, and introducing *licentiousness*; as the other is undermining morality, and paving the way to immorality. If men were in good earnest friends to *morality*, how could they run against *Scripture*, which contains the completest system of morality that ever appeared in the world? What would those gentlemen have more than *all*? If they really are for morality, there they have it, plain, short, and full as can be desired, and so as no where else. Mr. Lock, when entreated to draw up a system of *morals*, returned this very wise and just answer: "Did the world," says he, "want a rule, I confess, there could be no work so necessary nor so commendable: but the Gospel contains so perfect a body of ethics, that *reason* may be excused from that inquiry, since she may find man's duty clearer, and easier in *revelation* than in herself." Scripture ethics are indeed the best *ethics*, and the only ethics that are refined and raised to a due height, set upon a firm basis, directed to right ends, and enforced by prevailing sanctions.

To conclude, the whole of what I intend, and all that I have aimed at, as well in my Remarks before, as now in these papers, is, that both *religion* and *morality* may go together, and amicably support and adorn each other; that *morality* may not be set up in opposition to *faith*, nor *faith*

• Lock's Letters, p. 546. fol. edit.

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in opposition to *morality*, which would be dividing friends, and destroying both: that *moral* duties may not be extolled to the prejudice of *positive*, nor again *positive* to the prejudice of *moral*; but that both may be esteemed according to their due weight and worth, and according to the rank they hold as referred to the love of God: that God be loved in the first place, and man for God's sake, as God has ordained: that the Christian Sacraments be held in due esteem, as Divine ordinances, and as the springs of the *spiritual life*, productive of moral virtues, and perfective of them: that all extremes be avoided, and the true *medium* fixed between enthusiasm or superstition on one hand, and irreligion or profaneness on the other. But if I have missed this true *medium*, I shall be very thankful to any man that shall resume the subject, and shall treat it in a rational and a Christian manner, to strike new light into it; for the service of truth, and the glory of God, and the common benefit of mankind.

AN ADDITIONAL NOTE TO PAGE 479.

THAT the two Sacraments are *federal* rites, that they are *seals* of the Gospel covenant, one for *initiating*, and the other for *renewing* the said covenant, is what I often assert, as known and current doctrine, building in a great measure my argument upon it, for the reciprocal communion between God and man, (of blessings on one part, and duty on the other,) in the Sacraments. But because some perhaps may doubt of this main principle, or may wish to see upon what Scripture grounds it stands, I shall here briefly show it first of Baptism, and next of the Eucharist.

OF BAPTISM.

IN *Baptism*, the case is plain, and needs but few words. Baptism succeeds in the room of circumcision, and is styled the *Christian* circumcision by St. Paul himself^d. Circumcision, as all allow, was a federal rite among the Jews, and is called *the covenant*^e, and *token of the covenant*^f, and *a seal of the righteousness of faith*^g. Therefore *Baptism*, succeeding thereto, is a *federal* rite, is entering into *covenant* with God.

OF THE EUCHARIST.

AS to the Eucharist, that may be proved to be a *federal* rite, or another method of *covenanting*, from several topics, as follows.

1. The terms or phrases of the institution itself are mostly *federal* terms or phrases.

Τὸτο γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ αἷμά μου, τὸ τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης, τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυνόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. *For this [cup] is my blood, the [blood] of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* Matth. xxvi. 28. Mark xiv. 24.

Τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον, ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματι μου. *This cup is the new covenant in my blood.* Luke xxii. 20. 1 Cor. xi. 25.

Compare these phrases with the like *federal* phrases in the Old Testament, as follows.

Of circumcision it is said, *Αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη, This is the covenant, which, &c.*

And of the blood of the sacrifices, when the Law was received, it is said, *Ἴδὸν τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης, Behold the blood of the covenant.* Exod. xxiv. 8.

The phrases used by our Lord in the institution of the Eucharist are plainly parallel to these: and therefore the Eucharist is a *federal* rite, as was circumcision or sacrifice under the old Law.

^d Coloss. ii. 11, 12. See Dr. Wall's Hist. of Infant Baptism, part i. c. 2. p. 11. and Defence, p. 37, 269.

^e Gen. xvii. 10.

^f Gen. xvii. 11.

^g Rom. iv. 11.

2. Another argument of the same thing may be drawn from the Eucharist succeeding in the room of the Passover, or Paschal Supper. Christ is the Lamb of God, the true Paschal Lamb^b, and therefore called our *Passover* by St. Paulⁱ. And he is represented in the Eucharist now, as by the Passover before. The rites of the Eucharist, and the phrases used in the institution, are mostly borrowed from the Paschal rites and phrases, as might be shown in many particulars. But for brevity sake, I choose to refer to such authors^k as have specified them. Now it is certain that the *Passover* was a *federal* rite, inasmuch as sacrifices are federal rites^l. Besides that, the Scripture account of the *Passover* shows it^m. It was a *sign* and a *memorial* of God's *redeeming* his people from Egypt; and by that redemption God covenanted with the people of the Jews to own them for his people, and to be their Godⁿ. It is obvious to perceive how these circumstances are applicable to the Christian redemption, and to the Christian *Eucharist* the memorial of it.

3. I shall only observe farther, that St. Paul in 1 Cor. x. manifestly supposes, that in or by the *Eucharist* there is the like communion and intercourse between God and every worthy receiver, when Christians feast at the *Lord's table*, as there was between God and the Israelites, when the Israelites feasted at the *altar*, and as there was between the *devils* and their votaries at the *table of devils*. And if sacrifices in both cases were *federal* rites, and amounted to *covenanting*, then we have St. Paul's authority for esteeming the *Eucharist* a *federal* rite, a seal of a covenant between God and man. And if it amount to *covenanting*, then we must admit of a reciprocal inter-

^b John i. 19. xix. 36. 1 Pet. i. 18.

ⁱ 1 Cor. v. 7.

^k Archbishop Wake's Discourse of the Eucharist, p. 3. Pfaffius de Oblat. et Consecrat. Eucharist. p. 180.

^l See Mede, p. 371.

^m Exod. xiii. 9, 16. Deut. xvi. 1, 2.

ⁿ 2 Sam. xii. 24.

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course in it between God and man, God shedding forth his grace and blessings, while man makes his dutiful returns of obedience. And it is very observable, that as no man was to eat of the *Passover* before he had been *circumcised*°, so the rule also is, that no one must presume to partake of the *Eucharist* before he has been *baptized*. And as there were strict and severe penalties enjoined by the Law against *profaning* the *Passover*, so in the Apostolical age, it pleased God to inflict diseases and death upon such as *profaned* the *Eucharist* P, in order to create the greater reverence and veneration for this high and holy solemnity.

• Exod. xii. 48.

• 1 Cor. xi. 30.

A SUPPLEMENT
TO
THE TREATISE,
ENTITLED,
THE NATURE, OBLIGATION, AND EFFICACY
OF THE
CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS
CONSIDERED.

Wherein the Nature and Value of Positive Institutions is more particularly examined, and Objections answered.

VOL. V.

k k

SUPPLEMENT
TO THE
NATURE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS
CONSIDERED.

IN the close of my discourse upon the *Sacraments*, &c. I declared, that I should be thankful to any man that would resume the subject, and treat it in a *rational* and a *Christian* manner, to strike *new light* into it. Two or three gentlemen have since appeared, and have performed their parts; but whether in a *rational* or a *Christian* manner, let indifferent readers judge. Thus far I take upon me to say, that they might have afforded us more *light*, if they had had *less heat*, and had been careful to preserve the coolness and sedateness proper to religious or learned inquiries. And if, amidst all their ardent zeal for *morality* in theory, they had been pleased to exemplify it in practice, by a strict observance of the moral rules for good writing, they might certainly have succeeded better, and have done more honour both to themselves and their subject. Injurious reflections and studied misrepresentations are immoral, and are the faults of little writers; and such as carry their own shame and punishment along with them. But to let these things pass. I design not

to make any formal reply to my several correspondents: truth will answer for itself, and, I am persuaded, may be left to shift, having been once set competently clear, as I presume it has. Yet some few things there are, capable of farther illustration, and important enough to deserve it; for the sake of which, principally, I throw in this Supplement. And because the author of the Defence of the Answer to the Remarks seems to be the leading man, I shall choose to continue the debate directly with him, and by the way only with the rest. I shall digest his positions into so many articles, and shall remark upon them, more or less, as I shall think there is occasion.

I.

THE first and most important article concerns the nature and obligation of moral virtue, upon which he thus clearly expresses his sentiments: "Moral virtue consists in the conformity of our actions to the relations or reasons of things; and therefore this must be obligatory to all intelligent beings, even *previous* to any laws, or commands, or injunctions, *Divine* or human^a." He goes, we see, upon the *independent* bottom, and sets up a system of morality without *God* at the head of it. *Previous*, he says, to any laws, any *Divine* laws, natural or revealed: this is his principle. He supposes *obligation* without *law*, a *religion* of nature without a *Deity*, and *duty* without a *superior* to whom it is owing. One might think the very naming of these things might be enough to confute them. Baron Puffendorf observed well of those independent schemists, in the words here following, as they stand in the English translation; "And truly, as for those who would establish an eternal rule for morality of the actions, without respect to the *Divine* injunction and constitution, the result of their endeavours seems to us to be, the joining with God Almighty some coeval *extrinsical* principle which he is obliged

^a Defence of the Answer, &c. p. 8. comp. p. 6.

“to follow, in assigning the forms and essences of “things b.”

His observation is very just: for if God be presupposed as assigning the forms and natures of things, then whatever results from those forms, or natures, or their relations, must be referred up to God as the sole author and designer of all; and then all practical rules resolve into the Divine injunction, since God must be supposed to *will* and *enjoin* what himself has made necessary. But if relations or fitnesses be made obligatory, independent of, and previous to, *Divine* injunctions, there is nothing left to resolve them into, but an *extrinsic* principle. There seems to have been the like fallacy and mistake in this affair, as in the famous argument for the existence of a God, drawn, as they call it, *a priori*; which resolves in like manner into a principle *extrinsic*. For since a *property* cannot be supposed *antecedent* to its *subject*, nor the substance *antecedent* to *itself*, there remains nothing but an *extrinsic* principle to found the argument *a priori* upon. But this by the way only.

To return to the matter in hand: I say, if there was any *design* at all in the contrivance of things, God must be set at the head of all, and then all resolves into his *design*, *will*, and *injunction*: but if we once leave *God* out of the scheme, there remains only *chance*, or *fate*, or I know not what other *extrinsic* principle. The proof of a religion of nature depends entirely, as Bishop Parker observes, upon the supposition of an Author of nature: For, says he, “unless that be antecedently granted, we cannot so much as proceed to inquire after the law “of nature. For if he never contrived the nature of “things, it is evidently in vain to search for his design in “the contrivance c.” To which I take leave to add, that if God was the author and contriver of nature, then his *design*, *will*, and *injunction* must be considered as antece-

^b Puffendorf's Law of Nature and Nations, lib. i. c. 2. p. 14.

^c Parker's Demonstration, &c. pref. p. ix.

dent, and previous to every thing. Bishop Parker therefore, in the same place, justly reprehends Grotius, (if it was Grotius's real and settled opinion,) for supposing the rules of morality *obligatory* without the supposition of a Deity^d. The most judicious of the heathen moralists looked up to a *Deity* whereon to found their morality, as may be seen in Selden and in Sharrock: and the most judicious moderns also, as Cumberland, Puffendorf, Barbeyrac, Parker, Tyrrell, and others, have done the same. Dr. Clarke however plainly espoused another principle, in his Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion: and Mr. Clarke of Hull, some time after, undertook to confute it; which, in my judgment, he has effectually done, with all the modesty, ingenuity, and decency, as well as strength of reason, that becomes a knowing and a judicious writer. Him therefore I before referred to^e, to save myself the trouble of doing the same thing over again, and to less advantage. However, since the author of the Defence thinks he has something to say worth the answering, (though he pretends not to make any reply to Mr. Clarke,) I shall proceed a little farther into the question, and once more debate this controverted point with him. I have said enough in the general already to satisfy, as I am persuaded, reasonable men, who are used to an abstract way of thinking: but for the sake of common readers, I shall be a little more particular, and risk the being tedious, while I distinctly examine what the Defence has to plead for the *previous* obligation upon *God* and upon *man*.

1. By his account all *intelligent* beings, God himself with the rest, are *obliged* to the practice of *virtue*; though how either *virtue* or *obligation* belongs to God, I understand not. We have often heard of his moral *perfections*: but to talk of his moral *virtues* is a kind of new language. It comes very near to saying, (it is upon this author's principles saying,) that it is his *duty* to practise

^d Parker's pref. p. viii.

^e Nature, Obligation, &c. p. 444.

them. For thus he defines moral *duties*: they are “such acts as we are obliged to exert in conformity to the reasons of things^f.” Which account of *duties* is exactly the same with what he had given of *virtues*; excepting that *virtues* are habits, and *duties* acts. Consequently all intelligent beings, God with the rest, are *obliged* to exert those *acts*, in conformity to the reason of things. That is to say, God himself is tied up to *duty*, though he has no *superior*, and it is not easy to say to whom he *owes* it.

Next as to *obligation*, it seems to run cross to all common language, and common reason too, to talk of God's being under *obligation*, while he owns no *superior*. The Defence might as well suppose a cause prior to the first, as a lawgiver higher than the highest, or a law without a lawgiver, or obligation without law. The sum of what he has to plead is, that “where there was no law, and yet God could not but act according to what was right, there was the highest obligation possible^g.” He might as well say, that God is under an obligation to *exist*, because he *cannot but* exist. It is the property and the perfection of Almighty God to exist always, and always to act according to unerring *wisdom*, and *goodness* infinite. I do not see what warrant we have for speaking of *God*, as if we were talking of *creatures*, and for bringing him under *duty* and *obligation*: it is neither *virtue* nor *duty* in him to exert acts of *goodness*, but it is his *perfection*.

2. Next, from God, let us descend to his creatures, who are indeed *obliged* both to *virtue* and *duty*, by the *law* of the Most High, and by nothing else. Whatever some may please to fancy about abstract *fitnesses*, if God be at the head of them, he *obliges*, and not they: or if you abstract the Deity, you abstract the obligation. To follow them only as rules of convenience, when convenient, would not be *duty* or *virtue*, but craft or policy: and to follow them at all, when not convenient, would

^f Defence, p. 6.

^g Ibid. p. 13.

not be *duty* or *virtue*, but *folly* and *madness*. There is one very great flaw in the reasonings of those that go upon the independent bottom, that they consider only general abstract *fitnesses*, without taking into account the particular *fitness* of the agent who is supposed bound to observe them. They consider only *what is fit to be done*, without inquiring *whether it be fit for Caius or Titius to do it*: which is a strange omission in them. All that these general *fitnesses* mean is, that they are good for mankind, and that the observance of them promotes the common happiness: and yet it is very certain that every man may, must, and cannot but pursue his own happiness, and flee misery as such. It is *fitting*, and *reasonable*, and *just*, that a man should love and serve himself, *equally* at least with others: and it is *unfitting*, *unreasonable*, and *unjust*, (were it practicable,) for a man to love his neighbour *better* than himself. There is no *wisdom* or *virtue* in being wise for others only, and not for one's self also, first or last: neither can any man be obliged to it. Well then, let us imagine *fitnesses* to be the rule to go by, and no *Deity* at the head of them, to bind and enforce them^h: it may be *fit* for a man to observe them as far as is consistent or coincident with his temporal happiness: and that will be no *virtue* nor *duty*, but self-interest only, and *love of the world*. But if he proceeds farther to sacrifice his own temporal happiness to the *public*, that indeed will be *virtue* and *duty* on the supposition that *God* requires it, but without it, it is folly and madness. There is neither *prudence* nor *good sense*, and consequently no *virtue*, in preferring the happiness of others *absolutely* to our

^h Istæc porro præcepta, etsi manifestam habeant utilitatem, tamen ut eadem vim legis obtineant, necessum est præsupponi Deum esse, et sua providentia omnia regere; eundemque mortalium generi injunxisse, ut ista rationis dictamina tanquam leges, ab ipso, vi congeniti luminis promulgatas, observent. Alias enim possent ea quidem fortasse observari intuitu utilitatis, (sicut quæ a medicis regendæ valetudini præscribuntur,) non autem tanquam leges; quippe quæ necessario ponunt superiorem, et quidem talem qui alterius gubernationem actu suscepit. Puffendorf. de Offic. Hom. &c. lib. i. c. 3. p. 22.

own; that is to say, without prospect of a future *equivalent*. But if God commands us to postpone our present interest, honour, or pleasure, to public considerations, it is then *fitting* and *reasonable* so to do; because God by engaging us to it, becomes our *security* that we shall not finally, or in the last result, be *losers* by it. What would otherwise be *folly*, now commences *duty* and *virtue*, and puts on *obligation*. If God commands it, he *binds* us, he *obliges* us to it, by connecting our true and certain happiness with it. When we submit to temporal pains, self-denials, restraints, losses, damages, &c. for the public good, this is *properly* virtue: and yet this is not virtue unless God *commands* it, because that alone can make it, in our circumstances, *rational*, *fitting*, or *safe*, to do it. In God all happiness centers: him we can *wisely* follow and obey, because in him we have all, and he cannot deceive us. Here is a foundation for *real* virtue, which without him is barely *nominal*, or *notional*ⁱ, and indeed no virtue, were it practicable. From these principles it follows, that *virtue* and *religion* are but two names for the same thing: and both of them resolve into *obedience to God*^k: the necessity of which, or obligation thereto, resolves into the necessity we are under, as rational and

ⁱ Without the *Divinity*, duty, obligation, right, are, to speak the truth, but *fine ideas* which may please the mind, but will never touch the heart; and which, in themselves considered, can never lay us under an *indispensable* necessity of acting or not acting after a certain manner. To give these *ideas* all the force they are capable of, to make them able to keep their ground against the passions and private interests, it is necessary there should be a *superior Being* more powerful than we are, which may compel us to conform ourselves to them invariably in our conduct, that may *bind* us so, that it may not be in our power to disengage ourselves at pleasure; in a word, that may lay us under an *obligation* properly so called, to follow the light of our own reason. *Barbeyrac's Spirit of Ecclesiast.* p. 2, 3.

^k Certainly, to *obey* the law which the Author of his being has given him, is *religion*: and to obey the law which he has given or revealed to him, by making it to result from the right use of his natural faculties, must be to him his *natural religion*. And its truest definition is, the *pursuit of happiness by the practice of reason and truth*. *Wollaston's Relig. of Nat.* p. 52.

thinking beings, to pursue our own most true and lasting happiness.

How well this tallies with the Scripture account of *virtue* is very evident. Our Lord himself has frequently observed, that all good offices done to others, for temporal ends only, have no *virtue* in them. *To do good to those that will do good to us, and to lend to those of whom we hope to receive, what is it but traffic and merchandise? To pray or to give alms, and the like, only to be heard and seen of men, what is it but to seek honour of men? There is no virtue in these things, however serviceable the outward acts are to the world. Heathens and publicans can do thus: it is Pagan morality, which perhaps rarely rises higher. But virtue is quite another thing, looks beyond this world, and rests in God alone. It is submitting to present restraints and self-denials, and trusting in God only for our recompense. Accordingly, all the bright examples of virtue recorded in sacred story, are represented as terminating in faith and hope towards God: see particularly the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where this doctrine is so plain, that nothing can be more so. I say then, that the love of God is virtue, and is duty, and the sum total of both. Any other pretended virtue not centering in that, is either unintelligible or impracticable. It is in vain then to talk of obligatory fitnesses previous to Divine laws. The fitness of every action depends upon the right adjusting of all circumstances, and particularly the circumstances which the agent himself is under. It is fit for God alone, it is his peculiar prerogative and perfection, to adhere constantly to the rules of truth and goodness, without obligation, without law. He is out of the reach of pain and misery; and his happiness can never interfere with the common felicity. But creatures may run risks, (all creatures, more or less,) and want both to be bound by law, and to be secured by the same, as often as their temporal happiness may interfere with the public interest. In such cases,*

the rules of virtue would be no rules to *them*, because not *reasonable* in their circumstances, till God, by annexing happiness and misery to the observance and non-observance of them, turns the scale, and makes them *eligible*, fit to be practised in all circumstances whatever. Thus *virtue* is rendered *obligatory* to all creatures, and indeed is made *virtue* to them, (as I have before hinted,) when it would be otherwise folly and distraction. Having, I presume, thus competently fixed our principles, and set morality upon its true basis, objections to the contrary, being founded in false principles, fall of course. But still, rather than be wanting in any thing that may serve to clear up this important point to the meanest capacities, I shall consider and answer the principal objections, and then take leave of this article.

1. It is objected, that *the consequence* of our doctrine is, "that it was the arbitrary will of God, whether even vice, with all its deformities, might not have been equally valued by him, as virtue is ¹." As wide a consequence as ever was drawn. Obligation arises not merely from *command*, (for every command would not make it,) but from the command of so *great* and so *good* a Being, in whom all *happiness* is supposed to center. If he could command me to be *false*, he might himself be *false* also, and not be what he is; and then his command would have no weight in it, nor carry any obligation with it, because I could not *trust* or *confide* in him. The just consequence from our principles is directly contrary to what this writer pretends. For *obligation* supposes, that God may infallibly be *trusted*; which supposes him to be infinitely *good* and *great*; which again supposes him not capable of doing, or commanding others to do, any thing contrary to the highest and most excellent end, the common good of all intelligent beings.

Besides, we could not *prove* that there is any such thing as a *law of nature*, or *religion of nature*, if we did

¹ Defence of the Answer, p. 12.

not know beforehand that there is a *God*, and that he is infinitely *wise* and *good*, and therefore must *will*, *command*, and *enjoin* what is for the common felicity, and nothing but what is so. So that here again, the very supposition we go upon, in asserting a *law of nature*, runs directly counter to what the objection pretends.

2. It may be asked, whether, “if God had commanded “men to be unjust and ungrateful, it would have been “morally good to be unjust and ungrateful^m?” To which I answer, that it is putting an absurd, self-contradictory supposition; for it is supposing a God that is not necessarily wise and good, a God and no God. But to come closer to the question: abstract from the consideration of *Divine law*, and then consider what *justice* and *gratitude* would amount to. To be *just* and *grateful* so far as is consistent or coincident with our temporal interest, pleasure, or convenience, and no farther, has no more *moral good* in it, than the paying a debt for our present ease, or in order to be *trusted* again: and the being further *just* and *grateful*, without future prospects, or to be finally losers by it, has as much of *moral virtue* in it, as *folly* and *indiscretion* has: so that, the *Deity* once set aside, it is demonstration, there could be no *morality* at all. But admitting a *Deity*, and his *laws*, then morality immediately revives, and has something to subsist upon, though at the same time God must be supposed to be *God*.

To conclude this article, I shall take the freedom to borrow the words of an ingenious gentleman, who about four years ago thus expressed his sentiments on this head.

“Take in *the Divinity* into your system of morality, “and if it be regular also in other respects, it is like a “complete human body, beautifully formed, and aptly “disposed for exerting all the offices and acts that a living body is capable of. Abstract *the Divinity* from “your schemes; suppose they have no concern at all

^m See Defeuze, p. 12.

“with, nor reference to, *God* and his *will*, and your morality will be like a body without a head, from whence the spirits are derived, the principle of motion and action to all the other members, otherwise useless and inanimate.”

3. It may perhaps be objected, that this way of resolving virtue makes it look like a mean and *mercenary* thing, because it is supposed to stand only upon a view to one’s own *happiness*, when it ought rather to be entirely *disinterested*, and above all selfish views. To which I answer, that this way of resolving virtue is just and rational: for what more rational than to pursue our greatest happiness? Or what more irrational than to neglect it, or to prize any thing above it? Let some declaim as they please upon *disinterested* benevolence, we maintain that it is sufficiently disinterested, if it contemns all narrow, low, or sordid views, and looks only at securing an eternal interest in God. What other foundation of virtue can any man lay, which is not plainly fanciful and chimerical? They may say, they *follow virtue*, for *virtue’s sake*: as if virtue were the *end*, when it is evidently but the *means*; and *happiness* is the *end* it leads to, happiness either of ourselves or others. Let them say next, that they follow it as a *means* to make *other* men happy. What! without any self-regards? How is it possible? Or supposing it possible, how can it be *reasonable*, or *right*, or indeed *virtue*, to prefer the happiness of others *absolutely* to our own? Let them pretend next, that they follow virtue, because they take *delight* in it, as in *beauty*, *order*, *symmetry*, &c. Be it so: then it is indulging a *passion*, and pursuing a kind of *pleasing sensation*, and so is acting upon no higher a principle than *love of present pleasure*; which perhaps, after all, resolves only into the delight we take in doing things which tend to procure the *love*, *esteem*, *honour*, and *applause* of men. Whatever it be, it is something vastly inferior to taking *delight* in God, and

▪ A Letter to a Young Gentleman at the Temple, p. 10.

is neither so *honourable* a principle to found virtue upon, (were it really *virtue*,) nor at all *sufficient* to support it in trying circumstances. For if the supposed pleasureableness of virtue comes to be overbalanced with pains, (as it easily may, when *Divine* comforts are set aside,) then virtue may become loathsome and grievous, and no man will follow it. Upon the whole then, there is no firm foundation of *virtue*, but the love of God, and reliance upon him. All other pretended props or supports are *low*, and *mean* in comparison: and after all the fine talk which some of a lively imagination may please to make use of, there are but *two* principles for men to proceed upon; namely, either the *love of this world*, or the *love of God*. And now let any reasonable man judge which is the most *mercenary* principle of the two; which the likeliest to found true and solid *virtue* upon.

I meet with no other objections, but what are the same with those now mentioned, or so nearly the same, that the same answers may serve for all. So I have nothing further to add, but the inference, or corollary, in favour of *positive* duties, as before.

If God's *command* in moral duties constitutes *virtue* and *duty*, then of consequence, God's command in matters of a *positive* nature constitutes *duty* and *virtue* also: and therefore our obedience, in either case, resolves into the same principle, and has the same common ground of obligation. God's reasons for commanding may be different; but our reasons for obeying are the same. *Reasons* of a *law* are one thing, reasons of *obligation* are another. A law should not want its *reasons*; but yet it is the *law*, and not those *reasons*, that properly creates the obligation: for the law would *oblige*, though we knew nothing of the reasons on which it is founded. *Positive* duties, therefore, and *moral*, are alike obligatory, as enjoined by the same authority, and enforced by the same sanctions. Both proceed from the same infinite *goodness*, and both lead to the same infinite *happiness*: which is sufficient to infer *equal* obligation, where other circumstances are equal.

Moral duties arise from the *will* or *command* of God, founded on the known *standing* reasons of things: *positive* duties arise from the *will* or *command* of God, founded upon *occasional* reasons, known perhaps to God alone. In *moral laws*, we see the *reasons* first, and by them we come at the knowledge of the *law*; which method of investigation has probably occasioned the mistake of supposing the reasons *obligatory* antecedently to the *law*, though they are proofs only that there is and must be a *law* suitable: in *positive laws*, we know the laws themselves first, and afterwards the *reasons*, so far as we at all know them; and so nobody here suspects any thing of an *obligation* prior to the laws.

So much for this first and most important article: the rest may be dispatched in fewer words.

II.

The Defence pretends, that positive duties arise from "the mere will of the prescriber^o." To obviate which, I before observed, "that they are always founded upon *reasons*, known perhaps in part to us, but perfectly known to God; and so are ultimately resolvable into *infinite wisdom* and *goodness* P." I do not find that the Defence advances any thing against what I said, excepting only confident affirmations. There is another gentleman who enters a little farther into the question^q, who yet is forced to allow, that *positive* commands are founded in "good and wise reasons," because infinite Wisdom does every thing *wisely*. But he asks, whether they be founded on "such reasons as moral duties are founded upon?" Such undoubtedly in the main, *wise* and *excellent* reasons, and reasons of *common* good. For as God has prescribed *moral* duties, because he loves mankind, so he has also prescribed *positive* duties for the same reason.

^o Defence, &c. p. 6, 7, 8, 14, 42.

^p Nature and Obligation, p. 441.

^q The Comparative Excellence and Obligation of Moral and Positive Duties fully stated and considered, p. 23, 24.

But are they *natural, necessary, eternal, indispensable, resulting from the nature of things*? No, for then the precepts enjoining them would not be *positive*, but *moral*. But notwithstanding, it is a *natural, necessary, eternal, indispensable* rule of morality to *obey* God even in matters of a *positive* nature, while the law continues in force, and is not repealed by the same authority that gave it. *God's* liberty in this case is greater, *ours* is not: he may change the *law*, we cannot swerve from our *obedience* without his leave. It is allowed that positive precepts are *occasional*, not *constant*, are particular to *times, places, or persons*, and not so *universal* as the other. But still there may be as great necessity for those *occasional* precepts upon *occasion*, as for the more *constant* ones *constantly*. There may also be as much wisdom and goodness shown in adapting them to mutable circumstances, as in suiting the other to the permanent system of things: and their ends and uses may be as *high and heavenly*, and looking as far forwards as the ends and uses of moral commandments. On all which accounts the paying a conscientious regard to positive precepts, for the time being, may be of as great importance, and as strictly required, as any other obedience. But we shall have more of this matter under other articles.

III.

The Defence asserts, that "positive duty must give way to moral, whenever they interfere."^r This is the doctrine which I disliked in the Catechism, and which I have confuted at large in my former papers. The setting up of duty against duty, and giving the preference absolutely to one above the other, is *injurious to both*.

The reason which he gives for preferring *moral* duties absolutely to *positive* is, because the former are *unchangeable* and the latter *changeable*; which is not strictly true, not true of *all* moral duties: for many of them will cease,

^r Defence, p. 8, 9.

like as positive duties, when there shall be no longer occasion for them. The duties I mean, of mercy to the afflicted, poor, and miserable, which obtain only in this world, and are among the *weighty* matters of the law while there is need of them. The truth is, *moral* performances, of such a kind, have their times and seasons, as well as the other, are most of them limited to the present system of things, and expire with it. It is equally true both of moral and positive duties, that they continue as long as there is occasion for them, and no longer, and then will be succeeded by other duties, moral or positive, such as a new scene of things requires, and such as will then be insisted upon as new ways of expressing and exercising that *love of God*, which is the foundation of all, and which is unrepealable, abiding for ever. While the *occasion* or necessity remains for any particular duty, any branch of that *love*, be it in a positive instance or moral, the importance of that duty so long remains. Length of time makes no difference as to the weight or force of an obligation. We are not at all the less bound to obey what is enjoined us at this juncture, because it will not be enjoined a hundred or a thousand years hence. While the positive law is in force, obedience is indispensably necessary: and nothing can remove it but the same authority that gave it.

There are some instances in Scripture of ritual laws giving way to *necessity*, being understood to contain *tacit* exceptions for preserving life. Upon that principle, David was allowed to eat of the *shewbread*^s, contrary to the ordinary rules. And the Jews scrupled not to abate of their rigours as to keeping the *Sabbath*, in cases of great necessity^t: though at the same time no necessity whatever would make them submit to the "eating of "swine's flesh"^u," when they thought no tacit exception was to be understood. *Necessity* very often alters the

^s 1 Sam. xxi. 6. Matt. xii. 3, 4. ^t 1 Maccab. ii. 41. Luke xiii. 15. xiv. 5.

^u 2 Maccab. vi. 18, 19, 20.

case, both as to moral and positive precepts: not that it properly justifies the *violating* of either, but the laws being supposed to admit of some tacit exceptions in favour of necessity, they are not *violated* when not observed in cases which they did not reach to. Allowing only for such cases of necessity, (to which both moral and positive precepts sometimes yield,) a positive law, while unrepealed, binds as much as a moral one: and God himself can no more make wilful disobedience in positive instances (the law continuing) to be innocent, than he can make injustice or ingratitude, or any other immorality, to be no immorality. The disobeying a positive precept is immoral, as well as the disobeying a moral one: and all the difference is, that one continues perhaps longer than the other, not that it is more obligatory, while both are standing, than the other.

Suppose that Abraham, when commanded to go and sacrifice up his son, had put it off, some months or days, to discharge good moral offices to the sick, needy, or afflicted; would that have been justifiable conduct? I suppose not: because there is a time for all things; and at that particular season the *positive* precept was to take place above the *moral* ones, which might have justice done to them at another time.

Suppose again, that at the three seasons of the year, when all the males were to go up to Jerusalem, to appear before the Lord, they had loitered and stayed behind for some reasons of *charity* or *humanity*; would such behaviour have been commendable? Far from it. The *positive* duty was limited to a certain time, the particular exercise of the moral ones was not: and therefore it was proper at that season, for the moral affirmative precepts to give way to positive. It would have been vain for them to have pleaded in such a case, that positive duties are *means* only to moral, and that they intended to be good *moral* men at home, and so to answer the *end* designed. God will not be mocked at that rate: but when he commands men to obey, though in *positive* instances, disobeying him

is rebellion and heinous iniquity. The question therefore about the *preference* depends not upon the *moral* or *positive* nature of the precepts, as I have often said, but upon the time, and other circumstances. Thus far in answer to the author of the Defence.

There is another gentleman, who spends, I think, about forty, or more, tedious pages, to assert the superior excellence and obligation of moral duties ^a. The first nine or ten pages he fills with things mostly foreign, or with false representations of my principles, as his manner is. He represents my notion as differing from Bishop Cumberland's *y*, though it is exactly the same with it. He intimates more than once, if I understand him, that the rule I go by is, to consider what will best serve a *present turn*, or *particular exigency* ^z: whereas my constant rule is, to consider in any particular case what will be best *upon the whole*, so as never to cross upon the greatest and highest end, the *common felicity*. A rule so innocent, and of such admirable use in all cases of intricacy, that nothing can be more so.

He misrepresents me further ^a, as if I had resolved the iniquity or sin of neglecting the holy Communion into the *offence* only, the ill *example* set, and the occasion thereby given to *unjust* and *ill-natured* censures. Whereas I affirm *frequent* or *total* neglects to be "neglecting to renew our covenant and intercourse with God, neglecting to repênt and to resolve well, neglecting to repair the spiritual life, disposing the mind to irreligion and immorality, and, in process of time, to incurable profaneness ^b."

I observed besides, that the *example* of such irreverence towards God would do infinitely more harm to the world, than any pretended *moral* services can atone for, or compensate ^c: a truth which no serious person can doubt of.

^a The Comparative Excellence, &c. p. 40, &c.

^b Ibid. p. 44, 59.

^c See Nature and Obligation, p. 76.

^y Ibid. p. 44.

^z Ibid. p. 46, 47, 48.

^c Ibid. p. 26, 76.

And I particularly made mention of it, to obviate the vain pretence, that a man may be doing *good to the world*, by friendly and charitable offices, while he *totally* neglects his *religious* duties. I say, that *upon the whole* he does not serve mankind in such cases, but does more harm than good: because the mischief done to religion in general by such examples, will do mankind more hurt than the services of any single man, or many, can make amends for.

I must here take notice of a very odd argument which this gentleman produces^d for the justifying a *total* neglect of the holy Communion. If it be lawful to neglect it *sometimes*, for reasons of necessary charity, he argues, that it may be lawful also to neglect it *often*, or *always*, upon the same principle, if the like occasions happen: For, says he, "How can the number make that criminal when repeated, that was innocent and right in the "single act?" To which I answer, *first*, that there is a time for all things, and there is no sense in supposing that occasions of *necessary* charity can recur so often, as to require either a *constant* or a *frequent* neglect of the Divine ordinances in the same man. I answer, *secondly*, that it would be *great vanity* in any man to pretend, that his services are equivalent to God's honour, or are so necessary to mankind that he can *never*, or *very rarely*, be spared to attend upon God. I answer, *thirdly*, that there is no man but what takes every day or night more time for his ordinary meals, his recreations, or his sleep, than it would require once a week to spend in partaking of the *Communion*. And if *moral* duties may yield to such *daily* avocations, surely they may much more yield to *weekly* or *monthly* calls to the Sacrament. I answer, *fourthly*, that this gentleman's general rule, that *number* and *repetition* do not make an act criminal, is a very false one, and contrary to the common rules of *moral* arithmetic. It is the *repeating* the same act of drinking, that makes

^d Comparative Excellence, &c. p. 46, 47.

the *drunkard*; and the *number* of the morsels makes the *glutton*: or, to use a fitter comparison, it is the over great *frequency* of fasting that famishes the body; and, in like manner, too *frequent* abstaining from the holy Communion famishes the soul. No charity to men's bodies, or souls either, will justify a man's neglecting the concerns of his own soul. God gives us leave to neglect his ordinances *sometimes*, but within compass, and within measure, so that neither *religion* in general, nor a man's own *spiritual* improvement suffer by it. But if instead of a *pound* permitted, we presume to take *twenty*, or instead of a *shekel* allowed us, we take a talent, though it be only repeating the same act, taking pound after pound, and shekel after shekel, yet all beyond what is proper, and permitted, is wrong and robbery, and the *excess* is criminal, though there be no iniquity in the *single* act.

Hitherto I have been attending this gentleman through ten of his pages, as far as to page 50, where he at length begins to talk directly to the main point, the *preference* of moral to positive duties. And now I must give the readers a taste of his reasonings upon that head.

1. One of his arguments is, that moral duties exceed positive, "as much as practice improves and strengthens "beyond contemplation^c:" as if *acts* of positive duty were *contemplation* only.

2. Another is, that "it is peculiar to moral duty, which "positive has no share in, that it make us rich towards "God, rich in good works^f." As if Abraham's obedience in two signal positive instances, by which he was justified, and for which he was called the *friend of Gods*, did not amount to *good works*, nor made him *rich towards God*. Or as if preaching the Gospel and keeping the faith were not good works, entitling to a *crown of righteousness*^h.

3. A third argument, or the first over again, is, that

^c Comparative Excellence, &c. p. 50.

^e James ii. 21, 22, 23.

^f Ibid. p. 50.

^h 2 Tim. iv. 7.

moral duties are *active virtue*^h: as if *positive* duties were not altogether as *active*.

4. A fourth, or the same over again, is, that “in moral duties we step farther towards heaven; in positive we sit down to consider, and refresh ourselves for the journeyⁱ.” So Abraham, we are to suppose, sat down to *consider*, and *refresh*, when he came out of his own country in obedience to a *positive* commandment, and went three days’ journey to offer up his only son; and made no *step* towards heaven in those instances, though thereby *justified*, and advanced to the closest *friendship* with *God*.

5. A fifth is, that moral duties only are “founded in the reasons and fitnesses of things^k.” As if infinite Wisdom could command any thing that had not its proper *fitness* to answer the ends designed: or as if it were not eternally and unalterably *fitting*, that God should be obeyed in every thing.

I pass over this gentleman’s crude account of the reason of the difference between *affirmative* and *negative* precepts^l, that one should bind always, and the other not so. He might have said all in a very few words: that we cannot be always employed in all affirmative duties, because they are *many*, and we can do but one thing at a time: but we can always *forbear* the doing what God has *forbidden*. One sort therefore admits of intermissions in acting, the other admits of none in the forbearing to act.

The reader, I presume, by this time, has enough for a specimen, and I shall trust him with the rest. To pursue such a writer through all his wanderings and mistakes would take up too much of my time and paper, and make trifles look considerable. I return to the author of the Defence.

^h Comparative Excellence, &c. p. 51.

ⁱ Ibid. p. 52.

^k Id. *ibid*.

^l Ibid. p. 53, 54, 55, &c.

IV.

The Defence observes, that obedience to *positive* precepts can in no case be *greater* virtue than obedience to *moral*; "because it cannot be greater virtue than exact conformity to the reasons of things^m." I would only ask here, whether some instances of obedience to *moral* precepts may not be *greater virtue* than other instances of obedience to moral precepts: or whether there be no *degrees* in virtue. The argument seems to me to strike at all degrees in virtue, and so to prove nothing, because it proves too much, and terminates in absurdity. I think the proper distinction here is, that all acts of virtue are *truly* virtue, one *as well* as the other, but not in the *same degree* with the other. Common logic will tell us, that though substance admits not of *magis* and *minus*, yet there is *major* and *minor substantia*. I do not understand how this writer can say, that there *cannot be greater virtue than virtue*, unless in such a sense as there *cannot be greater substance than substance*, though it is certain that one substance may be greater than another.

The truth is, and it is all that he should say, there may be *greater* and *smaller* virtues, and there may be more of virtue in one than in the other: but yet the smaller virtue is *virtue* no less than the other; as a little diamond is not less a diamond than the greatest, though it be a less diamond. The argument seems to be nothing but a confused transition made from one way of expression to the other, not observing the proper distinction. And since I have taken this notice of it, it needs no farther answer. It is manifest that there are *degrees* in virtue: and as obedience to positive precepts is undoubtedly *virtue*, so it may happen in certain cases, as particularly in Abraham's, to be *greater* virtue, though not *more truly* virtue than any other.

^m Defence, p. 16.

V.

The Defence finds fault with us for asserting that obedience to God in *positive* instances is really *moral*. He judges it to be acting in conformity to *positive* law only, not to *moral*ⁿ. I must take leave still to affirm, that obeying God in *positive* instances is *moral* obedience, conform to *moral* law, which prescribes that the *creature* shall obey the *Creator*. The very *nature* and *reason* of the thing, the *relation* and *natural fitness* requires it^o. And if it be *moral* duty (as I suppose it is) for a servant to obey his master in things *indifferent*, and for a *subject* to obey his *prince*, and for a *son* to obey his *parents*, and for a *soldier* to obey his commanding officer, how comes it to pass that it should not be *moral* duty for *men* to obey *God* in things of a *positive* nature? The author of the Defence understands not how it is *properly virtue*. But it is very obvious to perceive, that sincere obedience to *Divine* laws is always *virtue*, and so *properly*, that nothing else properly is *virtue*. However, upon his own principles, this must be *virtue*, because it is eternally *fit*, *reasonable*, and *right*, that God should be obeyed even in *positive* instances, so long as the commands subsist: the *reason* of things and the *common good* demand it.

ⁿ Defence, p. 16, 17.

^o The words of Dr. Clagett, or Dr. Stebbing, are so apposite to our present purpose, that I shall here transcribe them.

“ Though the distinction between *moral* and *positive* may be allowed with respect to *laws*, yet this does not seem to afford any foundation for a portionable distinction with respect to the *actions* of men conversant about those laws. That is, though you may absolutely confine the notion of a *moral law* to such laws as are of natural and perpetual obligation, you cannot absolutely confine the notion of a *moral man* to him who obeys such laws only. The reason is plain, *viz.* that upon supposition the *positive* laws are enjoined, obedience to such laws becomes a *part of morality*, as resulting from that general and universal principle of morality which has just now been mentioned; to wit, that *God is to be obeyed in every thing which he commands*. He therefore who refuses to obey even a *positive* law is no *moral man*.” *Stebbing's Abridgment of Clag.* p. 63. fol. edit.

VI.

The Defence asserts that "positive duty is enjoined "only as a means to moral virtue^p." But if it be *moral virtue* to obey God in *positive* instances, as I have proved, then it is more than *means* to virtue, and therefore not means *only*. He allows it may be called *virtuous means*; which is so near the saying what I say of it, that it seems to be only a kind of frowardness, that he scruples to call it directly *virtue*, as I do.

VII.

The Defence has another singularity, that obedience to positive commands "is not so properly virtue, as a declaration, or testimony, or proof of virtue^q." This is but a forced pretence, or subterfuge, which will not answer the purpose. Strange, that the very *life* and *spirit* of virtue, which according to St. James^r lies in the *activity*, should be no more than a *proof* of it. At this rate, all acts and instances of virtue, in moral as well as positive duties, will be *proofs* only of virtue, not virtue. Moral performances will all be *proofs* only of the inward *habits* of virtue; which is what the objection, I suppose, amounts to. Accordingly, *almsgiving* will be no virtue, but a proof of liberality: and so the Defence itself says expressly, that "feeding the hungry is only an act by which I testify that I have virtue, but it is not virtue itself^s."

The same will be equally true of all *good works*: from whence it will follow, that we are to be rewarded, not for our *virtues*, but for our *proofs* and *declarations*. The like also must, by parity of reason, be said of *vices*: and so it should be observed of acts of *lewdness* and *drunkenness*, that they are not *vices*, but *declarations*, *testimonies*, and *proofs*, that men are much addicted to incontinence and intemperance. If any man affects such a way of talking,

^p Defence, p. 18.

^r James ii. 26.

^q Ibid. p. 20.

^s Defence, p. 20.

I would not thwart or disturb him in it. It is enough for me, that the objection overshoots the mark, and is as forcible against *moral*, as against *positive* duties. Let but obedience in *positive* instances be as truly virtue as obedience in *moral*, and I ask no more; neither am I concerned to dispute with those that deny it of *both*.

However, I cannot but observe with some satisfaction, that this writer does not long continue contradicting me in this article, but comes entirely into my sentiments in another place, unawares. He asks, "What is the difference between continuance in well-doing, and virtue? "betwixt good works, and moral goodness?" Intimating, that there is no difference at all. *Well-doing* therefore is more than *proving*; and *good works* more than *proofs*. They are *virtue*, and *moral goodness*, by his own confession: so hard is it for a man not to forget himself sometimes, when he is labouring to overthrow the truth. To conclude this point, I can easily prove that obeying God in *positive* instances is *well-doing*, and that such performances (as in Abraham for instance) are *good works*. Therefore, &c.

VIII.

The Defence pretends, "that the breach of a positive law, when it is no breach of a moral law, may be valued at a certain price here, and the man that suffers the penalty of it may be in danger of nothing future."[†] This I take to be *new* doctrine, and of pernicious tendency. I have seen something of it before, in a late writer[‡]; who proposes it, however, very modestly, in the way of conjecture, as a matter that may require second thoughts; as indeed it does. The doctrine, I think, amounts to this; either that it is *no sin* to violate positive institutions, or that it is *venial*, though ever so *wilful*. I am afraid this will be bringing in again the Popish doc-

[†] Defence, p. 25.

[‡] Ibid. p. 31.

[‡] Colliber, on Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 151, &c.

trine of *mortal* and *venial* sins, at a back-door. For, to use this gentleman's phrase, upon another occasion, "One egg is not liker to another," than this doctrine, of some sins being so slight as to deserve only *temporal punishment*, is to the *Romish* doctrine of *venial* sins. This is the second time I have observed him running (unawares) into *Popish* tenets, or very nearly such. The first was, in his asserting the absolute *perfection of good works*, which I before took notice of^γ: and now this next is, his maintaining the doctrine of *venial* sins; for such it plainly is. Against all such pretences, I may here take leave to use the words of Bishop Burnet^z: "The Scripture nowhere teaches us to think so slightly of the *majesty of God*, or of his *law*. There is a curse upon every one *that continueth not in all things which are written in that book of the law to do them*^a. And the same curse must have been on us all, if Christ had not redeemed us from it: *The wages of sin is death*. And St. James asserts, that there is such a complication of all the precepts of the law of God, both with one another, and with the authority of the Lawgiver, that *he who offends in one point is guilty of all*^b. So since God has in his word given us such dreadful apprehensions of his *wrath*, and of the *guilt of sin*, we dare not soften these to a degree below the *majesty of the eternal God*, and the *dignity of his most holy laws*." Thus far he. And I presume, the settled standing doctrine of all sober and Protestant Divines is, that the *wilful* violating the Divine law, even in a *small* matter, is no small thing. Sins of *ignorance* and *infirmity* are the only slight sins: all *wilful* sins are deadly and damning. The rule then is, to make the estimate not barely by the *matter* of the offence, (for then Adam's offence would have been a slight thing,) but by the stress that God has laid upon his commandments, and

^γ See Nature and Obligation, &c. p. 57.

^z Burnet's Articl. xvi. p. 140.

^a Gal. iii. 10.

^b James ii. 10, 11.

the degree of *wilfulness* that goes along with the transgression of them. This is old and true doctrine. But let the serious and devout Christian observe and consider, what these *novel* notions about *positive* duties are like to end in: namely, in this; that it is *no sin* to offend against them, or none that affects the *conscience*. Nevertheless, I am persuaded, that the same persons who speak thus slightly of obeying God in matters *positive*, will look upon it as a grievous sin for *servants, children, and subjects*, to disobey their *masters, parents, governors*, in any lawful or indifferent commands. Or if they will not allow that, what will then this contempt of *positive* duties at length bring us to?

IX.

Another particularity of the Defence is, that outward hypocritical performances in *moral* duties cannot justly be called *moral* performances; for this wise reason, because they are *immoral*^c. And then he goes on, pleasantly, to talk against *playing* upon the word *moral*, at the very instant that he is doing it. For what does his argument here amount to, but *playing* upon a word? The Divine precepts are distinguished into *moral* and *not moral*, and not into *moral* and *immoral*. So that *moral* in the phrase *moral performances*, is not opposed to *immoral*, but to *positive*, or *not moral*. Actions therefore, or performances, may in this sense be *moral*, on account of their *matter*, (which is *moral*, not *positive*,) and be *immoral* too, on account of their *obliquity*. Did he never hear of *moral evil*? For, strange as it may seem, it is most certainly true, that *moral evil* is a thing *immoral*.

X.

The Defence denies, or at least scruples to own, that “any supernatural sanctifying graces go along with the “worthy reception of the holy Communion^d.” I will

^c Defence, p. 41.

^d Ibid. p. 53.

not here be at the pains to prove (for the satisfaction only of an humorous gentleman, who may read if he pleases) the known and approved doctrines of our Church, and of all Christian churches. I referred him before to Vossius, and now refer him thither again, and to Gerhard, and Hooker, to say nothing of many more, who have proved the thing to our hands. It is sufficient now to take notice, that Dr. Glarke himself owns the doctrine, in his post-humous Sermons, though he had omitted it in his Catechism. He owns that such graces, “through the assistance of the Spirit of God, are annexed to the ordinance partaken of by truly devout and well-disposed minds^e.” At length then it appears, that the Doctor has *talked enthusiastically*^f, just as I would have had him do: so that the best apology for Dr. Clarke would have been to say, that he had *omitted* the doctrine accidentally, and not *denied* it; which now appears to be fact. But his apologist was too well pleased with the *omission*; and judging of the Doctor by himself, thought he had left it out as *enthusiastical*; though it is the plain certain doctrine of all Christian churches, upon the foot of *Scripture* and *antiquity*.

XI.

Another singularity of this writer is, that he does not allow the *exercise* of the *love* of God, and of *faith*, *hope*, *charity*, and *humility*, to be essentially *requisite* to the worthy reception of the holy Communion. He admits that they *may* be exerted upon that occasion: but he says, “the institution or command cannot be said to require the exercise of those extrinsic virtues^g.” So it seems, those virtues are *extrinsic*, that is, *foreign* to the worthy reception of the holy Communion. He desires a text of Scripture to prove that those virtues are *required*^h.

^e Clarke's Posth. Serm. vol. iv. p. 131, 186, 187.

^f See the Answer to the Remarks, p. 76.

^g Defence, p. 61.

^h Ibid. p. 62.

I believe I could cite some. But it is needless, because the very *nature* and *end* of the Sacrament requires the exercise of those virtues, as it is *covenanting* with God, expressing our firm reliance upon the sole merits of Christ for our salvation, and maintaining communion both with God and man. All this might be easily made appear from *Scripture*. And I must insist upon it, that whatsoever Scripture by plain and good *consequence* teaches, *Scripture* teaches. In this point also, I conceive, I have Dr. Clarke fully and clearly on my sideⁱ.

XII.

The Defence still pleads^k, that “moral virtues are an exact imitation of God himself,” as he had before pleaded in the Answer^l. I reminded him in return^m that *human* virtues could by no means justly pretend to any such high claim: and *human* virtues were undoubtedly the subject of dispute, and of which I had affirmed in my Remarks, that they wanted the relief and additional improvements of the two Sacraments.

He is now pleased to intimate, and another gentlemanⁿ has more plainly said it, that he meant not *human* virtues, but *moral virtues* in the abstract. Now indeed, if the question had been whether *abstract ideas* wanted the benefit of the Sacraments, this answer had been *pertinent*: but as it was only about *men*, and about *virtues* considered as in *man*, the Answer perhaps is such as any other person of plain good sense would not readily have thought of.

XIII.

Another peculiarity in this writer is, that our *moral virtues*, or our *virtuous practices*, need no expiation. I had

ⁱ See Clarke's Posth. Sermons, vol. iv. Sermon 6, 7. per tot.

^k Defence, p. 67.

^l Answer to the Remarks, p. 72.

^m Nature and Oblig. p. 57.

ⁿ Chilton's Positive Institutions, &c. p. 47.

maintained, that our best and most virtuous practices want Christ's *expiation*, to render them *saving*°. Upon which, this diverting gentleman cries out: "God forbid! I won't pretend to ask for a text of Scripture for this new doctrine. Apply Christ's expiation to virtuous practices! I ever thought, that his expiation was to be applied to sins, to vicious, not to virtuous acts. But good must be called evil^p," &c. No *jesting*, I beseech you, with the *sacred* name, or in so *serious* a subject. The point to be maintained was, that however holy or virtuous men may be, yet they want the benefit of Christ's *expiation*. This doctrine, which is as *old* as Christianity, (or rather as *old*, very nearly, as the creation,) I expressed in such terms as wise and grave men do, who know what they are about. Dr. Clarke, among others, thus words it: "Our best virtues or works are so imperfect as to need pardon, rather than deserve a reward^q." And it is right to say, not only that our *vices*, (which is low and flat, and short of the whole truth,) but that even our *virtues* and *best services* need pardon and expiation, because of their defects. The expression is just: for though those virtues or services are *defective*, they ought not therefore to be called *vicious acts*; neither indeed are they such, since they take their denomination from the ruling principle, and are besides accepted as *righteous*, through Christ.

But suppose there had been any slight inaccuracy in an expression of common and constant use, could any thing be more trifling than thus to break off from the grave subject of debate, to tease an expression, and thereupon to fall into so indecent a fit of levity? It is all one to me, whether it be said that our *virtues* or our *vices* stand in need of Christ's *expiation*; provided it be but owned, that the very *best* of men want it to supply their defects, and that they are to come to the *Sacraments* for it; which is what I asserted.

- Nature and Obligat. &c. p. 64. compare 92.
- ▷ Defence, p. 72, 73.
- Clarke's Posth. Sermon. vol. iv. p. 317.

XIV.

The Defence intimates more than once, that Pagan virtues are as valuable as *evangelical*, both being so near akin, and so much alike, that "one egg is not liker to another." A shocking position; highly injurious to the Christian religion, and tending to infidelity; condemned expressly by our Church in her thirteenth Article, and by all sober Christian Divines. To confute it at large would be tedious, and lead me too far: besides that it is the less needful, after what has been done of that kind by the learned and judicious^a. I shall content myself therefore with offering only a few short hints.

Pagan darkness comes not up to *Gospel light*.

1. There is not that *refined* knowledge of *God*, of his *nature*, of *his works*, or of his *ways*. Now, as all virtue terminates in the *love of God*, and in *faith* towards him, it must of course follow, that when that *love* or *faith* is more *rational*, or more *enlightened*, and at the same time *purser*, *stronger*, and more *intense*; I say, it must of course follow, that there every *virtue* is so much *raised* in proportion, as the *love* of God is, from whence it flows, and on which it rests. And there must of course be a proportionate defect in all Pagan virtue^t, as wanting that sound, rational, and elevated knowledge of God, which Christianity supplies.

2. There are also wanting to Pagan virtue, a clear and distinct view of *heaven* and *heavenly* things, and a *certain* well grounded *assurance* of a *life* to come, and of a *future judgment*; besides many excellent *motives*, *incitements*,

^a Defence, p. 86, 87. compare p. 26.

^b See particularly the Bp. of London's Second Pastoral Letter, p. 68, &c.

^t Quemadmodum enim in naturali religione imperfectiones et defectus sunt; ita in omnibus vitæ officiis defectus sunt in statu naturæ proportionati. Sicut enim in physiologia dici solet, imbecillitates et peccata primæ concoctionis haud facile in secunda et tertia posse emendari; ita cum prima virtus sit religio, qua proportione naturalis deficit religio, eadem omnes ab ista religione promanantes virtutes deficere est necesse. *Sharrock. de Fin. et Offic.* p. 52.

helps, and *encouragements* to virtue. Now to pretend that these advantages contribute nothing towards the raising and refining *Christian* virtues above *Pagan*, or that the want of them must not inevitably sink all *Pagan* attainments much below what *Christians* may attain to, is as wild and absurd, as to admit causes without effects, or effects without causes. *Christian* virtues therefore, when properly such, must be allowed to exceed *Pagan*, as much as *light* does *obscurity*. The schools of *Rome* or *Athens* were never yet comparable to the school of *Christ*: nor were the virtues there taught fit to be named with those that are recommended by Christ and his Apostles, and wrought by the Holy Spirit of God. A man may better pretend that the civility of a home-bred rustic comes up to the politeness of the best bred gentleman, than that *Pagan* virtue is as high and heavenly as the *Christian*.

These things are clear, evident, and uncontestable. But yet because sometimes a slight objection or two weighs more on one side, than demonstrations on the other, it will be necessary to hear and examine what the Defence has to plead in favour of *Pagan* attainments.

1. He pleads: "Pagan virtue either is virtue, or it is not."

"If Pagan virtue is the same as defective virtue, it is the same as that which is not virtue: or if it be real virtue, it will be impossible to distinguish very much betwixt virtue and virtue^u." The sum of this argument is, that Pagan virtue is either as excellent as evangelical, or it is no virtue at all. If such be really the case, and there be no medium, then let it be *no virtue at all*: for we are not concerned to make it virtue. One thing we are certain of, that it is not *Christian* virtue, nor any way comparable to it. We demonstrate that it is vastly defective in comparison: and if because it is thus *defective*, it is therefore *not virtue*, let it then lose its name, rather than upon account of a mere *name* be put upon the same foot with

^u Defence, p. 26.

Christian graces. The truth is, *Pagan* virtue is but a kind of *nominal* virtue. Their good works are *materially*, but not *formally* good; *speciously*, or in appearance good, not *really* and *strictly* so; they are *comparatively* good, as being less evil, or as approaching nearer to the rule of action, but not *absolutely* good. And “since none of our actions “ can be *strictly* good, and actions performed by *Pagans* “ cannot be *imputatively* good, therefore though they are “ *speciously*, or *comparatively* good, yet by reason of that “ imperfection which must needs cleave to them, because “ it is not done away through Christ, they are strictly “ evil, that is, sins^x.” Were they done as God hath willed and commanded according to the Gospel rule, they would be *imputatively* good through faith in Christ, like the good works of Christians: but since they are not perfect in *themselves*, and their imperfection is not removed by faith in Christ, they must of course be *faulty*.

2. But the Defence says: “He that conforms his moral “ actions to the reasons of things, directs them right, and “ wants nothing to make them exactly what they ought “ to be: and to call such a conformity *Pagan*, in oppo- “ sition to some other virtue which is not more exact, nor “ can be more exact, is only to blind people with scho- “ lastic jargon, &c.” To the ignorant and undiscerning, any thing may be *jargon*, as to the blind all things are dark. If this gentleman thinks I here treat him with too little ceremony, let him remember what church or churches he here throws contempt upon, by calling their true Christian doctrine *scholastic jargon*. If he did not like it, or could not *subscribe* to it, he ought however to treat it with more modesty. But to the point. The whole force of his argument lies in the supposed *conformity* of *Pagan* works to the *reasons of things*: which he takes for granted might be *exact* and *perfect*; though it is demonstration that they were not, could not. Their actions indeed might be *materially* good, good as to the *outward* act, being service-

^x Bennet's Directions, &c. p. 78.

^y Defence, p. 27.

able to mankind; and so may the actions of *hypocrites*, or even the services of *brutes* be: but to make an action *formally* good and perfect, the *manner* and *motive*, and *end* of the action, with several other circumstances, must be taken into account. The wiser heathens themselves were very sensible, that their very best actions were lame and faulty, far from exact^z. In a strict sense, none but the *Divine* actions have an *exact* conformity to the *reasons of things*: because God alone can extend his views to *all* the reasons of things. Creatures may go as far as their views reach, and their abilities or opportunities permit. The more *light*, the more *strength*, the livelier *faith*, and the brighter *hope* they have, together with strict *sincerity* and *integrity*, so much the more excellent and exalted their virtues are. Suppose a *Pagan* falls down to *pray*, (as prayer is a supposed moral duty,) if his notions of God be as *worthy* of the *Divine Majesty*, and as suitable to the *truth* of things, as the *Christian* notions are; and if he prays with as good judgment and as right discernment of *what* he is to pray for, and with the same *faith* and *trust* in God, and with the same *pure* intentions and *heavenly* views, and with the like *fervour* and *constancy* as a *Christian* is taught to do; then perhaps the prayer of a *Pagan* may be as conformable to the *reasons of things*, as the prayer of the best *Christian*. But does not every man perceive, at first sight, that the thing is impossible?

Suppose a *Pagan* to perform some acts of *justice* or of *mercy*: if he has the same view to the *glory* of *God*, and the same ideas also of the *Divine Being*, as a *Christian* may have: if he has as strong a *faith* in a world to come, the same *hopes* of living hereafter in *heaven*, both *soul* and *body*, living also in *society* with *God* and *Christ* and the holy angels; if he abstracts from *worldly* views,

^z Diis immortalibus solis et virtus et beata vita contingit: nobis umbra quædam illorum bonorum, et similitudo. Accedimus ad illa, non pervenimus. Ratio vero diis hominibusque communis. Hæc in illis consummata est, in nobis consummabilis: sed ad desperationem nos vitia nostra perducunt. *Seneca, Epist. xcii. p. 322.*

seeks not the honour, love, or esteem of men, but of God; if with such upright intentions, and such singleness of heart, as becomes a Christian, he performs these moral duties, then let his *virtue* be compared to *evangelical* righteousness. But the supposition is palpably absurd, and the thing impracticable: so vain is it, to set *Pagan* virtues in competition with *Christian* graces. All that I can see in the argument offered in the Defence is only this, that so far as *Pagan* virtues are strictly virtue, so far they are *exact*: which if repeated a thousand times over, will be of no moment at all for determining the question now before us. We allow that *Pagan* virtues are virtue so far as they are virtue: but then we deny that they are virtue so far, or to such a degree of perfection, as *Christian* virtues are. They are not so conformable to the *reasons of things*, because *Pagans* have not so *large* a view, nor so *just* and *correct* a notion of the *reasons of things*, as *Christians* have. Their virtues therefore are much more *defective*, and their services low and lame: on account of which defects, and their coming far short of the rule, they have the *nature of sins*^a. And so have even *Christian* services too, considered in *themselves*, and abstracting from the grace and merits of Christ, through which only they are accepted as *good*, and made *well pleasing* and *worthy*^b, notwithstanding their *defects*. However, there is no comparison between *Pagan* virtues and *Christian*, as there is

^a Dicimus ad opus bonum morale (id est ad opus perfectissime bonum, cuique nulla adhæret *Assumptio*) necessariam esse *gratiam*, non quamlibet, sed quæ sit ordinis supernaturalis, et per quam primo creatur in hominibus fides: nec hæc qualiscunque, sed Christiana et infusa. Ab hujusmodi fide incipere dicimus omnem volitionem perfecte bonam, et sine ea impossibile factu esse aliquod opus quod perfectissime bonum dici debeat. Nec tamen dicimus opera *gentilium* meliora, Christiana fide carentium, protenus *mera peccata* esse— Si quærat, an qui propter Dei amorem, beatitudinis etiam sibi acquirendæ intuitu, naturæ suæ placitis; insitisque a Deo notitiis practicis obsequi studebant, in pio sinceroque hujusmodi obsequii conatu peccabant necne? Respondemus, eos hoc conatu et *studio* non peccasse, sed *imperfectione* conatus operisque hujusmodi re vera sèmpèr peccasse. *Sharrock de Fin. et Op.* p. 52.

^b See Clarke's Posth. Serm. xiii. vol. iv. p. 317, &c.

no comparison between their respective attainments, talents, or advantages.

3. The Defence says further: "I should be glad to hear an exact distinction made betwixt the gratitude, humanity, justice, and charity in Socrates, and gratitude, humanity, justice, and charity in any *saint*." He may easily make out the *distinction*, from what I have already said. But if he still wants to be farther informed, I shall just hint to him, that Socrates's knowledge of divine things was not so *large* or *clear*, nor his faith so *strong*, nor his hope so *lively*, nor his aims so *pure* and *heavenly*: and therefore his gratitude, justice, &c. were of coarser alloy, and much inferior in every respect, to Abraham's, for instance, or St. Paul's. For though the *outward* acts might be the same, yet Socrates's mind was not so richly furnished, nor so divinely adorned; for which reason his virtues were not so fair or bright as the other, any more than *human* virtues come up to *angelical*. The better cultivated the mind is, the more refined and raised will every virtue be that comes from it, or dwells in it: as from a rich and well watered soil we may expect the choicest plants, and from the best trees the best fruits. Socrates was perhaps as excellent a man as any one in his circumstances could be: but if he had been bred up at the feet of a Gamaliel, he had been more excellent; and yet much more so, had he been trained up under Christ. He never had lectures comparable to the Sermon in the Mount: neither was his *demon* (whatever it was) able to illuminate or elevate the soul like the *Spirit of God*. These things are very plain, and could not have been missed by the author of the Defence, had he not first confounded himself with a false principle, that *virtue* cannot be better than *virtue*, or that all virtues are alike and equal, admitting of no *degrees*. And this he seems to have been led into, by considering virtue in the *abstract*, *ideal* virtue, and not as it subsists in the subject of it, in particular persons. The abstract *idea* is indeed always the *same idea*: but the virtues, as subsisting in their respective subjects, are greater

or less, as they more or less answer to that *idea*. Or if he allows nothing to be *called* virtue that comes not strictly up to that *idea*, he must discard all *Pagan* virtues at once; and, at length, it will amount only to a strife about *words*, while *things* remain just as before. But I pass on.

XV.

In the following parts of the Defence, the author (which I am sorry to see) approaches nearer and nearer to principles of *Deism*, and lays down tenets, such as are expressly condemned by Dr. Clarke equally with me, and I think by all other *Christian* Divines. One of his tenets is, that “by the religion of nature men may know *how* God is to be worshipped^c.” Had he said only, men may know *that* God is to be worshipped, he had said truth: but he particularly words it *how*, and prints it in Italick, to show the emphasis he lays upon it. I shall confront this new doctrine with the excellent words of Dr. Clarke, who, speaking of the *Pagans*, says: “The manner in which God might be acceptably worshipped, these men were *unavoidably* ignorant of. That God ought to be worshipped, is in the general as evident and plain from the light of nature, as any thing can be: but in *what particular manner*, and with *what kind* of service he will be worshipped, cannot be certainly discovered by bare reason^d.” In another place of the same treatise he says: “There was plainly a necessity of some particular revelation to discover in *what manner*, and with *what kind* of external service, God might acceptably be worshipped^e.” This he both says and proves at large in the places referred to. And I believe, in this matter, he has the *Christian* world on his side, against the author of the Defence; who, in this instance, manifestly goes off from *Christian* principles.

^c Defence, p. 96.

^d Clarke's Evidences, &c. p. 178.

^e Clarke, *ibid.* p. 199, 200. See also Bishop of London's Second Pastoral Letter, p. 15.

XVI.

The Defence says further, that "the religion of nature will show, how men may be reconciled to, and accepted by God^f." Worse and worse. This again is directly contrary to what Dr. Clarke teaches; who, among many other just and pertinent observations upon this head, says: It "cannot positively be proved from any of God's attributes, that he is absolutely obliged to pardon all creatures all their sins, at all times, barely and immediately upon their repenting. There arises therefore from nature no sufficient comfort to sinners, but an anxious and endless solicitude about the means of appeasing the Deity^g." In another place^h, he expresses the same thought thus: "There was a necessity of some *particular revelation* to discover what *expiation* God would accept for sin, by which the authority, honour, and dignity of his laws might be effectually vindicated." This also he proves at large. The same thing has been briefly and strongly pressed now lately, by another very able handⁱ.

As no one could suppose that any *Christian* could dispute this point with us, so it has not been the way to quote *Scripture* texts at all upon it. But the author of the Defence happening to be a person that professes a regard for *Scripture*; it will be proper to acquaint him, that his doctrine flatly contradicts St. Paul's, as I shall easily prove to him. I begin with Rom. iii. 20. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The whole drift and scope of the Apostle is to prove, that no law could justify, but the law of faith by Jesus Christ. And as his argument concludes against the *Jewish law*, so it still more

^f Defence, p. 96.

^g Clarke's Evidences, &c. p. 182, 183.

^h Ibid. p. 200.

ⁱ Bishop of London's Second Pastoral Letter, p. 14, 15.

strongly concludes against the *law of nature*, less perfect than the Jewish law, as being *contained* in it, and making but a *part* of it ^k.

The point is still plainer from Gal. ii. 21. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." The argument concludes irrefragably against every law but the *Christian*^l, consequently against the *law of nature*, as much as against the *Jewish law*. The Apostle plainly asserts that there was a necessity of Christ's death, because mankind could not be justified by any *law*, but by *grace* only. If righteousness could come by the *law of nature*, then Christ died *in vain*; which being absurd to suppose, it is no less absurd to imagine, that "the religion of nature could show how men might be reconciled to, and accepted by God." Let us proceed a little farther to observe, how contrary St. Paul's doctrine is to that of the Defence. The Apostle says, "that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, is evident: for the just shall live by faith^m." Now unless the law of nature contained the doctrine of *justification by faith in Christ*, it is impossible (if the Apostle says true) that the religion of nature should show how men may be reconciled to, and

^k Si lex a Deo data, tanquam legis naturalis per peccatum obscuratæ quædam interpres, explicans eam et renovans, justitiam præstare non potuit, multo minus id potest sola *lex naturalis*. Quare si ex operibus legis scriptæ nemo Judæus justificatur, consequenter intelligendum relinquitur, multo minus justificari posse ex operibus *legis naturæ*. *Bull. Harmon. Apostol.* part. ii. cap. 8. sect. 8. p. 460.

Quæ adversus legem Mosaicam disputat Paulus, multo fortius, ut jam alicubi notavimus, contra *naturæ legem* militant. *Idem*, p. 483.

^l Summa hæc est: rejicit a justificatione Apostolus Paulus opera.

1. *Ritualia*, quæ lex ceremonialis præscripuit.
2. *Moralia*, quæ nativis hominum viribus in statu sive *legis* sive *meræ naturæ* fiunt, ante et citra gratiam Evangelii.
3. *Judaica*, sive futilem illam justitiam quam docuerunt Judæorum magistri.
4. Denique *universa* a Christo Mediatore divulsa, quæque sua vi, vel citra respectum ad fœdus gratiæ, Christi sanguine stabilitum, salutem sempiternam assequerentur. *Bull. ibid.* cap. 18. sect. 2. p. 508.

^m Gal. iii. 11.

accepted by God. St. Paul goes on in the same chapter to say, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law : but the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believeⁿ." Now, I suppose, the religion of nature had been *given* long before St. Paul wrote : and had he known any thing of this admirable use and virtue of it, that it could show "how men may be reconciled to, and accepted by God," he could not have failed to have taken some notice of it, and to have owned that there was a law of nature *given* which could *give life*, and that *righteousness might be* by that law of nature, independent of the law of Christ. But St. Paul knew no such doctrine ; or if he did, he condemned it as *proud* and *false* doctrine. *Unbelievers* may dispute this point both with St. Paul and us, and may create us some trouble by rejecting our *strong evidence* ; though at the same time we know they can only trifle against the infallible word of God. However, as I said, they may create us some trouble, by leading us into a more intricate dispute about the *nature* and *reason* of the thing itself, which we are scarce qualified to judge of. But as to professed *believers*, there is a short and easy way to be taken with them, by producing the *texts*, and then observing to them that they forget their *rule*, run counter to their *own principles*, and are *self-condemned*.

XVII.

The Defence pretends also, that "the religion of nature will show a future state of rewards and punishments." I must observe, in the first place, (since the author appears as a *second* to Dr. Clarke in this cause,) how much he runs against his *principal* in this point also. Dr. Clarke says thus : "There was a necessity of some *particular revelation*, to give men full assurance of the truth of those

ⁿ Gal. iii. 21, 22.

“ great motives of religion, the rewards and punishments of a future state; which, notwithstanding the strongest arguments of reason, men could not yet forbear doubting of.” As to the generality, at least, of the heathens, under the *religion of nature*, St. Paul’s account, I suppose, may be admitted, that they were “ strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” Some indeed of the better sort had *faint hopes* of such a thing, and many had *dark* and *confused* notions of it; but neither *certain* enough to be depended upon, nor *clear* enough to be of any great use. Besides that none of them had any thing whereon to fix a well grounded *hope*, being all concluded under *sin*: so that I see not what this boasted benefit of the *religion of nature* really amounted to. Let the author of the Defence, now at this day, after the latest improvements in philosophy and moral science; I say, let him try if he can from mere *reason* demonstrate any thing more than this, that there will be some *difference* in another world between the *more* and *less* sinful, (all being *sinner*s,) without determining *what* it will be, or how *long* it will last. I am persuaded, when he sets his Bible aside, he will not be able to prove more than I have mentioned. I am very certain he can prove little or nothing of *rewards*, because we have none of us a full *claim*, or *strict right* to any. Happy is he that is to have the slightest *punishment*: so stand we upon the foot of mere *natural religion*: and, I think, it is no very comfortable prospect to boast of. As it is impossible for men to form an adequate idea of infinite *holiness*, *justice*, and *wisdom*, or of what they require; so it is impossible for man naturally to know upon what *terms* God can accept and reward sinners. God has declared and shown the *terms* upon which he can do it: but they are such as give no encouragement for any

° Clarke’s Evidences, p. 200. compare 184, &c.

p Ephes. ii. 12.

¶ See Bishop Bull’s Harmon. Apostol. Dissert. ii. cap. 10. sect. 13. p. 476. Bishop of London’s Second Pastoral Letter, p. 17, 18, 19.

one to rest upon *natural religion*, but such as show that all who have nothing else to rest upon are lost and undone for ever. If any may be saved *in it*, yet certainly none can be saved *by it*.

XVIII.

The Defence farther intimates, that the religion of nature "will show the duties we are to practise to one another." Lamely enough. But let us hear Dr. Clarke to the contrary, in this matter also as before. "There was a necessity of some *particular* divine revelation, to make the *whole* doctrine of religion *clear* and *obvious* to all capacities, to add *weight* and *authority* to the plainest precepts, and to furnish men with extraordinary assistances to enable them to overcome the corruptions of their nature."

I shall take leave to say, more expressly, that the religion of nature does not show *all* the duties we owe to one another; particularly, not the duties we owe to men's *souls*. And as to those duties which the religion of nature really does show, it shows them but by halves. It shows indeed the *material* part, but very little of the *formal*, in which chiefly consists the transcendent excellency and perfection of *Christian* duties above *natural* performances. It shows not those excellent *ends, motives, principles*, which make up more than two thirds of *Christian duty* or *virtue*, and are indeed the life and spirit of it. To direct a duty *right* is part of duty: to aim it *well*, and to pursue it upon *high* and *heavenly* views, goes into the *disposition* of the agent; and definition of virtue; for it is the *disposition* of the heart that makes the *virtue*, and is *virtue*, and perfects the *duty*. For which reason, I shall not admit that the religion of nature shows the *duties*, but the shell rather of the duties which we owe to each other. A very judicious writer¹, speaking of the *feeble relics* of *natural*

¹ Defence, p. 99.

² Clarke's Evidences, &c. p. 200.

³ Placete, of Conscience, p. 38.

light, observes, that its “use is restrained to very narrow bounds,” and further adds: “We may, I confess, by this means arrive at the knowledge of some few duties: we may perceive some part of that which is more especially criminal in the opposite irregularities: but then we shall continue strangers to the rectitude of many duties, and to the obliquity of many sins; according to that of St. Paul; *I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet*.”^a

XIX.

The Defence admits the “sufficiency of reason to be a guide in matters of religion^x.” To obviate which pretence, Dr. Clarke very rightly says: “In experience and practice, it hath on the contrary appeared to be *altogether impossible* for philosophy and bare reason to reform mankind effectually, without the assistance of some higher principle^y.” But the *insufficiency* of reason to be a *guide* in such matters has very lately been set forth^z in the clearest and strongest manner for the conviction of *infidels*: and one might think that St. Paul’s authority, were there nothing else, might be enough to convince any *Christian*. To the texts before cited I shall add another: “The law made nothing perfect: but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh unto God^a.” I observe also, it is St. Paul’s doctrine, that the Scriptures only can make us “wise unto salvation^b.”

XX.

The Defence admits (and what will not that author admit?) that “the religion of nature is very perfect^c,” though by his own confession it wants many *motives, incitements, encouragements, and assistances, to make men more ready and willing to perform it*. As if the want of

^a Rom. vii. 7.^x Defence, p. 96.^y Clarke’s Evidences, &c. p. 195. compare p. 201.^z Bishop of London’s Second Pastoral Letter, p. 7, &c.^a Heb. vii. 19.^b 2 Tim. iii. 15.^c Defence, p. 97.

those were no imperfection. But wise men know that it wants also *fulness, clearness, certainty, authority*, and the power of *justifying*, and that it can give no man a title to the kingdom of heaven.

Placete observes to our purpose as follows: "As the light of nature has been miserably obscured by sin, and the consequences of sin; so had it retained its *original purity*, it could not have instructed us in all things necessary to salvation^d." The observation is just. Men were never left to the mere *law of nature*, no not in Paradise. God superadded a *positive law* to *natural religion*, even in the state of innocence; which he would not have done, if natural religion had been *perfect*, or *sufficient*: for infinite Wisdom designs nothing *superfluous*, does nothing *in vain*. It would have been arbitrary and tyrannical, to have imposed a *positive law*, only to create *needless difficulties* and *unnecessary hazards*. Divine Wisdom saw that the religion of nature was not *perfect* enough to found his *covenant* upon, and therefore superadded a *positive precept*, and made life and death to depend upon it. Bishop Bull says, "Besides the seeds of *natural religion* sown in man's mind at the creation, he was also endowed with certain *supernatural gifts* and powers, in which his *perfection* chiefly consisted, and without which his *natural powers* were in themselves *insufficient* to the attainment of a heavenly immortality: and consequently the *law of nature*, as considered now in fallen man without *Divine revelation*, and without any *supernatural assistance*, is much less able to confer the heavenly immortality and bliss upon them that live up to it^e."

Where then was the *perfection* of the law of nature, which could neither fully instruct men in their *duty*, nor confer *immortality*? There was wanting *supernatural light* and *supernatural assistance* even from the begin-

^d Placete on Conscience, book i. cap. 7. p. 52.

^e Bull. Opera Posth. State of Man before the Fall, p. 1066.

ning. Life and death depended on *revealed* law and *positive* injunction. The most exalted reason which Adam and Eve may be supposed to have, could not tell them *what* and *who* God was, nor what *terms* he would expect, nor what *kind* of happiness he intended for them, nor by what *helps* or *means* they might come at it, or be rendered worthy of it. Man's right to immortality even then was not founded in the *law of nature*, but in the *positive* law and covenant superadded to it^f. So absurd is it in our dregs of degeneracy to talk of the *perfection* of the law of nature. And what shall we say to the case of *angels*? If the *law of nature* be perfect any where, one would expect to find it so in them: and yet so far as we can judge of them from Scripture accounts, one great part of their *perfection* lies in their quick and ready dispatches of *occasional* services, in their prompt compliances with *positive* commands. Upon the whole, I see no manner of foundation any where for this boasted *perfection* of I know not what law of nature: to me it appears fancy and fiction only, having nothing but strength of imagination to rest upon.

XXI.

The Defence asserts, that "the religion of nature and that of Jesus are exactly the same:" as if the light of a *candle* were the same with the light of the *sun*. He says, "virtue is the same in both cases, of equal extent." As if there were no virtue in reverencing and adoring God the Father as *Father*, or Christ Jesus his *Son*, and our *Redeemer*, or the *Holy Ghost* most intimately allied to both, and the *Guide* and *Sanctifier* of mankind: or as if there was no virtue in faith, hope, or charity, such as are properly *Christian*, and far exceed all *Pagan* endowments; or no virtue in renouncing our own righteousness, nor in setting our affections on things above, nor in resisting the *Devil*; to say nothing of many other *Christian* duties, which the

^f See Bull, *ibid.* p. 1082, &c.

* Defence, p. 98.

mere light of nature knows not of. Christian morality is of much wider *extent* than *natural*; founded upon vastly larger *discoveries* and higher *views*, and flowing from a sense of stricter and more engaging *relations*: by all which there is new *matter* afforded for more and greater virtues, for a more *extensive* and more *exalted* morality.

It is not a just way of reasoning, to plead in this case, that duties flow from the *relations* we bear to God and to one another, which relations being always the *same*, the duties therefore must be always the *same*, neither more nor fewer, neither higher nor lower. For in the *first place*, strictly speaking, duties do not flow from the *relations*, but from the *known* relations, or from the *discoveries* made of those relations: *unknown* relations create no *obligation*, infer no *duty*. There is therefore always as much room left for enlarging the compass and extent of duty, as there is for throwing in more light: "For to whomsoever much " is given, of him shall be much required." The religion of nature expands itself, becomes larger and fuller, upon every new *manifestation* God makes of his *nature*, *works*, and *ways*: and since the *Gospel* has brought in many and great discoveries of several kinds, it is more than a *republication* of the original law of nature; it is (as to its moral part) natural religion *augmented* and *filled up* with large additions and improvements, in proportion to the additional *light* the Gospel brings with it.

Then, *secondly*, as to relations continuing always the *same*, it is not strictly true: for relations may arise from *new* circumstances, and *transient* acts, (acts of favour, covenant acts, &c.) as well as from the *permanent* natures of things. The relations of a *benefactor* to the person *obliged*, of a *deliverer* to the person *delivered*, of an *instructor* to the person *instructed*, and the like, commence in time, bring *new* obligations with them, and *additional* duties. The *relation* which a *Christian* bears to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is not precisely the same with that of a *Jew* or a *Pagan*, but is a *nearer* and more intimate relation; as Christians have been admitted into a closer ac-

quaintance with them, and into greater privileges. Neither is the *relation* of one Christian to another the same with that of *Jew to Jew*, or *Pagan to Pagan*, but a *stricter* relation, and so a ground and foundation for some *special* virtues and duties. From hence may be understood how the religion of *Jesus* is much more *extensive*, even in *natural*, or *moral* duties, (to say nothing here of *positive*;) than mere natural religion, as much as Gospel light and Gospel discoveries are more *extensive* than the discoveries of unassisted reason. To say all in a few words, Christianity contains all that is really good in all other religions, and has besides a great deal of rich furniture of its own. Such is the transcendent excellency of the Christian religion: a rule full and complete beyond all rules, and such as can “render the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works ^h.”

I have now run through one and twenty articles of the Defence, appearing to me so many articles of error. Several of them would have deserved a larger discussion, especially the last six or seven. But I considered, that they will, very probably, be more minutely examined and confuted over again, in the controversy we have with *infidels*; and that they make no part of the dispute between Dr. Clarke’s real friends and me. The Doctor is plainly on my side in many of the articles, (I think about half the number,) and his friends, as I conceive, will have reason to complain of disappointment in this their advocate. He undertook to defend the learned Doctor against the Remarks, which he has not done: but, instead of clearing up or justifying the *exceptionable* places of the Doctor’s writings, he has in effect been finding fault with the *unexceptionable*; covertly censuring some of the *best* and *soundest* principles which the Doctor had maintained in opposition to *Deism*. Somebody also, as I may note by the way, (one that is much an admirer of Dr. Clarke, but of Dr. Sykes more,) has taken the like freedom with

^h 2 Tim. iii. 17.

Dr. Clarke's Defence of the Prophecies; injudiciously censuring what he ought to commend^l, just as the writer of the Defence has done.

But the conduct of this gentleman convinces me more and more of what I formerly hinted in my Remarks^k, about the necessity of fixing a certain rule, (*viz.* "Scripture interpreted according to Christian antiquity,") to "prevent the endless excursions of flight and fancy; and the necessity also of returning to our old and well-tried principles, and there making our stand; since if we once yield to go at all farther than is reasonable or warrantable in the *subversive* way, there is no knowing when or where to stop." When men desert their *rule*, and their most faithful *guides*, to follow their own wanderings, and to strike out a religion for themselves, by themselves, they are apt to deviate wide and far from truth and reason, and to involve themselves in a multitude of errors. This writer is himself a lively instance and example of it. But he conceives, all the while, (and I have charity enough to think him serious in it,) that he has at length hit upon "the true method of proceeding in the argument against serious and rational infidels^l." It may be his real judgment: but then he might more prudently have kept it to himself, because he cannot reasonably expect that the judgment of a single man should weigh much against the united judgment of the wisest and ablest defenders of the Christian faith, ancient and modern, as well as against plain Scripture, and the truth and reason of things. To me he appears to have been vastly more complaisant to *infidels* than St. Paul would have been, and to have yielded up so much to them, as scarce to have left himself *Christian* ground to stand upon. He is pleased however with the thought, that after all his lavish concessions to them^m, they cannot prove Christianity to be *useless*, or not to have still *very great* and *very good advantages*.

^l See Republic of Letters for September 1729, p. 189.

^k See above, p. 428, 429.

^l Defence, p. 101.

^m Ibid. p. 91, 96, 97, 100.

I hope they cannot : it would be strange, if that *great salvation*, that brightest demonstration of Divine philanthropy, that unexhaustible fund of blessings and comforts, could appear *useless* upon any supposition ; so *great* and so innumerable are its *uses*. But will this cold manner of recommending Christianity do the Christian cause any service ? Would it be any great commendation of the sun-beams, after disallowing them their *greatest* use in *giving light* to mankind, to say that they are not however *useless*, but have *very great* and *very good advantages* in giving *motion* and *warmth* to the animal and vegetable world ? The *greatest* use of the *Gospel* is, that it gives *life*, eternal life, to mankind. We learn from St. Paul, as before observed, that Christ did not die *in vain* ; and that no law but the Gospel law, the covenant in Christ's blood, could give life to a sinful world. This is the *use*, the inestimable use of it, that mankind are *saved* by it, and that no flesh could be *saved* without it. Why is this principal *use* dropped, and none but the other slighter ones insisted upon ?

It may be said, that infidels will not admit that use which we speak of, as not admitting the Scriptures by which we prove it. Be it so ; yet it is our business to assert and maintain what from the infallible word of God we know to be *true* : and let them *disprove* the doctrine when they can, for that is incumbent upon them. Let them demonstrate, when they are able, that neither the Divine *wisdom*, nor *justice*, nor *holiness*, could *require* such *terms* as by the Scripture account God appears to have required. They will not find it easy to prove a *negative*, or to form demonstrations where they have no *data* to go upon, no sufficient *ideas* to work with, nor *medium* to proceed by. I believe, neither they nor we can judge any thing *a priori* in such high things : our thoughts are narrow, and our compass short ; and we are not wise enough to fathom the depths of infinite wisdom or holiness, nor to direct God how to govern the world.

If it be pretended that the death of Christ, and the co-

venant therein founded, could not be *necessary* for all mankind, since it has not been *published* to all mankind, the consequence is not just; because those that know nothing of it may yet partake of the benefits of it. It is certain that all mankind are gainers by it, as being thereby entitled to a resurrection: "for as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made aliveⁿ." But many may turn this blessing into a curse. I say then, that it was necessary the thing should be done, though not so necessary that all should know it. God can make allowances for *invincible* ignorance where he pleases, and can extend the merit and virtue of the Gospel covenant to those who have never heard of it. But it was absolutely necessary there should be such a covenant, otherwise no flesh could be saved: and it is absolutely necessary for every one that knows of it, to accept of it and close in with it; otherwise he forfeits the blessings and privileges of it.

I have digressed a while from the particular subject of *moral* and *positive* duties, to attend this writer in some other matters as important as that. But now in the close, I shall subjoin a word or two of the general tendency of that argument. There has been mischief done, and may be more and more, by depreciating *positive* duties; and therefore it is necessary now more especially to assert the strict obligation of *positive* institutions. The direct tendency of depreciating them (whether designed or no) is to introduce a low and lame morality, scarce deserving the name; and to substitute a *partial* obedience in the room of a thorough and entire regard to *all* God's commandments. It is justly observed, by a late writer^o, of *positive* duties, that "they produce a sort of *enlargement* " of our obligations, and cannot but render the practice of "religion more difficult than when restrained to those "few general acts to which nature and reason oblige us."

ⁿ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

^o Colliber on Natural and Revealed Religion.

The fact is true: those *positive* precepts are additional burdens, not only as bringing in more services, but as binding all the rest stricter and closer upon us, engaging us to a more exalted morality. Here lies the grievance. But then they are the *true friends* to morality who take positive duties in with it, to raise and support it. And it would make one very suspicious of the other way, of depressing *positive* institutions, to find that the greatest libertines, and professed infidels, can so readily chime in with it. They know what they do. Set but aside the *positive* duties, and insist only upon *moral*, upon following *nature* and *reason*, (as they will call it,) and they will soon contrive a morality *loose* enough, suited to their own taste and fancy, rather than to the truth of things. They are much better pleased to have the choosing and forming a religion or morality for themselves, than to let God choose for them. They will not inquire what God has commanded, but they will sit down and direct what he *ought* to command. He shall have the name of the *Lawgiver*; and they will prescribe what he is to do, and will have the drawing up both of the *laws* and the *penalties* for him, according to *their* wisdom, not *his*. This is what infidels and libertines aim at, by separating *positive* from *moral* duties, and crying up the latter in opposition to the former. It is an artful contrivance to have the modelling of morality in their own hands, in order to make what they please of it, instead of leaving it in the hands of God. But the true way of securing morality, properly so called, is to entertain a high regard to God and his *revealed* will in the first place. Godliness is the groundwork of all true and acceptable morality, the first and the best part of it: and godliness lies chiefly in religious and devout exercises, in a conscientious performance of the duties called *positive*, duties of the *first* table. Indeed, the mere outward performance of these duties amounts only to a *form* of *godliness*: but when the inward and outward piety go together, (as they always should,) the happy fruits will be *universal righteousness*.

As to the *order of duties*, I find it well laid down in the close of a very good Sermon which I have lately met with^p: and I shall presume upon the worthy author's leave to make use of his words, and to conclude with them.

“ Let us pay a due regard to all God's commandments ;
 “ carefully performing, in the *first* place, all the duties of
 “ the *first table*, the greatest and most necessary duties,
 “ and particularly *faith in God*, the very root and founda-
 “ tion of all good works, and also [*faith*] *in our Lord*
 “ *Jesus Christ*, the foundation of all Christian virtues,
 “ and the very condition of our salvation ; together with
 “ the other two great and most necessary duties, *Baptism*
 “ and the *Lord's Supper*.

“ Let us, in the *second* place, be mindful of discharging
 “ our whole duty to *our neighbour* and *ourselves* ; all the
 “ duties of the *second table*, as judgment, mercy, and the
 “ like.

“ And lastly, let us not leave undone the duties of least
 “ moment.”

^p Mr. Slade's Sermon, of the Order of Duties, on Matt. xxiii. 23.



